

**Religious Dualism in South Africa**  
**Consequences of Inadequate Missions Theology**  
**of the Sprit World**

by

**Harald Froise**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ATR: African Traditional Religion  
AIC: African Independent Churches *or* African Initiated Churches

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis has been written to address the reality that we tend to arrive at philosophical positions based on our worldview which is largely affected by our culture and background. This is so ingrained into our system that it is difficult for us to break away from that position. In a Christian context, this affects the way we interpret scripture, and it is only when we step back and objectively examine carefully what we believe against what is written in scripture that we begin to question how accurately our worldview reflects biblical teaching. This tendency to base our beliefs on our culture has enormous significance when we come to export our faith to other cultures.

The thesis examines the beliefs of people in an animistic society, and attempts to differentiate between what is purely cultural and what is religious. It takes note of the fact that heavy emphasis is being placed on respecting the existing cultures in societies in which the Christian faith is being propagated. But in so doing there is a blurring of what is cultural and what is religious, so that demands are made to add Christianity to an existing religion rather than to switch from serving foreign gods to worshipping the one true God.

The thesis also examines western evangelical Christianity which has been strongly influenced by enlightenment thinking, so that the supernatural events of the New Testament have given way to scientifically explained alternatives. It notes that much of the Christian faith that has been taken to people of different cultures has carried the baggage of that western culture. This has had serious deficiencies when dealing with societies that have been steeped in animism, which the thesis contends is nothing more than demonic influences. The brand of Christianity that has been brought has been inadequate to deal with these phenomena. The result of this is that people have not been liberated from the influences of their animistic past.

It is postulated that the Christianity of the Bible does indeed deal with issues of animism, and that to a significant degree. It was faced in New Testament times and powerfully dealt with by the Christian's authority over the demonic forces. It further holds that this New Testament ministry is still valid for today, and that the results of missionary activity could have been very different if this biblical theology had been understood and practised. Instead, the failure to equip emerging churches with the ability to deal with these forces, has led them to attempt to deal with them in their own way. The only way they knew,

was to continue the practice of appeasing the spirits. This is why there is such a strong appeal to include appeasement of the spirits, referred to as ‘ancestors,’ in the enculturated Christianity of the emerging churches. This has contributed to religious dualism in South Africa, since a demonstration that the Christian faith is powerful enough to deal with the demonic forces would have obviated the need to find solutions elsewhere. It is also noted that where it has been possible to break out of the limitations of western enlightenment theology, evangelism has been more effective.

**Key words used in the thesis**

Enlightenment

Worldviews

Syncretism

Ancestors

Deliverance

Spirit world

Authority

Demons

Evangelism

Biblical theology

Culture

Religion

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie proefskrif is geskryf om aan te dui dat die filosofiese standpunte wat ons inneem bepaal word deur ons kultuur en agtergrond. Dit is só deel van ons dat dit baie moeilik is om daarvan ontslae te raak. In 'n Christelike omgewing beïnvloed dit die wyse waarop ons die Bybel interpreteer en slegs wanneer ons volledig objektief waarneem wat ons in die lig van die Bybel glo, kan bepaal word of ons wêreldbeskouing die Bybel getrou navolg. Die begroning van geloofsoortuigings in die heersende kultuur het veral groot betekenis wanneer ons ons geloof aan ander kulture oordra.

Die proefskrif ondersoek die geloofsoortuigings van animistiese gemeenskappe en poog om te onderskei tussen wat werklik slegs kultuur is en wat werklik godsdiens is. Daardie kulture waaronder die Christelike geloof verkondig word moet gerespekteer word. Daar moet egter gewaak word teen die vermenging van kulturele sake en religieuse sake. Soms word die eis gestel om die Christelike Evangelie bloot aan te heg by bepaalde godsdienste sonder 'n totale oorgawe aan die aanbidding van die ware God in die plek van vreemde gode.

Die proefskrif ondersoek ook Westerse Evangeliese Christendom wat sterk beïnvloed is deur die Verligting met die gevolg dat die bonatuurlike elemente van die Nuwe Testament vervang word met wetenskaplike verklarings. Daar is vasgestel dat die Westerse kultuur op verskeie ander kulture oorgedra is met die verkondiging van die Evangelie. Daar bestaan dus besliste tekortkominge in die hantering van die animistiese kulture wat volgens die oortuiging van dié geskrif demonies van aard is. Die gevolg is dat verskeie mense nie van die invloed van hulle demoniese agtergrond verlos word nie.

Die standpunt wat hier ingeneem word is dat die Bybel animisme wel op 'n deurslaggewende wyse hanteer. In die Nuwe-Testamentiese tye het die saak ook voorgekom en is dit hanteer deur die Christen se oorwinning daaroor. Hierdie Nuwe-Testamentiese hantering van die saak is steeds geldig en die sending kon heel anders verloop het indien dit deurgaans erken is. Inteendeel, opkomende kerke is nie bemagtig om wel dié magte te hanteer nie en dit het daartoe gelei dat hulle op hulle eie wyse daarmee gehandel het. Die enigste wyse wat aan hulle bekend was om die geestesmagte te hanteer, was om die geeste te probeer kalmeer. Daarom is

daar steeds in die opkomende kerke die oortuiging dat die geeste - die voorouers – bloot kalmeer moet word. Dit het gelei tot religieuse dualisme in Suid-Afrika aangesien 'n duidelike demonstrasie van die oorwinning van die Christelike evangelie oor die geestelike magte ontbreek het en hulp dus elders gesoek is. Waar die beperking van die Westerse Verligtingsdenke voorkom is, was evangelisasie ook baie meer effektief.

### **Kenbegrippe**

Verligting

Geesteswêreld

Wêreldbeskouing/Duiwels

Voorouers

Bybelse Teologie

Kultuur

Evangelisasi

Bevryding

Sinkretisme

Gesag

Religie

Unless otherwise noted  
all Biblical quotations are from  
The New International Version  
Bible Society of South Africa  
1978, 1982



## **INTRODUCTION**

### **RESEARCH PROBLEM**

#### **Problem Statement:**

South Africa is experiencing a large-scale return to animism among its people. This is evident from a number of manifestations: the large syncretistic African Indigenous Church movement, numbering almost 11 million people (Froise M, 1999:48), who attend their church services regularly, but depend on appeasing ancestor spirits, and know little about salvation by grace; the introduction of spirit incantations into prayers and other activities in mainline churches; the re-awakening of traditional religion in large sectors of our population; the sanction of practices of traditional healers by our hospitals and medical aid societies; the prominence given to the occult in our broadcasting media; and the incessant growth of New Age philosophies, including the infiltration of these philosophies into many of our churches. Spiritual hunger is rife among our people, but they are not turning to the church for answers.

#### **The Hypothesis**

Shortcomings in missionary understandings of a Biblical worldview of the spirit world have played a significant part in bringing about this position.

#### **The Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to show that a correct understanding of biblical teaching could have prevented this trend and forged a much stronger emerging Christian church. Although it is late in the day, and it will be hard to reverse the trend, yet some ground may be redeemed if the church begins now to apply true biblical principles and thus be relevant to the needs of the society.

### **PRIOR STUDY**

Much has been written on the African Indigenous Church movement, mainly by researchers and anthropologists, but some has also been written by members of this movement themselves. For some ten years Professor C G Oosthuizen of the University of Zululand has organised an annual symposium under the acronym NERMIC (New and Emerging Religious Movements and Independent Churches) at which papers have been read by researchers, anthropologists and leaders of African Indigenous Churches, providing a rich resource of information which will be incorporated into the study. My own Masters thesis was entitled: "The Zion Christian Church: a study to evaluate the theology and practices of African Independent Churches with a view to formulating a strategy to win them for Christ."

In recent years there has also been an increasing amount written on the occult, and the effects of this on the lives of individuals, on societies and on nations. This thesis will seek to bring some of these threads together.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Three major sources will be used in the research for this project, two of them secondary sources, and one a primary source.

### **Secondary Sources**

Much information will be gleaned from the vast amount that has been written on the subject from a number of different perspectives. This will include both supporters of the spiritist philosophy as well as critics of it. A second secondary source will be the NERMIC symposia and what has been presented at these symposia. Almost all contributors at the NERMIC symposia are sympathetic towards the animistic paradigm and there have been few who have had the courage to oppose it.

## **Primary Sources**

I have personally had a great deal of experience as a counsellor to people suffering various symptoms as a result of involvement in various forms of animism or occult. This information should be made available to help others, both counsellors and prospective counsellors as well as victims. I will therefore draw on case studies from my own experiences.

Some of my sources will demonstrate how erroneous teaching on the part of presenters of the gospel, on the one hand, has led to the problem and how erroneous teachings developed by the victims of missionary misunderstanding, on the other, has created a new problem. Other sources will be presented as evidence that a different, and biblical approach could have led to very different results. This will be substantiated by different results having been obtained by a correct application of biblical truth.

## **PROCEDURE AND SCHEDULING**

The following study outline will be followed:

### **Introduction**

The Problem Stated: Shortcomings in missionary understandings of a Biblical worldview of the spirit world has led to a powerful syncretistic church movement, and a return to animism. This could have been avoided if New Testament models of ministry, as it relates to the spirit world, had been implemented by early missionaries.

### **Chapter One**

#### **A Powerful Syncretistic Church Movement**

Spiritism in the Church

In the Government

Among Academics

In Secular Society

In African Traditional Religion  
Contributory Factors  
Biblical Worldview Applied

## **Chapter Two**

### Animistic Worldview

Animistic worldview defined  
The rapid growth of the church in South Africa  
The Problem of Culture  
Missionary Ignorance  
Secrecy  
Attempts at Compromise  
Secrecy Broken  
Summary

## **Chapter Three**

### The Western Worldview under Scrutiny

Introduction  
Western Wordview defined  
Evangelical Approach to Ministry of Deliverance  
    Exegetical Inconsistencies  
    Opinions of other Evangelicals  
Christians and Bondage  
Effects of a faulty Worldview  
    Failure to meet needs of converts from animism  
        Bondage in Animism  
    Continued Bondage among Believers  
    Development of alternative Syncretistic theology  
Syncretistic Theology  
    Syncretism Defined

Culture vs Theology

Conclusion

## **Chapter Four**

Biblical World View

Powers and Authorities in Scripture

Old Testament ?

Explicit Incidents

Implicit Incidents

New Testament

Demonisation of Believers

Angels and Demons

Opposing Opinions

Liberal Theology

African Theology

Continuity of Praxis and Belief in Church History

Science and Religion

Contrasts between Biblical and Animistic Power Encounters

Healing in African Traditional Religion

Healing in African Independent Churches

Pitfalls and Erroneous Teaching

The need for Biblical Theology

## **Chapter Five**

Application of biblical worldview in missions

Validity of Drawing Conclusions from evidence

Modern Missionaries

Biblical Examples

Modern evangelism

Different Perspectives on Healing

Superiority of Biblical Practices

Superiority of Biblical Practices over non-biblical charismatic practices

Superiority of Biblical Practices over non-biblical animistic practices

Changed Perspectives

Case Studies

Other authorities

My Case Studies

## **Conclusion**

A better theology of spirit world would have

left us with a stronger church

left a church more relevant to every day life

given less incentive for the return to animism

Application of biblical principles can yet build a strong church

## **VALUE OF THE STUDY**

A lack of adequate knowledge leads to confusion. Looking at phenomena from only one perspective shows ignorance. There is no doubt that the world, both the church and secular society is terribly confused on spiritual matters. It is not anticipated that this study will turn the world upside down, but it could make a significant difference to many people who would wish to make use of it. Without question, the study will have value for my own knowledge and effectiveness in the field, but likewise, others could benefit and become more effective in counselling and ministry. In addition, people who are confused about matters relating to the spirit world could be helped to place things in perspective and have their thinking clarified.

## **THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF THIS STUDY**

The theological basis upon which this study will stand is the postulation that the Bible is the Word of God and is our final authority for faith and practice. Normal rules of literary interpretation and the application of sound rules of logic are to be used in the understanding of the Bible. It is to be read in context, both immediate and the broader context. It understands that the Bible does not contradict itself, and where apparent contradictions are present, one needs to investigate deeper to discover the intention of the writer in the context of the particular statement. This is the evangelical position as regards

the Bible, and the position to which I subscribe.

As regards the subject of this thesis, it is my position that the teachings of Jesus as applied by the disciples and recorded in the New Testament are applicable for the church today; that when Jesus taught his disciples to go and make disciples, "and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20), we have no right to pick and choose which of Jesus' teachings we will apply and which we will reject simply because some do not suit our culture or worldview. It is important to understand the purpose of the different books of the Bible, the readers the author had in mind, and the cultural background, and this needs to be taken into account in exegeting the books. Some have taken that perspective to allow for the interpretation that the context in which the New Testament was written was one in which the worldview of the day believed that mental illness and other unexplained maladies were the result of the activities of evil spirits, but scientific advances have led us to believe that these are the result of other causes. Therefore it is legitimate to ignore teachings relating to, or experiences described as demonic. However, I believe the evidence I will provide shows that this worldview at least is not culturally based, or a periodic worldview, but a scientific fact.



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **A POWERFUL SYNCRETISTIC CHURCH MOVEMENT**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In South Africa today there is a large syncretistic church movement involving millions of people who are committed to their faith, enthusiastic in their worship and attend church on a regular basis. On any given Sunday, parks and open spaces in our cities will accommodate groups of worshippers which could number from eight to fifty people, some with their drums, others dancing around in circles, listening to animated preachers zealously proclaiming their messages. In rural areas drums and singing will resonate from homes on hilltops and in the valleys, sometimes till late at night, at other times right through the night. Other more developed and organised groups meet in church buildings and may have much larger congregations. Some are small groups representing one- or two-church denominations. Others are a part of mega-denominations who hold their leaders in varying degrees of reverence. At Easter time roads from all over South Africa to Pietersburg in the Limpopo Province are crowded as cars, taxis and buses in their thousands travel bumper-to-bumper carrying millions of enthusiastic and faithful pilgrims to Mount Moria for the annual Easter conference of just one denomination, the Zion Christian Church. These are synoptically regarded under the general umbrella of the African Independent Churches (AIC) though some researchers and theologians prefer to refer to them as African Indigenous Churches (Makhubu 1988:1) to distinguish them from the growing white independent home church movement, or African Initiated Churches (Anderson and Pillay, in Elphick & Davenport, 1997:233) or African Instituted Churches (Shorter and Njiru, 2001:14) since many of these churches have been founded through black initiative.

One feature of this movement is the tremendous growth it is experiencing. In 1997 Oosthuizen maintained that between 75 and 80 percent of the black population in 1950 belonged to mainline churches and only between twelve and fourteen percent were in the Independent Churches. By 1980 the share in mainline churches had dropped to 52 percent compared to 27 percent in the Independent churches. By 1991 there were some six thousand denominations in the AIC representing 36 per cent of the total South African black population while members of mainline churches had dropped to 41 per cent. (Oosthuizen, 1997:8). Anderson and Pillay put the total Independent church adherence at ten million in 1997 (Anderson & Pillay, 1997:227), and the South African Christian Handbook puts the number of AIC worshippers at almost eleven million based on the 1996 census statistics (M. Froise 1999:76). The following chart has been drawn up from information from various sources:

**Table 1**

**AIC GROWTH TRENDS**

Year	Churches	Denominations	Members	% of pop.	% of Black
1913	30 <sup>1</sup>				
1960					
1970	3000 <sup>1</sup>				
1980				36.0 <sup>2</sup>	27.0 <sup>2</sup>
1990	6000 <sup>1</sup>	4000 <sup>2</sup>	8.0 <sup>2</sup>	35.0 <sup>2</sup>	
1991					
1996			10.7 <sup>3</sup>	35.5 <sup>3</sup>	42.9 <sup>3</sup>

1, Anderson & Pillay; 2, Oosthuizen; 3, M. Froise

It is difficult to know how accurate these statistics are. Hendriks draws attention in the South African Christian Handbook 1999/2000 to the difficulty analysts of the Census statistics had in establishing which people belonged specifically to the AIC. He writes

The principle for arranging the large number of names was to concentrate on the key component in a name. The Zion Christian Church or ZCC is a clearly distinguishable church. All churches with "Zion" in their names were classified under code 55. ... Experts with an intimate knowledge of the AICs were employed by StatsSA to classify many of the names. However, there are still serious shortcomings in the classification ... (Hendriks, 1999:66).

One of the shortcomings referred to above is the fact that some churches have several different categories featured in their names. For example, “The Jerusalem Apostolic church of Zion” could be a typical name of a church. Does it then fall into the category of Apostolic or Zionist? A further complication would be added if a name were to include “Ethiopian”, for example, “The Ethiopian Apostolic Church in Zion”. This could also be a typical name, and incorporates all three of the major categories of African Independent Churches (H. Froise 1989:22). Claims of AIC leaders themselves are wildly different from these figures and would suggest official figures could be conservative if their estimates are reliable<sup>1</sup>. It is difficult to draw accurate conclusions since a total of six million black people did not state their religious affiliation in the 1996 census, upon which these figures are based (Hendriks 1999:48). Hendriks points out that, although stating religious affiliation in census questionnaires has always been optional, the way the question is phrased can encourage or discourage giving an answer. In 1980, the fact that it was optional was not stated. In 1991 it was conveyed obscurely by adding one word in brackets: “(optional)”. In 1996 the question almost discouraged people from answering it by adding after the question: “This question is optional” (Hendriks, 1999:48). It seems therefore that a large vacuum resulted in the area of religious affiliation, which could account for the disparity. Patrick Johnstone shows some exciting trends in the growth of the church worldwide, and particularly in Africa, with the growth from eight million (10% of Africa’s population) in 1900 to 275 million (57%) by 1990 (Johnstone 1993:37). Southerland quotes DAWN (Disciple a Whole Nation) as claiming that 30 000 people are being converted to Christ in Africa every day (Southerland 1999:14). Many of these new churches and converts fall into the category of AICs. There is tremendous euphoria about these wonderful growth patterns, and much has been said and written about them. The question we have to ask

---

<sup>1</sup>On 16 May 1980, To the Point (SA Zion Church leading the way for peace by Eugène Krüger, 31) reported that 2.3 million people attended the Easter conference for the 70th anniversary celebrations of the ZCC. This was confirmed by the Rand Daily Mail (Millions flock to Zion Church Festival, 7/4/1980). At the Easter conference of the ZCC in 1990, a claim was made of 3.1 million worshippers attending (The Star, 17/4/90). If this represented as much as 60% of their total membership, this denomination would be claiming a membership of 5 million. The lower the percentage the 3.1 million represents, the higher would be the total membership.

The late Dr Lydia August, daughter of Christinah Nku, founder of the St John’s Apostolic Faith Mission, and leader of one faction of this church at the time, personally told me in 1997 the church had a membership of 3 million. That gives a total of eight million in these two denominations alone.

is: how authentic are these churches? In subsequent chapters I will seek to answer this question.

There is no lack of spirituality in our country. But in this thesis we will investigate whether true biblical Christianity is the predominantly desired form of spirituality. In the following pages we will see forms of Christianity that differ from historic evangelical Christianity both inside and outside the church and examine and evaluate these forms of Christianity, and also examine whether historic evangelical Christianity has been adequate to meet the challenges of different spiritual experiences on offer.

## **SPIRITISM IN THE CHURCH**

### **Forms of Animism**

The premise of this thesis is that spiritual activity is rife in South Africa in various forms, but questions whether people are turning to biblical Christianity for their spiritual needs to be met. In some cases it is a turning to institutions that may well fall under the title of Christianity, but the question is whether the teachings of these institutions conflict with those of the Bible. Wallace Mills (Bredenkamp & Ross 1995:166) points out that

Modern researchers have found that Xhosa Christians do retain a great deal of belief in the ancestors and in their effects on the living. Pauw reported high proportions of Christians who had received messages from their ancestors. He also reported a new 'unveiling the tombstone' ceremony. This ceremony has a high degree of similarity with, and incorporates almost all the essentials of, the traditional *ukubona umzi* or *ukubuyisa* ceremony. This seems to indicate that, to a large extent, Christianity was accepted in addition to, rather than in place of, traditional religious beliefs.

The return to animism is not evident only in the rapid growth of churches which have an element of animism in them, there is also an increasingly large move towards African Traditional Religion (ATR). Gabriel Setiloane, as far back as 1979 when he was Head of the Department of Theology at the University of Botswana and Swaziland, rejects the biblical creation "myth" of Genesis as being inferior to the African myths concerning the origin of Human beings, claiming that the traditional African views present a higher form of God than biblical teaching does. He then adds:

If, then, we maintain that we have a higher understanding of Divinity than obtains in western Christian theology, why are we continuing in the Christian fold? I must confess that nowadays I find an ecumenical Bible study session with my western Christian theological brothers and sisters rather irksome and boring. The question is not only why do we remain in the Christian fold, but, as one young West African Christian said to me in Basel: 'Why do we continue to seek to convert to Christianity the devotees of African traditional religion?' (Setiloane in Appiah-Kubi, 1979:63.)

His clear implication is that ATR has more to offer than does western Christianity. Calls are being made with increasing momentum for African black people to return to their roots.

In The Star of October 6, 1999, Chief Mwelo Nonkonyana, leader of the Eastern Cape House of Traditional Leaders is said to have called on President Thabo Mbeki to "convene a national traditional ritual to appease 'angry ancestors' and end the ongoing road deaths in the Eastern Cape." The article continues:

We never thanked our ancestors for this country's liberation. This could be contributing to these bad things; our ancestors could be very angry. Veld fires, tornadoes and accidents could be signaling their anger.

In the same article, a Ugandan herbalist practising in the Eastern Cape is reported to have said, under the title "Appeal to 'angry ancestors' could stop carnage, says chief,"

Black people had run away from their roots and were following Western culture, and black people should reconnect with their ancestors.

These are clear calls to Black people to abandon what has been brought to them by the West and to return to the animistic religion of their forefathers. Though the word used is 'culture', the context clearly indicates it is religious, and the religion brought by Westerners was Christianity.

### **Spirit Incantations in Mainline Churches**

Animistic beliefs and practices are making a marked impact on traditional mainline churches. Noel Bruyns, a senior Catholic journalist attended a meeting of Catholic Bishops to discuss how the topic of inculturation would feature in the forthcoming Bishops' Conference. He wrote:

There's good news for Africans who follow their culture and cultivate a healthy relationship to their ancestors, and then have the nagging feeling that

this may make them bad Christians. The place of ancestors, a crucial aspect of African culture, is gaining new respectability in Christian circles. The issue was recently discussed not in one of the African Indigenous Churches, like the Zion Christian Church but in a meeting of Catholic Bishops.

During the . . . meeting, the bishops were addressed by a former Professor of Anthropology, the Mozambican Jesuit Fr Ezequiel Gwembe. He pleaded for a rethink of the Church's stance towards the ritual respect for one's ancestors (Challenge March 1994:20-21).

All these calls are being made in the name of the church and in chapter two we will examine this in the light of Scripture.

In an article published by the Southern Cross 18 June 2000, Father Waliggo, a Ugandan priest speaking in a workshop on "Christianity in Dialogue with African Culture" organised by the Comboni missionaries in Pretoria, calls for the Church to purge all 'foreign words' from its vocabulary. He said

The choice is either to inculturate or to let Christianity in Africa die out slowly but surely.  
The first Christian evangelisation of Africa in the early centuries faded away because it was not deep-rooted in the identity and culture of the people . . . .  
He stressed that to be fully African one needed to be in full communion with one's ancestors and with those yet unborn.

The question arises whether the issue is religion or culture. The Gospel does not superimpose culture, but it is a different religion. While communication with ancestor spirits and ancestor veneration is not new to African religion, one has to ask what place it has in biblical Christianity. Waliggo further adds "the idea of hell [is] opposed to the African values of family and kinship." In this thesis we will examine whether such rejection relates to cultural aspects of Christianity, or the very teaching of Christianity itself.

Father Waliggo was not the only prominent person at the conference to express this opinion. Father Victor Phalana, who is a lecturer at the St John Vianney Seminary and specialist in inculturation, supported Waliggo's view and "warned that Christianity could not be fully inculturated if the African Christian was not liberated from the Eurocentric Church."

The late Paul Makhubu was from a Baptist background and trained at the interdenominational evangelical Union Bible Institute. He later joined the AIC and became known as a senior representative and leader of the movement. He writes:

When death occurs in most black families, if the family are [sic] Christians they will always consult their minister to allow them to carry out their customs [of sending messages to their ancestors]. Ministers usually do their best to respect the wishes of the family. . . . The draping of the coffin with the hide of the beast which has been slaughtered for the occasion is compulsory. This happens even in Christian families, and is a custom which is connected with the ancestor veneration. . . . The usual talk on such occasions follow this kind of form, ‘go well, remind so and so about us, we are also coming.’ This is common among black Christians of all denominations. It is like someone going on a train journey, and friends waving handkerchiefs on the platform (Makhubu 1988:60).

Another form of occult is hearing voices or receiving messages that conflict with the message of the Bible. The Sunday Independent gave almost a full page to a letter by a Dutch Reformed church member and lay preacher who also served as a government official. The letter was accompanied by a 204 x 250 mm photograph depicting this man with his male lover, claiming Jesus had appeared to him on at least two occasions condoning his homosexual activities in contradiction of several Bible passages condemning the practice (1 Corinthians 6:9).

There in that church . . . I once again experienced in an almost tangible way the presence of Jesus and I understood that I had been asking for the wrong thing. That God [sic] did not make a mistake in creating me as a gay man and that I had to serve him and preach his good news as a gay man (Viljoen, 4).

### **SPIRITISM IN THE GOVERNMENT**

Even the government is submitting to the call to “return to roots”. At the inauguration of the President under the new ANC government in 1994, spiritual leaders of African Traditional Religion were called in to pray and bless the event. Shortly before his inauguration, Signposts (Volume 13, Number 1, 1994:1) reported:

Sangomas ‘Bless’ Nelson Mandela.

Thirty-two witchdoctors (sangomas or spirit mediums) called on the spirits of the ancestors to ‘bless’ Nelson Mandela, the president of the African National Congress, at a cultural festival organised by the ANC and attended by 60000 people at King’s Park Stadium, Durban, on Sunday, October 24, 1993.

In our multi-faith society, different religions are represented at openings of parliament and other national events. At the Aerospace Africa 98 exhibition in

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<sup>2</sup>His prayer had been for liberation from a homosexual orientation.

Pretoria, The Star published a photograph of a *sangoma*<sup>3</sup> with his paraphernalia spread out on the ground as he was blessing a new Learjet 45 aircraft which was unveiled at the exhibition. In preparation for his assumption of the presidency, Deputy President Thabo Mbeki is reported to have visited his home town at Idutywa to undergo ceremonial cleansing. A Star report (The Star, 24 December 1998) states;

One of the organisers, Butterworth businessman Sisa Bikitsha, said the welcome would double up as a traditional ceremony to introduce Mbeki to his ancestors for the blessings he needed before taking over as president of the country next year.

. . . Mbeki would also under go a cleansing ceremony to prepare him for the rigours of the leadership post now held by President Nelson Mandela.

Explaining ANC involvement in the forthcoming Mbeki ceremony, Ngonyana said it was a demonstration of respect the organisation had for indigenous culture and tribal customs.

## **SPIRITISM AMONG ACADEMICS**

It is not only traditional leaders, or animistically oriented churches, or the government, that call for a return to animism, academics have also joined the fray. James Ambrose Brown observes,

In South Africa our academics are arguing for African religion to be recognised as equal to Christianity. Why, they ask, must Africans have to suffer the humiliation of practicing their traditional rituals in secret while pretending to be Christians? This, of course, means that the sangoma when he throws the bones will remain the true channel for forgiveness from the ancestors (James Ambrose Brown, *Speaking Out*, Today June-July 1998:11).

In the 1994 CB Powell Public lecture, Professor Kobus Krüger of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of South Africa vigorously argued the case for religious pluralism in South Africa. He emphasised that he was not arguing for an accommodation of one another's religion, or even an understanding of each other's

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<sup>3</sup> West describes an *isangoma* as a traditional diviner whose healing powers are specifically not Christian, but rather, they come directly from the guiding shades. An *isangoma's* healing techniques vary, for example, some will throw bones to divine while others will rely on dreams. M West, 1975, *The shades come to town*, quoted in S. K. Mfusi, 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Spiritual Plane, *The Star*, 29 April 1998.

<sup>5</sup> Smuts Ngonyana was former Eastern Cape MEC for economic affairs.

faith, but of pluralism in the sense that there should be a cross-pollination between the different faiths (Krüger 1994:2):

If *plural* means more than one, and a *plurality* a state of being more than one, let us then agree that *pluralism* goes a step further. It is the positive step of **being** more than one (emphasis mine).

He continues:

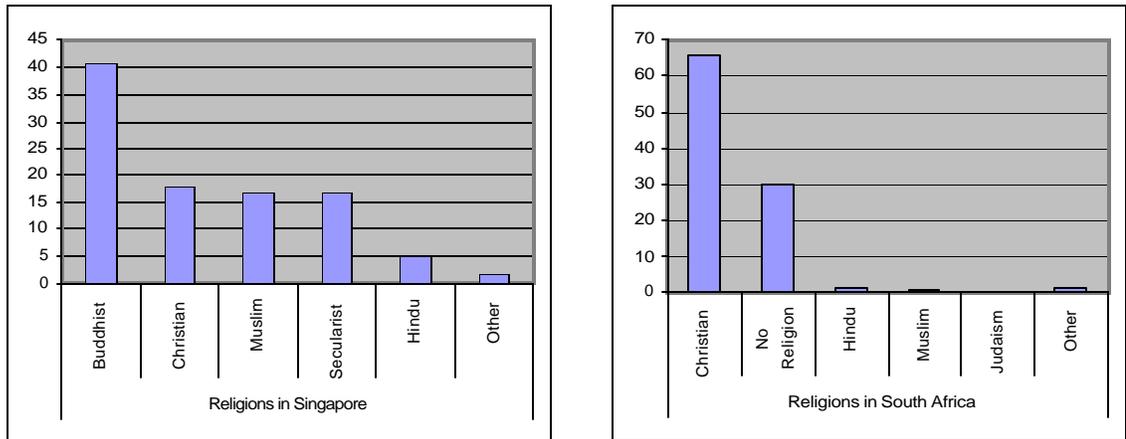
It is time to extricate Christianity from the alliance of Piety, Power and Privilege that marks the recent centuries of Western expansionism, and to join hands with all people of sincere religion.

While it is true that there is no reason why Christianity should enjoy a position of privilege – it did not enjoy that privilege in the time of Christ, nor does it need a privileged position to survive – it is interesting to see the argument propounded in support of the ‘logic’ for religious pluralism in South Africa. Because of the many different faiths in South Africa, he says, “Obviously, this is pluralism.” Yet he acknowledges that the 1991 census statistics revealed that Christianity was claimed to be the chosen religion of 66% of the population and “30% of the population for unknown reasons not falling into any of these categories.” The remaining four percent was shared by Hinduism, Islam and Judaism (Krüger 1994:3). Even acknowledging that a percentage of the 30% unlabelled would represent ATR, the argument does not appear to have substance. It would be different if there were substantial numbers in the various religions such as, for example, in Singapore, where 41% are Buddhist, 18% Christian, 17% Muslim, 17% secularist and 5% Hindu .

By way of a visual contrast, the two graphs in Figure 1 will highlight the differences:

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<sup>6</sup> *Christianity Today* January 12, 1998:37.



**Figure 1. Comparative Religious Distribution in Singapore and South Africa**

As can be seen, there is some degree of numerical equality between the religions of Singapore, justifying, at least on that basis the claim to religious plurality, but a gross numerical inequality in South Africa.

## **SPIRITISM IN SECULAR SOCIETY**

### **The occult in our media**

Hardly a day goes by that something occultic is not broadcast on our national media. In just one weekly programme on SAFM, Woman Today, five out of a total of thirteen programmes in the last quarter of 2000 were occultic. Some of these were repeats of programmes that had been broadcast in the previous quarter. For instance, clairvoyant Claire Petulengro, author of “Health Signs: Maximise your body’s potential through your stars”, was interviewed by Nancy Richards on September 20, 2000 and the programme was repeated on December 27, 2000. On July 12, 2000, self-proclaimed witch Titanic Hardy, author of “Enchanted” was interviewed. This was re-broadcast on December 20, 2000. In the last quarter of 2000, the following interviews were broadcast in just one weekly programme:

October 18: Rev. Elder Darlene Garner: Metropolitan Community Church for gays and lesbians. (It will be shown how this fits into the occult.)

October 25: Ethne Gray, Jungian therapist.

- November 1: Paul Wilson, author of “The Big Book of Calm”.
- November 8: Michal Levin, author of “Spiritual Intelligence - Awakening the Power of your Spirituality and Intuition”.
- December 27: Claire Petulengro, author of “Maximise your body’s potential through your stars”.

The same goes for television programmes. Programmes that are screened as good, clean family programmes, such as “Providence”, “Due South” and “Medicine Woman” all bring in, in one form or another, some aspect of the occult. In “Providence,” broadcast on SATV’s channel 3, the deceased mother of Dr Hanson appears frequently to give advice to her daughter. In “Due South” the late father of Mounty Fraser similarly appears often to encourage or advise his son. The main characters in “Medicine Woman” treat the spiritual ways of the indigenous Indians of America with great respect, even putting into practice some of their animistic ways.

These are just a few examples of how our society is being influenced by spiritist philosophies and practices contrary to the teachings of the Word of God.

## **SPIRITISM IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION**

### **Traditional Healers**

In days gone by traditional healers were referred to as ‘witch doctors’. This may have been an unfortunate choice of a description, but it does indicate the divining method used by such practitioners. This is no longer acceptable nomenclature. ‘Traditional Healers’ is the term used to describe those who are engaged in medicine in the context of ATR. These are steadily gaining acceptance in our society, so that Medical Aid Societies and Health Insurance institutions will now honour the accounts of these healers. In the introduction to his book, “Rituals and Medicines,” Hammond-Tooke argues that the investment in training medical personnel is being undermined by the rate of emigration of South African trained personnel to other countries where they can earn a more lucrative living. He points out that this will inevitably lead to the need for emergency measures. A number are available, he suggests (Hammond-Tooke 1989:14):

. . . one possibility is the utilisation of the services of the traditional healers who are indeed numerous and who ply their profession in the remotest quarters of the country. Certainly here there is no personnel shortage.

This book addresses this possibility. It seeks to answer the question: what are the possibilities of an alliance between doctors trained in the biomedical tradition and the practitioners of indigenous medicine? Are the attitudes and methods of these two categories in fact complimentary, or do they differ so fundamentally that any form of co-operation is ruled out from the start? What are the factors that encourage (or discourage) an alliance between them?

. . . One school [of thought] . . . appalled by the medical technocracy . . . argues that, in fact, indigenous medicine is in many respects 'better', more holistic, than its modern western counterpart, that it is congruent with indigenous worldviews and that it is, therefore, more effective for black patients than the biomedical approach. . . .

## **CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS**

### **Ethnocentrism**

It is part of our human nature to assume that the values we have grown up with, and our opinions that have been formed by these values are correct and, indeed, superior to those of others. Western nations, with all their technology and achievements, assumed themselves to be a superior race. This was reflected in the way they presented the gospel in mission fields they pioneered. Without questioning their own Christian worldviews, they assumed these to be biblical and correct. However, many western missionaries are acknowledging that the gospel they presented was heavily influenced by their western culture. When Jesus came to earth, he encountered a Jewish faith which had developed traditions and prejudices over many centuries. He confronted this situation often, for instance, when the religious leaders had prescribed detailed legalistic rules and regulations to the observance of the Sabbath that had never been intended by God. Jesus took issue with them over this, pointing out that they had misinterpreted the spirit of the law: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). This statement is not license for a loose interpretation of Scripture. It did not destroy the essence of the Law, of which he said, "until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of the pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Matthew 5:18). But it did put a perspective to the use or abuse of the Law.

John Mbiti, while being grateful for those missionaries who brought the gospel from Europe and America to Africa, which he agrees Africa both wants and needs, expresses his criticism in these terms (Lane 1984:226):

But what Africa does not need is imported Christianity, because too much of it will only castrate us spiritually or turn us into spiritual cripples. . . . Africans were taught by word and example that they had to become culturally circumcised before they could become Christians.

Just how easy it is to add prejudices to our worldviews will be seen from the following example and if Jesus were to return now, he would find similar prejudices and traditions. In North America today, there is a strongly held eschatological position which is a spill over of a problem dating back to the 1930s. At that time liberalism had become a major threat to the evangelical church. One difference between evangelicals and liberals was that evangelicals of that day generally held to a pre-millennial tradition while liberals rejected this view. Therefore a person's opinion on the millennium became a criterion by which to determine whether he was evangelical or liberal. This was a reaction to a current problem rather than a soundly developed biblical theology (Berkhof 1941:708). Although prominent evangelicals had variously held to pre- post- or a-millennial views through the centuries, the predominant view of evangelicals at that time was pre-millennial. A verdict on a person's evangelical soundness therefore came to be based on whether or not he held a pre-millennial eschatology. Now, seven decades later, a premillennial position is entrenched in the statements of faith of many denominations and institutions as a reaction, or an over-reaction, to the problem of the thirties. Professor Malan of the University of the North, for instance attributes the spiritual decline in Reformed Churches in part to deviating from a Premillennial eschatology (Malan 2002:3). This is in spite of the fact that, in over 300 references to the second coming of Jesus Christ in the New Testament (La Haye, 1974:10), neither Jesus nor any of the New Testament authors ever mentioned a millennium. In detailed eschatological discussions of both Jesus and Paul, a millennial period does not appear as part of the scheme. Even the apostle John makes no mention of it in his gospel or his epistles, and the only mention is in a passage of scripture (Rev. 20), which, at best, can be described as figurative or symbolic. Yet many institutions in North America make acceptance of this position

mandatory for membership or participation at certain levels . Pre-millennialists deny that Revelation 20 is a figurative passage when it refers to the thousand years (Grudem 1994:1131), but they would need to switch from figurative to literal interpretations between the first and the third verses of the chapter; from binding Satan with a chain - which surely must be figurative - to a reign of a thousand years, which they insist must be read literally (Grier 1959:79).

### **Evaluation of Western Worldview**

Chapter three will define a western worldview and examine to what extent evangelicals, both in a missionary as well as in a general context have tenaciously clung to a theology prejudiced with western thought and experience and whether this has been to the detriment of the gospel. Syncretism will be defined and the worldview exported to other parts of the world tested against this definition. To what extent, for example, has ethnocentrism assumed western culture was superior to the cultures of recipient peoples, and that the western culture was part of the gospel?

### **Views concerning the world of Spirits**

Having evaluated the cultural ethnocentrism, it will be necessary to evaluate the western theological worldview. What experience of dealing with evil spirits did western missionaries have? Was this little more than lip service to the belief in the spirit world, and secondly, if they did believe in their existence, what influence do they have in a person's life, and in particular, that of a Christian?

### **Sufficiency of Biblical Worldview**

Chapters four and five will be devoted to the Biblical Worldview. In Chapter four the biblical worldview will be explained and shown how totally relevant it is for all of society and all situations today. This will be compared with the western worldview discussed in Chapter three. A careful evaluation between the western and the biblical

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<sup>7</sup>The following is a random selection of institutions in North America that entrench a premillennial eschatology in their constitutions: Associated Gospel Churches, Columbia International University, Prairie Bible Institute, Briercrest Bible Institute, Evangelical Bible Church, Trinity Western University.

worldviews will be made and in Chapter five we will note whether things could have been done differently and what effect that would have had. Did an inadequate worldview held by missionaries contribute to the religious pluralism that exists today? Did the western worldview adequately address some of the basic issues that afflict people who have had such a close attachment to spiritual forces? Did converts from an animistic background to Christianity continue to seek solutions to their problems from animistic practitioners since they believed that Christianity did not have the answer to these particular problems?

### **Biblical Worldview Applied**

After taking into account all the facts, examining the historical position of the church from the New Testament to the present, Chapter five will show that the biblical worldview is relevant for today. Cases from my own personal counseling experience, and those of others, will demonstrate how practical and totally relevant the biblical worldview is, and how its application can make a change in people's lives, and therefore in society.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE SYNCRETISING OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION WITH CHRISTIANITY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter we will see how Christianity grew in South Africa, first slowly, but then gaining momentum. The question is raised as to the authenticity of the faith when measured against biblical criteria. In discussing this question we will note how difficult it is to separate elements of religious faith from culture in general, and the problems this poses for the full acceptance of the Christian faith without compromising traditional values that conflict with biblical teaching. The chapter goes on to show that western missionaries had similar difficulties in separating culture from biblical Christianity, in particular in their understanding of the spirit world. With this limitation important spiritual issues were not adequately addressed, leaving new converts in a dilemma which led to them seeking their own solutions, but these were based on familiar ground in their traditional understanding of spiritual issues. This was unacceptable to the missionaries, resulting in converts resorting to clandestine operations to avoid the wrath of the missionaries. In more recent years there has been an attempt to compromise and recognise the virtues of traditional beliefs and incorporate these into the new Christianity. This is part of a broader worldview of tolerance of others' beliefs and practices, recognising them as different but valid. The subtle and growing inclusion of occultic thought in the media – television, radio and the press – has encouraged this and this in turn has released the pressure to operate in secret, and people have come out into the open with their syncretistic forms of worship.

Since African Traditional Religion has a high element of animistic belief and practice, animism as a worldview is defined and discussed. This form of worship is evaluated against biblical teaching and standards, before going on to show how these values have been incorporated into the new Christian churches. This leads to discussing in conclusion whether, in the light of these findings, these churches are justified in claiming to be Christian if scripture is the yardstick to apply.

### **THE RAPID GROWTH OF THE CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA**

In the past five centuries there has been largescale missionary expansion into previously unevangelised countries upon the heels of exploration expeditions and colonisation. Africa has been the most responsive to the gospel, and South Africa in particular has experienced a phenomenal growth of Christianity, especially over the past two centuries. Following the 1992 conference on the church's history in South Africa, entitled "People, Culture and Power: Christianity in South African History 1792 – 1992" Bredenkamp and Ross (1995:1) claimed in the introduction to "Missions and Christianity in South African History" that

Two hundred years ago, the only Christians in South Africa were the descendants of European settlers living in the south-west of the country. ... Today, approximately three-quarters of all South Africans describe themselves as Christians.

Elphick (1997:3) corroborates that statement:

By the early nineteenth century South Africa had become one of the most intensely 'occupied' fields of Christian missions in the world. The story began among the Khoikhoi, then called 'Hottentots.' Subsequently Christianity penetrated beyond the Cape Colony to the Xhosa, the Zulu and the Swazi, the Sotho and Tswana, and to Africans and whites in republics established by Dutch settlers beyond the Orange River in the 1830s.

Richard Elphick confirms that statement in his introduction to "Christianity in South Africa" where he writes:

About 72.6 per cent of South Africans now claim to be Christian, up from about 46 per cent in 1911. Over the twentieth century Christianity has grown most dramatically among Africans – the largest, fastest growing, and now politically dominant sector of the South African population – up from 26 per

cent of Africans in 1911 to 76 per cent in 1990. In addition, by 1990, 92.1 per cent of South African whites, 86 per cent of Coloureds, and 13 per cent of Indians called themselves Christians (Elphick 1997:1).

As has been the case in many new mission fields in the world, conversion has initially been slow. That was also true in South Africa, but this soon changed so that in more recent years the advance of Christianity has been phenomenal. Elphick points out that growth was initially slow in the nineteenth century but gained momentum in the twentieth.

[Between 1652 and 1910] In most cases, missionaries founded schools, studied African languages, and translated the Bible. Usually they made a few converts. Religious change was rarely rapid and never simple; it differed greatly from region to region. Among the Khoikhoi [who had lost political and economic independence] the gospel found eager adherents almost from the first . . . (Elphick 1997:3).

The Roman Catholic church, though small at the beginning of the twentieth century became more aggressive in their expansion efforts and invested in training leadership so that it grew to become one of the larger denominations by the 1960s. The Afrikaner Reformed churches also became more aggressive in education and social services and expanded their influence. The African Initiated Churches, which had been a small minority in the nineteenth century began to mushroom in the twentieth century (Elphick 1997:4-7). So Elphick writes

The result of all this activity was a massive growth of Christian adherence among Africans in the twentieth century, a process still almost totally ignored by scholars, though it far overshadows the much slower – but more adequately studied – spread of the Christian faith in the nineteenth century (Elphick 1997:7).

## **THE PROBLEM OF CULTURE**

The rapid growth of the church is certainly gratifying, but the question must be asked, how genuine is this growth? Conversion to Christianity was always complex. The degree of conversion has been the subject of much debate. Many studies show that Africans have readily converted to Christianity but have generally been unwilling to embrace the faith in its entirety.

Ngubane puts it well:

It was expedient to belong to a church; Africans appreciated the discipline of church membership and accruing benefits, such as acceptance by missionaries and colonial powers, access to schooling, acquisition of jobs etc.; so, *a growing number of Africans embraced Christianity.*" (Ngubane 1984:77).

Ngubane's statement suggests that conversion to Christianity was material rather than spiritual; convenience rather than conviction. He also says that

Religion has always been the medium in which different cultures encounter and perceive one another most acutely because it provides the symbol language in which they communicate. But it is also in religion where African and Western cultures clashed, and still clash, most violently with far-reaching consequences (Ngubane 1984:77).

The clash between the two should not be surprising since they are diametrically opposed to one another. It is not a question of superiority of one religion over another so much as that their source of power is completely different, and one offers salvation in Christ whereas the other does not.

The whole of ancestor theology in African Traditional Religion should be re-evaluated. Turaki (1999:222ff) makes it clear that sacrifices to the deceased ancestors, veneration of them, and sometimes worship are present. It includes appealing to them for help and advice and receiving messages from them. In some instances it even includes appealing to them to inflict harm on others. In Deuteronomy 18:9-12 divination and contact with the ancestors is forbidden. In the New Testament, likewise there are many warnings. Jesus talks about false prophets who even perform miracles and exorcisms in his name in Matthew 7:15-23.

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them.... Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

The Apostle Paul also has several warnings along similar lines. (See 2 Cor 11:4, 13-15; 2 Thess 2:9.) If traditional religion had been acceptable in terms of biblical

theology, the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 would not have been necessary, nor would there have been a need for missionaries to evangelise at all. Studies have shown that all peoples throughout the world have embraced one or other religion. But Christ's commission was to liberate people from the bondage of these religions and receive eternal life through Christ.

One of the main contributing factors to this conflict is the extent to which religion is intertwined in culture. By this distinction I mean that religion includes everything that pertains to the spiritual dimension of life. This includes forms of worship and invoking the attention of spiritual beings or ancestors. But culture relates to non religious activities, such as how we dress, or what we eat, whether we produce music by organs or drums. Mayers (1987: xi) defines culture as

... everything that is part of one's everyday life experience. It includes:

1. Tangibles such as food, shelter, clothing, literature, art, music, etc.
2. Intangibles such as hopes, dreams, values, rules, space relationships, language, body movements, etc.

These work together to give an entity distinctiveness and unity.

Difficulties arise when activities pertaining to everyday life have significance in our religious belief system. This is what I mean by the intertwining of religion and culture. For example, in some societies drums are used as a means of communication, but drums are also used to invoke the attention of ancestors. Or, to cite another example, names are given as a means of identifying one person from another. But sometimes names given seem to have religious significance, as Mdende experienced. In an article in the, Sunday Independent, 6/2/00 "African traditional Religion promotes the right not to be Christian" Martina Della Togna quotes Nokuzola Mdende, chairperson of the National Council of African Traditional Religion:

I was brought up with an identity crisis because at school we were taught something different from at home. It started with my name – at school they called me Oscarine, a more 'civilised' name than Nokuzola, according to the Christian missionaries. It was compulsory to be baptised in those days and when one is baptised the child must get a 'Christian' name. So I was Oscarine for a few hours, then I would return home and become Nokuzola.

When I was doing religious studies at the University of the Transkei, Canon LL Pato taught us about African Traditional Religion. He was talking about what we were doing at home, and I realised for the first time that what we practise at home is a religion.

At school we were taught that religion is synonymous with Christianity, civilization, and western values. Christian missionaries said Africans don't have a religion, they have a culture, implying a religious vacuum.

The earlier quotation from Ngubane where he says that it is in religion where African and Western cultures clashed, and these further comments show this confusion.

When missionaries came to preach the Gospel in Africa, they brought along a whole range of Western values. They appeared determined to instil in their converts these Western values and a distaste especially for traditional religious values and African culture (Ngubane 77).

What Ngubane, along with many other writers, is struggling with is the introduction of western culture, rather than bringing the pure gospel, as distinct from culture. The gospel message must remain intact, but can be expressed within existing cultures without compromising its message. However, when we add religious practices into the mix, we are, in fact, compromising the message.

It is exactly the theme of this paper that western missionaries came to South Africa with a religion thoroughly influenced by western culture. And it is for the same reason that conversion has been difficult because it has been almost impossible to untangle African Traditional Religion from the culture. Elbourne says:

Early Khoisan interaction with Christianity was shaped by existing Khoisan beliefs. ... What is important is that Khoisan converts did not receive the Gospel in exactly the way in which European missionaries intended, but 'heard' the message in accordance with their own needs and existing situations. At least some converts, for example, seem to have seen missionary activity as a response by a God, in whom they already believed, to a crisis situation, *rather than a rejection of all their old beliefs* [Emphasis mine] (Elizabeth Elbourne in Bredenkamp 1995:72).

The current call for incorporation of African culture in Christianity fails to make this distinction. It is actually calling for incorporation of African religion into Christianity, and this is what is so strongly condemned in scripture.

## MISSIONARY IGNORANCE

Part of the reason for this unwillingness of Africans to fully embrace Christianity is that missionaries had little understanding of the worldview that was typical in an African society. Western missionaries generally were uninformed in matters of the spirit world. Encountering the spirit world in the form that it manifested in African societies as well as animistic societies in other parts of the world, was a totally foreign experience for western-trained missionaries. Henry (1986:17) points out that

Virtually all systematic theologies deal with the subjects of angels and demons, but westerners feel that these have little or nothing to do with the affairs of the Christian. So the existence of angels and demons is not denied, rather, it is ignored. This leaves the average western Christian with very little knowledge about angels and demons.

The Enlightenment era contributed to this as will be more fully dealt with in chapter three. A couple of examples here, however, are in order. Conzelmann, for instance, supported by Goppelt (in Goppelt 1982:268) maintains that the equipping of the apostles in Luke 9:1ff falls away in 22:35.

A new phase of Lukan research was introduced by H. Conzelmann with his book *The Theology of St Luke* (1960; Ger. 1964). In a careful exegetical investigation he pushed beyond these cliché-ridden initial attempts, but he continued fundamentally in the same direction. This can be seen with respect to the following points.... (4) Through this periodization Luke wanted to make clear to the church of his time that the forms of the church may change, but the fundamental structure must be maintained.”

In relation to the forms of the church changing, Goppelt adds a footnote: “Thus, e.g., the directives for equipping the apostles in the earthly days of Jesus (Lk 9:1ff.; 10:1ff.) were removed for the period thereafter (22:35ff).”

Luke 22:35ff refers to a reversal of the instructions given to the 70 in Luke 10. In relation to the kind of death Jesus anticipated, namely “being numbered with the transgressors” (Lk 22:37), Jesus warns the disciples to be prepared. To read into this that the equipping of the disciples to deal with demons and illnesses was now to come to an end seems far fetched indeed. Other commentators do not share this view. Campbell Morgan (Luke:249) sees additional equipping, rather than removal of the original equipping: “The implicate is that their work lay ahead. Thus he was interpreting the reason for the purse and the wallet, and the sword. They would be necessary because of all that lay before them.” Gooding and Ryle both see it as a

metaphorical reference, implying that they were entering into battle and nothing would fall easily into their laps without significant effort. Gooding (1987:333-334) says

Misunderstanding his metaphorical reference to the need for a sword, the disciples found two swords and offered them to him. He brushed them aside without further explanation: the next few hours would show them quite clearly that he was not talking of literal swords, or advocating violence, either in the propagation, or in the defence, of the faith (Lk 22:49-51).

Ryle says

It is safest to take these remarkable words in a proverbial sense. They apply to the whole period of time between our Lord's first and second comings. Until our Lord comes again, believers are to make diligent use of all the faculties which he has implanted in them. ... They should not expect difficulties to be overcome, enemies to be defeated, if they do not wrestle and struggle and make an effort themselves (Ryle 1997:282).

Dunn (1998:37) also seems unclear on this subject. He agrees that Paul's theology relating to idols was in fact a reference to demons and that demons were the real recipients of the sacrifices made to idols. He does question, however, whether Paul was "simply reflecting the real fears of the 'weak' members of the Corinthian church, naming realities of which he himself was less than certain? Or indeed, was his use of the term 'demons' simply the result of his deliberate echo of Deut. 32:17, with a further echo in 1 Cor. 10:22 of Deut. 32:21 ..."

He does not offer an answer to the questions he has posed, but his subsequent comments seem to leave Paul in some doubt, since he points out that "In this connection it should not escape notice that 'demons' are never mentioned again in the undisputed letters of Paul, nor does Paul anywhere speak of exorcism. Evidently, then, he could leave ambiguous the status of other gods/demons ..." Dunn concedes in the footnote, however, that there were the cases of Acts 16:18 and 19:13 in which Paul was personally involved in exorcism though he doesn't seem to attach much significance to them.

The Acts 16 reference is a single case, but in Acts 19:11-16 it is clear that this was a significant part of Paul's theology and practice. It seems therefore that Dunn is not justified in leaving Paul in any kind of doubt. In the gospels, each case of

exorcism is described in detail. In Acts, both in the case of the other apostles and lay disciples as well as the case of Paul, specific cases were no longer described, but generic statements were made because this ministry had by this time become commonplace.

Dunn's further conclusion holds no credibility, namely that Paul's silence on the subject is that

(1) The one ultimate reality is God; so *anything* that detracts from that, even as an empty 'nothing' (idol) still detracts from the one ultimate reality of God. [Or] (2) Idols/demons have an all too real *existential* reality – whether merely the human projections of other gods, or objectively real demons – and that existential reality can be so crippling and enslaving that it must be given no place (Dunn 1987:37).

It is this very existential reality that makes it essential that we have a more credible theology and praxis on the subject, the absence of which has left many people in bondage who could otherwise have been set free.

This ignorance on the part of the missionaries made it difficult for Africans to accept Christianity as presented by the missionaries. It soon became clear to them that there was an important part of their worldview that was not addressed by the Christian gospel as presented. Right from the earliest missionary activity there tended to be an adaptation of the Christian message by converts to conform to pre-existing belief systems. Bredenkamp and Ross quote Elizabeth Elbourne who

... shows how the destruction of Khoisan societies in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries made these people particularly receptive to missionary messages, but equally demonstrates how the Khoisan adapted these messages, *in the light of their pre-existing beliefs* [emphasis mine], to create an autonomous and specific spiritual repertoire (Bredenkamp & Ross 1995:7).

Missionaries arrived with their brand of Christianity which was tainted with a western worldview which will be examined in chapter three. What they believed the church ought to look like was the image of the church as they knew it back home. Everything associated with African culture was rejected as being "un-Christian". There was an inability to distinguish between what was acceptable culture and what was religious and in violation of biblical teaching. Fleming (1986:25) recognises this when he writes:

The new believers were taught to follow Christ by separating themselves from everything connected with the ritual and ceremony of the tribe. All these cultural customs were looked upon as sin. As a result, the Christians and the rest of the tribe became polarized, deeply affecting the solidarity of the tribal kinship.

## **SECRECY**

With the spread of Christianity, we ended up with a trichotomy of religious expression among the black people of South Africa: Mainline Churches, African Independent Churches, and African Traditional Religion. The African Independent Churches came from two major sources: either they broke away from the Mainline churches or they sprang up independently, and sometimes modelled themselves on the pattern of breakaway churches (Froise 1989:6). Because of attitudes towards the African Independent Churches by the Mainline Churches, there was a conspiracy of secrecy within the ranks of the Independent Churches. Hiebert et al (1999:19) point out that

Missionaries often tried to stamp out animistic 'superstitions,' but they did not go away. Because they were not consciously dealt with, they went underground. Young converts knew they dare not tell the missionary about their old ways lest they incur the outsider's anger. So these ways became part of the new Christians' hidden culture. Christian marriage ceremonies were held in the church, and then the people returned to their homes to celebrate the wedding in traditional ways in private. Amulets were hidden under shirts, and Christians did not admit to Christian doctors that they were also going to the village shaman. The people continued to practice their old ways, but did so in secret to avoid the condemnation of the missionaries.

In a parallel situation in the Philippines Henry calls it an "informal conspiracy of silence."

One of the most obvious results of this conflict of worldviews is that Filipinos have become very reluctant to discuss the spirit world openly with westerners for fear of being labelled as "ignorant and superstitious." For this reason there still exists an "informal conspiracy of silence" (Henry 1986:33).

The same distrust is true in South Africa. Empirically I have had conversations with Africans who have been reluctant to talk about their encounters with evil spirits

until I have shown them my understanding of them. Then they have opened up freely. In a South African context Zwanini Shabalala says:

For many years the African Independent Churches (AIC) have been despised and undermined by those in the mainline churches. It took decades for the mainline churches to accept some AICs as “churches” and not just as “groups”, “sects” or “cults”. There had been debates on whether they can be called Christian groups or not. ...

All that is said about the AICs and the position of their members in the society, has made people disassociate themselves from the AICs. It has also made those people who need the services of the AICs to go to them secretly because they do not want to be associated with them (Shabalala 1993:1).

The difficulties missionaries have had have been distinguishing between religion and culture. When western missionaries insist in a break from everything connected with ritual and ceremony of the tribe, this *is* the imposition of western Christianity, which also resulted in polarisation of the new Christians from the tribe. But when western missionaries insist in a break from the system of venerating and consulting the deceased ancestors, it *is not* the imposition of western Christianity.

Meyers says

The missionary becomes an agent of change whether he likes it or not. The gospel of Jesus Christ is tied to no one culture and allows the individual to transcend his own culture. This does not imply that we must attempt to establish a “Christian culture.” Rather, it leads to the regeneration of specific cultures by the work of grace within the hearts and lives of the Christians living within those cultures. Christianity can permeate any part of the sociocultural setting or make the whole over anew. An American can become a Christian as an American without being made over to a Nigerian. A Nigerian can become a Christian as a Nigerian without being made over to an American. The excitement of Christianity springs from Christ living “in me,” to make me pleasing to him through the working of the Holy Spirit (Mayers 1987: xiii).

## **ATTEMPTS AT COMPROMISE**

In a later era an attempt to reconcile these differences was made by naturalisation or indigenisation. A large part of the problem came from confusion as to what represented culture and what belonged to religion. There is no question of the importance of inculturation or indigenisation, both to make the message understood as

well as internalised. Tippett, Yamamori and Taber (1975:401) comment that “We are continually (and quite rightly) warned of the danger of planting foreign western Christianity on what we have for so long called ‘the mission field.’” He draws on the example of Jesus and argues that

If the mission of God was achieved by the incarnation of his Son, culture-bound as a Jew, and a Jew of Galilee, and a speaker probably of Galilean Aramaic, and by occupation a carpenter in the tradition of his earthly father, and he in turn said, ‘As the Father has sent me into the world, so send I you into the world,’ thereby giving us a model for mission; I think we may assume that we are bound to work within the limitations of the cultural forms of the people to whom we are sent.

Steyne (1974:212-213) expresses similar sentiments and quotes statistics established by Albert Mehrabian after ten years of research indicating that only 7% of the meaning conveyed in communication is through the words used. The rest is shared between tone of voice and inflection, actions and body language and practical demonstration. He continues:

If we add to this the fact that the message communicated is not the message heard, for as imitation is innovative, so too is acceptance innovative, we ought to give more attention to this crucial factor in evangelizing. It should be remembered that the hearer determines what is to be communicated for the information will be filtered through the acceptor’s “central conceptualization” (world view). The fact that the Christian message often does not speak within the cultural context, nor does it use cultural insights to present a meaningful local translation of the gospel – a dynamic equivalent of the New Testament models – ought to make us realize how much more effective advocates of the Gospel could be if they took into consideration these facts and communicated so that change will result (Steyn 1974:213).

What both Tippett and Steyne are talking about above relates to the form of conveyance of the message. If song and dance are the means used in a particular culture, the missionary does well to learn that and apply it in presenting the message. The challenge is to know where to draw the line: what is the message, which cannot be changed, and what is the means of communicating it and indigenising it so that it is meaningful to the receiver.

Ngubane (1984:78) also recognises this shortfall when he says “Unfortunately early missionaries failed to reproduce in contemporary African cultural contexts the

theologising process which was exemplified by St. Paul and others.” Then he makes a statement that indicates the extent of the frustration:

African Christians found themselves in a serious dilemma. Some leaders among them did some theologising and positively searched for traditional values or treatment of needs not catered for in the mission churches or rejected outright ... Strange [sic] enough, most of these values and needs were recognized and sanctioned by either the Old or New Testament, e.g. ... healing, expulsion of evil spirits ...

Lamin Sanneh (1989:29) identifies two alternate missionary methods to present the message cross-culturally. He calls the one “mission by diffusion” by which the missionary culture is inseparable from the message carrier. He suggests this is the method used in Islam where there is an insistence on the indispensability of the Arabic heritage in Scripture, law and religion and cites a Muslim scholar who said “Assuredly the worth of an act is by its intention.” He calls the second method “mission by translation.” In this method the “recipient culture is the true and final locus of the proclamation, so that religion arrives without the presumption of cultural rejection.” Sanneh sees the early Jerusalem apostolic missionary endeavour as being by cultural diffusion, but that this changed so that “Mission as diffusion is unquestionably the stronger strand in Islam, whereas mission as translation is the vintage mark of Christianity.”

This may be the biblical ideal, but as we have seen from arguments above, it has unfortunately not always been practiced in this way with some adverse consequences. Both black and white authors have written volumes lamenting this fact. Not only has the deficiency been in the presentation of the gospel, but the gospel has also been filtered through a western enlightenment worldview that has minimised or sidelined the supernatural. Ngubane made this point in the quotation used earlier: “most of these values and needs were recognised and sanctioned by either the Old or New Testament, e.g. ... healing, expulsion of evil spirits ...”

All this is not to suggest any compromise of the gospel.

As Sanneh also says:

Christian missionaries, from Peter and Paul down to our own day, have spent a good deal of their time denouncing false conversions, and urging believers to adopt a code of critical self-examination lest they presume too much on the worth of any person, whether as transmitter or recipient (Sanneh 1989:29).

‘From Peter to Paul down to our own day,’ and in the nineteenth century Kierkegaard took issue with the compromise of the Christian faith. He thought it was too easy to become a Christian, but in doing so nothing changed.

Kierkegaard’s ... mission is simple. He wants to awaken Christendom to the difficulties of becoming a Christian. *Christendom*, as Kierkegaard uses the term, is institutional religion. Christendom makes Christianity easy; it does not require a life-rending decision or passion. Instead one must only follow the crowd. As Kierkegaard describes it, “There are many people who reach their conclusions about life like schoolboys; they cheat their master by copying the answer out of a book without having worked out the sum for themselves.” ... In Kierkegaard’s view the difference between Christianity and Christendom is radical: “The thought of Christianity was to want to change everything. The result of the Christianity of ‘Christendom’ is that everything, absolutely everything, has remained as it was, only everything has assumed the name of ‘Christian’ – and so ... we live a life of paganism” (Wilkens & Padgett 2000:156 quoting Kierkegaard).

But this is exactly where the difficulty comes in. It is the compromise of the gospel that writers are demanding. The indigenisation of the gospel is being interpreted as an acceptance of those parts of culture that conflict with the teachings of the Christian scriptures. Ngubane (1984:77) laments that “missionaries ... appeared determined to instil in their converts ... a distaste especially for traditional religious values ...” He believes that Black theologians could contribute a great deal with their insights, “especially those relating to synthesising African traditional beliefs and the Christian tradition” (:76). He misinterprets the intentions of Paul when he compromised his cultural norms in order to get the gospel across when he writes: “Paul and the early church leaders did not simply condemn and jettison the Greek mystery religions and Greek philosophy” (Ngubane :78).

Sanneh puts it this way:

It was the experience of the Gentile church that brought Paul to the radical edges of his own tradition. His religious sentiments were progressively molded by the exposure to the Gentile movement. Dodd wrote (*The Meaning of Paul for Today*, 1964:47) that “Paul the Jew had to suffer the shattering of his deepest beliefs before he came through to a new conception of a missionary’s work. He had to learn that there was no distinction of Jew and

Gentile. It needs some effort of imagination to realize what this surrender cost him” (Sanneh 1989:28).

It should be noted however that the cultural issue Paul struggled with was the realisation that cut right across everything he had been brought up to believe, that the gospel was universal in its application, and not confined to the chosen race of the Jews. The cultural adaptations he made were to be able to present the gospel in a way the people would understand it, not to adjust the gospel to fit in with the culture. This is clearly seen in his Mars’ Hill experience, where he encountered a very active religion in the local culture. But he did not condone that religion just because it happened to be part of culture. He was very disturbed by the religion of their culture: “Paul ... was greatly disturbed to see that the city was full of idols” (Acts 17:16). He preached to them, using their culture and religious understanding as a starting point because that is something they would have understood, but steered their thinking away from the cultural religion towards the true God and his Christ. The Athenians had a system of belief in a multiplicity of gods, but also erected an altar “To an unknown god”. Larkin maintains that the origin of the altar dates back to a sixth century B.C.E. plague during which Epimenides proposed a remedy of driving a flock of sheep from the Aeropagus, and wherever they lay down, there to sacrifice them to the god of that place. Consequently memorial altars with no god’s names inscribed on them are dotted throughout Attica. But he adds that there may be some ancestral attachment to the altars, quoting Wycherley:

Wycherley proposes, with some archaeological justification, that such altars may also have been raised to appease the dead wherever ancient burial sites were disturbed by the building projects of later generations (Larkin 1995:255).

When Christianity is presented from the context of a particular culture, it is what has become meaningful within the worldview of the presenter. Church from a western background was associated with cathedrals and organs. But the cathedrals and organs are not part of Christianity. It is what, in that culture, has become a meaningful expression of Christianity. However when one comes to a different culture, those

same expressions do not have any meaning. African cultures have a different way of expressing themselves. Mayers helps us here with these comments:

All social units consist of some basic meaning and a way of expressing that significance. *We will call this combination of meaning and expression of meaning the form/meaning correlation.* Language is a symbolic system and uses certain verbal and written forms to express meaning. Culture is a symbolic system that compasses all of life, including the language one speaks.... The dominant symbolic system of the North American missionaries was language. For the Africans, it was drama/dance. ... (Mayers 1987:205).

However, in many cases these very bodily movements were seen by missionaries as evil and condemned. That was not part of their religion. It was their culture.

Citing an empirical example Mayers tells this story:

While translating Luke 13 in my Bible translation program in Central America, I ran into a problem. Jesus, in verse 32, calls Herod a "fox." Since this translation effort was prior to my crosscultural conversion, I was paying more attention to form than to meaning. At first I could not understand why the nationals were having a problem with calling Herod a fox. ...Then it began to sink in that the word implied that Herod was a homosexual. As soon as I shifted the form from "fox" to "wildcat," they understood perfectly and rejoiced that now "it made sense" (Mayers 1987:60).

Using "wildcat" in this context is not being unfaithful to scripture. The meaning was a reference to Herod's character. The term used was merely the form of communicating that. But in the context of the Central Americans, wildcat was the form needed to convey the meaning which referred to his character. It was this inability to distinguish between form and meaning that made it difficult for the missionaries to distinguish between religious meaning and the rest of culture which was the form of expression.

In missionary endeavours there was a syncretism in the presentation of the gospel both with regard to form and meaning. The denunciation of drums and African traditions was based on the western worldview of what the church ought to look like because that is what it looked like back at home. The form of presentation was western and difficult for Africans to comprehend. But more serious was the syncretism in meaning, where westerners denied the functional reality of the spirit world in spite of the strong emphasis on it in scripture. This denial will be discussed

in greater depth in chapter three, and the emphasis on the spirit world in scripture will be discussed in chapter four.

## **SECRECY BROKEN**

We saw earlier that missionary intolerance towards traditional forms of worship led to the conspiracy of silence or secrecy. The situation is rapidly changing as South Africa becomes more and more pluralistic in its philosophy. A tolerance towards different religious concepts is giving more and more credence to different religions. Whereas they were once clandestine, the weakening of the Christian monopoly is emboldening other groups to come into the open with their beliefs. This is true, not only in the black community, but in the white community as well.

### **Television Programmes**

Increasingly, television programmes are devoted to occultic activities. Television family programmes are including more and more exposure to occultic thought. Chapter one shows how both “Providence” and “Due South” frequently show how the main characters in the play receive guidance from “the ancestors.” Syd Hanson’s deceased mother in “Providence” frequently appears to guide and direct her. Mounty Fraser’s deceased father in “Due South” does the same. And in “Medicine Woman” the main characters often appeal to the spiritual wisdom of the North American Aboriginals’ traditional religions for guidance.

All this has led to more boldness among adherents of the African Independent Churches and African Traditional Religion to be open about their positions. Writers like Daneel and Allan Anderson have advocated an acceptance of African Independent Churches as simply an African cultural expression of Christianity, while the NERMIC symposia organised annually by Oosthuizen and Kitshoff have given platforms for AICs to express their views in a non threatening environment. It is at one of these symposia that a white researcher presented a paper which found that the women of the Nazarite Baptists of Shembe believed that Shembe is God. And in a subsequent discussion she expressed that at least Shembe had given his people hope, and believed it was only a white point of view that this was a false hope. And a black leader of the Nazarite Baptist Church, who claims that Shembe is THE Holy Spirit, stated this in his paper “The Concept ‘Holy Spirit’ in the *Ibandla lama-Nazareta*’

The Nazarites believe that there is a third member of the Trinity who is the Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit is not equal to God but is an extension of God more or less like the Son. The difference between many Christians and the Nazarites is that Christians believe in God the Father who is Jehovah, God the Son who is Jesus and God the Holy Spirit whose name is to Christians unknown. The Nazarites also believe in God Jehovah, God Jesus Christ and in addition God the Holy Spirit. God, the Holy Spirit, has a name, and his name is Shembe. The Prophet Isaiah Shembe was not God but he was the servant of God and so all Shembes; but Shembe the Holy Spirit which descended to Ekuphakameni is God. (Mpanza 1993:1)

### **The Press**

An increasing degree of coverage is appearing in the Press, demonstrating progressive acceptance of ATR.

On 6<sup>th</sup> October 1999 the Star carried an article entitled “Appeal to ‘angry ancestors’ could stop carnage, says chief.” In the article a herbalist, Moses Musisi called upon President Mbeki to convene a national traditional ritual to appease angry ancestors. This, he believed would end the road carnage.

On 29<sup>th</sup> April 1998 the Star published an 18cm x 12cm photograph showing a *Sangoma* blessing the new Learjet 45 aircraft that was unveiled at Aerospace Africa in Pretoria.

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2000 the Star carried an article by Rich Mkhondo entitled “Nothing wrong with rites.” Among other things the article claims that Jewish, Catholic, Presbyterian and other groups agree that those protesting against traditional or religious ceremonies are violating people’s constitutional rights, and then draws parallels between ATR and Islam and Judaism.

On 18<sup>th</sup> June 2000 Southern Cross carried an article by Mathibela Sebothoma entitled “Call to purge the Church of all ‘foreign’ words.” Expressions such as ‘sacrament’, ‘eucharist’ and ‘alleluia’ should be removed from Bibles and missals lest Christianity die out slowly and surely in Africa. The article goes on to call for full acceptance of communication with the dead both in church services and liturgy.

On 14<sup>th</sup> February 1993 an article appeared in the Star entitled “Breakthrough for Sangomas,” when a medical aid society agreed to honour claims up to R750 for consultation fees as a first towards recognition of the traditional healer profession.

The paper had a colourful boxed insert describing how traditional healers could heal breast cancer, diarrhoea, arthritis and purify blood.

On 24<sup>th</sup> January 1997 a sequel to the 1993 article in the Star was entitled “Sangomas receive overdue recognition.” The sub title read “New medical scheme gives patients the option of consulting traditional healers or conventional doctors.” The article reported that Eskom had agreed to accept the Thamba medical aid scheme which covers workers who consult traditional healers, and that Telkom, the Post Office and other institutions were expected to follow suit.

On 18<sup>th</sup> January 1997 the Saturday Star published an 18cm x 12cm photograph of a Sangoma and a bone-thrower alongside an article entitled “Sangomas join battle on crime” by Terry van der Walt. The caption under the photograph read “Magic Response: Sangoma Doreen Ndiko and bone-thrower Seth Seroka set about their business of protecting homes – and they seem to be having a great deal of success.” And

On 24<sup>th</sup> September 2000 the Sunday Independent carried an article entitled “Sangomas join war on Aids” by Mlungisi Zondi. The sub title of the article read “Research team claims that plant with ‘profound medicinal potential’ used by traditional healers will help fight depression, weight loss and retroviruses.”

### **Radio Broadcasts**

Strengthening the acceptance of ATR is the general tolerance towards spiritual expressions that are extra to the Christian Bible. A random two-month selection of broadcasts by the national radio broadcast SAfm’s Women Today included the following guests related to the occult:

- 20/9/2000 Guest: Claire Petulengro, author of ‘Health Signs: Maximise your body’s potential through the stars.’ This is the promotion of Astrology which is decidedly a form of the occult.
- 18/10/2000 Guest: Reverend Elder Darlene Garner of Metropolitan Community Church for gay and lesbian people.
- 25/10/2000 Guest: Ethne Gray, Jungian Therapist. Karl Jung had a highly developed system of astrology.

- 1/11/2000 Guest: Paul Wilson, author of 'The Big Book of Calm,' based on a mantra of meditation taught by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the master of transcendental meditation.
- 8/11/2000 Guest: Michal Levin, author of 'Spiritual Intelligence – Awakening the Power of your Spirituality & Intuition.' Although Levin claims she is not a guru or a teacher, her methods are nevertheless closely related to those of transcendental meditation.

These are just a few random examples of how traditional religion and New Age philosophies are being given publicity and acceptance in the media.

### **Animism**

When we come to define an animistic worldview we recognize that there are a variety of expressions among different people. Over the centuries different communities have developed their own brand of beliefs in the spirit world and practices of application. The basic beliefs, as we shall see, are fairly common, but the applications vary. Each community may have different rituals, and believe that these are essential, in order to achieve specific purposes.

Following are some examples of beliefs held by different communities.

Elphick quotes Elbourne & Ross to describe Khoisan beliefs.

In Khoisan culture there were healing rituals, initiation rites for boys and girls, and a range of taboo beliefs and purification practices. Animals occupied an important place. An elderly man interviewed by Moravian missionaries in 1808 told them that all members of his community had a particular link with the spirit world in the shape of an unearthly animal that followed them throughout life and brought news in times of crisis. Snakes were considered to cause illness and misfortune, and healers who had undergone special training were thought able to cure the bodies of sufferers. Storytelling bound together myth, heroic narrative, and the ordinary: the heroes of Khoisan folktales were not powerful figures, but often tricksters who escaped danger through cunning. Many Khoisan tales were about animals. Dreams were a crucial means of communication between human and sacred beings: they were considered prophetic, and their interpretation a matter of common conversation (Elphick et al. 1997:33).

The Zulus believe in a universe inhabited by both material entities and spiritual beings. A God who is too remote also exists, but is not concerned with day to day affairs of his creation. Fleming (1986:25) says

For the traditional rural Zulu, reality includes a universe inhabited by material as well as spiritual forces. The Creator is a god who is called by two basic names: *UNkulunkulu* – the Great, Great One, and *UmVelinqangi* – the Pre-existent One. All natural phenomena were created by him, but he is remote and plays little part in everyday life.

As a result, man, to the Zulu, is a personal being created by God who no longer takes much interest in him. The spirits are the nearest approach to any personal God and the only check on unethical behaviour. However, they can also be agents of evil.

“In the Akamba (and other African) understandings of the spirit world, the departed, together with the race of the spirits, populate the spirit world. There is contact between human beings and the departed, but there is hardly any relationship between the spirits and God” (Mbiti 1971:457).

In the iBandla lama Nazaretha

... the Spirit can be categorised into two types ... the Holy Spirit and ... an Evil Spirit. The two differ, not in form but in their work. The father of all Holy Spirits is God and the father of all Evil Spirits is Satan. God, his angels and other Holy creatures are Holy Spirits; Satan with his demons and evil creatures are evil spirits (Mpanza 1993:2).

Steyne (1974:106) quotes from Makhathini’s article: “Ancestors, Umoya, Angels” in “Our Approach to the Independent Church Movement in South Africa” in Missiological Institute:

Africans understand man as a trichotomist in this that he has a (a) Inyama/Umzimba (flesh); that part which rots and perishes; this is the body; (b) the Umoya/Umphefumulo – the force that keeps man alive; (c) Isithunzi – literally “a shadow”. The most important part in man is Umoya/Umphefumulo (breath or spirit force) ... This Umoya we speak about here must not be confused with Ancestral spirit. The spirit Umoya dwells in the heart. The isithunzi shadow which is inseparably together with Umoya may be termed the personality or force of character. This isithunzi can be acquired or removed by use of medicine ... the captor, because of his great and dangerous power, can easily turn the captive to ... a spook-like familiar ... This Umoya may be so powerful that it can correctly foretell what is to come, discover hidden things and tells of what happened. This spirit can very easily look like or act like the Holy Spirit. It can imitate and even claim to be God-sent. Experiences in exorcism have been told where the evil spirit or the Umoya has sung hymns, prayed, recited Scripture and made holy claims about itself (Experience of a Christian African).

However there are some concepts that are common in animistic cultures throughout the world. These are that

African spiritual reality takes special cognizance of life force, ancestors and spirits. These all play a fundamental part in the socio-cultural structures and pervade the total life pattern of an individual. They closely relate his physical life to the realm of the departed (Stejne 1994:106).

Burial rites are important in all animistic communities. Rev Buti Tlhagale, Secretary General of the Catholic Bishops Conference (1996:8), believes there are serious consequences to neglecting the burial rites of the deceased. He writes

Traditionally, a sudden and untimely death could only be seen as the work of witchcraft, which also causes anxiety. Witchcraft symbolises evil and the murderers are seen as evil people. An unexpected death is a bad omen which is believed to bring misfortune.

According to African culture, separation rites must be performed. The deceased “passes” from one phase of life to another. In order for the living to be healed from the pain of death, they must accompany the deceased to the point where he or she joins the world of the spirits.

Neglect of burial rites can only spell misfortune. It means that the whereabouts of the soul of the deceased is unknown.

Idowu agrees that burial rites are important in ATR.

[Spirits] have categories by which they can be described. For example, there are ghost-spirits. It is believed by Africans that a person whose dead body is not buried, that is, with due and correct rites, will not be admitted to the abode of the blessed departed ones, and therefore will become a wanderer, living an aimless, haunting existence. This is also the fate of those who die bad deaths- by hanging or drowning, of bad diseases, or during pregnancy; since they are accursed, they will not be acceptable in the abode of the blessed. This category of wandering spirits includes also those who had been wicked while on earth and are therefore excluded from the fellowship of the good. The haunt of ghost-spirits are trees, rocks, rivers and watercourses, or hills. In certain areas the possibility is not ruled out that they may enter into animals or birds or snakes in order to destroy things or molest people (Idowu 1973:174).

The importance of burial rites in an African context is governed by the worldview that those who die are transformed into another form of life and remain close at hand. They are still considered to be alive, though they are dead, and are therefore referred to as the “living dead”. Since the living dead have powers to inflict hardship on society, and to influence people in various ways, they are treated with the utmost respect. Burial rites are therefore not

something that can be lightly glossed over, but must receive its proper attention. Oosthuizen gives us further insight into the importance of burial rites in African societies.

According to African culture, the personality survives the ordeal of death indefinitely. The dead live in an invisible world, where they experience spiritually the same kind of existence that they had in life, without its trials and tribulations. They remain in contact with the earth and are considered to be closely associated with the family, over which they exert considerable influence. The ancestors are much like human beings, although they have greater wisdom and are nearer to the source of power. Sometimes the “living dead” are feared, for they can harm people through epidemics and droughts. They are even appeased through specific sacrifices. There are widespread practices of remembering the dead, especially family heads, adults, and married people. ... The ancestors appear to people on earth up to four or five generations after death, gradually receding into obscurity as those who remember them and sacrifice to them also die (Oosthuizen 1990:464).

Figure 2 - Animistic Worldview

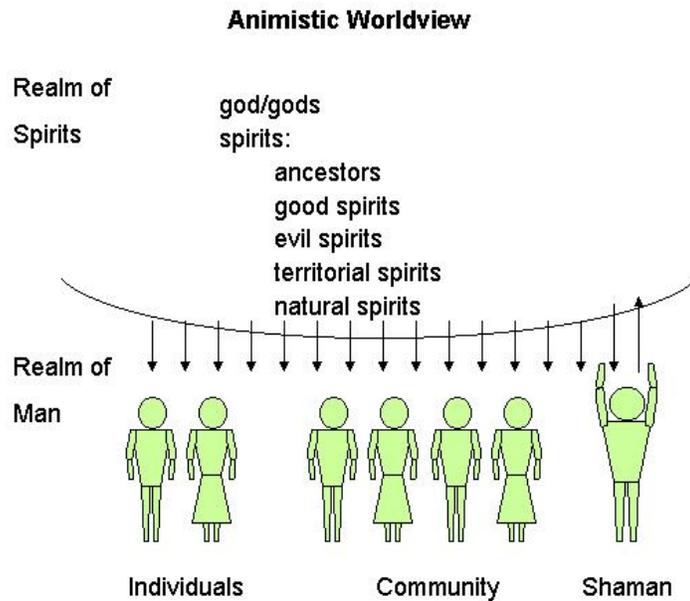


Figure 2 is how Tim Warner describes the animistic worldview.

Idowu adds another dimension. He claims that African traditional religion is monotheistic in essence. He describes the supreme being as Deity, and states that all African religious systems believe in this Deity. According to Warner, the god or gods

in his Animistic Worldview chart are spelt with a lower case ‘g’ to indicate that he is an impersonal deity who created the world but who has no concern with the affairs of mankind. Neither is he approachable by mankind, and the objects of prayers and worship are the ancestors or other spirits. Idowu (1973:171), however, disputes this concept and says that the Supreme Being is certainly approachable through divinities.

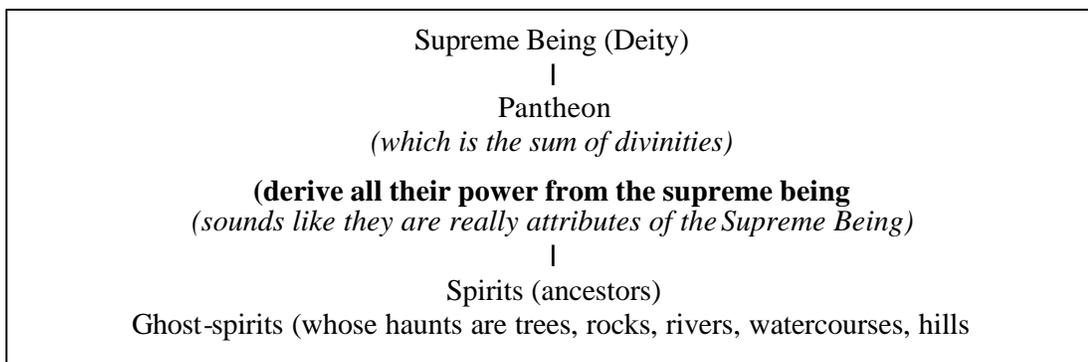
... in course of time [the divinities] have become conventional channels through which man believes that he should normally approach Deity. It is this accepted role of the divinities according to African beliefs and practices which has lent weight to the notion which results in the sweeping and erroneous assertion that Deity is never approached directly by Africans; or that if he is called upon directly at all, it is only in moments of crisis and desperation when all other aids have failed.

Idowu (1973:165) also says

There are investigators who are ready – perhaps too ready – to assert that in most of Africa, there is only a two-tier conception of the divine, that of Deity and that of ancestors. We have to be very careful here, however. Conceptual language can be confusing, and one has to make sure that one really understands what it is saying. For example, in consequence of complications the term ‘spirits’ has been used to cover in certain areas both the categories of divinities and the general, uncharacterized spirits.

And in a further discussion Idowu (:168) says:

. . . African traditional religion cannot be described as polytheistic. Its appropriate description is monotheistic, however modified this may be. The modification is, however, inevitable because of the presence of other divine beings within the structure of religion. *But* ‘beings’ in their case can only be spelt with the initial small letter ‘b’; ‘powers’, when they are so described, can only be spelt with the initial small letter ‘p’; this is because, in fact, they have no absolute existence and the African world is under a unitary theocratic government.



**Figure 3. Animistic Worldview of Lamin Sanneh**

It is questionable how strongly this monotheistic view can be held, since the words for ancestors in Sesotho and IsiXhosa respectively are the same as the plural words for God. In Sesotho, *Modimo* is the word for God, and *badimo*, the plural, is used for ancestors. In IsiXhosa, *uThixo* is the word for God and *othixo*, the plural, the word for ancestors.

## **VENERATION OR WORSHIP**

The question has often been raised whether the ancestors are venerated or worshipped. Many have claimed that worship is reserved for God, and that the ancestors are merely venerated. The dictionary defines venerate as to pay respect. However, sacrificing to the ancestors suggests something far stronger than merely paying respect. Idowu expresses a problem with attempts to make this distinction:

... those who say categorically that Africans do not worship their ancestors are forgetting the complex nature of the working of the human mind. Worship and veneration, as we have observed, are psychologically closer than next door to each other: the emotional indicator is always trembling between the two, swinging towards the one or the other in accordance with the emotional pressure or the spiritual climate of the moment. This is something that happens anywhere, everywhere, in the world, and with peoples at every level of development (Idowu: 1973:182).

Our conclusion is that while technically Africans do not put their ancestors, as ancestors, on the same footing with Deity or the divinities, there is no doubt that the ancestors receive veneration that may become so intense as to verge on worship or even become worship (Idowu: 1973:186).

## **EVALUATION**

In the foregoing pages we have examined some of the characteristics of African Traditional Religion. Judging from the comments quoted it appears that a number of researchers consider that, to a large extent, there was never a serious conversion from African Traditional Religion to Christianity, but rather an accommodation of Christianity while maintaining the tenets of the traditional religion. Many black theologians have striven to show the validity of this blending of the two, and white theologians and anthropologists are increasingly giving their blessing to this viewpoint. In order for this study to arrive at a meaningful conclusion, it is necessary

to examine the soundness of these arguments. Since the Bible is the acknowledged text book and authority for our faith, and statements from the Bible are used to support some of the arguments in favour of this blending, this discussion will also use the Bible as the authority and yardstick to measure these claims. Arguments appealing to scripture for support will be examined in the light of scripture and the logic of these arguments critiqued. Even if scripture has not been used to support statements and claims, the counter arguments will draw on scripture to prove their validity.

The most universally held belief is that a person, upon death, becomes a spirit who continues to influence the living, especially close relatives. These come to be known as ancestors and have powers to pass messages to the living, or to bring blessing or calamity. Mpanza confirms that this is the belief in the Nazarite Baptist Church. "It is, further, my submission that dead human beings are living Spirits" (Mpanza 1993:2).

The Bible knows nothing of this state of the spirits or the souls of the departed. While the Bible certainly agrees that there is life after death, it is not in the form advocated by African Traditional Religion. Rather the Bible teaches a definite break from this life through death, and thereafter comes the judgement. "... man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment ..." (Heb 9:27). Scripture teaches that we will be raised with new bodies.

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:42-44).

When Jesus taught of the potential danger of affluence, he told this parable to illustrate his point:

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. ... The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here

and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead' (Luke 16:19-31).

Even though a parable is given to teach a particular point and the intention is not to try to get a doctrine out of each aspect of the parable, the story nevertheless shows what Jesus' worldview was relating to life after death. Firstly, both the characters in the story upon death were assigned to their place of final destination. From that place, there was no returning to earth. This immediately conflicts with the ancestor worldview of African Traditional Religion, which teaches that the departed don't go very far, but are constantly at hand. Secondly, there is a large chasm between the two categories of the deceased in the story. Unlike traditional religion in which the departed, whether good or evil, remain in contact with one another and with their successors. Further, even though the rich man in the story requested that Lazarus be allowed to return with messages to his surviving relatives, this request was denied. In traditional religion this is assumed as a right.

Mbiti (1971:454) claims that the New Testament supports the idea of contact with the ancestors:

There are spirits of the departed to whom the Gospel is preached (cf. 1 Peter 3), some of whom are faithful (Heb 12:1, 23). ... But the official Christian practice has lost the place of 'the Communion of Saints' in terms of fellowship between the departed and the living in Christ. It is here that the African background could be a source of revival for this otherwise legitimate aspect of Christian Theology and living.

Neither of the scriptures that Mbiti quotes support his argument. The passage referred to in 1 Peter is from verse 18b to 20 and reads:

He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.

Exactly what Peter was referring to with reference to the spirits in prison is a point of debate. Peter identifies the incident in the Old Testament to which he is referring. He dates it to the period while Noah was building his ark, and that incident is recorded in Genesis 6:4-6:

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days – and also afterward – when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. ... The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.

The exact meaning of this passage is obscure because the combination of terms is unfamiliar. Various speculations have been proposed by different commentators. Some commentators believe these Nephilim were spirits of fallen angels – not spirits of humans (Wuest 1945:98-100), while others believe they are the spirits of deceased human beings who are in “prison”, referring to their final state in hell (Clowney 1988:156-164). In neither case do they support Mbiti’s argument, since they do not refer to spirits in contact with those still living on earth.

The second scripture Mbiti appeals to for support is Hebrews 12:1, 23. Verses 22b-23 say “You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect.”

In this passage, quite clearly, the author is writing about the spirits of the deceased who are in heaven. It is not talking about the spirits of the deceased still influencing, and in contact with the living.

Neither of the scripture passages Mbiti uses can be successfully used to sustain this argument.

Referring back to the quotation from Mbiti above, a more disturbing matter from a prominent theologian than misinterpreting scripture, is the defying of scripture. He advocates a Christianity that can be enriched by learning from the African background to maintain a link between the living and the departed in Christ. Shorter, (1973:61) seems to agree:

Undoubtedly African beliefs about their ancestors can enrich the development of Christian doctrine on the vital relationship between the living and the dead.

But this is in direct violation of scriptures that specifically and strongly denounce this.

Let no one be found among you who ... *consults the dead* [emphasis mine].  
Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD (Deut. 18:10-12).

While it is true that many parts of the Old Testament no longer apply in the way they did before the arrival of Jesus Christ, that does not apply to all of the Old Testament. Mosaic Laws had three parts to them: the Moral Law, the Ceremonial Law and the Civil Law. The civil law changes as circumstances change. While the Israelites were in the wilderness the civil law had to do with cleanliness and health issues as they related to their circumstances at that time. Those laws could not apply to us today because our circumstances are so different. The ceremonial law was fulfilled in Christ and therefore is no longer applicable. The sacrifices of the Old Testament which the writer to the Hebrews reminds us could not take away our sins, were but a precursor to Calvary, where Christ became the perfect sacrifice once for all and eliminated the requirement for sacrifices (Hebrews 7:27). But the Moral Law will never pass away. These relate to our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationship with mankind. In the context of our relationship with God, and the prohibition to serve other gods, laws relating to contact with demons or spiritism or ancestors have not fallen away (Matthew 5:18). The Bible does sometimes refer to angels as spirits (Heb 1:14). But whenever a spirit is cast out of a person in the New Testament, it is an evil spirit. There is one case where the New Testament talks about a spirit wandering about, seeking contact with humans. It is when Jesus teaches about the activities of evil spirits that have been cast out of a person seeking to re-occupy that person's body (Luke 11:24-26). The only case in scripture where the spirit of a dead person is called up is condemned and was done by a witch or medium, the practice of which is forbidden in the Deuteronomy passage quoted above (1 Sam 28:7-18).

Ngada (1985:23) tries to justify ancestor theology in this statement:

The people of the Bible had great respect for their forefathers: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jesus had contact with his ancestors, Moses and Elijah, on Mount Tabor and there was even an explicit command from God about honouring your father and mother which Jesus appealed to when criticising

the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (Mark 7:10). And there in the Bible the whole world of spirits was simply taken for granted.

But again, we find a lack of logic in the argument. The respect for the forefathers in the Old Testament does not equate in any way to the respect *and contact* with the ancestors in ATR. The respect Ngada refers to is clearly stated in the Bible as respect to *the God* of the deceased forefathers, not to the forefathers themselves. Neither can the appearance of Moses and Elijah on Mount Tabor be used to support the argument. This was a unique incident when three of Jesus' disciples were privileged to get a glimpse into heaven: Jesus was transfigured and Moses and Elijah appeared momentarily in the same form. None of the disciples had any similar or related experience on any other occasion. The assumption that the commandment to honour our parents in the Ten Commandments is talking about deceased parents is quite unfounded and unsound logic.

Another attempt to justify the ancestor theology of African Traditional Religion is to claim that Jesus is the first of the ancestors.

Francis Rakotsoane, writing for Challenge makes this statement:

If he is the first of the dead to be raised (Col. 1:18), then he is not only one of the ancestors, but is, in fact, the leader of the ancestors and therefore different from them in terms of his status among them.

From this it becomes clear that the "old ancestor" spoken of in the opening of some African prayers, and to whom the prayers of the living were indirectly addressed through the mediation of the "new ancestors", should be understood as being Jesus himself.

Being the first to rise from the dead, he is thus the first to enter the glory of ancestorhood. He is also the firstborn of every creature (Col. 1:15). This implies that all the sacrifices and prayers offered to ancestors are in the final analysis offered to Jesus who sits on the highest point of the pyramid of ancestors.

Jesus is the sole mediator between the living and the Father. No one can come to the Father except through him (Jn. 14:6). But I see no sin if Africans ask for Jesus' help through the medium of their ancestors in a way understandable, meaningful, relevant and proper to Africans ...

To deny people the right to identify themselves with their own culture is not only to challenge and despise their ancestors (the founders of such cultures), but it is to create a society of "those who have been torn away from their ethnic roots; and who, feeling insecure and belonging nowhere, are open to all kinds of unstable behaviour (Rakotsoane 1996:20).

Although Rakotsoane acknowledges a difference in status of Jesus from the rest of the ancestors, that difference relates only to rank: the leader because of his prior position. He clearly does not appreciate the difference in status based on substance. Jesus is one with the Father, and is himself God. Rakotsoane also appeals to his status

as first born of every creature and draws a conclusion that this implies that all sacrifices made to ancestors are in fact made to him. It is difficult to see the logic in this conclusion, but Paul's reference to Jesus as being the firstborn of every creature is in fact a reference to his deity and his pre-creation existence. His argument further falls down when he admits that Jesus is the only mediator between the living and the Father, but then rationalises that the ancestors are needed to mediate between the living and Jesus. Again, the logic in the argument seems to be missing. Rakotsoane continues in his statement to appeal for the right for Africans to identify themselves with their own culture in their religious expression. To deny this is to "challenge and despise their ancestors." The first need here, is to identify that part of the culture that belongs to religion as has already been pointed out earlier in this chapter. The ancestor theology belongs in the realm of religion and must therefore be evaluated on its religious merits. It is agreed that denying this part of culture is a challenge to the "ancestors", but the antithesis is a challenge to the Bible and the laws of God. When God specifically forbids any contact with the dead (Deut 18:10-12), then to pursue that course is to challenge and defy the living God. Rakotsoane is right when he says that the outcome has had a destabilising effect with feelings of insecurity and a lack of identity. But it is not the denial of the right to have contact with the ancestors that has caused this, but rather the syncretism between to opposing forces. The lost identity is having embraced a new faith without renouncing the old, though they are in opposition to one another. Embracing a biblical faith in Christ, with the liberty that affords, has the effect of a fulfilled and balanced life. Mayers says it this way:

Not only will I remain an American or a Nigerian, but I will also become the very finest American or Nigerian possible. My sense of responsibility to my nation and to my way of life will be continually refined and developed. This will not mean I will agree with whatever is labeled "American" or "Nigerian," but I will responsibly share in every aspect of American or Nigerian life that is open to me" (Mayers 1987: xiv).

## **INCORPORATION OF ATR INTO 'CHRISTIAN' CHURCHES**

Now we will examine the extent to which these views have been incorporated into African church life. Volumes have been written to validate claims that all forms of church have a right to make the claim that they are authentically Christian. Bredenkamp and Ross, commenting on “the variety of so-called ‘independent churches’” say

...they are not in some way more South African than the historic churches (nor, for that matter, in some way less Christian). These are merely alternative ways in which Christianity has been naturalized in South Africa” (Bredenkamp and Ross 1995:5).

They concur that “As time went on the lived Christianity was moulded increasingly by the mission converts, and not by the missionaries (Bredenkamp & Ross 1995:3). It may be added that the lived Christianity was also not moulded by Scripture. In a survey conducted by Marjorie Froise in Welkom in which data was collected from 1800 respondents she found among members of the African Independent Churches that membership far outweighed the teaching of the church in importance. Only 4% of AIC members believe the doctrine of the church is more important than church membership.

Objecting to Martin’s assertion that the Zionist prophet leader “becomes the new Moses, a saviour, a black Christ, so that Jesus Christ is pushed into the background; ... promises total liberation from suffering, political domination ... salvation ...” Ngubane (1984:75) says

This kind of assessment is tantamount to saying that these churches hardly deserve to be called ‘Christian’. Such analysis appears to me open to a number of serious queries from several angles. There is ample evidence that these churches claim to be fully Christian, and do not see themselves as relegating Jesus Christ into the background. And it appears that there is no evidence that the leaders of these churches ever claimed or pretend to usurp the place of Christ in the Church.

Ngubane agrees however that Martin, Oosthuizen, Sundkler, and Beyerhaus, are all agreed in their evaluation:

Some researchers have fallen into this pitfall, for instance Sundkler (1961:323) sees Shembe and Lekganyane as usurping the position of Christ; Martin (1964: 165-6), as pointed out above, considers 'Messianic' churches as relegating Christ to the background; G. C. Oosthuizen (1968:103) says the kingship of Christ has been lost in the nativistic movements; Beyerhaus (1969:131) sees all Zionists as working with a closed Bible, where Christian terminology is stripped of all true biblical meanings (Ngubane 1984:76).

It seems just the evidence that these churches **claim** to be Christian is adequate proof that they are. But life is full of examples of unjustified claims. Paul describes false apostles as claiming to be apostles of light and Satan as claiming to be an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:13-14). The mere claim does not prove its authenticity. "By their fruits you shall know them" said Jesus in warning against false claims (Matt. 7:16).

Daneel (1987:256) falls into the same trap of validating the claims of these churches to be authentically Christian. He challenges the evaluation of Damman. He says "The crucial question in a theological evaluation of any church is the part assigned to Christ." Then he quotes Damman on Christological conceptions in the Independent Churches: "Messianic attributes of Christ are transferred to the group leader – the Black Messiah is totally identified with the biblical Messiah (e.g. Simon Kimbangu)."

Daneel then proceeds to critique Damman's conclusions:

Damman's evaluation of the churches of Shembe and Kimbangu differs markedly from those of Sundkler and Marie-Louise Martin respectively. This indicates once more the problem of subjectivity and the preconceptions of each researcher. What is significant in Damman's approach is the determination of the position of the prophetic leader in relation to Christ and to his followers. The Mindolo consultation in 1962 laid down quite rightly with regard to the identification of the church leader with Christ: 'It should be noted that when this identification becomes substitution, the group has ... moved outside the sphere of the Christian Church.'

Of course, this still begs the question of how one should distinguish the point in the transition when such identification becomes substitution. Have such leaders as Shembe, Lekganyane, Mutendi and Kimbangu really replaced the figure of Christ? And are the evaluation of these movements based on adequate data? ...".

In pointing out the subjectivity and preconceptions of the researcher, Daneel touches on a crucial point. It is interesting to note how he and Ngubane come to opposite conclusions of Sundkler's and Martin's findings. But both Daneel and Ngubane are apparently unaware of the claims that some of these churches and their followers do make.

In the eyes of his followers, Lekganyane, as well as his successors have enormous stature. Engenas ". . . assumed the title Kgosi ya Masiono, King of the Zionists," and was accorded the dignity and respect such a title would command.

According to Drum, Edward's followers in 1954 regarded him as . . . everything. They call him Chief, Kgosi, Superintendent, Bishop, Mookamedi and even God. Whenever he approaches, all men remove their black uniform caps and look down while women raise their voices in rejoice, [*sic*] shouting loud his praises as the true saviour. . . Members . . . show their love with the money they shower on him (Froise 1989: 44).

Church members regard the leader as supernatural. It is true that individuals here and there can become deluded and become hero worshippers, ascribing more to the leader than the leader would agree to. But with the widespread messianic views held by their followers, one can only conclude that it is encouraged from the leadership.

In an interview I had with Moses, a member of the ZCC, I asked him about Lekganyane. He said, "He is like Jesus Christ. He can walk on the water. He can turn himself into a white man whenever he wishes." When Engenas Lekganyane died in 1948, his followers believed he would come to life again. Engenas was regarded as a representative of God. To despise him was to despise God in person. He had been given all the powers in the Church by God and Jesus Christ could be served through him. He was in fact regarded as a mediator (H. Froise 1989:86).

In the official magazine of the Zion Christian Church, The ZCC Messenger, of which Bishop Lekganyane himself is the editor-in-chief, the following exposition of John 14:16 appears in an article entitled: The Right Reverend Bishop B.E. Lekganyane is the present day Mediator between the Zionists and gods and God:

When Jesus was still on earth, He once said, "I will never leave you alone. I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper, who will stay with you forever" (John 14:16). This Helper is the Spirit who reveals the truth about God. This Helper will be rejected by the world, because it cannot see Him or know Him.

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<sup>8</sup> Paul Makhubu 1988:15

My fellow Zionists, allow me to call you the blessed ones, or the chosen nation of God, because you understand the Scriptures. I say so because you follow and worship the one whom you see and know. You follow the one who protects and helps you, for Jesus regarded Him as the Helper who reveals the truth about God.

“My fellow Zionists, I do not doubt myself that the Helper who is referred to here, is the Right Reverend Bishop of the mighty Zion Christian Church. Consequently I publicly proclaim that He is the Mediator between the people and God. He is the way to God. No one can communicate with God except through Him. ... (ZCC Messenger Issue #16 Easter 1990 p.26 by Piet M. Kubayi).

Shembe and his successors also claim to be the Holy Spirit, but their followers go even further, claiming that the leader of the *iBandla lamaNazaretha*, Nazarite Baptist Church is God himself. One of the leaders of the church, Mpanza, has already been quoted earlier in this chapter, as also a researcher from the University of Natal who concluded, after extensive research among the women in the church, that almost exclusively, the women of *iBandla lama Nazaretha* believe that Shembe is God.

## **SUMMARY**

In this chapter we have seen the phenomenal growth of the church in South Africa, although it has been observed that by and large, there has never been a total embrace of Christianity as presented in scripture. We have then discussed the intensifying tendency to validate African Traditional Religion by both black and white theologians and noted how ATR theology is being incorporated into the theology and practice of the church. However, we have also examined the arguments proposed in support of ATR theology and evaluated this against biblical teaching. Here we have found a serious lack and question whether the Independent Churches embracing this theology do indeed qualify to call themselves Christian. The argument that ancestor veneration is part of culture, and that to dismiss it is to disrespect the ancestors is countered by the biblical truth that to continue to venerate the ancestors is to disrespect and defy God, who forbids this practice. In this instance we have to say with the Apostle Peter: “We must obey God rather than men!” (Acts 5:29).



## CHAPTER THREE

### THE WESTERN WORLDVIEW UNDER SCRUTINY

#### INTRODUCTION

Many significant developments have taken place in the world in the past two centuries. Change has taken place at an increasingly rapid pace following the industrial revolution and subsequent advancements in technology. With the explosion of scientific knowledge has also come a change in worldviews in many areas. A major victim of these developments has been belief in the supernatural among the more advanced nations. This skepticism is largely the result of Higher Criticism which developed during this period of scientific advancement. J. I. Packer (<http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Classroom/1284/crit.html>) attributes to Higher Criticism "... the skeptical assumptions on which the theories rest and the bleak conclusions that they offer, rather than to argument and analysis itself." Although most evangelicals would reject Higher Criticism as a valid approach to analyzing Scripture, there can be no doubt that the church as a whole, including the evangelical branch of the church, has been influenced by the paradigm shift resulting from this. It is in this context that I wish to examine and evaluate where the church is today, what its worldview is relating to the spirit world and a ministry of deliverance, and whether that worldview stands up to scrutiny.

We will, to begin with, set out what the general view of the evangelical church is. We will then define syncretism and it will be shown how different worldviews can fall into the trap of syncretism. We will then examine the evangelical church's view on deliverance in general and whether or not this is still a valid ministry today. Then we will consider whether it is possible for a Christian to be bound by demonic forces, looking at arguments from both sides. Finally we will draw a conclusion of the effects of a faulty theology in the area of understanding the spirit world and the authority of the Christian over the forces of evil.

In this context I wish to deal with a traditional evangelical Christian worldview – which at least pays lip service to supernatural phenomena in Scripture – rather than a

worldview of the developed west in general – which completely rejects anything supernatural. Our theological perspectives are generally flavoured by our backgrounds and our cultures. I myself was raised under the influence of western theological thinking and had little understanding of the spiritual underworld. Yet I was ill at ease about the fact that there was so much of Scripture that was being by-passed in my circle of biblical studies. It was only after I had begun to study some doctrines and practices of African Initiated Churches that I began to look more closely at the cherished doctrines of my own tradition and began to see serious deviations from biblical teaching.

### **WESTERN WORLDVIEW DEFINED**

In attempting to define a western worldview of the spirit world, there will inevitably be some generalisations, since not all western evangelical Christians will subscribe exactly to any definition that is proposed. However, the following definition will, to a general extent, describe the majority of western evangelical Christians with some minor variations.

Most evangelical Christians will claim a belief in the phenomena of evil spirits and demons. However, for the most part, this is a theoretical belief, and for many, any exorcism of demons was the province of Jesus and his apostles, and confined to the first century ACE. Rodney Henry makes this observation:

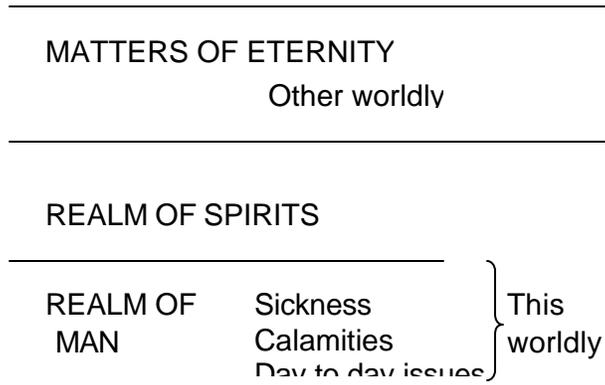
Virtually all systematic theologies deal with the subjects of angels and demons, but westerners feel that these have little or nothing to do with the affairs of the Christian. So the existence of angels and demons is not denied, rather, it is ignored. This leaves the average western Christian with very little knowledge about angels and demons (Henry 1986:17).

And

Today, western Christianity largely ignores the existence of a spirit-world which is *other worldly*. This was not always the case. The disappearance of this realm of the spirit-world . . . is a rather recent event in Christian history. Its elimination came to the West in the same way that this category of the spirit-world is being challenged today in the Philippines through scientific education (Ibid:18).

Henry distinguishes between the *this-worldly* and the *other-worldly* to help us to understand the difficulty we face (See Figure 4). In the Filipino context, the *this-worldly* represents the spirit world as it affects people in their every day lives, and the *other-worldly* as the things that affect us in the ultimate,

Figure 4



Rodney Henry's description of Filipino Spirit World

like salvation and eternity. Westerners try to explain the *this-worldly* in scientific terms, and ignore the spiritual side of it. The *other-worldly* is that part of the spirit world that the West is prepared to subscribe to, namely spiritual concerns as they affect us in the ultimate: salvation and eternal life. He continues:

Science increasingly attempted to abolish anything that is supernatural. This affected the church in varying degrees. The effect that science has on most Christians in America is that they desire a Christianity that is compatible with science. American Christians seem to have reached a compromise with science. They will leave the natural world to the domain of science, and the ultimate concerns of salvation and eternal life to Christianity. Though these areas of ultimate concerns cannot be proven scientifically, neither can they be disproved. In this way we have excellent scientists who are also Christians. As scientists of this world they will accept nothing by faith. As Christians, they accept the ultimate concerns by faith because they belong to a category which is *other-worldly*. This compromise leaves the American Christian his religion of ultimate concerns while maintaining intellectual credibility (Ibid: 19).

A second century statement by theologian Tertullian, to the effect that the church of his day was active in deliverance ministry confirms Henry's claim that "The disappearance of this realm of the spirit-world . . . is a rather recent event in Christian history":

Mock as you like, but get the demons if you can to join you in their mocking . . . Fearing Christ in God, and God in Christ, they become subjects to the servants of God and Christ. So at our touch and breathing, overwhelmed by the thought and realization of those judgment fires, they leave at our command the bodies they have entered, unwilling and distressed" (Tertullian

quoted in Anderson 1990:185).

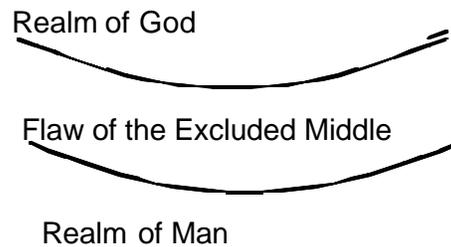
Paul Hiebert was a missionary in India for many years, and is currently Professor of Mission and Anthropology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He comes to the same conclusion:

What of the plagues that magicians cured? What about spirit possession, or curses, or witchcraft or black magic? What was the Christian answer to these? Neither the missionary evangelist or doctor had an answer. These did not really exist, they said. But to people for whom these were very real experiences in their lives, there had to be an answer. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of them returned to the magician for cures (Hiebert 1982:39).

What Henry describes as the *this-wordly*, Hiebert describes as the *middle level* (See Fig. 5). He says:

It should be apparent why many missionaries trained in the West had no answers to the problems of the *middle level* - they often did not even see it. When tribal people spoke of fear of evil spirits, missionaries denied the existence of evil spirits rather than claim the power of Christ over them. The result, as Newbigin has pointed out, is that Western Christian missions have been one of the greatest secularizing forces in history (Ibid: 44).

Figure 5



Paul Hiebert's *Flaw of the Excluded Middle*

Some modern writers have tried to explain away the biblical accounts of demon possession as being the popular way of describing psychological conditions in New Testament times without modern scientific knowledge.

Goppelt, for example writes (as quoted in chapter two when dealing with missionary ignorance of an African Worldview):

Thus, e.g., the directives for equipping the apostles in the earthly days of Jesus (Lk. 9:1ff.; 10:1ff.) were removed for the period thereafter (22:35), ... (Goppelt 1982: 269: Footnote 13).

In Lk 22:35, 36<sup>9</sup> Jesus makes specific mention of the directive given in 10:4 which was physical, and vastly different from the directive given in 9:1 which was purely spiritual. If the directive of 9:1 was intended only during Jesus' earthly ministry, what were the disciples and apostles doing, healing and casting out demons throughout the book of Acts? A more feasible explanation of Luke 22:35 is that given by Lewis Foster in the NIV Study Bible commentary that the hostility they would now face would require them to equip themselves with purses, bags with supplies and swords for defence (Foster: 1583).

McKenzie agrees and argues:

The question arises to what extent the NT employs the language and imagery of mythology to personify evil. The question is more or less the same question which arises from the biblical use of popular language to describe natural phenomena (cf creation). Such popular language implies no dogmatic or philosophical affirmation of cosmic personal forces of evil. Such language, the origins of which can be traced in Jewish writings, seems to lie behind AA 16:16; 1 Co 10:20; Apc 16:14; 18:12; the demonic kingdom of Mt 25:41; Rm 8:38; 1 Cor 15:24; Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col 2:15; 1 Pet 3:22; the attribution of infirmity to an evil spirit (2 Cor 12:7); the great judgement of the demons (Jd 6), and probably 1 Cor 6:3. But while the use of popular imagery should be understood to lie behind many details of the NT concept of demons, the Church has always taught the existence of personal evil spirits, insisting that they are malicious through their own will and not through their creation (McKenzie 1965:193).

In a further statement he confirms his rejection of this view:

Many modern writers have explained the accounts of possession in the Gospels as exhibiting the simple view of antiquity that evils of an unknown cause were the work of demons; the people who are called possessed suffer from psychic disorders which can now be recognized as such. An exorcism similar to the exorcisms of the Gospels is attributed to Apollonius of Tyana in the life written by Philostratus; this work, however, comes from the third century AD. These writers think that Jesus accommodated himself to this popular belief and used language which agreed with it. In doing this, these writers say, He did no more and no less than He did in other areas where modern science has advanced far beyond the knowledge of His times. Just as His language assumes the flat earth and the geocentric universe, so it also assumes the demonic explanation of psychic disorders.

The parallelism between the two is not perfect. In the Gospels the episodes of possession are part of a larger pattern of thought. The coming of

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<sup>9</sup>Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?" "Nothing," they answered. He said to them, "But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one."

Jesus is a crisis for the kingdom of Satan, the powers of evil. They recognize the presence of supreme power and rebel at its proximity. The discourse of Jesus given when the Pharisees explain His power as due to a pact with the demons is one of the most severe in the Gospels; refusal to believe that He exhibits the power of God precisely in His power over demons is the sin against the Holy Spirit which is not forgiven. The severity of the discourse makes one slow to accept an explanation which proposes that there were no demons to expel (McKenzie 1965:685).

Far from biblical language about demon possession being their way of describing psychological conditions because of scientific ignorance, the reality is that spiritual conditions are being explained as psychological conditions because with the advance of science, the existence of spiritual forces is denied as observed by Henry (1986:17).

Empiricism confirms this, as the following example will indicate:

Nicky was a bright, attractive, sporty and popular matric student at a Gauteng high school. Suddenly everything changed and she became the laughing stock of her peers. She began to hear voices and see people not seen by those around her. She began to experience weird phenomena like satanic symbols appearing on her body. On one occasion she looked in the mirror and a tear began to develop on her blouse with an asterisk forming on her chest. These were not imagined, as they were confirmed by her mother. She also showed me some of these images. On one occasion she was with her mother in the garden and called to her mother to get into the house and lock the door. Her mother asked why she should do this, and Nicky told her that the man who had followed her from school was approaching. Her mother tried to assure her that there was nobody there, and she was safe with her mother. At that Nicky said the phantom had just struck her and her face swelled up and a cut appeared inside her lip. For four months she had sought help from psychologists and psychiatrists. She had been hospitalised in a psychiatric ward in the J. G. Strydom Hospital in Johannesburg and the family had spent large sums of money for psychiatric therapy. None of these had helped. Finally, when the family could no longer face the trauma of what was happening to Nicky, as well as other unexplained occurrences in the home, her school teacher phoned me and asked for help. When Nicky and her mother came, supported by her school teacher, Nicky told me all her experiences, corroborated by her mother. Seeking a potential source of the problems I probed to find out what she had been involved in prior to the change. She had been invited by a group of peers to a ouija board party, though she had declined. However, her peers had gone ahead with the party and presumably put a spell on her, not realising the spiritual forces they were toying with. After reading Scripture together and confessing and renouncing sins that would have made her vulnerable, we broke the curse and cast demons out of her. The experience had elements of the Mark 9 example. She was hurled to the floor by the demon and foamed at the mouth. After approximately two hours, Nicky returned to normal and the phenomena taking place in her home disappeared. The change was so complete that the entire family came to faith in Christ (Froise, unpublished document).

This example flies in the face of those who claim that demon possession in the New Testament was simply their ignorant way of describing psychological disorders. In this case, the psychologists were powerless to help her, whereas casting out evil spirits brought about the cure.

A further reason to reject the claim that New Testament demon possession was their way of describing psychological disorders is the reference in Scripture to the final judgement of Satan and his angels. Revelation 20:10 states:

The devil, who had deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night forever and forever.

And in the parable told by Jesus in Matthew 25, he says:

Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (v. 41).

Satan and his demons are obviously regarded by Jesus as real beings. Even if he was adapting to the culture of the day he would unlikely manufacture this kind of destiny for the destruction of a concept.

Even in the field of psychology we come across supernatural phenomena. Psychiatrists acknowledge the reality of supernatural occurrences with, for instance, ouija boards, though they have no explanation for the phenomena. The case of Nicky quoted above demonstrates the demonic nature of the power involved. Meyer, Moore and Viljoen have some interesting facts about special powers Sigmund Freud possessed over his adversaries.

Freud's demand that his supporters remain absolutely loyal to his interpretation of psychoanalysis caused some of them to break away from him. This was not always a painless undertaking, as Freud apparently had an extremely powerful hold over his supporters. Wilson points out that 'Freud seemed to have a frightening power of inducing suicidal depression in 'heretics''. Jung, for instance, was depressed for three years after his break with Freud. Herbert Silberer and Victor Tausk committed suicide after their differences with Freud, and Wilhelm Reich suffered a nervous breakdown (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen 1990:35).

Clearly, this is not a benign psychological condition, but a supernatural case with evil consequences.

While many evangelicals will readily accept literally the miraculous in Scripture, they do not believe they apply today. The following diagram would be a general description of where the majority of evangelicals stand today, where the blank section in the middle represents the supernatural that occurred in Scripture, but has no place in our theology today: what Hiebert describes as “the excluded middle.”

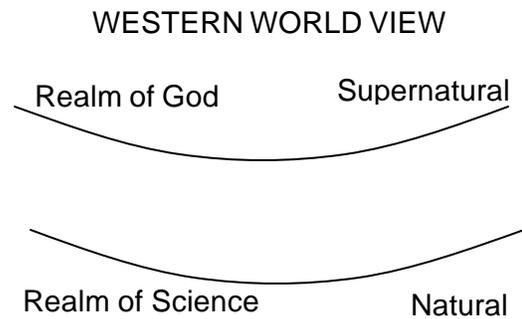


Figure 6

## EVANGELICAL APPROACH TO A MINISTRY OF DELIVERANCE

### Exegetical Inconsistencies

In my discussion on the biblical world view in chapter four, I will show the high prevalence of a ministry of deliverance in the New Testament, and its relevance for today. Many western evangelicals today believe that this is a ministry that is no longer relevant. However, this is both illogical and has no biblical support. It is illogical because, surely, if people were afflicted by evil spirits in the day of the early church, they will likewise be afflicted today. If many people were demonised then, so will they be demonised today. If they needed to be set free from demonic bondage then, they need to be set free today. It is unbiblical because there is no scriptural justification to discontinue such a ministry. This will be comprehensively shown in chapter four. Unfortunately our western mindset has influenced even our theological conclusions. For example, Berkof says, in relation to the ministry of healing (which is slightly different, but related - see Luke 9:1&2), that there are no biblical grounds to warrant that this ministry is ongoing (Berkhof 1941:601). This is a clear example of the western influence. He does not back up his claim – it is an argument from silence. There is a far stronger case for saying there is no biblical justification for the cessation of this ministry. If the gospels introduce a ministry which is not intended to be ongoing, there would need to be a far more explicit biblical statement to that effect. Arguments to this effect are generally unfounded rationalisations. There is no

teaching in Scripture that justifies this viewpoint. When Jesus took leave of his disciples at the end of his earthly ministry he commissioned them to go and make more disciples, teaching them to obey everything he had commanded them (Matthew 28:20). This was to be a perpetual position. There was no suggestion that some of the things he had taught them were to be omitted in the perpetual advance of the gospel.

A ministry of deliverance is prevalent in Jesus' ministry, the apostles' ministries and the ministries of disciples at large in the New Testament church. Some have claimed that there is a tailing off of reporting of exorcism in Acts, thus indicating that it was a fading ministry and by the end of the New Testament era, this ministry was no longer practised. Codrington, for example, says

The marked decline of this kind of activity in the book of Acts and the total omission of any teaching on it in the epistles leaves the impression that the preached Word of God would accomplish its own form of deliverance (Codrington 1987:168).

But let's examine that argument. We have already seen that many people in Acts 5 were delivered from evil spirits by the apostles. In Acts 8, the word 'many' is again used in the ministry of Philip the deacon. In Acts 19 it was so prevalent in Paul's ministry that others tried to imitate what Paul was doing (with dire consequences). We could also justifiably insert a footnote in Acts 18 during Paul's Corinthian visit, as Paul confirms to the Corinthians how he had done many miraculous signs among them (2 Cor 12:12). Though this reference does not specify casting out demons, this ministry is generally included in the context of miraculous signs in other passages. In the gospels specific incidents of exorcism were recorded and described in detail. In Acts, they are mentioned in summarised form. That is highly significant as this empirical example will show. During a visit to Canada in October 2000 there was a house break in the City of Calgary. That story made front page news in the city's largest newspaper, the *Calgary Herald*. On returning to South Africa, in the same month in Welkom, three houses were broken into, and an office secretary's brother was shot and killed by police. These were incidents in my immediate circle. There were doubtless numerous other cases in the same month. None of these incidents made their way into the newspapers at all, let alone made front page news. Rather, they were reported generically in a periodic statistical report that said how many

incidents of various crimes had occurred over the reporting period. Individual cases were no longer newsworthy. That is what happened in Acts. In the gospels, exorcism was a novelty. In Acts it was commonplace. In the gospels individual cases were described in detail. In Acts they were summarised in periodic reports.

Codrington believes that simply preaching the Word of God is sufficient for casting out evil spirits. While not in agreement with some evangelicals that there is **no** place for exorcism in the church today, he nevertheless is extremely reserved about such a ministry, and draws conclusions that seem not to be logical. He says

The approach adopted here is that the preaching of the Word is adequate to meet the needs of all sinners, whether demon-possessed or not and therefore there is never a need for exorcism of any kind. The marked decline in this kind of activity in the book of Acts and the total omission of any teaching on it in the epistles leaves the impression that the preached Word of God would accomplish its own form of deliverance (Codrington 1987:168).

But we have to ask the question, “What changed?” Why was the preaching of Jesus throughout the gospels not powerful enough to cast out those demons? Why was the preaching of the apostles not adequate to cast out demons? Why did they, in addition to preaching, also cast out demons?

Codrington affirms his position by saying

The context of driving out demons is the preaching of the Word. In Mark 6:12, it is again noteworthy that as the disciples went out and “preached that people should repent,” they were also involved in driving out demons. Luke 9:1 seems to have the same perspective, when Jesus “... gave them power to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God” (Codrington 1987:168).

But is this argument valid? Is it not rather the context of evangelising, of which driving out demons, curing diseases, healing the sick and preaching the gospel are all an integral part? If it is valid to argue that the preaching of the gospel would result in casting out demons without any further action, why is it not valid to assume that healing the sick would also automatically result?

Other renowned evangelical commentators fall into the same trap as I will now show.

**“Casting out demons today means ‘resisting the devil’”.**

Bishop J C Ryle falls into the same error as many others when it comes to this particular subject. In the first 2 verses of Luke 9, Jesus gives a specific mission to his disciples. Luke writes:

When Jesus had called the twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

Ryle comments:

Let us observe that the apostles' commission had special reference to the Devil and physical sickness. ... There are two principal parts of the Christian minister's work here.

Up to this point his statement is accurate. He correctly states that deliverance and healing are these two parts. But then he proceeds to draw conclusions, not based on any scriptural teaching:

We must not expect him [the Christian minister] to cast out evil spirits, but we may reasonably expect him to resist the Devil and all his works and to constantly wage war against the prince of this world (Ryle 1997:119).

When he reaches Chapter 10:19, he omits any comment on the verse at all.

Here is a clear example of drawing a conclusion that the text does not warrant. While his statement that we should resist the devil and constantly wage war against him is correct, his claim that the Christian minister should not cast out evil spirits does not flow from the passage. The text offers nothing to draw such a conclusion. From the text it is clear that we **can** expect the Christian minister to cast out demons. No justification is offered for the conclusion he reaches. The commentary on this passage is poor exegesis based on the writer's preconceived belief that this ministry has no place in Christian ministry today.

MacArthur (1991:236) writes: "The only people who ever legitimately cast out demons were Christ and the apostles."

That statement is inaccurate. It ignores the experience of the seventy two in Luke 10. There they reported back to Jesus (v.17) excited that the demons obeyed them. In which way did they obey them? There can be no other explanation than that demons were commanded to get out of people and obeyed. In Acts 8 we have the story of

Philip. This is not Philip the apostle. This was Philip, the server at tables, chosen by the church so that the apostles could give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. Philip also cast out many evil spirits (Acts 8:5-7). In addition, other unnamed disciples were also casting out demons and the twelve tried to stop them, but Jesus objected:

“Master,” said John, “we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us.” “Do not stop him,” Jesus said ...” (Luke 9:49-50).

Now note the inconsistencies. Having made a claim that the only legitimate people beside Christ to cast out demons were the apostles, MacArthur proceeds to describe how he himself cast out a demon from a woman. He heard the demon speak, thus confirming she was demonised. Up to the time of writing this book, this was his only experience of casting out demons, but he draws conclusions from it as an authority on the subject. He says:

We tried to speak to the demons. We commanded them to tell us their names, and we ordered them in Jesus’ name to go to the pit. We tried two hours to send those demons out of her.

When we finally stopped trying to talk to the demons and dealt directly with that young woman, we began to make some headway. ... She had been involved in unimaginable filth and was living a hypocritical life. She confessed her sins with tears and affirmed the truth of Jesus Christ, then asked the Lord to cleanse her from every sin in her life. Again, in prayer she articulated every sin she could think of having committed and prayed earnestly with a repentant heart. Afterward she was a changed woman (MacArthur 1991:236).

MacArthur’s conclusion is that the first method failed, and the second succeeded, from which he files the verdict that the second method is the correct one to be followed. But there is no scriptural precedent for the second method to cast out demons. In Scripture both Jesus and the apostles commanded demons audibly that they should depart. In my empirical experience, a period of studying Scripture together, then identifying sins that have given rise to the condition and confessing and renouncing these, followed by commanding spirits to leave has proved to be the most effective. The only difference between the two methods is reversing the order, but

both elements are needed.

Anderson lists seven steps towards freedom. The first is to renounce anything that is counterfeit, and not totally true to Scripture. The second step is to distinguish between deception and truth which includes a doctrinal affirmation. The third step is a step of forgiveness and setting aside bitterness. The fourth step is one of submission. The fifth step confesses and renounces pride. The sixth step deals with habitual sins. The final step takes authority over demonic powers and commands them to leave. Each one of these steps is followed by an appropriate prayer (Anderson 1990:187-204).

### **Opinions of Other Evangelicals**

Ryle's and MacArthur's views, however, are not the only ones held by respected evangelicals. I have already quoted Paul Hiebert and other missionaries of highly respected evangelical missionary societies. Campbell Morgan, writing back in the forties, sees inconsistencies between evangelical epistemology and scriptural teaching. He is less willing to adapt scriptural teaching to accommodate his difficulties. He writes:

Then there was the actual healing of the multitudes. ... That is to say there was mental and bodily healing, healing for the bodies of the sick, healing for the minds of the demon-possessed; and they were healed every one. The church ought to face this problem and enquire as to whether we have not lost, with our loss of purity, the actual power that ought to have enabled us to deal with very much of physical and mental disease, which is still in our midst, and which baffles us on every hand (Morgan 1948:123).

Patrick Johnstone has a chapter entitled "The Spiritual Challenge" in his book "The Church is Bigger than you Think". He writes:

Jesus told his disciples "... how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man?" That authority is given to us to cast out demons, and over all the power of the enemy. We should be under no illusion about the seriousness of the conflict or underestimate the power and cunning of the "strong man" whose goods we are bent on taking. His infernal majesty is no push-over. He certainly has no intention of releasing his captives, but now through our faith in the finished work of the cross, he has to yield. This is the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged. It is a reality, and we are involved whether we like it or not" (Johnstone 1993:270).

He continues, and rightly points out that the subject of spiritual warfare has brought polarization to the Body of Christ and adds that there are two extremes we need to avoid. These are basically the same extremes C.S. Lewis mentions in the foreword to his *Screwtape Letters*,

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them (Lewis 1942:9).

Johnstone (1993:271) says, under the heading “Under-emphasis of the spiritual nature of the conflict”:

For too long Western Christianity has done just this and many missionaries have gone into situations ill-prepared for spiritual opposition. This was certainly my experience in Africa. I was working among a people steeped in witchcraft and fear of spirits. I owe much to my godly African co-workers who educated me about the spiritual powers at work and their cultural and demonic setting. They also demonstrated how the Lord Jesus gives total freedom through a deep repentance with renunciation of the works of darkness and faith in Him and only in certain cases that exorcism is necessary. However those who hold this position can be too cautious, and even accuse the strong proponents of the more aggressive approach of being heretical ...

Another is Reginald Bibby who is a sociologist at the University of Lethbridge in Canada and described as “the pre-eminent analyst of religious practice in Canada”. He cites many cases of people who have had paranormal experiences which can only be explained as supernatural phenomena. This is not confined to the Third World mission field. He writes:

Canadians appear to have significant numbers of these kinds of somewhat puzzling “supernatural” experiences. Approximately one in two claim that they have experienced precognition – the anticipation of an event before it has happened ... Those levels are almost identical to what Canadians reported in a Gallup survey in 1979 (Bibby 1993:119).

Thus it can be seen that a ministry of casting out demons as practiced in the New Testament is a valid ministry for this current age. While there are eminent theologians that believe it has no place in the church today, their arguments can be shown to be

lacking in substance, and there are equally eminent theologians who contend that this remains a vital ministry for the church today.

## **CHRISTIANS AND BONDAGE**

This brings us to an even more thorny question. Having established that a deliverance ministry does have a role to play in the church today, what about deliverance of Christians? Is it possible for a Christian to be demonised?

Robert and Martha Peterson are missionaries with Overseas Missionary Fellowship, and served in Indonesia. Answering the question: “Can a believer be possessed?” they say:

Theologians all over the world have been shocked by the evidence they have witnessed and are acknowledging that a Christian can be invaded. Until a few years ago, when the Lord started sending us people who were clearly born again and just as clearly controlled to some extent by demonic forces, we too held the view that a Christian could not be possessed. ... He or she has been invaded and needs deliverance (Peterson 1989:113).

The Evangelical Missionary Quarterly and other missiological journals are replete with articles by renowned evangelicals who write in the same vein, and it forces us to look again at the validity of our biblical interpretation.

Van Rensburg (1999:75) is also of the opinion that Christians can be in bondage. He says

Binding refers to the spiritual and physical effect that Satan may have on a person. Such a person is not under the control of the devil, yet may experience physical and mental ailments caused by the powers of darkness ... That Christians may come under such heavy attack of Satan that it indicates a *binding* is borne out both by phenomenological observation and the exegetical evaluation of the Scriptures.

The view that a Christian cannot be demonised arises from a cultural perspective. The first question to raise is: why is it important to believe that a Christian cannot be demonised? We don't believe a Christian cannot sin. We don't believe a Christian cannot be sick. There is no logical reason to believe that a Christian cannot be demonised, especially if he delves in Satan's territory. Scripture certainly does not

teach it, and if Scripture does not teach it, what is the rationale for trying so hard to prove the point? A large majority of evangelical Christians hold to this epistemology, though it is certainly not uncontested. In studies carried out among reformed theologians, van Rensburg makes this observation:

In reformed theological circles it is generally accepted that believers cannot be possessed or bound (AKLAS 1986; SKLAS Southern Transvaal 1993:245). . . . the reformed epistemology rests on the belief that a reborn person, in whose life the Holy Spirit lives and works, cannot also house a demon (Huisamen 1982:23). However, in his empirical research Cilliers (1996:86) found that 77% of the ministers rejected the view that believers can be possessed by demons. If one considers that 91,5% of those questioned (p11) were ministers of the Reformed Churches, (Cilliers 1996 Annexure A:1), this implies that a significant percentage do indeed accept the possibility that a Christian may have a demon or are uncertain in this regard. Thus there is not agreement on this matter in reformed circles (Van Rensburg 1999:10).

Some have said that every case of casting out demons in the Bible involved unbelievers. However, that too is an unsubstantiated assumption. The Bible does not say that any of them were unbelievers. It is an assumption prejudiced by what our worldview has conditioned us to believe. Doubtless, some were unbelievers and placed their faith in Christ when delivered (eg Legion, Mark 5:1-20). But to say that all, or even most were, is unwarranted. Who said that the “many” in Philip’s ministry did not include those who had already come to faith? Who said Mary was not already a believer when seven demons were cast out of her? Who said the man in the synagogue was not there because he was a follower of Jesus? These are all assumptions based, not on Scripture, but on our worldview. The Bible does not distinguish between believers and unbelievers in areas of healing and exorcism. One possible exception is the woman described as a daughter of Abraham in Luke 13, which leans towards her being a believer. The distinction is an imposition influenced by the western epistemology. A strong argument is made by Greijdanus, referred to by van Rensburg) that the woman set free from Satan’s bondage in Luke 13 was a believer:

It is indeed unlikely that Jesus would have referred to the woman’s being part of the Covenant with Abraham if he (who knows the hearts of men) had

known that she did not have any regard for the Covenant and its promises. Who should know better than He that not all the offspring of Israel are truly Israel? (Rom. 9:6). Calvin (1964b:538) explains the meaning of this expression in Romans 9. He points out that Paul wishes to indicate here that the Jews have no reason to boast on the grounds of their descent, *unless they adhere to and obey the law and the word of the Covenant*. The fact that Jesus does indeed refer to the woman as a daughter of Abraham, affirms the integrity of her faith and indicates that there is not exegetic evidence to assume that the woman in Luke 13:10-17 can **not** be typified as a believer. If the Scripture is its own interpreter, this fact cannot be denied (Van Rensburg 1999:29).

Van Rensburg challenges Gous on this point. Gous takes a conciliatory view concluding that

a child of the Covenant who has not yet come to believe, can be bound, but a Christian cannot (Van Rensburg 1999:10).

Against that he argues:

The theology of this point of departure rests on a loose footing. It gives evidence of a strange view of the Covenant (Bavinck 1929:206-208; 599; Heyns 1978:220; König 1990:17-18). Furthermore, the implications of such a view are preposterous: an innocent child of the Covenant can be bound (Gous 1983:42 says that binding does not necessarily occur as a result of occult movement), but a Christian can at a time of spiritual impoverishment become intensely involved in occultism but cannot be bound? (Ibid.)

If it were true that a Christian cannot be demonised, why would it be necessary for Jesus to cast out demons in the first place? Then he need only bring them to faith and they would be automatically set free. The Bible doesn't teach that that will happen. Jesus warned of the danger of someone delivered ending up far worse than before when a spirit comes back with seven others worse than itself (Luke 11:24-26). Clearly, an unbeliever has less spiritual protection than a believer to prevent that. It is not likely Jesus would put unbelievers to that risk unless they were prepared to put their faith in him.

Brent Grimsley and Elliot Miller published an article "Can a Christian be 'Demonized?'" in the Christian Research Journal, Summer 1993, which we will examine in detail since it is fairly representative of arguments used by evangelicals

whose world views exclude deliverance.

Grimsley and Miller refer to two passages they claim are typically used by people who believe in demon possession of believers, and set out to disprove that the people involved were in fact believers. The references are to King Saul in 1 Samuel 18 and 19 and to the woman bent double in Luke 13, referred to earlier. In both cases they admit an inconclusive result, that in either case they could just as easily be unbelievers as believers. They claim that the strongest passages in support of the view are unconvincing, but they equally fail to be convincing for the opposing view. Then they add this statement:

Since the church historically has not held that Christians can be demon possessed, and since the idea of a demon coinhabiting a body with the Holy Spirit is naturally repugnant, the burden of proof should be on those who say that a genuine believer can be inhabited by a demon. Yet the most such scholars as Dickason can say is that the Bible does not clearly give evidence that believers *cannot* be demonized. This is to argue from silence at *precisely the point* where we would expect clear biblical teaching.

There are three important things that must be addressed in response to the above statement.

1. The church's historical position. The only documentary support the authors offer that the church has historically held to a position that a Christian cannot be demonised is an unpublished paper "Demons and Christians" by Gordon R. Lewis. In the footnote they state: "Lewis notes that 'in the early church (of Acts and subsequently) deliverance ministries occurred in connection with the conversion and baptism of heathen, but were not continuous practices among church members.'" This suggests that the ministry of deliverance changed from the gospels to Acts, since many exorcisms are recorded in the ministry of Jesus that were not associated with baptism and there is no record of conversions. (Matt. 4:24-25; 8:16; 9:32-33; 10:1; Mark 1:21ff; 5:2ff; 7:25ff; 9:17ff). In Acts 5:12 ff conversions are recorded but baptisms are not. The point, though, is not whether there were conversions and baptisms associated with these deliverances, but to question the validity of the arguments. It assumes, arguing from silence, that deliverance was administered only to unbelievers. Taking the argument to its logical conclusion, namely that once a person becomes a believer, he can no longer be demonised, one might ask, as

previously mentioned, why then would it be necessary to cast out a demon, since a simple conversion would have the desired result? The further point of this quotation is that there is an unsubstantiated assumption that both in Acts and subsequently, the practice was not continued among church members. The continuity of the practice of deliverance both in Acts and throughout church history will be comprehensively shown in chapter four.

2. The authors claim that “the idea of a demon coinhabiting a body with the Holy Spirit is naturally repugnant.” But to whom is it “naturally repugnant”? It may be repugnant to a scientifically oriented, “enlightened” westerner. But for people being converted from spirit worshipping heathen societies, it is the most natural thing to accept and the most liberating hope that they can be set free. To many people the idea of two men living together in a homosexual relationship is repugnant. But that does not negate its reality.

3. The third flaw in this statement is the demand that the burden of proof for the possibility of a believer being demonised must rest on those who hold to that belief as if the opposite position is the ‘default’ position. But since Scripture does not distinguish between a believer and an unbeliever in the context of demonisation or deliverance, the burden of proof has to come from those who seek to impose such a distinction.

Grimsley and Miller continue to argue that Scripture lays down certain truths and principles that militate against a view that Christians can be demonised: “In fact,” they say “a comprehensive study of this subject in the New Testament should lead to one conclusion: citizenship in Christ’s kingdom and demon possession are mutually exclusive concepts, because demon possession implies citizenship in *Satan’s* kingdom.” The premise that demon possession implies citizenship of Satan’s kingdom is a false premise. The authors had previously concluded that “demon possession can be understood as ‘possession to control’” after drawing on the American Heritage Dictionary which defines ‘possess’ as “to gain or exert influence or control over; dominate.” They then use W.E. Vine’s translation of *daimonizomai* “To be possessed of a demon, to act under the control of a demon.” Thus, to claim now that being demon possessed implies ‘citizenship’ is inconsistent with their previous argument.

And since the premise is unfounded, the conclusion drawn from this premise, namely that citizenship in Christ's kingdom and demon possession are mutually exclusive, is also false.

Grimsley and Miller further argue that "By faith, all Christians are delivered from the kingdom of darkness and transferred into the 'kingdom of His beloved Son'" referring to Colossians 1:13 and Acts 26:18 in support. But both these passages talk about Christ's act of redemption, and deliverance from the dominion of darkness (Colossians) and the power of Satan (Acts). If we apply the same logic to the issue of sin, we run into trouble, because even though Christ came to deliver us from the power of sin, Christians continue to sin. In the same paragraph the authors use Luke 10:17-20 in support of a statement that "Satan, the ruler of this world, can no longer hold on to his captives." This argument, however, has no logic, since this very passage refers to the authority the seventy-two disciples had over demonic forces, and which they used, undoubtedly, to cast out demons. They further claim that "every exorcism recorded, *appear* to involve non-Christians, usually in the context of evangelism (emphasis mine). This sentence contains two unsubstantiated assumptions. None of the scriptural passages make any claim to be addressing only unbelievers, and as we have already seen, the gospel passages make no allusion to exorcisms being in the context of evangelism. According to current empirical experience in evangelistic campaigns there have always been both believers and unbelievers in the crowds. It would be fair to assume the same would be the case in the New Testament instances.

The next claim the authors make is that "The assumption throughout Scripture is that one might have God dwelling within, or Satan, but not both." Only one Scripture is used to support this "throughout Scripture" claim: 1 John 4:4: "greater is He who is *in you* than he who is *in the world*." But the more general observation from Scripture is the presence of both good and evil in the same context. "Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be" (James 3:10). Also Matt 7:3; Luke 6:46; Rom 2:1. Using the same logic the authors have used, one could also conclude that there is no room in the world both for God and the devil since Scripture teaches clearly that God is everywhere: where then is there room for Satan or evil?

The problem lies in applying physical principles to spiritual realities.

In the next paragraph Grimsley and Miller refer to Scriptures relating to the bodies of believers being temples of the Holy Spirit. “Paul exhorts the Corinthian Christians not to be bound together with unbelievers on the grounds that they are the temple of God – and harmony between light and darkness, Christ and Belial (Satan), and the temple of God and idols [which Paul associates with demons in 1 Cor. 10:19-20] is impossible (2 Cor. 6:14-18).” The very fact that Paul finds it necessary to exhort the Christians in Corinth not to associate with demons is proof that it is both possible and was happening. In the context of proving that Christians cannot be demonised, the argument has no value. They ask “How then would God, who is greater than Satan, allow a demon to reside with Him in His temple?” While it is hard to understand why God would allow that, it is no harder than to understand why God, who is greater than Satan, would allow Satan to exist in his universe at all. Continuing under the heading of the *Temples of the Living God* the authors refer to Matt. 12:43-45 where Jesus warns that a demon, having been expelled from a person returns after wandering to find the house unoccupied and re-enters that person with seven more demons. “We may legitimately conclude that, had he found his old dwelling occupied [by the Holy Spirit], he would not have been able to regain possession of the conclude that the cleanliness and orderliness of the person would suggest conversion had occurred. It is highly unlikely that Jesus would put an unbeliever to the risk of the “worse” condition that he talks about in this context when the demon arrives back with seven worse than himself, unless the man had the protection of having been converted. Although Jesus offers no steps for the exorcised person to take to prevent that from happening, Paul explains how the spiritual armour of the Christian is a protection against these demonic forces (Eph 6:10-18).

Grimsley and Miller next refer to Ephesians 1:13-14, where Paul talks about the seal of the Holy Spirit that guarantees our inheritance. This, of course is a reference to the guarantee that our inheritance of salvation cannot be taken away from us. This we readily acknowledge: the fact that a believer may be inhabited by a demon in no way affects his or her eternal inheritance of salvation. They continue to argue that “God sets definite limits as to what the powers of darkness can do,” and then appeal to 1

John 5:18 “He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him.” Both John Stott and John Calvin disagree that this verse refers to demonic inhabitation. Stott points out that this verse is talking about sin (Stott 1988:195). Calvin says the same. We all know that Satan cannot deprive us of our salvation, but we also know what damage Satan can do to any Christian who will allow him. This verse has to do with sin and salvation: it has nothing to do with demonisation. Calvin (Calvin 1998:102), commenting on “The evil one does not touch him” (1 Jn 5:18) says

This refers to a deadly wound. God’s children do not remain untouched by Satan’s assaults, but they ward off his blows with the shield of faith, so that they do not penetrate the heart. Hence spiritual life is never extinguished in believers.

Grimsley and Miller claim there is a conspicuous absence of possessed Christians in the New Testament and that there is no practical instruction on exorcism within the church. The first part of this claim we have already seen is based on an unfounded assumption. It is only reading Scripture through the filter of a western empiricism that this conclusion can be reached. On the question of practical instruction on exorcism, there are some inconsistencies in the argument. Firstly, there are many other areas of Christian practice on which it may be claimed there is no practical instruction. Although baptism is taught and referred to often in both the historical and didactic parts of the New Testament, there is no instruction given anywhere on how this is to be done. Neither is there any instruction on how to conduct a wedding, and we could go on finding holes in the argument. But the second inconsistency is that the authors agree, and quote other sources, that exorcism would be a valid ministry for unbelievers who are demon possessed. Yet there is no practical instruction on how to cast out demons from unbelievers either. The reality is that Jesus taught the disciples (Luke 9:1-2; Matt. 10:8) and then instructed them to perpetuate these ministries by teaching new disciples “to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:20). Justifying their argument that these absences prove that Christians cannot be demonised, they quote Ice and Dean in *Overrun by Demons: the Church’s new preoccupation with the Demonic* “We believe that such silence speaks volumes . . . the Bible clearly claims to give us *everything pertaining to life and godliness* (2 Pet.

1:3) and is *adequate to equip us for every good work* (2 Tim. 3:17) . . . those who teach Christian possession are by implication denying the sufficiency of Scripture and are going beyond its authority by promoting their own . . .” Clearly, this argument is self defeating since the doctrine of exorcism is so prevalent in the very Scriptures Ice and Dean agree are our authority. It is not the proponents of a deliverance ministry that impose their own doctrine. It is the opponents. For though the thesis of their paper is that Christians cannot be demonised, their practice invalidates all forms of deliverance. Indeed, it is the very Scriptures themselves that are sufficient for people in bondage, whether believers or unbelievers. In Acts 5 we read that “the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders” (v.12), and “Crowds gathered . . . bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed” (v.16). In Acts 8 “With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many . . .” (v.7) and in Acts 19 “God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that . . . evil spirits left them.”

My conclusion, therefore, is that the arguments presented in the above document are strongly influenced by a western culture and fail the test of logical argument. Too many assumptions are made that cannot be substantiated. There is not a single conclusive argument in the eight page document.

John MacArthur is highly respected in evangelical circles, yet there are inconsistencies in his arguments on this subject. In his chapter on Spiritual Warfare in “Our Sufficiency in Christ” he makes a bold statement that “there is no illustration in the entire Bible of anyone casting a demon out of a believer” (MacArthur 1991:235). We have already argued against this epistemology. It is an unsubstantiated assumption that every person out of whom demons were cast were unbelievers. Many came to Jesus **because** they believed. Jesus cast seven demons out of Mary. We know she was a believer. It is only a predisposed mind set that will claim she was an unbeliever at the time it happened. But the Bible does not say so.

It is also interesting to note how MacArthur describes what happened to this woman. He says, “She confessed her sins with tears and affirmed the truth of Jesus Christ.” Using the word “affirmed” rather than “embraced” would suggest that she affirmed a previous commitment. It would be a most unusual way of saying that she received Christ, from which we have to question whether this was a backslidden

believer. The wording suggests that.

Huisamen and Ouweneel are two other researchers that believe a Christian can be demonised. Van Rensburg (Van Rensburg 1999:10) refers to them in his work and says:

Huisamen (1990:54) is convinced that Christians can indeed be bound. Ouweneel (1987:350) apparently shares this conviction, as he interprets Galatians 3:1 to indicate occult bewitchment. He warns all believers against making themselves available to occultic influences (1978:333-335). It is worth mentioning that in reformed circles both Ouweneel and Huisamen are regarded as conservative theologians. Ouweneel's work (1978) is regarded as standard in the field of occultism while Huisamen's more popular work (1990) is freely used by ministers and recommended to members of the church. It is therefore strange that the reformed ministers who regard Ouweneel and Huisamen as authorities in the field of the occult, in contrast to these two theologians, reject the possibility that Christians can be bound.

Van Rensburg himself also confirms this. He says:

Binding refers to the spiritual and physical effect that Satan may have on a person. Such a person is not under the control of the devil, yet may experience physical or mental ailments caused by the powers of darkness. . . . That Christians may come under such heavy attack of Satan that it indicates a *binding* is borne out by phenomenological observation and the exegetical evaluation of the Scriptures (Van Rensburg 1999:75).

What is our response to these phenomena? The typical evangelical response is denial. How do we respond to people who come out of occultic or Satanistic backgrounds, and are hounded by the problems of their past? We tell them to try harder, to die to self and to the flesh, and we totally misunderstand what they are really going through. We, in fact, admit the insufficiency of Scripture and that the gospel does not have an answer to these problems. But it does! It is just that we do not avail ourselves of its power.

## **THE EFFECTS OF A FAULTY WORLDVIEW**

Let us now move on to examine the effects of applying this western world view. In Scripture we find that many people were cured of various ailments, both physical and mental. Yielding to a cultural philosophy has significant and unfortunate consequences for the gospel.

### **Failure to Meet the Needs of Converts from Animism and Continued Bondage**

The Christian gospel comes with healing in its wings (Malachi 4:2). 1 John 3:8b states “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” Jesus himself said “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. ... So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (Jn 8:32, 36). But in the world there are many people who are not free: they are in bondage. The writer to the Hebrews says: “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death” (Heb. 2:14, 15).

### **Bondage in animism**

The fear and bondage in animistic societies is well documented. Ken Coleman, writing in *East Asia’s Millions on Animism* says

It may surprise the reader when we couple Animism with the other major scriptural religions (i.e. religions that have written records ...) such as Shintoism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, or Taoism. However, as you read you will discover that all of these religions, as well as some forms of Christianity which are practiced in a non-biblical way, have an underlying Animism which permeates and controls the thoughts and actions of the worshippers. ... During our years of service in East Asia, my wife and I saw ‘naked’ animism amongst the Iban people, as they pitted themselves against the spirits that surround them. Their every activity, whether it be child-birth, matters connected with farming or housing, sickness, life or death was dominated by fear of the spirits. It was a constant ‘game’ of either appeasement of the spirits by sacrifices, or attempts at deception to frustrate the spirits. ...” (Coleman 1991:1).

Phil Steyne quotes the Haitian Voodooist creed, taken from James Leyburn’s “The Haitian People” published by Yale University Press, 1966 like this:

I believe in scores of gods and spirits, guardians of earth and sky and of all things visible and invisible. I believe that all these spirits are potent ... and have power to possess us ... that [they] are capable of good and evil; gentleness and anger; I believe in the efficacy of sacrifice, in the pleasures of the living, in the careful cult of the dead ... in the spiritual causation of diseases and misfortune; in the possibility of interfering with the normal flow of events by means of magic (Steyne 1991:3).

Then Steyne comments that “These spirit-powers are none other than the powers

of darkness identified in Scripture.” (Ibid.)

In an empirical case in the Tugela Ferry valley, the bondage of those outside of Christ and the liberty of those who had experienced full conversion is evident:

There is [a] dimension that comes into play when total conversion takes place. Evangelist Bani Mabaso rents garden plots from a government irrigation scheme where a strip of fertile land 150 meters by four meters may be rented for 50c per annum. For a fee of ten Rand, the land may be ploughed and prepared for sowing. The vegetables growing in the gardens were lush and of a high quality, bearing testimony to the fertility of the land. Some garden strips, however, were neglected, weed infested and unproductive. The evangelist pointed out that all the flourishing strips belonged to the Christians, while the neglected ones belonged to unbelievers. He then added that the [traditional] religion of the African people was the greatest hindrance to progress. Dependence on ancestor spirits and fear of them contributed to retrogression rather than progress (Froise 1989:104).

That is bondage in non-Christian religions. But, as Coleman points out, it exists even in some forms of Christianity which are practiced in a non-biblical way. What are these “forms of Christianity which are practiced in a non-biblical way”? The next section suggests some answers.

### **Continued Bondage Among Believers.**

We have identified that spiritual bondage exists among people outside of Christ. But what of people who claim to have become Christians. It is here, above all else, where a western worldview has failed to respond to the challenge of dark forces. Instead of having taught sound biblical theology (which we will define in the next chapter), western missionaries and theologians have turned a blind eye to the problem. In the January – March issue of “SIM Now”, which was devoted to Animism, the following statement is made:

The problem” says John Chitumbo, chaplain at Luampa Hospital in Zambia, “is that people in the churches are not well grounded and taught because their pastors and leaders are not well grounded and taught. The people don’t trust the Lord, so they live in fear and dread. They aren’t strong enough in their faith to realize that this is spiritual warfare that must be fought with the Word of God and with prayer (SIM Now Jan/Mar 2000 p.4).

In chapter two we saw the views of an African Christian, Makhathini, quoted by Steyne, who saw man as a trichotomist – *Inyama/Umzimba* (flesh),

*Umoya/Umphefumulo* (life force) and *Isithunzi* (shadow). Referring to the *Umoya*, he says “[it] may be so powerful that it can correctly foretell what is to come ... can very easily look like or act like the Holy Spirit. It can imitate and even claim to be God-sent ... recited Scripture and made holy claims ... (Stejne 1974:106).

The similarities of this man’s experiences to the incident in Acts 16 are particularly noteworthy.

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, ‘These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.’ She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, ‘In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!’ At that moment the spirit left her (Acts 16:16-18).

Note how this slave girl had the ability to “correctly foretell what is to come, discover hidden things and tell what happened” and how she imitated Christian jargon: “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.”

In the same SIM Now periodical mentioned earlier, it is said “Families spend their lives in fear, frantically trying to avoid offending one another, an ancestor, demon, or idol” (SIM Now Jan/Mar 2000 p.4).

Another clear example of bondage is reflected in a passage in the Institute of Contextual Theology’s “Speaking for Ourselves” in which Ngada quotes the testimony of ninety year old Archbishop Mhlophe. Mhlophe complains that Le Roux (a strong influencer in Zionism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century), as an accomplice with King Cetshwayo and the British monarch, did not want people to have contact with their ancestors or to wear white garments or to carry staffs

“in order to conquer us. Whoever forsakes his ancestors is also forsaken by his ancestors and becomes an easy prey to diseases and to all his other enemies . . .

The results are clear today. Blacks have become the slaves of Whites” (Froise 1989:74).

Under the section to demonstrate that believers can be in bondage, empirical examples were given. There must be untold numbers of people who are in bondage and will remain in bondage simply because of the belief that they cannot be in bondage because they are Christians – their symptoms must have alternative explanations.

### **Development of an alternative syncretistic theology in light of mission misconceptions**

As a result of the western failure to fully comprehend the significance of the spirit world, and minimising its teaching in Scripture, formerly animistic societies concluded that there were certain aspects of the spirit world to which the missionaries had no answers (Hiebert 1982:39). And because the empirical influence of spirits in their lives was so real, they were forced to find their own solutions to their problems. Rodney Henry shows how Christians in the Philippines who had experiences of the unseen forces which the church failed to acknowledge led to what he describes as an ‘informal conspiracy of silence’. They secretly continued their animistic practices, concealing this from the missionaries who simply did not understand what they were experiencing. In this “conspiracy of silence”, a Filipino Christian will perform religious worship in Church on Sundays but will happily consult traditional healers or diviners during the week. This western lack of appreciation is vividly demonstrated in a discussion Henry had with a Filipino pastor:

I received a letter from a woman in a theological school which asked me to come to school immediately. She explained that one of the students was being ‘troubled by demons’ and she wanted me to come to the school to handle the situation. I decided that I would go and on the way to the school, I stopped to ask an American missionary to pray for me and for the situation with the student. When I explained the situation to him, he simply laughed at me and changed the subject. That was the last time I ever talked to an American about the spirit-world (Henry 1986:vi).

This has been a common experience around the world where animism has dominated, and Africa has not escaped this. Benjamin Ray writes that the majority of African Christians remained only partly converted (Froise 1989: 60).

With the arrival of Christian missionaries, Africans found themselves in a dilemma since the missionary claimed that he had knowledge of the Holy Spirit and matters spiritual, and that his Scriptures had all the answers they needed for spirituality, yet he clearly did not understand the spiritual issues they were facing. It is not surprising, therefore, firstly that they secretly continued the spiritual practices with which they were familiar and felt they understood, and secondly, that they tried to integrate this into their theology.

About mystical forces Pritchard states:

The European does not appreciate that the Azande have to take into account mystical forces of which he (the European) knows nothing? (Marwick 1972:329 quoted by Oosthuizen in *Like a Roaring Lion* 1987: 63.)

If the missionaries had been able to explain spiritual phenomena in biblical terms and according to biblical teaching, and had been able to show the power of the gospel over evil forces rather than deny or ignore them, converts would have been in a far better position. They would have been able to understand their experiences in the light of Scripture and would not have needed to revert to their former practices. This in turn would have helped them to see the reality of what their 'ancestor' spirits really are, and would have obviated the need for them to find explanations to justify their continued necromancy practices. Scripture is clear in its teaching in this area:

Let no one be found among you who ... is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you (Deut. 18:10-12).

Instead, the church, by and large, became impotent and gave evidence of a lack of spirituality which Africans found unacceptable:

People need practical and immediate answers, not empty prayers which are forgotten as quickly as they are prayed.

The experience of King Saul of the Bible exemplifies the fear and frustration of one who was faced with a dilemma and had to look for a remedy. "When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his

heart. He enquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him by dreams or urim or prophets. Saul then said to his attendants, 'Find me a woman who is a medium (witch) so that I may go and enquire of her'" (Omondi 1986: 5).

The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization recognised that this lack of understanding in the western worldview has led to this dilemma. In a report on the Consultation on Gospel and Culture held from 6<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> January 1978, it included this statement:

A number of us ... have spoken both of the reality of evil powers and of the necessity to demonstrate the supremacy of Jesus over them. For conversion involves a power encounter. People give their allegiance to Christ when they see that his power is superior to magic and voodoo, the curses and blessings of witch doctors, and the malevolence of evil spirits, and that his salvation is a real liberation from the power of evil and death.

Of course, some are questioning today whether a belief in spirits is compatible with our modern scientific understanding of the universe. We wish to affirm, therefore, against the mechanistic myth on which the typical western world-view rests, the reality of demonic intelligences which are concerned by all means, overt and covert, to discredit Jesus Christ and keep people from coming to him. We think it vital in evangelism in all cultures to teach the reality and hostility of demonic powers, and to proclaim that God has exalted Christ as Lord of all and that Christ, who really does possess all power, however we may fail to acknowledge this, can (as we proclaim him) break through the world-view in any mind to make his lordship known and bring about radical change of heart and outlook (LCWE 1978:21).

All this has led to a lack of confidence in western theology and with it an increasing acceptance and confidence in the African theology which has drawn from experience and the animistic past. In the "Final Communiqué" of the EATWOT Pan-African Conference in 1977 (Appiah-Kobi and Torres, 192-93) the following sources of African theology are listed:

1. The Bible and Christian tradition;
  2. African Anthropology;
  3. African traditional religion;
  4. The African independent churches;
- Other African realities.

More and more credence is given to animistic practices. Omondi makes this observation:

Following a Parliamentary petition in Kenya's high court in the 70's, an order was given requiring that a medicine man be allowed to administer a

ritual that would free some Kamba voters in Kangundo from the consequences of an oath binding them to vote for a certain parliamentary contestant. The ritual was performed under the supervision of administrative officers and those in bondage were set free. The human terrorising fear of misfortune had been effectively used by an individual who sought political power (Omondi 1986:4).

And Oosthuizen observes that:

The role of the medicine man has become more prominent and he is often in the context of Christ, prophet and minister. Medicine-men have increased and no longer are they frowned upon by the black intelligentsia as was the case a decade ago. Many Zionists consult them and some Zionist prophets receive also training as diviners. The AIC have a different disposition to African culture from that of the historic churches and have taken healing seriously, as being associated with religion. This has given prominence to the prophet or prayer healer. Those problems that were the task of the diviner to solve, such as sorcery, witchcraft, evil spirits and spirit possession, have to be taken seriously. (Oosthuizen 1987 in *Roaring Lion* 65 - (de Villiers?))

## **A SYNCRETISTIC THEOLOGY**

That African theologians should develop their own systematic theology is not a bad thing. However, the epistemology should be based, not on empiricism, though that will play a part, not on tradition, but on the teachings of the Bible if we believe the Bible is the Word of God. If the Bible is not the source, we end up with a syncretistic theology, and lose any degree of absolutism. Everything that has been said thus far in this paper indicates that the western theology that has been introduced has, at least in part, also been syncretistic. Syncretism or empiricistically based theology would not be an issue had there not been so much severe warning, both by the Apostle Paul and Jesus Christ himself against it. On several occasions Jesus warns about false prophets and their fate.

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ... Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?" Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" (Matthew 7:15-23).

And again he says:

For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and

miracles to deceive even the elect – if that were possible (Matthew 24:24).

The Apostle Paul also has some strong words to say about false prophets:

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve (2 Corinthians 11:12-15).

And writing to the Thessalonians he says:

The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

Even in the Old Testament we see that miraculous works were not necessarily of God, but could be the work of the enemies of God, sorcerers and witchcraft. See for instance the case of Moses in delivering the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt. The instructions given to Moses to verify his claim to be a representative of God were to use his staff to perform various miracles. But all these miracles were imitated by the religious sorcerers:

Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake (Exodus 7:11-12).

Miracle after miracle that was performed by Moses and Aaron was repeated by the Egyptian sorcerers. It was only when Moses produced the gnats that their secret arts failed them, and they acknowledged that God's hand was in it, implying that his hand was not in theirs:

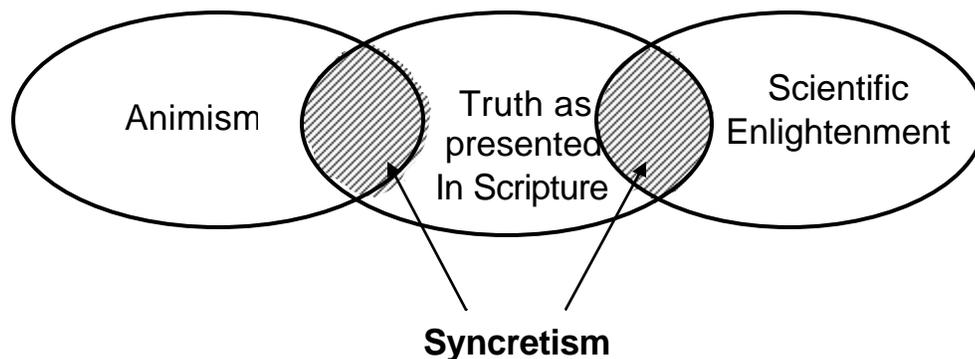
But when the magicians tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, they could not. And the gnats were on men and animals. The magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God (Exodus 8:19).

Thus it is false to assume that supernatural miracles are necessarily from God.

But what would constitute the false prophets spoken of by Jesus and Paul? Both acknowledge that they performed amazing miracles, as did the sorcerers in the Old Testament. Paul implies in the Corinthian passage that they did apparently good things: their appearance to those who observed them were angels of light. Jesus points out that they cast out demons and perform great miracles, even in the name of Christ! And yet they are labelled false prophets and evil doers and deceivers who would even turn people away from the faith if that were possible. These are strong words. The answer can only lie in the fact that they were engaged in using powers of darkness to perform their miracles. This is confirmed by the Exodus experience, and Paul's labelling them as counterfeit miracles. That is why the epistemology of theology is so important and must be based on Scripture rather than empiricism.

### **Syncretism Defined**

If we accept that the Bible represents truth as revealed to man by God, then that must be the basis of our theology. Anything that is contrary to that teaching is syncretism. But syncretism does not apply only to African theology. It applies equally to western theology that does not conform to biblical truth. Figure 2 will elucidate.



**Figure 7 Syncretism**

In this diagram the centre ellipse represents truth as far as it is possible for finite human beings to receive it, as presented in Scripture. The ellipse on the left represents the animistic worldview, and on the right, the western scientific worldview. When people embrace Christianity in its truest form they move into the centre ellipse. However, whatever religious forms they bring with them from their backgrounds are represented by the shaded areas. This is a mixture of true Christianity and the

worldviews of their former belief systems. This is called syncretism. When an animist comes to Christ, he moves into the centre ellipse. However, when he brings with him those religious forms that are in conflict with biblical Christianity, syncretism results. Thus, if he insists on further contact with the spirits of the dead, which clearly violates the teaching of Deuteronomy 18 and other parallel Scriptures, this is syncretism. Likewise, if a westerner comes to Christ, he moves into the centre ellipse. However, when he brings with him those religious beliefs that are in conflict with biblical Christianity, he creates a syncretism. So, if he becomes a Christian, but his scientific and enlightened worldview prevents him from believing in the reality of spiritual beings, this is syncretism. And when his upbringing tells him that demon possession is invalid in this modern day and age, this is syncretism.

In the findings of the EATWOP Pan-African Conference quoted earlier by Young, the epistemology applied is apt to lead to syncretism. The first source mentioned is the Bible and Christian tradition. It is interesting to note that the problem Jesus had with the Pharisees of his day was the emphasis they placed on tradition, even if those traditions had an element of scriptural teaching in them. The second source is African Anthropology, then African traditional religion, which is why the emphasis on contact with the dead is so important. The next source referred to is the African independent churches, which in turn are more empirically based than scripturally based. Finally, the last source mentioned is other African realities which is pure empiricism. It is no wonder, then, that African theology is largely syncretistic.

Oosthuizen quotes Kiernan to show some of the realities that exist in African indigenous churches.

The forces of good and evil have special significance and are given special attention within the context of the African Indigenous Churches (AIC). Many of this first generation Christians are still deeply involved with aspects of traditional spirituality. ... The evil forces are utilised by human beings against one another. Both the intention and the agony are human, while evil itself is generated in or from a non-human agency (Kiernan 1985:1 quoted by Oosthuizen 64).

An example of syncretism in application is evident in Father Mpako's church as surfaced in an interview with the Staff Reporter of the Southern Cross. Mpako is a

former rector of a Catholic seminary and founder of the African Catholic Priests' Solidarity Movement (ACAPSM), now priest of a local parish. He says: "In my parish, every Sunday we begin holy mass with African incense and pray to the ancestors to join us in worship" (Noel Bruyns 1999).

This practice completely ignores the prohibition of Deuteronomy 18.

### **Culture vs Theology**

It should be clearly stated that our problem is not with culture, but with theology. The complexity of the situation arises from the fact that in all cultures, culture and religion are so intertwined. When a Buddhist of Thailand becomes a Christian, he is seen not only to turn his back on his religion, but also on his country, his family and his tradition. When an African comes to Christ it is objected that he cannot turn his back on those who have sustained him through the years. It is therefore found that conversion to Christianity with an accompanying abandonment of the ancestors is unacceptable. But this is where the distinction needs to be made. The use of drums for communication is cultural and not religious. The use of organs for hymn singing is cultural, not religious. But the veneration of ancestors by animists on the one hand, and the playing down of evil spirits by westerners on the other, are religious, and not cultural. Too often these have become confused. The reason for the proclamation of the Christian gospel is that it is believed, as Christ taught, that it is the good news of salvation and liberation, and that there is no alternative way to come to God. And so, if one is to convert an atheist to faith in Christ, he must renounce his atheism and embrace Christ. He cannot have both. If one is to convert from Hinduism to Christ, he must renounce his faith in a million gods to embrace the one true God, and he must renounce his belief in reincarnation and Karma and embrace eternal life, not through works, but through faith in Christ. He cannot have both. When one understands that the faith in ancestors for protection and guidance is part of a religion and not of culture, it becomes more tenable to renounce faith in these and embrace the finished work of Christ and his all sufficiency. Again, one cannot have both. They are in conflict with one another.

So, who are the ancestors then? Thlagale lays claim to Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus of Luke 16:27 as support for the theology of ancestors in the gospels

(Thagale 1994: 10). But this very parable would tend rather to refute the theology of ancestors, not support it. As we saw in chapter two, the parable shows clearly a break from this life through death.

The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' ... 'between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us' (Luke 16:19-26).

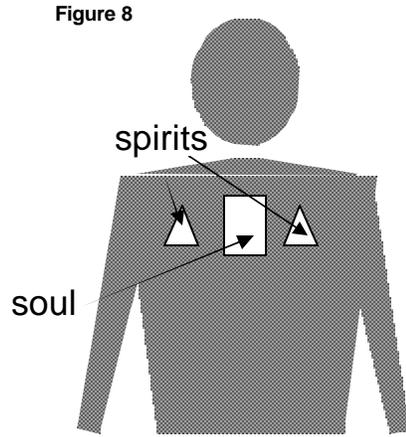
This parable suggests, firstly, that the soul or spirit of the dead immediately goes to its final destination of heaven or hell. This also appears to be what Jesus was saying on the cross when he assured the repentant convict on the other cross: "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Secondly, there is a large chasm between those who die outside of Christ and those who are in Christ. In the parable they are assigned to hell and to a place next to Abraham respectively. In ancestor theology there is no distinction between their respective destinies. In some forms of the theology, those who have lived good lives are known as the "living dead," whereas those who have lived bad lives are the "dead dead" (Thavis 2000) but there is no question of them being assigned to heaven or hell. The third thing to notice is that the rich man's request for Lazarus to return to communicate with the living was denied. Empirically one finds that the living tend to listen very carefully and obediently to the ancestors who return with messages. If that was an acceptable vehicle for communication, surely the Lord would have acceded to this request. But it was not an acceptable vehicle, therefore the Lord puts another scenario to the rich man, namely that they have not listened to the prophets who were legitimate communicators. The Bible emphatically forbids communication between the living and the dead. Who then are these "ancestors"?

The Bible teaches that man's soul, once departed, does not return again. Though "there shall be a resurrection of the body, and a reunion of the body to the soul from which, during the intermediate state, it has been separated" (Strong 1956:1015), there is no returning of the soul to interact with the living on earth. There can, therefore, be

only one other explanation of who these “ancestor’s” are. The following diagram will help to understand this.

The square represents this person’s soul. This is the real person who will live on forever, his final destination depending on his relationship with Christ. The triangles are invading spirits, and there may be one or two or many or none at all. Mary had seven spirits cast out of her. When the

person dies, the spirits are released. It is these spirits that come back to haunt or ‘guide’ or torment those who are living, and in many cases, take up residence. These are not the souls of the deceased people but inhabiting spirits who indwelt them. Since they had indwelt the deceased person, they re-appear in the guise of that person, and the unwitting relative sees the resemblance so vividly that they conclude it to be that person. Would this not be exactly the kind of deception Satan would engage in, since Jesus attributes deception to Satan and his false prophets? As we have seen from Jesus’ parable quoted above, as well as Jesus’ comments to the dying thief, the souls of the deceased immediately go to their final destination, and no provision or permission is given for them to return to earth. The spirits that people encounter in ATR therefore cannot possibly be the spirits of the ancestors, as claimed both in ATR and by many advocates of this view. The theory postulated here fits in far better with the teaching of Scripture than the ancestor theology which has become so popular.



## CONCLUSION

Western theology applied into other cultures has been ill equipped to deal with the phenomenon of the spirit world among the people westerners have tried to evangelise. This ought not to have been the case, since the Scriptures they claim as their authority deals specifically and abundantly with the subject. In Mark’s gospel alone, there are nine cases of casting out spirits or dialogues concerning them in the first nine chapters – an average of one per chapter. Yet in preaching and in training the subject receives little more than passing comments. It is this failure that has led to a loss of confidence among converts, and resorting to develop their own theologies.

However the epistemology of these theology formulations may be seriously questioned, since careful biblical exposition plays a minor role and empiricism plays a major role. But the empirical experiences have not been subjected to adequate scrutiny. And this is extremely dangerous since the Bible warns of false prophets, other spirits than the one presented by the apostles, and alternative gospels which are untrue and may lead one astray (2 Cor 11:3-4). In fact, the African theology that is prominent today has been shown to be syncretistic, and, rather than set people free from bondage, it has held them in bondage.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW OF THE SPIRIT WORLD

#### INTRODUCTION

In our western enlightened worldview we have been trained to rationalise or ignore things relating to the spirit world. This, in spite of the fact that both the Old and the New Testaments have much to say about the unseen forces that permeate the world. Chapter three showed how our western worldview of Christianity tends to ignore or sideline the spiritual and focus on the rational. However, Scripture shows in no small measure that our faith is spiritually oriented, to the extent that Paul indicates that even the interpersonal struggles we face are influenced by spiritual forces (Ephesians 6:12). Commenting on the spiritual armour that Paul introduces with this and the two previous verses, Ridderbos says

With what earnestness this exhortation is given and in what context this battle is to be viewed may appear still further from the familiar “armor” pericope (Eph. 6: 11ff.), where twice there is mention of the “whole armor of God” (*panoplian tou Theou ...*

He continues, pointing out that this armour is concerned specifically with the struggle against falsehood and unrighteousness and in general with the perseverance of faith as is indicated by the designation of the various parts of the armour. But then he expands on this, saying

This struggle stands in a much wider context, however: it is waged not against “blood and flesh, but against the principalities, the powers, the world rulers of this darkness, against the evil spirits in the heavenly places” (v. 12). Thereby the believers’ conflict of faith, in its moral aspects as well, is related to the continuing eschatological antithesis between the powers of darkness and the kingship of Christ (Col. 1:13). This is also the effect of what is said in Romans 13 concerning the passing of the night, the proximity of the day, and in this connection the changing of armor (“the weapons of the light”). Whereas elsewhere it is declared of these powers that Christ has subdued them and, as it were, has harnessed them to his triumphal chariot (Col. 2:15),

and delivered his own from their power (Col. 1:13), in Ephesians 6 the point of view of the “not yet,” at least of the “not yet fully,” finds expression (just as in the formulation of provisionality in Rom. 13: 12: “the night is far spent, the day is at hand”) (Ridderbos 1975:268).

Warner writes:

With the secularization of our worldview, the reality of spiritual warfare has almost disappeared from our thinking and rather than risk the scorn of our peers, we seek to have as little to do with the world of demons as possible, being content to leave them in the realm of theory or theology. To bring them into everyday life would be to risk ridicule and that is something none of us likes and very few of us handle well (Warner 1991:59).

But he quotes John Newport, in a paper delivered at the Christian Medical Society symposium on the demoniac, held at Notre Dame University as far back as 1975:

Fortunately. . . the victory, or triumphant view of the atonement is coming back into its own. The sacrificial, substitutionary, propitiatory and redemptive views of the atonement all have validity. However, the triumphant view must take its proper place. Much of the New Testament . . . has to do with the power of Satan and demons, and this victory view should be seen as quite important (Warner 58).

Scripture has far more to say about the “invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities (Col. 1:16)” than we tend to give credit to. This we see both in the Old and the New Testaments.

There are both explicit and implicit examples of spiritual activity in Scripture.

## **POWERS AND AUTHORITIES IN SCRIPTURE**

### **The Old Testament**

Explicit instances

Even though evil spiritual forces have rebelled against God, they are nevertheless subservient to God and their liberty to act is restricted by God. This may be seen in the dialogue between Satan and God over Job. Satan’s ability to afflict Job and his family was by specific permission of God and God set definite boundaries to the affliction he would allow (Job 1:2). It may also be seen in the experience of Moses when he was commissioned to liberate the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The

miracles that Moses performed through the power of God were counterfeited by the Egyptian magicians through the power of their magical arts. God allowed the magicians the liberty to do that until it came to the plague of gnats. At this point God limited the magicians so that they were unable to emulate this miracle, and admitted “This is the finger of God” (Ex. 8:19). Unger (1971:75) shows how magic and the demonic are related:

As an ingredient of idol worship, magic goes back to antiquity. By virtue of their multiplicity and limited knowledge and power, the gods (demons) of paganism are incapable of establishing stability and security in society. This deficiency forced both gods and men to make use of magic – an inactive power independent of gods and men, but which could be activated by the aid of incantations and rituals in order to accomplish supernatural deeds.

Sumerian-Akkadian and Canaanite religious literature amply attest the employment of magic by gods (i.e., demons) to accomplish definite purposes. The Babylonian Creation Epic (*Enuma Elish*) reports that in the struggle against the primeval pair, Tiamat and Apsu, the hero of the young generation of gods, Ea-Enki, killed Apsu with the aid of a spell which he recited. It was by virtue of his knowledge of effective spells and rituals that Ea-Enki had the title “Lord of Incantation” and was reputed to be the god of magic par excellence.

In a battle with Tiamat, Marduk, the champion of the gods, used among other weapons a “red paste” which he held between his lips, red being the magic color for warding off evil influences. Moreover, before proclaiming Marduk as their chief god, the gods in assembly tested him to ascertain whether he possessed the requisite knowledge of magic, without which no god could rule supreme. By his spoken word he made a piece of cloth vanish and reappear (be restored).

Figure 9 demonstrates graphically Satan’s limitations.

There are a number of cases that indicate that even evil spirits are at God’s command and he uses them to accomplish his purposes. We see this in Judges 9:22,23: “After Abimelech had governed Israel three years, God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem, who acted treacherously against Abimelech.”

We see it again in the life of King Saul, from whom the Lord’s favour had departed. In 1 Samuel 16:14-16 we read:

Figure 9 – Satan's Limitations



Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him. Saul's attendants said to him, "See, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our lord command his servants here to search for someone who can play the harp. He will play when the evil spirit from God comes upon you, and you will feel better." Whenever the spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.

Further examples of evil spirits obeying commands of the Lord are found in 1 Samuel 18:10 and 19:9.

Then we find the controversial case of the spirit of Samuel returning from the dead in response to Saul's engaging a spirit medium in 1 Samuel 28:7-14.

Saul then said to his attendants, "Find me a woman who is a medium, so I may go and inquire of her." "There is one in Endor," they said. So Saul disguised himself, putting on other clothes, and at night he and two men went to the woman. "Consult a spirit for me," he said, "and bring up for me the one I name." The king said to her, "Don't be afraid. What do you see?" The woman said, "I see a spirit coming up out of the ground." "What does he look like?" he asked. "An old man wearing a robe is coming up," she said. Then

Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground<sup>10</sup>.

In the parallel passages of 2 Samuel 24:1ff and 1 Chronicles 21:1ff we have another incident of Satan being used as a tool for God to accomplish his purposes. In the Samuel passage we read of God's anger with the disobedience of Israel, and how he incites David to take a census, which it later transpires was a sinful act. In the Chronicles passage a further detail is added to the narrative, indicating that it was actually Satan who was used to incite David. Page (1995:36) comments:

The two accounts are not incompatible, however. Second Samuel 24:1 states that Yahweh incited David against the people because he was angry with them. Presumably, the census and consequent plague were seen as punishment for some unidentified, prior sin. Though the chronicler does not refer directly to God's being angry with the nation before the census, he does retain the idea that Israel, and not just David as an individual, was punished by God (21:7). Both accounts also cast David's action as wrong. ... Second Samuel, which presents the census and its consequences as punishment for an unnamed sin, stresses the sovereignty of God in relation to human sin. We might compare the portrayal in 2 Samuel with the Pauline concept of people being punished by being given over to their sins (Rom. 1:24,26,28). The chronicler, on the other hand, sees Satan as the one directly responsible for inciting David to sin and deliberately avoids attributing this function to God. Here we may think of the teaching of James 1:13, "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone."

In Second Chronicles we have the case of the Lord's impending judgement and punishment of King Ahab. He uses an evil spirit to accomplish his purpose. Verses 20-22 read:

Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, "I will entice him." "By what means?" the LORD asked. "I will go and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets," he said. "You will succeed in enticing him," said the LORD. "Go and do it." "So now the LORD has put a lying spirit in

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<sup>10</sup> Various interpretations are offered to this incident by different commentators. On the one hand the spirit's response appears to be an authentic appearance of Samuel since he responds "Why do you consult me now that the Lord has turned away from you and become your enemy?" which Keil & Delitsch say means "How canst thou expect an answer under these circumstances from me, the prophet of Jehovah?" Luther says "The raising of Samuel by a soothsayer or witch ... was certainly merely a spectre of the devil; not only because the Scriptures state that it was effected by a woman who was full of devils ... but also because it was evidently in opposition to the command of God that Saul and the woman inquired of the dead." Calvin also regards the apparition as only a spectre: "It is certain that it was not really Samuel, for God would never have allowed his prophets to be subjected to such diabolical conjuring" (Keil and Delitsch: 265).

the mouths of these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you.”

In modern counseling empiricism many cases are encountered of people experiencing presences in their rooms of a greater or lesser intensity. A student at a Bible School in Sweetwaters, Natal, experienced a mouse running up one arm, across his chest, and down the other arm. He was expelled from the school as being mentally incapacitated and therefore incapable of studying.<sup>11</sup> A woman experienced on a regular basis an alternative weight weighing down the mattress next to her when her own weight weighed down the mattress when she went to bed at night.<sup>12</sup>

Hosea records a case of idolatry and links it to a spirit. In this case the spirit has a specific role, namely prostitution. It is clear that this spirit is an obstacle to the people’s ability to worship God:

They consult a wooden idol and are answered by a stick of wood. A spirit of prostitution leads them astray; they are unfaithful to their God (Hos 4:12).

Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. A spirit of prostitution is in their heart; they do not acknowledge the LORD (Hos. 5:4 ).

In Zechariah 3 we again encounter Satan as the accuser. Page (1995:32) suggests that Zechariah takes for granted that Satan is a familiar figure. He points out:

Some commentators argue that Satan is simply represented as a functionary whose proper role is to act as prosecutor and who represents God’s justice as over against God’s mercy. The rebuke of Satan by Yahweh, however, renders this view most unlikely.

### **Implicit Incidents**

There are also cases where a direct statement is not made, but the underlying thought or actions indicate that the world of spirits is dominant. They abound in the book of Daniel. In the first chapter we learn of the abduction of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Curiously, on their arrival in Babylon their names are changed to Belteshazzar, Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego respectively. It is evident, though, that these changes were not merely a case of convenience, giving them names more

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<sup>11</sup> Private discussion with Hugh Wetmore, lecturer at the school.

<sup>12</sup> Counselee in my personal counseling experience 1992.

easily pronounced in the local culture, such as often happened in South Africa when the names of indigenous people that were unpronounceable by whites were changed by their employers. In the South African contexts these were changes of convenience. But in the Babylonian context, these changes had religious implications.

The meaning of *“Daniel”* is *“God is my Judge.”*

By contrast, the meaning of *“Belteshazzar”* is *“Bel, protect his life.”* Bel is a form of the heathen god, Baal.

The meaning of *“Hananiah”* is *“The Lord shows Grace.”*

By contrast, the meaning of *“Shadrack”* is *“The Command of Aku.”* Aku is a Sumerian moon god.

The meaning of *“Mishael”* is *“Who is what God is?”*

By contrast, the meaning of *“Meshack”* is *“Who is what Aku is?”*

The meaning of *“Azariah”* is *“The Lord Helps.”*

By contrast, the meaning of *“Abednego”* is *“Servant of Nego,”* which has also the forms of Nebo or Nabu, an Egyptian god (NIV Study Bible, notes on Daniel 1:7).

We also find, in the same chapter, in the siege of Jerusalem, the removal of vessels of worship from the temple of Jehovah to the temple of Baal. This is a symbolic sign of victory by the Babylonian gods over the God of the Jews.

In the second chapter of Daniel, we have the first record of a dream of King Nebuchadnezzar. This leads to a contest between the spiritist diviners and Daniel. The source of power for the spiritists is the same source of power in the animistic worldview that we examined in chapter two. Under favourable circumstances the astrologers would have been able to interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. But since this was a dream given by God rather than Satan, no meaningful interaction between the spirit guides and the diviners was possible and it was only God’s servant who had access to its interpretation.

In the third chapter of Daniel we have another spiritual encounter when Nebuchadnezzar erects a ninety foot statue and demands it be worshipped. This was a direct attack on the worship of God as modeled by Daniel and his three companions.

Daniel’s fourth chapter has a repetition of the circumstances in the second chapter where, once again, the astrologers failed to interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s

dream, and again the reason was that the author of the dream was God, and not Satan. The Bible does show that dreams can come from different sources. These ones in Daniel are clearly given by God. But Jeremiah warns against false dreams and false interpretations:

“Indeed, I am against those who prophesy false dreams,” declares the LORD. “They tell them and lead my people astray with their reckless lies, yet I did not send or appoint them” (Jer. 23:32).

So do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your interpreters of dreams, your mediums or your sorcerers who tell you, ‘You will not serve the king of Babylon.’ They prophesy lies to you that will only serve to remove you far from your lands; I will banish you and you will perish (Jer. 27:9,10).

Yes, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have... (Jer. 29:8).

## **The New Testament**

When we come to the New Testament, the scene seems to take on a new dimension. In the Old Testament we find the presence of evil spirits, but there are no recorded cases of exorcism. That is not to say that there were no people who were demon possessed, or as some commentators believe is a more accurate translation, demonised. The Greek word used in the New Testament is *daimonizomai*, which does not have the connotation of possession. Ankerberg and Weldon say “although the term ‘demon possession’ is more or less accurate as a descriptive phrase, it may also imply theological inaccuracies such as the ‘ownership’ of a person. No demon ever ‘owns’ a Christian, nor can a demon ever cause a genuine Christian to lose his or her salvation, which is forever secure.” They quote this explanation from Dickason:

When we look at the word for demonization, improperly translated “demon possession,” it is highly instructive to notice its root and structure. The verb *daimonizomai* means “to be possessed by a demon.”

The participle from the same root, *daimonizomenos*, is used twelve times in the Greek New Testament. It is used only in the present tense, indicating the continued state of the one inhabited by a demon, or demonized. This participle has components to its structure. First there is the root, *daimon*, which indicates the involvement of demons. Second is the causative stem, *iz*, which shows that there is an active cause in this verb. Third is the passive ending, *omenos*. This conveys the passivity of the person described as demonized.

Putting it all together the participle in its root form means “a demon

caused passivity.” This indicates a control other than that of the person who is demonized; he is regarded as the recipient of the demon’s action. In other words, demonization pictures a demon controlling a somewhat passive human (Ankerberg & Weldon 1993:300).

The big change between the Old and New Testaments is introduced through the ministry of Jesus who demonstrated and taught his disciples exorcism. Healing and exorcism turned out to be a prominent part of Jesus’ ministry. This is an aspect of the Christian gospel that has been badly neglected in post-enlightenment evangelicalism. For instance, in the first nine chapters of Mark’s gospel, cases or dialogue concerning demons or exorcism occur no less than nine times (1:21ff; 1:32ff; 3:11-12; 3:22ff; 5:1ff; 6:7ff; 7:25ff; 9:17ff; 9:38ff) – an average of one per chapter. Yet one seldom hears teaching or preaching on the subject in evangelical circles. What the disciples learned from Jesus, and what he instructed them to do in turn (Luke 9:1-2; 10:19) became a prominent part of their post-Calvary ministry (Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:16ff; 19:12).

Some common illnesses or conditions were at times attributed to the activities of demons and sometimes not. There is therefore a need for caution before assuming that any condition is demonic in origin. For instance, Mark records in separate instances the cases of two men, both deaf and mute, but their causes were very different. Mark 7:31-35 records the story of a man deaf and almost mute whom Jesus healed. In this instance there is no suggestion that his condition was demon induced. His method of healing was not through exorcism, but by touching the man’s tongue with saliva and commanding that his ears be opened. Mark 9:17-27, on the other hand, records the story of a young man who was also deaf and mute. In this case, though, it was demon induced and the method of healing was by exorcism.

## **DEMONISATION AND BELIEVERS**

The demonisation of believers has been a point of heated debate among evangelicals. Chapter three deals extensively with the question, and the subject will not be repeated here, other than to include some comments that reinforce what is argued in chapter three.

The first point to mention is that, since we are looking at a biblical worldview, it

is important to note that the Bible does not distinguish between believers and unbelievers in cases of demonisation just as it makes no distinction in the case of healing. Advocates of the view that Christians cannot be demonised argue that there are no cases in Scripture when a believer is demonised. We have shown in chapter three that that is an unfounded assumption, and most commentators against demonisation of believers admit that this is a grey area. That being the case, it is improper for us to add to Scripture what it does not say unless there are clear statements to corroborate this. We have shown that there are none. So to assume what the Bible does not say, that Christians are immune from demonisation, is a violation of exegetical principles and literary interpretation. Dickason, quoted in Ankerberg and Weldon (1993:302) points out that

Most of those arguments [from alternative theories of explaining empirical phenomena] stem from those who deny any demonization at all, not to mention the demonization of Christians. Even those who recognize the reality of demonization often seek to explain away the evidence on the grounds of secularly learned and practiced psychology.... Again, it is those who have little or no experience who are the most vocal objectors. We must allow the distinct probability that biblically guided investigation and counsel has shown in experience that some Christians have been demonized. The evidence is heavily weighted toward that conclusion (Ankerberg & Weldon 1993:302).

The most common argument against the possibility of Christians being demonised is that it is impossible for the Holy Spirit to occupy a place where there are demons. Murphy (2003:430-431) says

The argument is based more upon a syllogism of logic than on biblical interpretation:

*The major premise:* Every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

*The minor premise:* The Holy Spirit cannot dwell with demons.

*The conclusion:* Christians cannot have demons.

In every syllogism, if either the major or the minor premise is incorrect, the conclusion is always incorrect. The major premise of the above syllogism is correct (Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6), but where is the direct, clear, emphatic scriptural support for the minor premise? If it is lacking, then there is the possibility it is inaccurate and the conclusion false.

He goes on to show how illogical this argument is, since if consistently applied, it means that a Christian cannot sin, which we all know to be false:

*The major premise:* Every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.  
*The minor premise:* The Holy Spirit cannot dwell with sin.  
*The conclusion:* Christians cannot sin.

In attesting that the possibility of demonisation of true believers is rejected by most Christians, Murphy admits he himself held to that position. He writes

Most Christians would categorically reject the possibility of the demonization of true believers. This was my position during most of my years in Christian ministry. In fact most of us who have reversed our position on this matter were brought up with this traditional view of non-demonization of believers. We changed primarily because of accumulated experience in counseling the demonized. This has led to renewed scriptural studies and a re-examination of the position of the post-apostolic church fathers on this subject (Murphy 2003:429).

He continues to point out that “the church fathers saw that believers demonised before coming to Christ *were not automatically set free* (the author’s italics) from their indwelling demons when the Holy Spirit came into their life at conversion” He further adds that

Hundreds of Christian leaders counseling traumatized believers have discovered demonic personalities linked to the believers’ lives, often dwelling inside of them and in conflict with the Holy Spirit. We must accept this reality and help them into freedom without tearing away their Christian faith by telling them that since they have demons they are not true Christians and on their way to hell. How dare anyone, to defend a theological presupposition, inflict further pain on them! (Murphy 2003:429-430).

## **ANGELS AND DEMONS**

God is the creator of all things through the agency of the Lord Jesus Christ: “[The Son] is the image of the invisible God ... By him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him” (Col. 1:15-16). These invisible powers and rulers and authorities are references to spiritual forces (Eph. 6:12). These forces were originally created in perfection, but some were corrupted and fell into disgrace (Ezekiel 28:15). In Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 we have the accounts of the fall of Satan. In Isaiah we find that he was the Morning Star, which in Latin is ‘Lucifer’. In Ezekiel we find that he was created in beauty: “You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty” (12). He was anointed a guardian

cherub (14), but that his beauty became the source of pride (17). Isaiah tells us that he attempted to usurp the position of God in a series of ambitions to become the ruler of all the angelic realm<sup>10</sup> and finally to make himself like the Most High. He was therefore cast out of heaven as attested by Jesus in Luke 10:18 “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” Revelation 12:4 indicates that a third of the angelic force rebelled with Satan, and these are the fallen angels that are referred to as demons and evil spirits.

## **OPPOSING OPINIONS**

Not everyone agrees with what the Scripture teaches. Some would have us believe that Scripture should not be taken too literally. Others apply their own rules of literary interpretation to suit their *a priori* positions.

### **Liberal Theology and the Biblical Worldview**

Since Schleiermacher (1768 – 1834), there has been much debate about the accuracy or factual nature of the Scripture narrative. From the Luther Seminary comes this commentary:

Liberal theologians used insights and methods from the social sciences to shape Christian theology. Liberal theology has its roots in the Enlightenment, which emphasized free will, reason, and the ability of human beings to make progress in all things including religion; and also in romanticism which insisted on feeling and intuition as essential to human life. Friedrich Schleiermacher, the “father of liberal theology,” identified religion as a feeling of absolute dependence. For him, theology described internal religious experience rather than defining external religious truth. D. F. Strauss wrote the *Life of Jesus*, which sought to separate the “historical” life of Jesus from the “myths” surrounding it. In the United States, William Ellery Channing was an exponent of liberalism, leading some Congregationalists into Unitarianism. Later in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, biblical criticism would play a large role in liberal theology. A contrasting movement was confessionalism, which responded to modernity by asserting the external authority of Scripture and confessions (<http://demo.lutherproductions.com/historytutor/basic/modern/stories/liberal-theology.htm>).

German theologians Conzelmann and Bultmann fell into the trap of liberalism.

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<sup>10</sup> The Bible repeatedly refers to the angels as ‘stars’ in prophetic utterances (Is. 14:13; Rev. 1:20; Rev. 12:4).

Conzelmann, for instance, says that Jesus' command to the demons to keep quiet (Mark 1:25) is not historical: "It represents the pre-Markan form of the secret-theory" (Conzelmann 1969:141). This is in the context of his view that Jesus did not view himself as the Messiah, and this is the reason that he insisted that demons and others should not broadcast the things he was doing. There are, however, numerous statements by Jesus, both explicit and implicit, that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, one with the Father. None could be more direct than the dialogue with the woman at Jacob's well:

The woman said, "I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he." John 4:25, 26).

In another context Conzelmann demonstrates his scepticism about Jesus' miracles with this comment:

The miracles *said to have been performed* by Jesus ... (137) (Emphasis mine). There will be no discussion of the scientific side of miracle here. ... Of course, it is an exaggeration to say that during the New Testament period there was a general readiness for the occurrence of miracles (Conzelmann 1969:137).

Bultmann likewise does not believe in the existence of Satan and demons, and relegates them to the realm of myth. In his commentary on references to Satan in Second Corinthians he says:

On 2 Cor. 11:14 (Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light):

Paul assumes such mythological stories are well known. ... When the devil tempts Eve for the second time, he appears as an angel of light. Was this legend perhaps connected with that of Eve's temptation by Satan? (v.3) (Bultmann 1985:209).

The use of terminology such as "Mythological" and "legend" demonstrate his position.

On 2 Cor. 11:3 (But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ):

Presumably, not only Gen. 3 is in mind, but also the Rabbinic legend of the

serpent's seduction of Eve (Bultmann 1985:201).

Again, he refers to the reference to the fall as a "legend."

On 2 Cor. 12:7 (There was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.):

As a counterforce opposing Paul, this suffering is described as an *angelos satana*, thus as an expression of the antigodly cosmos which also threatens and entices the believer. ... Of course the *ina me ... edothe moi* already states that the suffering, and thus Satan, is in the service of the *Kurios* or of God. Finally, then, it is God himself who is encountered in the counterforce – a tenet which of course cannot be known and applied as a general truth, but only discovered in the struggle with suffering or with oneself. This struggle as verses 8f. show, is played out in prayer (Bultmann 1985:225).

Bultmann's attempt to disprove the literal existence of Satan by reference to his being in the service of the *Kurios* will not succeed. As we have already seen on pages 101 and 102 in the lives of Abimelech, Saul and Ahab, God does use evil spirits to accomplish his purposes.

Guthrie makes reference to a number of incidents in the gospels involving angels and concludes

It is against this strongly attested evidence for the existence of good spirits that we must consider *the world of demons* which we frequently meet in the synoptic gospels. We begin by noting that evil is personified in a single person, *Satan* in agreement with Old Testament belief. At the temptation of Jesus, the conflict is between this personification of evil, the devil, and Jesus himself. It is clear from both Matthew's and Luke's account that the function of tempting people with a view to persuading them to commit a moral offence is integral to the activities of the devil (Guthrie 1981:125,126).

In the context of this statement he adds a footnote concerning Bultmann's pneumatology:

Bultmann demythologized the references to demons, but it has been recognized by many others that this represents an essential element for a right understanding of the gospel (Guthrie 1981:125).

He refers to Friedrichsen, Stewan, Manson, and several bulletin articles in support.

Ladd says that "it is not accurate ... simply to explain away demon possession by saying it is an ancient interpretation for what we now know to be various forms of

insanity” (Ladd 1974:52). He continues to point out that Jesus healed both the sick and the demon possessed, and that demon possession was distinguished from epilepsy and paralysis, sickness and leprosy. He says:

Some scholars admit that Jesus appears to have believed in Satan and demons; but this represents a mere adaptation to the concepts of the age ... he used the concepts of his time as symbols to serve ethical ends. He did not purpose to give information about the existence or the conduct of supernatural beings (ibid.).

Ladd concludes that “this explanation is utterly inadequate.”

He then points out a second point of view which says that

Jesus was a child of his day and was mistaken in his belief about demons. What the ancients call demon possession was, in fact, nothing but mental derangement, and the modern man would have described the phenomenon of ancient demon possession in terms of mental sickness.

But Ladd refers to McCasland who affirms the wisdom and high character of Jesus. Being a man of great authority and possessed by the Holy Spirit, McCasland concludes that a serious difficulty is raised by the admission that Jesus was mistaken since exorcism was no mere peripheral activity in Jesus’ ministry but a manifestation of the essential purpose of the Kingdom of God into the evil age. He concludes

The demonic is absolutely essential in understanding Jesus’ interpretation of the picture of sin and of man’s need for the Kingdom of God. Man is in bondage to a personal power stronger than himself. At the very heart of our Lord’s mission is the need of rescuing men from bondage to the satanic kingdom ... Anything less than this involves an essential reinterpretation of some of the basic facts of the gospel (Ladd 1974:53).

A third position that Ladd identifies is one that “finds the biblical concept of demons an essential truth: there is a demonic element in the human experience” (Ladd 1974:53). Jesus, Ladd concludes, saw the souls of men as a battle-ground, an arena or theatre of tragic conflict between the opposed cosmic powers of the Holy Spirit of God and Satan.

United States President Thomas Jefferson in the late eighteenth century fell into the same trap. Jimmy Williams writes

Thomas Jefferson, a great American patriot and president did the same thing in the late 1700s with almost identical results. He admired Jesus as a moral

man, but like the Jesus Fellows, he assumed all supernatural and extraordinary elements in the Gospels were unreliable and could not be true. With scissors and paste, Jefferson cut out of the Gospels any and everything which contravened the laws of nature and his own reason ([www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/jesussem.html](http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/jesussem.html)).

The Jesus Seminar is a modern version of the Enlightenment critics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It sets out to disprove the supernatural aspects of the Bible and the Christian faith. It's members' conclusions were published in 1993 in a book entitled, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*. But like the higher critics before them, their arguments are weak and are based on a priori skepticism of the possibility of the supernatural. Williams draws attention to this when he writes

A major presupposition of the Jesus Seminar, ... is philosophical naturalistic world view which categorically denies the supernatural. Therefore they say one must be wary of the following in the Gospels:

1. **Prophetic statements.** Predictions by Jesus of such things as the destruction of the Temple, or of Jerusalem, or His own resurrection are later literary additions or interpolations. How do we know this? Because no one can predict the future. So they **MUST** have been added later by zealous followers.
2. **Miracles.** Since miracles are not possible, every recorded miracle in the Gospels must be a later elaboration by an admiring disciple or follower, or must be explained on the basis of some physical or natural cause (i.e., the Feeding of the 5,000: Jesus gave the signal, and all those present reached beneath their cloaks, pulled out their own "sack lunches," and ate together!).
3. **Claims of Jesus.** Christ claimed to be God, Savior, Messiah, Judge, Forgiver of sin, sacrificial Lamb of God, etc. All of these, say the Jesus Fellows, are the later work of His devoted followers. The historical Jesus never claimed these things for Himself, as Funk infers in his above-mentioned statements. Reality isn't like this. It couldn't be true.

Therefore the Jesus Fellows assert that the Gospels could not have been written by eyewitnesses in the mid-first century. On the basis of this philosophical presupposition, the Jesus Seminar considers itself personally and collectively free to select or discard any statement of the Gospels which is philosophically repugnant ([www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/jesussem.html](http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/jesussem.html)).

As can be seen from this sampling of their arguments, they are not based on researched facts, but on presuppositions. Based on their presupposition that no one can predict the future "they **MUST** have been added later by zealous followers." Based on the presupposition that miracles are impossible, they come to the ridiculous

conclusion that “all those present reached beneath their cloaks, pulled out their own "sack lunches," and ate together!”

It is clear that characters in the New Testament believed in the literal existence of Satan and demons. Russel (1981:25) concludes:

To deny the existence and central importance of the Devil in Christianity is to run counter to apostolic teaching and to the historical development of Christian doctrine. Since defining Christianity in terms other than these is literally meaningless, it is intellectually incoherent to argue for a Christianity that excludes the Devil. If the Devil does not exist, then Christianity has been dead wrong on a central point right from the beginning.”

Russel (1981:226) further appeals to the widespread belief in the devil throughout history among different cultural groups and creeds:

Whether or not the Devil exists objectively, it is certain that the Devil exists in the sense that the phenomenon Devil, the concept Devil, exists and can be defined historically with a reasonable degree of coherence. The historian can trace the development of the concept, which appears in Judaism, Islam, and other religions but reaches its fullest development in Christianity. People who are not Christians must cope with the problem of evil, but they are not obliged to cope with the problem of the Devil; they can define evil in different ways. The historian may rest content, as a historian, with describing the development of the concept. But the historical theologian is obliged to cope with the problem of the Devil, for the reason that the Devil has always been a central Christian doctrine, an integral element in Christian tradition.

He adds that, empirically, the intensity of evil around us demands a more satisfactory explanation than that Satan does not exist. He says (1981:225):

... most of us will recognize that we have experience in our lives of real evil, not just maladjustment or some other euphemistic dodge of reality, but real, conscious, purposeful hatred of the good and beautiful for their own sake and love of the ugly and twisted for their own sake. And we have the sense that the depth and intensity of this evil, though responding to the corruption that is in all of us, exceeds and transcends what could be expected in an individual human. The persistence of the idea of the Devil indicates that it continues to generate a resonance of experience in many people.”

To interpret the following references relative to their authors otherwise than literal would take some stretch of the imagination.

## **Jesus**

“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18). In the context of seventy two disciples returning after an evangelistic mission with excitement over victories they had gained over evil spirits, Jesus described this incident he had witnessed. The disciples clearly believed they had encountered demons: “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” How could this be interpreted other than that they had seen dramatic changes in people from whom demons had been expelled? Jesus responds, not in terms of a mythological explanation, but with reference to a historical fact.

In his own encounter with Satan in the desert, Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’” (Matthew 4:10). This is portrayed as an actual dialogue between Jesus and Satan. His belief in the reality of Satan is also reflected in his healing of a crippled woman of whom he said: “Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?” (Luke 13:16).

Jesus also had no illusions about the reality of Satan and his demons entering into people and occupying them. The gospels are replete with examples of demons being cast out of people, and in Luke 22:31 we have the incident of Satan entering into Judas: “Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve.”

### **Peter**

When Ananias deceived the church by selling property and donating a part of it to the church while claiming to have given the entire proceeds, Peter recognised this as being the influence of Satan: “Then Peter said, ‘Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?’”

In warnings issued in his letter, Peter refers to Satan as a “roaring lion”, actively seeking to devour the unsuspecting (1 Peter 5:8,9).

### **Paul**

In preaching to King Agrippa, Paul quoted the words of Jesus to him at his conversion: “I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am

sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me” (Acts 26:17-18). Satan is referred to here as a person, wielding power, as opposed to a mere influence in the world.

Writing to the Corinthians in the context of morality and faithfulness, Paul is in no doubt that temptation comes from Satan as a person: “Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (1 Cor. 7:5). He talks about Satan as an intelligent being, pitting his wit against ours (2 Cor. 2:11); in a deliberate act of deception when he appears as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14); as thwarting their plans (1 Thess. 2:18); and as counterfeiting miracles (2 Thess. 2:9).

All of these references, and others, indicate Paul’s belief in the literal existence of Satan.

## **John**

By contrast to Childs’s claim that the serpent of Genesis 3 “is not Satan, nor a demon, but simply one of the animals that God had made” (Childs 195:224), John believed that he *was* Satan: “The great dragon was hurled down – that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him” (Rev. 12:9), and that he influences people towards evil. He again refers to him as the serpent, adding the description, “the devil” and that he will be first bound and then released (Rev. 20:2,7).

The sum of these references can only serve to reinforce the literal existence of Satan and his demons, contrary to the beliefs of Conzelmann and Bultmann and others who deny their literal existence and relegate them to the realm of myth. Besides, the empirical examples of casting out demons and the effect of that in people in the New Testament narratives, in the experience of the church throughout its history, and many cases in present times, are evidence that demands a more solid explanation than to mythologise them. As Guthrie says

It follows logically that if a supreme agent of evil exists, there will also be an army of lesser spirits. The synoptic gospels are so full of exorcisms of demon

possessed people that no true estimate of the ministry of Jesus can be given without taking full account of evil spirits (Guthrie 1981:127).

Guthrie seriously challenges the idea that accounts of demon possession are merely first century modes of expression which have now become outdated. He says

It is not surprising that demon possession has been the subject for demythologization. But the question arises whether the mere substitution of medical terminology is a sufficient explanation of the many instances of demon possession in the synoptic gospels. These cases are not simply presented as illnesses. Indeed there is a clear distinction in the gospels between illnesses and possession. Moreover, healing of demon possession was almost always by a word of command, with the patient passive, in contrast to the healing of illnesses. There is a close tie-up between the spiritual conflict of Jesus and his commanding power over the demon world. A reinterpretation of the gospel exorcisms in psychiatric terms cannot satisfactorily explain the important place that this conflict had in the messianic mission of Jesus. It cannot, for instance, avoid the conclusion that Jesus himself accepted demon possession as a fact, and must, therefore, have either been mistaken or adapted himself to the level of the understanding of his contemporaries. Yet neither of these explanations is wholly satisfactory. The 'mistaken' view clearly impinges on our understanding of the person of Christ, and raises more acute problems than it solves. The 'adaptation' view assumes that Jesus used contemporary concepts as symbols and that the symbols may be reinterpreted without loss to the authority of Jesus (Guthrie 1981:128).

I concur with Guthrie's observation that "Modern rejection of the synoptic exorcisms is not based on the study of the text but rather on *a priori* considerations. Medical science classifies with well defined scientific principles, which make no allowance for spiritual forces as explanation of physical phenomena" (Guthrie 1981:129).

Ladd, likewise, takes issue with those who find the supernatural difficult to accept. He says

"Many modern scholars cannot accept the idea of a supernatural power, especially Jesus' words about the Jews being the children of the devil. 'It is simply inconceivable that Jesus of Nazareth ever said these words.'" These people, Ladd says, argue that such a statement is out of character of what we know of Jesus, and that these are anti-Semitic polemic by the author of the gospel. But, says Ladd

It must be admitted that the words are in character with the total teaching of the Fourth Gospel. The Jews cannot claim divine parentage, for their deeds deny it. Their attitude to him in resisting the truth which he revealed to them from the Father, and in resolving to put him to death was quite consistent

with the character of their father, the Devil, who rebelled against God whose kingdom is truth ..." (Ladd 1974:228).

Besides, the author of the gospel was himself a Jew and hardly anti-Semitic.

Oswald Sanders says

The very names applied to Satan by our Lord argue his personality. Murder is not a mere abstraction and does not exist apart from a murderer. There is no lie without a liar (John 8:44). In the Bible, moral evil is uniformly viewed as the product of personality. It exists only in the wills of personal beings, whether human or superhuman. To think otherwise is not rational.

Sanders goes on to argue that the very denial of the existence of Satan, and for that matter his demons, is one of Satan's cleverest tricks and his greatest victory. He quotes Denis de Rougemont in *La Part du Diable*:

But the devil, who is possessed with desire to imitate truth in twisting it, says to us, "I am nobody. What are you afraid of? Are you going to tremble before the non-existent? ... Satan disappears in his successes and his triumph is his incognito. The proof that the devil exists, and acts, and succeeds lies in the fact that the intelligent world does not believe in him anymore (Sanders 1975:12).

It could be added that an even subtler triumph of the devil is to have persuaded those who do believe he exists that his activities were curtailed after the New Testament period, and especially that he cannot touch the believer.

Lamin Sanneh likewise points out that belief in the supernatural was by no means extinct even by the time of the Renaissance. Referring to the supernatural as 'magic' [magic being intricately tied in with supernatural phenomena], he points out that the advance of science was never intended to nullify the reality of the supernatural, but rather to supplement it. He says

To the writers of the Renaissance ... magic and science stood at nearly opposite ends of the spectrum, but it was never remotely their intention to equate magic with obscurantism and science with progress, the one with slavery and the other with freedom in the manner we have done today. Rather the reverse. For them, magic stood for freedom and progress while science represented fatalism and absolute dogma. (Sanneh 1993:33).

He further writes:

At its simplest, writers believed that the new science should be a servant, not a master of humans. Bacon therefore urged that the new knowledge be sought for the power it puts into our hands rather than as an end in itself. It should be, in his words, 'a spouse for fruit', not a 'courtesan [sic.] for pleasure.' (Sanneh 1993:35)

## **African Theology and the Biblical Worldview**

We have seen that liberal theologians are at variance with evangelical epistemology of the historical nature of the biblical narrative, and that they have found cause to mythologise biblical teaching relating to the supernatural. We have also demonstrated that their arguments do not adequately explain how biblical authors as well as Jesus himself believed unreservedly in the reality of what they saw and experienced. We now come to examine African theology which takes a similar stance, though from a completely different perspective. Whereas liberal theology discounts the supernatural, African theology accepts it unreservedly, but discounts or circumvents biblical teaching on the supernatural. As Hesselgrave and Rommen point out:

African theology has a variety of sources: the Bible, especially the Old Testament, the Christian tradition; African history; the history of missions and the church in Africa; traditional religion and the symbols of African art, sculpture, drama, dance, and ritual. John Pobee essentially agrees with this (though he prefers to speak of African theologies in the plural) and says that he advocates a phenomenological approach to African religions *and* a literary-critical approach to the Bible which will enable African theologians to draw from Africa's "collection of myths, proverbs, invocations, prayers, incantations, rituals, songs, dreams, and so on" (Hesselgrave 1989:97).

Both Tienou and Kato would support that this is a flaw in African theology. Quoting Hesselgrave and Rommen again, "Tite Tienou says African theology is beset by major problems because so much weight is given to African sources." And Byang Kato "concludes that many African theologians 'exalt African culture, philosophy and religion beyond proportion'" (Hesselgrave 1989:97).

An example of the all-embracing nature of African theology is in the writings of John Mbiti. "Mbiti concludes from his research on the concept of God in various

African tribes that Africans already knew and worshiped the one supreme God long before the coming of the missionary” (Hesselgrave 1989:100). Hesselgrave and Rommen go on to give examples of attributes found in the concept of God in various tribal religious systems that Mbiti has identified and believes support this conclusion. But then they point out that whatever else is included in those religious systems is seen to be acceptable, in spite of their variance with a biblical worldview:

Mbiti treats data relating to various aspects of the African religious experience, whether shamanism, worship, sacrifice, or spirit involvement, looking for similar types of content (Hesselgrave 1989:100).

In Mbiti’s view, as with many other African theologians, Christianity simply brings into the mix further elements of religion to enrich the religion that was already in place prior to the arrival of Christianity. This is evident from Mbiti’s view that

If we think that these religions must be *supplanted* by Christianity, we are faced with a tremendous problem. But if we recognize that in the main they represent valid African understandings of the divine and that Christians need only *supplement* these understandings, this is indeed a strength. After all, true religion should have to do with the whole of life, with the whole of existence, with all “beingness.” Therefore, to ask a religious question should be to ask, not about detached theory, but about what actually is (Hesselgrave 1989:101).

All of this fails to take into account serious biblical warnings of embracing religions that the Bible describes as foreign gods.

... Do not look on them with pity and do not serve their gods, for that will be a snare to you ... The images of their gods you are to burn in the fire. Do not covet the silver and gold on them, and do not take it for yourselves, or you will be ensnared by it, for it is detestable to the LORD your God. Do not bring a detestable thing into your house or you, like it, will be set apart for destruction. Utterly abhor and detest it, for it is set apart for destruction (Deut 7:16, 25-26).

As regards shamanism and ancestor worship

When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who ... practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft ... or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is

detestable to the LORD (Deut 18:9-12).

Mbiti denies that African Traditional Religions are engaged in ancestor worship, but that this is veneration, such as is advocated in Scripture in paying respect to deceased ancestors:

Mbiti's assumption is that preChristian Africa knew God in a valid, albeit imperfect, way. In light of this, the anthropological data can be reinterpreted theologically so as to build upon the truth already present in the African religious experience. Reinterpreted in this way, God concepts speak of his true nature. Sacrifice, whether to God alone or to the spirits, is a valid form of worship. The medicine men are benefactors of African society. Ancestor worship is not worship as such but is reflective of the kind of profound respect for the departed which is enjoined by Scripture (Hesselgrave 1989:101).

However, there is hardly any similarity between remembering the dead and communicating with them. Often when advocates of this view refer to Scripture to support the claim, they refer to numerous biblical expressions "the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob," but this is in fact respecting the God of these deceased patriarchs, not respecting the patriarchs themselves.

Another prominent African theologian, Bolaji Idowu, also wants to include traditional African beliefs into African Christianity.

Idowu believes that the gods in African religions are ministers of the one God. Consequently representatives of all religions should seek for peaceful coexistence rather than taking a proselytizing approach. Christian influence should be exerted, if at all, in presence rather than proclamation (Hesselgrave 1989:109).

Other African theologians disagree with these views. Kato criticises Mbiti for not being thorough enough in his research, and drawing wrong conclusions. He says that

Mbiti interprets his data so as to substantiate his premises. Thus he rationalizes ancestral worship to remake it into ancestral respect. Similarly, idolatry is interpreted as the worship of the one God (Hesselgrave 1989:109).

Kato also takes issue with Idowu who, he believes, does not take Scripture seriously. He makes special mention of Idowu's commentary on Micah 4:3-5 which he quotes:

Here, in defining “total peace” as the end of religion, Micah adds startlingly the acceptance and understanding of each people in the religious context in which they lived. This would be as already asserted, because Yahweh was in control everywhere; and maybe that he [Micah] would like to have added that, therefore, every impulse to worship at all, and the resulting practice of essential worship, was of “the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth” (Hesselgrave 1989:109-110).

Kato’s observations on this commentary are reflected in this statement:

In these few words Idowu has distorted the peace of which Micah speaks by making it into the acceptance of “each people” in their own religious context. He also puts words in the prophet’s mouth when he says that “maybe. . . he would like to have added” that all worship is Yahweh’s (Hesselgrave 1989:110).

Kato observes that Idowu is espousing a relativism and universalism – that all religions are heading towards the same destination. Idowu’s position flies in the face of scriptural warnings that foreign gods are to be shunned (Deuteronomy 7:25-26), which is the exact opposite of “every impulse to worship – in the religious context in which people lived – and the resulting practice of essential worship, was ‘of the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.’”

It is not only in the area of ancestral spirits that African Traditional beliefs have corrupted the Christian gospel in some African Independent Churches. Turaki talks about the magic power of words in an ATR worldview. He cites a traditional belief that ““words have a magic power all their own” and all that is required is to use “the proper words correctly”” (Turaki 1999:190). Then he shows how this value has been brought into the church:

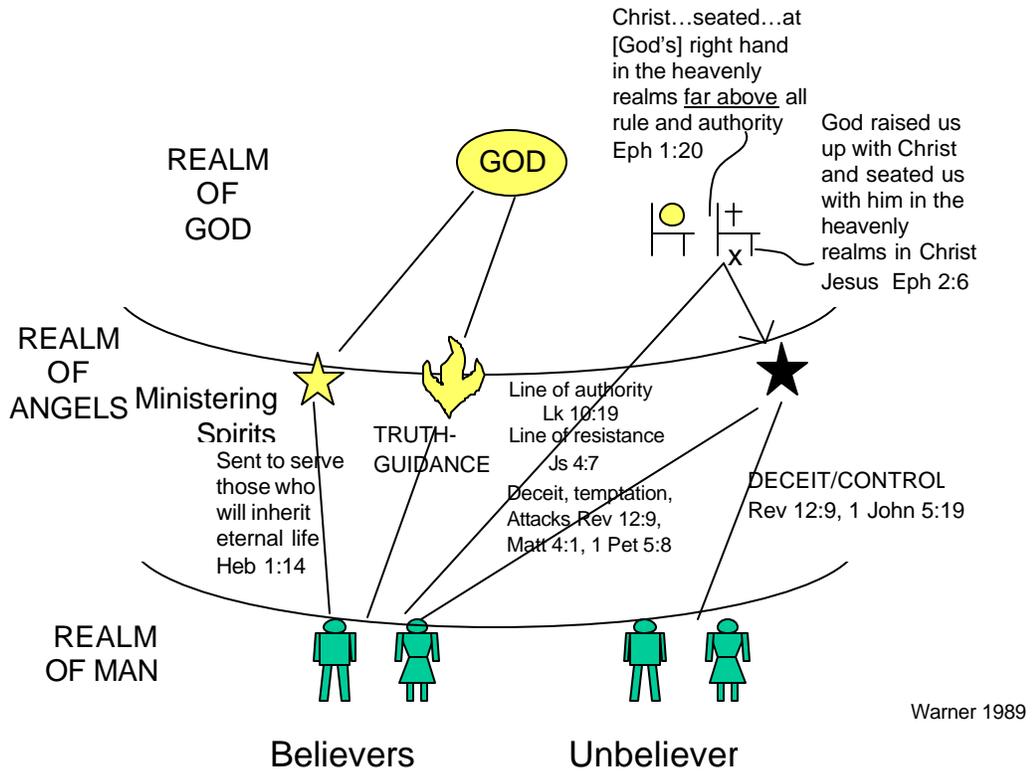
The belief in the power of words is pervasive in Africa. One needs only to look into the religious beliefs and practices of Africans, whether they are traditionalists or Christians. The African Traditional belief in the power of words and the power of blood have been reinforced by the theologies of some of the Independent Churches and the non-traditional and new Pentecostal and Charismatic groups, especially those of the Prosperity Gospel. In some cases, the theological terms and words used are couched in Christian language, but fundamentally, they are rooted in the foundations of African traditional beliefs and worldview. Thus, continuity between the pre-Christian religious and cultural heritage is emphasised, not in terms of Christian theologisation, but in terms of traditional and cultural praxis. . . . Principles for life thus developed, are usually contrary to the Christian principles for life. The Apostle Paul in Colossians 2:6-8, contrasted the principles for life according

to the Gospel of Christ from that of the philosophy of the world, according to the “traditions of men” (Turaki 1999:191).

In addition to the warnings quoted above from the Old Testament, there are also those in the New Testament, that again, warn that there are false prophets (Matt. 7:15-23), counterfeit miracles (2 Thess. 2:9), false spirits and false teachings (a different gospel) (2 Cor 11:3-4). With these warnings it becomes essential for us to avoid accepting so easily concepts from other religions, especially those that violate the teachings of Scripture.

The events of Calvary had profound significance on the subject at hand. When Jesus died and rose again it tolled the death knell for Satan’s power (1 John 3:8). Satan and his forces were defeated and the authority of Jesus over the forces of darkness were passed on to the apostles (Luke 9:1,2) and to the disciples at large (Luke 10:17, 19). Although chronologically the events in Luke 9 and 10 preceded

**Figure 10. Biblical Worldview – Authority of Believer**



Calvary, it was nevertheless Calvary that made the transition possible. Thus, we have power and authority over Satan and his demons. We nevertheless find that Satan has enormous power and is exerting that power in a depraved world. He is described by Peter as a roaring lion prowling around seeking prey. But we are assured by both James (4:7) and John (1 John 4:4) that he only has as much power as we will allow him. Figure 10 is a Biblical worldview seen from the position of the authority of the believer over Satan and his demons.

### **CONTINUITY OF PRAXIS AND BELIEF IN CHURCH HISTORY**

In their argument against the possibility of Christians being demonised, Grimsley and Miller's conclusion indicates that it is not only demonisation of Christians they object to, but the whole concept of casting out evil spirits. This is confirmed in their conclusion, which is summarised under the heading "Deliver us from Deliverance Ministries." In presenting their case, they argue with unconvincing documentation that "the church historically has not held that Christians can be demon possessed." The source quoted is an unpublished paper "Demons and Christians" written by Gordon R. Lewis, who claims that "in the early church (of Acts and subsequently) deliverance ministries ... were not continuous practices among church members" (Grimsley & Miller 7).

However, the records indicate a very different story.

The first century is covered by the New Testament, and its continuity in the New Testament church has been shown in chapter three.

In the second century we find the church to be very active in this area. Early church fathers including Justin Martyr (c.110-165 CE), Irenaeus, Tertullian (born around 160 CE), Clement of Alexandria (mid second century into the early third century – 216CE), Origen (born c. 185 and into the third century) all believed in the ongoing ministry to people oppressed by demonic forces. Here are two quotations from different sources, from many attributed to Justin Martyr:

Justin Martyr (Apology 85, 2) says that in the name of Christ, the Son of God who was crucified and rose again, every demon that is exorcised is defeated and submits

([www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith/articles/article7079.asp?action=show](http://www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith/articles/article7079.asp?action=show)).

Justin Martyr – translator Barnard – Introduction p.17

Justin was much interested in the activity of evil demons or spirits, which he believed were everywhere in the Universe. ... However, the activity of the demonic host was not beyond control. Christians exercise dominion over them in the rite of exorcism ... (Martyr/Barnard 17).

Irenaeus became Bishop in Gaul in 177. In his evaluation of a heretic, he attributes the heresy to demonisation.

But there is another among these heretics, Marcus by name...It appears probable enough that this man possesses a demon as his familiar spirit, by means of whom he seems able to prophesy (Arnold 1997:60).

Tertullian wrote

So at our touch and breathing,...they leave at our command the bodies they have entered, unwilling, and distressed, and before your very eyes put to shame (*Apology 23*) (Arnold 1997:208).

Clement of Alexandria and Origen take us into the third century, where we see that this ministry has by no means been terminated.

Origen wrote

They do not *get the power which they seem to possess* [to drive out demons] by any *incantations* but by the name of Jesus with the recital of the histories about him. For when these are pronounced they have often made daemons to be driven out of men, and especially when those who utter them speak with real sincerity and genuine belief (Origen 1980:9 translated by Chadwick 62).

When we come to the fourth century, we find the ministry still active.

Arnold (:112) writes that

The ministry of deliverance was so important in the early church that Eusebius cites a Roman bishop named Cornelius (c. AD 250) who says that there were fifty-two exorcists serving in the church at this time (Eusebius, *History of the Church* 6.43).

John Crysostom moves us into the later fourth and early fifth century, and Arnold comments ([www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2001/011/5.58.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2001/011/5.58.html) )

Church history contains many accounts of Christians engaging in similar [Gerasene demoniac] battles. In fact, in his exposition of this passage, the illustrious fourth-century Christian leader John Chrysostom noted, “These things anyone may see happening now also!”

Moving on into the second millennium, we find that a deliverance ministry is still seen as being both biblical and current. Arnold cites the following first and second millennium authors who continued to hold to a belief that this ministry is ongoing:

Numerous other accounts and excerpts could be given from Christian leaders throughout the post-Nicene age, the Byzantine Empire, and from luminaries such as Thomas Aquinas [13<sup>th</sup> century], John Calvin, Martin Luther [15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries], and the Puritans. ... They all took the realm of the demonic seriously and believed that Christians could be profoundly influenced by evil spirits. Yet they also were thoroughly convinced that believers had authority in the Lord Jesus Christ to send these spirits packing. As Martin Luther said regarding the devil in his famous hymn, “one little word shall fell him.” That word is Jesus (Arnold 1997:112).

The early church fathers also believed that this ministry extended to Christians as well. Arnold (110) refers to Hermas, dating from 100-150CE and says

In one passage he gives perspective on demonic “oppression” in response to a defeated Christian’s concern that no matter how hard believers try, “the devil is hard and oppresses [katadunasteu□] them.” Hermas protests that it is not inevitable that Christians should be oppressed if they put their faith in God and remain filled with the Holy Spirit: “...he comes to those who are partially empty [of the Holy Spirit], and finding a place he enters them, and then he does what he wants with them, and they can become enslaved to him (*Shepherd of Hermas*, Mandate 12.5, italics by Arnold) (Arnold :110).

In an earlier passage, Arnold comments from his research in relation to the church in the first three centuries that “Demons were often cast out of people as the church evangelised, but it appears that the primary context for the casting out of evil spirits was in the classes for new Christians” (Arnold 1997:107).

Thus it can be seen that the claims that a ministry of deliverance died out after the end of the first century era is not substantiated by the historical evidence. On the contrary, it is only in more recent years that this ministry has died out following the blunting of biblical spirituality by enlightened scientific knowledge. Kurt Koch confirms this development:

More recently, as the age of enlightenment dawned, belief in the demonic has declined among people in the West, although it did not disappear altogether (Koch 1973:31).

Even so, liturgies in some denominations still include reference to renouncing Satan. Anderson (1990:187) says

The early church included in its public declaration of faith, "I renounce you, Satan, and all your works and ways." The Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and many other liturgical churches still require this renunciation as part of confirmation. For some reason it has disappeared from most evangelical churches.

## **SCIENCE AND RELIGION**

The question arises whether biblical theology of the spirit world is a science and can be scientifically proven. A dictionary definition of science is "Branch of knowledge (esp. one that can be conducted on scientific principles), organized body of the knowledge that has been accumulated on a subject" (Sykes 1014). Using this definition, this subject satisfies the criteria as a science. A great deal of knowledge has been accumulated and has been organised in the large amount of literature appearing. The study of the spirit world is gaining ever increasing popularity and hundreds of volumes of literature are filling up the book shelves. Empirical studies abound and are serving to dispel the myth that biblical references to evil spirits and their expulsion from people's lives are simply an uninformed way of explaining phenomena that today fall under the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry. Missionaries returning to their western sending countries are reporting many incidents of experiences on the mission field that match the cases reported in Scripture. Peterson writes

Theologians all over the world have been increasingly shocked by the evidence they have witnessed, and are acknowledging that a Christian can be invaded. Until a few years ago, when the Lord began sending us people who were clearly born again and just as clearly controlled to some extent by demonic forces, we too held the view that a Christian could not be possessed (Peterson 1989:113).

If cause and effect are regarded as scientific principles of evaluation, then there is plenty of evidence that demonstrates that certain causes result in experiences that can be identified as demonic in nature. Likewise, empirically, the application of certain

biblical methods to people with certain symptoms result in freedom from those symptoms. Warner (1989) calls the causes that bring a person into bondage “Door Openers.” He identifies these in two categories. The first is those causes that are the direct result of a person’s activities, and the second is causes over which a person has no control. In the first category he includes certain personal sins including occultic activity, sexual sins and major sins, such as murder. In the second category he includes ancestral sins, victimisation and curses. These are the result of activities of other people. Other counselors concur that these contribute to demonic bondage in a person’s life.

Interestingly, the Bible talks freely about demons and evil spirits, and the New Testament in particular, talks about the expulsion of demons from people’s lives. But there is no clear statement in the New Testament how these demons gain entrance into a person’s life. There is, however, a significant correlation between door openers as identified by modern Christian counselors and the classification of some sins in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament there are no cases recorded of men of God casting out evil spirits. It appears that this was a new ministry introduced and taught by Jesus.

Consequently, the Old Testament had a different way of dealing with sins that were door openers. In the lists of sins and their penalties included in the Pentateuch, those sins that today are regarded as door openers carried one of two penalties, either excommunication or death. These are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

**DOOR OPENERS**

**PERSONAL GUILT**

CAUSES	PENALTIES
<p><b>Occult</b> Drugs, Cultic religions, Pseudo Christian cults, Alternative Healing, Satanic games &amp; music, Martial Arts, Divination, Necromancy, Satanism, Dedication of children to spiritual forces, downplay God’s sanctity</p> <p><b>Sexual Sins</b> Some sins appear to be more severe than others, since some carry the death penalty while others are penalised by excommunication.</p>	<p><b>Death Penalty:</b> Lev. 20:2 (dedicating children to Molech), Ex 22:18 (Sorcery – <i>mageia</i>=magic), Ex 22:20, Deut 13:9 (sacrifice to idols), Ex 22:20 (medium, spiritist), Ex 35:2 (sabbath violation)</p> <p><b>Excommunication:</b> Lev 20:6 (medium, spiritist), Deut 18:10 (Witchcraft – <i>pharmakeia</i>=use of drugs), Ex 12:15, Lev 7:20;17:10 (disobeying God’s sanctity laws).</p> <p><b>Death Penalty:</b> Ex 22:19, Lev 20:15,16 (Bestiality), Lev 20:10 (Adultery), Lev 20:13 (Homosexuality), Lev 20:10-12 (Variety sexual sins)</p> <p><b>Excommunication:</b> Lev 18 lists a variety of sexual sins. Verse 29 marks these for excommunication, Lev 20:17 (Sex with siblings)</p>
<p><b>Major Sins</b> Murder (which includes abortion), rape, robbery, and persistent sins of rebellion</p>	<p><b>Death Penalty</b> Ex. 21:12,14 (Murder), Deut. 21:20,21 (Persistent rebellion)</p>

**BEYOND ONE’S CONTROL**

<p><b>Ancestral Sins</b> When parents are involved in “door-opening” sins, their descendants to three or four generations may be held in bondage</p>	<p>Ex 20:3-6, Deut 5:9, (Sins of parents will affect offspring to three or four generations)</p>
<p><b>Victimisation</b> This includes experiences such as rape, sexual molestation, physical, mental &amp; spiritual abuse</p>	
<p><b>Curses</b></p>	<p>There are numerous texts indicating curses are a reality</p>

Thus it must be concluded that the study of the spirit world can rightly be described as a science. Biblical exorcism in no way conflicts with science, but is a science in its own right. It is the modern ‘enlightenment’ thinking that denies the reality of the phenomena of the spirit world. Studied systematically, there can be no question of the validity of the biblical ministry of deliverance, either in the days of the

New Testament or in this current day. The discipline of psychology enjoys far more acceptance as a science in the modern world, even though it has no better proof for its effectiveness than has a ministry of deliverance. In fact chapter five will show that there are cases where psychological and psychiatric therapy have failed when spiritual deliverance has succeeded.

## **CONTRASTS BETWEEN BIBLICAL AND ANIMISTIC POWER ENCOUNTERS**

There can be no question that genuine healings take place both in African Traditional Religion and in the African Independent Church Movement.

### **Healing in African Traditional Religion**

One of the attractions of ATR is the fact that the religion offers healing for various ailments and these healings are often successful. Bourdillon (1990:20) although ascribing it to a material motive, nevertheless shows its effectiveness:

One area in which ritual very often is performed for a material motive, and in which it can be efficacious, is the area of sickness and healing.... Healing rites often, though not always, do achieve what those performing them hope to achieve.

Steyn confirms the efficacy of animistic healing. Not only is it seen to be effective in its own society, but it is gaining ever increasing recognition in a broader context. He classifies Medicine Men in a list of specialists and says

The distinction between what may be purely occultic or magical, and what may be actually medical, is most difficult to discern. The treatment may be based on medical properties found in various concoctions made out of leaves, barks, roots, fibers and even animal parts. Some of the claims for cures border on the magical - an obvious involvement with supernatural powers, as evidenced by a sign outside the offices of a Nigerian medicine man offering to provide cures for:

“Children's illness; Convulsions; Stomach, Muscle and many others. Rheumatism; Jaundice; Eye troubles; Chest pain; Backache; Worms; Dysentery Purge; Cough; Gonorrhoea; Spleen and other stomach disorders. Treatments are given to pregnant and unpregnant women. Miscarriages for quick and sure relief. Remember that Specialist Native doctor cures many kinds of sickness which English medicine cannot cure.”

The advertisement testifies to the amazing abilities claimed by medicine men, and they do have obvious successes in the many areas listed,

but accomplished in association with powers beyond the natural, and not merely with the prescription of natural medicines (Steyn 1989:168).

He quotes Harner to show that, not only are the practices of animistic Medicine Men gaining recognition in the broader context, but are in fact being emulated.

The burgeoning field of wholistic medicine shows a tremendous amount of experimentation involving the reinvention of many techniques long practiced in shamanism, such as visualization, altered states of consciousness, aspects of psychoanalysis, hypnotherapy, meditation, positive attitude, stress reduction and mental and emotional expression of personal will for health and healing. In a sense, shamanism is being re-invented in the West precisely because it is needed (Harner in Steyn 1989:168).

### **Healing in the African Independent Churches**

In many instances healing in the AICs are difficult to differentiate from healings in ATR. In such cases it is necessary to question the source of power for the healing that is accomplished. Ngubane (1984:88) quotes an instructive observation from Sundkler which demonstrates this point:

Sundkler (1961: 237-242) gives an interesting example of adaptation and confrontation (which he regards as Bantu syncretism) under the chapter "New Wine in Old Wineskins". Two groups come together at dawn to a stream; one is of novices for divination led by the diviner Dlakude, the other is of the Sabbath Zionist Church led by the prophet Elliot Buthelezi. The two groups are each on the opposite sides of the stream. Their behaviour appears very much alike, yet they represent two different things. They both dance around the leader as they come half-running down the slopes of the stream. They sing similar melodies, but the words are not quite the same. One addresses itself to the traditional God and traditional spirits; the other addresses itself to the Christian God and the Holy Spirit. The traditional group gets first to the stream and performs its rites of purification and strengthening, using the stream water mixed with some traditional medicine (ubulawu), they drink this frothy mixture and begin to vomit. In the meantime the other group is waiting. A short but sarcastic verbal confrontation occurs when the prophet asks the novices' leader: "When are you going to finish, preacher?" After the first group finished, the second group begins its rites, using the same stream water, but blessed this time. The prophet scoops the water into the mouth of the patient and administers it "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit", and the group is told that this blessed water will take away illness from the sick person. Then follows the laying on of hands on the patient and the calling on the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues by the prophet and the patient. Thereafter the whole group drinks of the blessed water and all vomit on the rocks".

We come across some paradoxes in the New Testament which we must address.

On one occasion the disciples complained to Jesus that a group of people were doing things they believed was their sole prerogative.

“Teacher,” said John, “we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.” “Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us” (Mark 9:38-40).

On another occasion Paul pointed out that some people were preaching the gospel through false motives.

Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. (Philippians 1:14-18).

Both these cases could easily be compared with a present day situation when one might say that as long as Christ is preached, it matters not by whom or how it is done. Taking healing, for example, which was a significant part of Jesus’ ministry, one might say as long as healing is accomplished, the means are not that important. However, both the cases quoted above can be qualified, because both Paul and Jesus had different things to say in different circumstances. Jesus, for example, made a strong point that simply using his name to accomplish miracles was not adequate justification. He showed that it was possible even for false prophets to do miraculous things in his name:

Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ (Matthew 7:21-23).

It would be difficult to reconcile this statement of Jesus with the one quoted from Mark 9 above, which appear to be contradictory, were it not for the clarification that Paul gives us when he shows us that simply using the name ‘Jesus’ does not give it

the character of the name of Jesus as is implied in the use of the word. Addressing the Corinthians on the issue of false prophets he says

But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough (1 Cor 11:3-4).

The qualification, then, is the source of power used in the different situations. When Jesus responded to John in Mark 9, he obviously acknowledged that the disciple, though not one of the twelve, and maybe not even known to them, was a genuine disciple of Jesus, whereas the claimants in Matthew 7 were not true disciples, and presumably accomplished their miraculous works through the power of the lawless one that Paul mentions in 2 Thessalonians:

For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders ... (2 Thess 2:7-9).

Furthermore, using the power of the lawless one exposes both the practitioner and the recipient to forces of darkness to be preyed upon in terms of the chart appearing on page 124. This opens the door to demonic oppression. Warner cites examples of cases where people have been miraculously healed in healing services 'in the name of Jesus' but where the theology and lifestyles of practitioners fell clearly into the Matthew 7 category, and those healed have suffered other symptoms instead, such as depression. When the healing was renounced and reversed, the depression departed.<sup>13</sup>

### **PITFALLS AND ERRONEOUS TEACHING ON SPIRITUAL WARFARE**

C. S. Lewis says in the foreword to his Screwtape Letters, "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve

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<sup>13</sup> Course on Power Encounter, Johannesburg 1989.

in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them” (Lewis 1942:9). Commenting on this quotation in the Foreword to Ankerberg and Weldon’s “The Coming Darkness” Walter Martin says “We are living in a period when both are alarmingly evident” (Ankerberg & Weldon 1993:5). The tendency in western Christianity is to fall into the first of these two errors. And along with this disbelief comes the danger of becoming involved in occultic activity without realising the spiritual significance of it.

The other danger, however, not seen from the unbeliever’s point of view and involvement in the occult, but from the believer’s point of view, is to interpret every situation in terms of the demonic. For instance, every sickness and every failure is attributed to demonisation. As we have already seen, there were some cases in Scripture when illnesses or physical conditions were attributed to demonisation. But to say that every illness or physical weakness falls into this category is to ignore the many cases when demonisation was not involved. We have seen the example of the two cases of deaf/mute men in Mark 7 and 9 respectively, where one condition was the result of demonisation and the other was not. We may also cite the case of the man born blind whom Jesus healed. When asked “who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus responded “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life” (John 9:2-3). The view that every ailment has a demonic source also tends to blame demons on every poor decision and takes away the believer’s personal responsibility, and tends to blame every moral failure on demons: “Satan made me do it.”

It is also important to adopt a holistic approach to counseling. Van Rensburg (1999:78) rightly warns that

... not only the causes of involvement in occultism must be taken into account, but also its effect on the whole person. The occult distressed person is a human being who is a body-and-soul unity. In the process of deliverance this implies that one should not only concentrate on saving the soul. The physical affliction that accompanies occult distress, should therefore also receive the attention of the caring pastor. It is possible that the person may be terrified by the consequences of his involvement with occultism, the intimidation of “friends” aimed at preventing them from breaking with the organization and the trauma of the occult manifestations.

A further potential danger is to assume that deliverance solves all problems.

While my experience has been that problems that are clearly demon related are immediately eliminated at deliverance (as will be shown in empirical cases in chapter five), it is by no means always the case. As alluded to by van Rensburg in the above quotation, a person's problems may often be a mix of demonic activity and other psychological problems. This is an added reason why a holistic approach to counseling is necessary.

### **THE NEED FOR A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY**

Because of the deceptive nature of Satan, whom Jesus describes as the father of lies (John 8:44), and because he disguises himself as the angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), it is essential to have a sound biblical theology relating to spiritual warfare. The confusion surrounding the teaching on the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts gives rise to the potential for deception. Some empirical examples will help to elucidate this point. When counseling an ex-Satanist, he said that he and a group of peers had been assigned to curse churches that practiced glossolalia contrary to the teaching of Scripture. When the entire congregation was noisily exercising their "gift" of tongues corporately (see the prohibition in 1 Corinthians 14:27), they would pronounce curses on the church, which no one could distinguish because they could not be heard above the noise, neither were interpretations offered.

A second example is when demons were being cast out of a man, but there was evidence that the man was not completely released. After prayer and discernment it transpired that this man had received the gift of tongues by coercion, rather than by the determination of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:11). When he renounced the "gift" he was immediately set free, substantiating again the reality of counterfeit gifts spoken of by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:9.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **APPLICATION OF BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW IN MISSIONS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

If Christian mission activity has come under fire at all, it has been in the area of being too culturally oriented, which is to say that the Christian message has been presented with all the influences of the cultural background of the bearer of the message. Many critics have written comprehensively about this. Troeltsch, for example, comes to the conclusion that “the gospel and Western culture are indistinguishable to the extent that people cannot speak of the one without implying the other” (Sanneh 1993:121). Sanneh comments on that statement that

Two pessimistic conclusions are drawn from this: first that Christianity has become so culture specific that it is incommunicable cross-culturally; and second, that non-Western converts face the doubly impossible burden of ‘Westernization’ and ‘Christianization’ simultaneously (Sanneh 1993:121).

The problem with this state of affairs is that the westernised gospel is tainted with a western culture that has little to do with biblical Christianity.

This is also the complaint of many other African theologians. Mbiti, for instance, believes that the missionary effort in Africa has largely been a failure, and has his reasons for making this claim. Hesselgrave and Rommen make this observation:

Mbiti believes that in spite of the growth of the church in Africa and the fact that almost one-third of his own Akamba tribe are Christians the missionary effort in Africa has largely been a failure. Missionaries have been unable to contextualize the gospel with an understanding of and appreciation for African thought and religion. As a result the gospel has not yet been made relevant to Africans, conversions have not been real, and African Christianity is superficial (Hesselgrave 1989:99).

Sanneh goes on to point out that Troeltsch's position has been seriously questioned by several contemporary Western scholars. Toynbee believes this is a passing phase in the expansion of religion. He says that

Toynbee pressed for a fresh view in which the Greek scientific metaphysics of the first four centuries of the Church no longer holds sway for the people of today whose worldview may be different. For one thing cumulative construction of the universe today demands a shift of interpretation (Sanneh 1993:121).

In these brief quotations we have a significant example of what the real problem is. Troeltsch recognises that the Christianity that has been proclaimed by western missionaries has been submerged in the western culture to the extent that the gospel cannot be distinguished from the culture. That culture is one that has been significantly influenced by the enlightenment age through which we have come. Toynbee is a product of that enlightenment influence and demands a shift in thinking from the "primitive" of the New Testament age, of which Jesus was a product, to the modern thinking of the present age. Mbiti also recognises the shortcomings of the western-cultured gospel and demands a contextualisation of the gospel to make it relevant to African thought. However, what Mbiti really wants is an enculturation of the gospel so that African thought and religion become a part of the gospel just as western thought and enlightenment have become part of the western gospel. But the one is as defective as the other. The western gospel is irrelevant to African society because it fails, inter alia, to take into account the significant presence of spiritual forces in the every day thinking of Africans. Bondage and plague by evil spiritual forces is part of every day life. But African theology is not the answer, because it doesn't look for the gospel's power to overcome these forces of evil, but seeks to accommodate them and give them status they do not deserve. What is needed is a pure, unadulterated, biblical theology presented without compromise as to its content, but contextualised as to its presentation. Warner (1986:66) has observed that

One of the most glaring gaps in our missionary curriculums is in our failure to help missionaries understand the reality of demons in the world today and to equip them to deal with demons from a position of spiritual authority.

Since evangelical Christendom places so much emphasis on the need to be true to Scripture both in doctrine and practice, this chapter will be devoted to the application of biblical teaching to missions in the area of spiritual warfare. After making a general statement of how a biblical worldview should be applied, the remainder of the chapter will be largely empirical, demonstrating from case studies that power encounters as practiced in New Testament times are still applicable and the practice still works today. Empirical studies will be drawn both from researchers and practitioners around the world, and supplemented with empirical cases from my own experiences.

## **THE VALIDITY OF DRAWING CONCLUSIONS FROM EVIDENCE**

### **Modern Missionaries**

In our evangelical positions we are justifiably wary of formulating theology from experience rather than allowing Scripture to be the source and authority of our theology. We are quick to criticise those branches of the Christian faith that place more emphasis on experience than they do on the Word of God. Two dangers result from allowing experience to formulate theology: one is that Scripture is taken out of context to make it conform to the experience. The other is that the frustration of not being able to honestly find Scripture to support the experience leads to dismissal of the importance of Scripture, which in turn leads to the acceptance of “a prophetic word” as superceding Scripture to validate practice. Since both Jesus and Paul warned about false prophets with their supernatural powers (Matthew 7:15-23; 2 Thess. 2:9) our caution is justified. However, we need to be consistent in our application of the rule. In evangelical circles we read the New Testament accounts of casting out evil spirits and miraculous signs, but since we do not see these occurrences in practice in modern times, we have shaped our theology to suit our experience, dismissing almost all supernatural phenomena as belonging only to the New Testament period. Indeed, we minimise as either invalid or insignificant such miracles or supernatural phenomena as do occur. McGee (2001:145) points out that

. . . while the educational legacy of Duff has been endlessly recounted in histories of missions, few people today know about the miraculous events surrounding the introduction of the Christian faith in Myanmar. Historians of missions and missiologists have generally ignored these kinds of reports, ironically crucial pieces to the puzzle of how Christianity developed in non-

Western countries. Consequently, this exclusion has seriously limited the insights of historical and missiological analysis. To correct misapprehended interpretations, such stories must be considered. Historians may have reservations about the wide-angle lens of providential narratives, but they cannot afford to crop them out of the picture.

In support of his allegation, McGee (2001:145) gives the following story from Duff's experience:

In 1839 Alexander Duff, the renowned Scottish missionary to India, wrote about the role of Christian education in training indigenous teachers and preachers of the Gospel. "With such an aim," said Duff, "Missionaries of the Church of Scotland have been sent forth . . . in the absence of miracles." Teaching school in Calcutta, he was apparently unaware of what other missionaries working in Burma (now Myanmar) were experiencing during the same period in their work among the Karens. Venturing into the mountains, Jonathan and Deborah Wade lost their way until they came upon a Karen house. An elderly man sitting on the veranda gazed on them for a few moments in silence and then called out, "The teacher has arrived; the teacher has arrived!" Soon a crowd from the neighborhood gathered, for they had received a prophecy telling them that "the teacher is in the jungle, and will call on you. You must . . . listen to his precepts." As a result, the Gospel received a warm reception, converts were baptized, and a permanent mission station established.

Denying the validity of the supernatural, German Reformed historian Philip Schaff wrote:

No transition in the history of the Church [was] so sudden, abrupt, and radical as that from the apostolic to the post-apostolic age. God himself . . . established an impassable gulf. . . . The apostolic age is the age of miracles" (McGee 2001:145).

Presbyterian theologian Benjamin B. Warfield concurred.

In his judgment the extraordinary "gifts of power" of the apostles had served to authenticate them as the "authoritative founders" of the church. In turn, they conferred this capability on their own disciples. But as the latter gradually passed off the scene, so did the demonstrations of miraculous power. Despite Anglican attempts to defend the occurrences of miracles into the patristic age, Warfield would have none of it. In his estimation, the "great harvest of miracles" that came with the evolution of Roman Catholicism grew from the tares of "heathendom" (McGee 2001:149).

Speckman (2001:158) suggests that the reason for this dates back to the sixteenth century when scholars viewed miracles skeptically. Then he adds

The birth of Newtonian physics added impetus to skepticism, a development which was to become a distinguishing factor between a scientific and non-scientific scholar. For example, one of the most influential theologians of this century, Bultmann, dismissed miracles as myths.

As has already been seen in chapter three, there is no biblical support or justification for relegating supernatural phenomena only to the New Testament period. We must conclude, therefore, that our claim to a belief in the Bible as the Word of God, and our sole authority for faith and practice remains only a theory in many evangelical circles since there is a discrepancy between what we see in Scripture and what we have made our theology to state. Paul Hiebert found himself very uncomfortable over this issue as expressed by Wagner:

My colleague, Paul G. Hiebert ... mentions that when John the Baptist sent messengers to ask Jesus if he was the Messiah, the answer came back in terms of power to heal the sick and cast out demons rather than in terms of logical proofs. "When I read that passage as a missionary in India," Hiebert says, "I had a sense of uneasiness." He confesses that he was trained to present Christ with rational arguments rather than through demonstrations of supernatural power. He adds, "In particular, the confrontation with spirits that seemed so natural a part of Christ's ministry belonged in my mind to a separate world of the miraculous – far from ordinary everyday experiences" (Wagner 1988:146-147).

As pointed out by Hiebert in the above quotation, Jesus appealed to the empirical to support his claim to be the Messiah (Matthew 11:2-5).

Compatibility between doctrine and praxis is essential. If we believe the Scripture to be our authority, we must practice its teaching. If our praxis falls short of the didactic of Scripture we need to examine our premisses and conclusions. In other words, our correct evangelical position needs to be biblical in doctrine and effective in practice. Anything short of that places a question mark on its credibility. In everyday life, we are reluctant to invest in something on a salesman's promise of a future benefit without some kind of track record to give us confidence of the fulfillment of

that promise. God promises us future glory but gives us many experiences of him along the way. In the New Testament we often find an acceptance of the gospel because of its effectiveness in meeting the physical needs of the people. Following are a few examples of that.

## **Biblical Examples**

### **The apostles in general**

The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. ... more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number (Acts 5:12-14).

### **Philip in Samaria**

Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city. ... But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women (Acts 8:4-8).

### **Paul to Elymas the sorcerer when he put up an opposition to the gospel**

“Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind. ...” Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord (Acts 13:11-12).

### **In the ministry of Jesus**

The reactions to his miraculous signs were often that they praised God (Matthew 9:8; Mark 2:12; Luke 7:16; 18:43). Jesus evidently approved of this. When Jesus was in dialogue with his disciples shortly before his death, helping them to understand the true nature of his relationship with the Father, he appealed to his miracles as confirmation of his claims:

Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves (John 14:11).

On another occasion, when a royal official came to Jesus asking for help for his dying son, it was the healing power of Jesus that brought him to faith. Jesus had assured him that his son would live and the official returned home:

While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour." Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and all his household believed (Jn 4:51-53).

Jesus' power over the evil spirits contributed to the rapid spread of his popularity, and with it, his message. Mark wastes no time in demonstrating this, recording this fact in his very first chapter:

Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!"

"Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him."

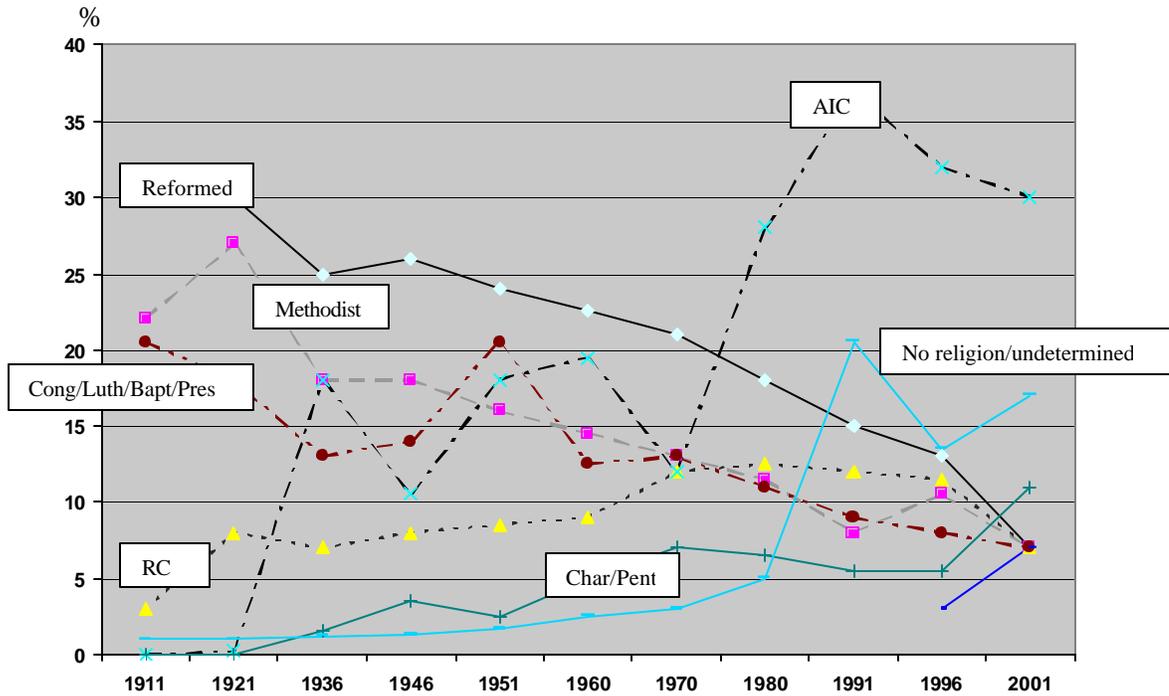
News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee (Mark 1:23-28).

### **In modern evangelism**

The same is true today. It is interesting that growth in the spirit churches of the African Initiated Churches has far outstripped growth in mainline churches over a number of decades. Over a period from 1946 to 1980, Oosthuizen gave an example of comparisons between the Methodist Church and the AIC, showing a decline from 12.9% to 9.3% in the Methodist Church and a growth of 9.6% to 29.3% in the AIC (Froise 1989:29). This is a significant turnaround, and even though we may question the source of supernatural power in the AIC, nevertheless, the fact of it attracts adherence. This trend has, however changed in recent years. Figure 11 shows a decline in the AIC since 1991 and an increase in Pentecostal and charismatic

churches. All other denominations in South Africa are on the decline, with the exception of Baptists, that doesn't show up in this chart. One can only conclude from this that AIC adherents are switching to Pentecostal and Charismatic churches as they gain confidence in these denominations (M. Froise 2004:3). Ron Steele of the Rhema

**Figure 11 – Fall-off in AIC Attendance**



Church in Randburg claims that 60% of Rhema's congregation is now black<sup>14</sup>.

The recent church growth explosion can be attributed largely to signs and wonders that are seen in some evangelistic efforts. Peter Wagner has done extensive research in this area and, though not he himself a Pentecostal, has become convinced that the supernatural phenomena taking place in Pentecostal churches are responsible for their phenomenal growth. Schenk concurs. He says (2001:101) "The movement has been a major force in world evangelization and has exerted deep influence on the global Christian community." It is also true that not all supernatural phenomena are of God. But in spite of that, they still contribute to numerical growth. Why then, should we not encourage those practices that are of God so as to expand the Kingdom of God? Here are Wagner's observations from the spread of Christianity in South America:

<sup>14</sup> Private Conversation between Ron Steele and Marjorie Froise, Randburg May 2004.

In Guayaquil, Ecuador, the reality of divine healing took many Christians by surprise. ... One factor that contributed heavily to [Foursquare crusade's] success has not yet been mentioned: divine healing was one of the keys to baptizing 1,500 new Christians and planting seven new churches in six weeks (Wagner 1978:124).

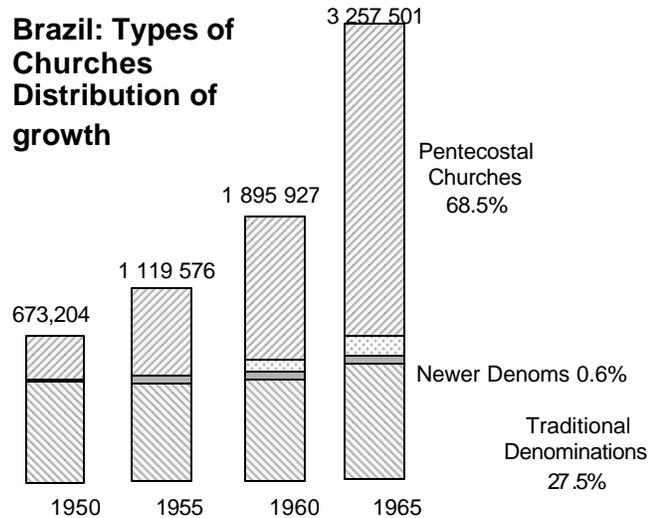
The value of any religion lies in what it has to offer. If it can meet present needs, it is that much more appealing.

Wagner refers to Aaron Johnson's assessment of the South American church growth movement in a work entitled *Authority Over the Spirits: Brazilian Spiritism and Evangelical Church Growth*. Johnson writes:

Without building the power encounter into your doctrine and practice, you cannot be effective in reaching the millions of Latin Americans who are subject to demonic activity of one kind or another. Exorcism of demons is a part of the ministry of almost all Latin American Pentecostal churches, and Johnson feels that, at least in Brazil, it is the most important key to Pentecostal church growth (Wagner 1978:135-136).

In their jointly authored book, Read, Monteresso and Johnson show graphically (Fig 12) how church growth in Brazil happened from 1950 to 1965:

**Figure 12.**  
Distribution of church growth in Brazil



Nor is this phenomenon occurring only in South America. It is becoming a world-wide phenomenon. Wagner writes

Dramatic stories of power evangelism such as these are emerging from virtually every area of the globe. One of the largest local churches in Africa is the Deeper Life Bible Church of Lagos, Nigeria, pastored by W. F. Dumuyi. Located in the center of the city, it meets in a gigantic sanctuary seating over 13,000 and is filled several times each Sunday. In 1986 the church reported 12,000 members, up from 1,500 members 10 years previously. One of the reasons for its explosive growth is that word of the healing power of God has spread throughout the city. Deeper Life member John Danuma, for example, had suffered from leprosy for years. As he tells it, "literally every part of my body had been eaten off. My thighs were the worst. They were mutilated; my flesh was like frog's skin. Nauseating odors exuded from my body. . . . Eating was as painful as death" (Wagner 1988:72).

Sterk (1992:371) maintains that

In areas of the world where animistic cultures are resistant to the gospel, a ministry of healing that demonstrates God's power is indispensable to the effective communication of the gospel and the growth of the church.

He continues his article by telling the story of Martin, a Tzotzil Indian from Mexico who had spent all his money and engaged in many incantations, rituals, sacrifices and blood ceremonies to tribal gods for the healing of his son. None of this had helped, and when he went to the city market to buy more candles and incense for yet another ceremony, Christians told him of a more powerful God who healed without expensive sacrifices.

Shortly after, Martin came to our door carrying his weakened son, Petul. We told him about the God of which he had heard in the market and then prayed that God would miraculously heal his son. A trip to the doctor had confirmed what Petul's father had already been told by the shamans: Petul would die! . . . God completely healed Petul! And as a result, Martin and his extended family put their faith in the all-powerful God, and the church began to grow in that village (Sterk 1992:371-372).

Campus Crusade's *Jesus* film has had a phenomenal effect around the world, and particularly where animism prevails. The healing and casting out of demons ministry of Jesus plays no insignificant role in this. Wagner says:

So what does this [technological perfection] mean? It means very little, as a matter of fact, in technological societies such as the U.S. Few American pastors even know of the film, and those who have seen it have not been overly impressed. But the situation is totally different in non-technological areas of the Third World. When the film is shown, sometimes against the

whitewashed wall of a building, in a remote village of India or Nepal the effect is dramatic. As far as many of those people are concerned, Jesus and His disciples have visited their village in person. When they see Jesus healing the sick and casting out demons, they are deeply impressed, because what He does relates so directly to their daily life. Many people they know and love are sick and demonized, including themselves in many cases. No one is around to raise problems of textual criticism or to mention Bultmann's theories of demythologization or to warn that what Jesus did was for a past dispensation, as we are accustomed to hearing in many of our Western churches today. No. For them at the top of their agenda is fear of evil spirits, and a chief felt need is for power to overcome their influence. Apparently this Jesus who has come to visit them has such power. (Wagner 1988: 75-76).

The victory of the Cross is more significant than many evangelicals are prepared to give credit for. It is far more than simply providing for eternal life in the presence of God in heaven and a victorious Christian life until we are promoted to that bliss. It is victory over the forces of evil in whatever form they may appear. Newport cites George Ladd's interpretation of Colossians 2:15, saying that Ladd

understands the verse to mean that Christ has disarmed the spiritual powers, stripping them of their insignia of rank or of their arms. Thus the verse states that by His death Christ triumphed over His spiritual enemies, winning a divine triumph over the cosmic powers.

Newport continues to state that

This view of the Cross forms the primary basis for the exercise of power over the forces of the enemy. The Christ who achieved this victory and confirmed it by His resurrection is the one who said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18, 19). We are delegated by this commission to enforce the victory won at the Cross in our ministry of planting the Church around the world and in our daily lives (Quoted in Warner 1989:58).

Tim Warner suggests that "more physical problems have a demonic involvement than we have recognized. And as a result Satan wins another round in the spiritual war by taking a Christian soldier out of the conflict." There are many cases in missionary annals of Christian workers who have been defeated as a result of not knowing how to respond to or even recognize spiritual attack. Warner tells the story of a young lady missionary who had been teaching in Colombia, South America. She had become so physically debilitated that she couldn't function normally and was forced to return

home.

After two years of going from doctor to doctor and clinic to clinic without any help, she became so discouraged that she decided to give up even trying to be a Christian. Although she had been in Satan's territory, where demonic activity was known to be very prevalent, no one had seriously suggested that the cause of her problem might be demonic. But on the morning she decided to put her Bible on the shelf, the Lord said to her, "Why don't you fast and pray and cast them out?" She knew very little about dealing with demons, but she decided that she had nothing to lose but her problem, so she decided to try.

Her first attempts at prayer were futile. No words would come out. She therefore decided to write a basic command against demons on a card and read it every thirty minutes during the day. After reading it the first time, she was able to pray, and she went through the day reading her Bible, praying, and reading her command to the demons every thirty minutes. By the end of the day she was a new person. She said, "the change was so great, I could hardly take it [in]." Yet, it was a week before she could accept the fact that her healing was real and permanent. She has since that time lived a productive Christian life.

He gives another example of a pastor in one of his classes.

[He] was developing the symptoms of a crippling disease. He had been through all of the standard medical tests, but the doctor said he could find no scientific confirmation that he actually had the disease. A tip-off that this might be more than a medical problem came in the form of a voice that told him every time he saw someone in a wheelchair, "Five years from now, that's you." It is now five years later, and the pastor is carrying on a full ministry with no signs of the disease. His route to freedom was in taking back the ground the demons claimed in the form of broken family relationships. When that was done, their power was gone and he was free (Warner 1989:89).

## **DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON HEALING**

Is all healing supernatural? What credence do we give, for example, to theologies that insist that any form of medication is evidence of a lack of faith and that only supernatural healing should be sought?

Although all the healings recorded in the gospels were apparently supernatural healings, this does not lead to the conclusion that this is the only form of healing that is acceptable. Natural healings were not recorded in the gospels because these were ordinary every day occurrences. The gospels recorded the ministry of Jesus, and it was divine healing that Jesus brought into the picture. But the very fact that Luke was

a physician (Col. 4:14) suggests that there was a place for medical doctors in the time of the New Testament. There are also other references in the New Testament to illnesses that were not cured supernaturally, while at other times medication was prescribed for physical illnesses. Paul wrote about Epaphroditus whose illness had taken him to death's door:

Epaphroditus ... longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow (Phil. 2:25-27).

There is no suggestion that any attempt was made to pray for his supernatural healing. Likewise, it appears that Timothy had a stomach ailment and was generally sickly. Paul gave him a piece of Pauline medical advice instead of praying for his healing:

Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses (1 Tim. 5:23).

In his own case also, Paul refers to a condition which may or may not have been a physical ailment. He referred to it as a thorn in the flesh. Some commentators think this was related to his deteriorating eyesight. Others have suggested it was a psychological problem or some other trial that he faced. Paul himself does not give any clear indication what it was. But nevertheless,

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me (2 Cor. 12:8-9).

One may therefore conclude that supernatural healings are not necessarily the will of God at any particular time, and indeed, sometimes healing even naturally will not occur so that God's glory may be revealed in us.

It may also happen that healing is a mixture of the divine and the natural. An empirical case will elucidate. After I had enjoyed the blessing of seeing thirteen students in the Mount Zion Training Institute healed after we had anointed them with

oil as instructed in James 5, one of the teachers in our institute, the wife of the pastor who was my co-worker in the institute, asked if she could come to the elders of the church to be prayed for. She explained that there were two ailments for which she desired healing. The first was a failing knee, and the second was a throat condition of eleven years' duration which precluded her from leading the singing in church – a serious defect in the wife of a pastor in a black church! We anointed her with oil and she reported that her knee condition had been healed instantly. However, her throat condition was not healed. But when she saw her doctor again for a routine check, he examined her throat and exclaimed in surprise: "I've never seen that before!" He had noticed a growth that took a twenty minute surgical procedure to remove, and her singing ability was restored. In this case healing did not result directly from prayer, but we may assume that the prayer made it possible for the doctor to determine the cause of the problem and complete the healing process through medical science.

Medical Missions has also been a factor in the spread of the gospel. There are some countries that would not allow the church to come, even if it has a track record of healing. In an article entitled "Medicine Melts the Barriers," a sub-title reads "Even 'closed' countries clamor for medical missionaries. Williams writes:

Much of the world has limited or no access to even basic health care. Conditions easily treated in developed nations can become debilitating due to inadequate treatment.

In many of these countries, opportunities for evangelism are extremely limited due to the restrictions imposed by totalitarian governments ... An offer to provide medical assistance, however, often opens the door for the gospel (Williams 1996:64).

## **SUPERIORITY OF BIBLICAL PRACTICES**

We now come to examine the importance of applying biblical principles in ministry. In this section we will firstly differentiate between the power of God over and against the power of Satan. We have already noted that God performs miracles and so does Satan. We have also observed that there is widely held skepticism of the supernatural in this day and age. A psychiatrist who was involved with a disturbed patient that I was also counseling told me in response to my contention that this case was more than psychological, and that there probably was some demonic influence as

well, “Well, we don’t believe in those things.” When I asked if he had any explanation for the phenomenon of ouija board, he confessed that “there are some things we don’t understand.” Collins writes

In order to build their science as an objective approach to overtly human behavior, psychologists paid a heavy price. The discipline accepted the assumption that empirical methods provide the only avenues to truth, and that the supernatural, if it exists at all, is irrelevant to the field of psychology. All of this is to say that historically, psychologists have almost defined themselves right out of any discussion of topics that might touch on the supernatural (Collins 1976:237).

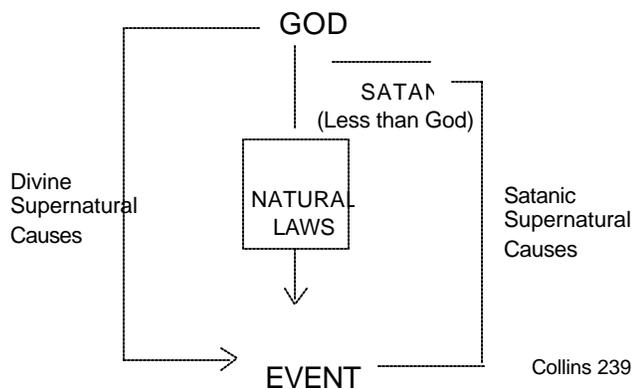
Collins also notes, however, that this scenario is showing signs of change. He says

Happily, this rigid behavioristic stance in psychology is showing signs of weakening. Increasing numbers of psychologists and psychology students are coming to recognize that there may be more things in earth and ... heaven than are dreamed of in the behavioristic or psychoanalytic philosophies. The new “third force” movement in psychology is not especially sympathetic towards religion, but it does maintain that what they term “peak experiences,” “transcendent phenomena,” and “transhuman influences” have an important influence on human behavior and should thus be included in the subject matter of modern psychology (Collins 1976:237-238).

Collins, who is a psychologist, says that those who deny the supernatural (and agrees that most in his profession do) (:238), limit themselves to natural laws, thus excluding an important dimension on their therapy of patients. He provides the following diagram to illustrate his point:

**Figure 13. Supernatural Causes in Psychology**

We have already observed that it makes no sense that Jesus would have introduced a ministry of liberating people from demonic bondage and teaching his apostles and disciples to do so, and that such a ministry should not be perpetuated in subsequent



generations. Neither does it make sense that there would be such a preponderance of

demonic activity and bondage in Jesus' day and the first decades thereafter, and that this should not be the case in the twentieth and twenty first centuries.

Is it important then to apply biblical practices in our present day ministries, or is this an optional extra for those who wish to do so? The following arguments will show that the power of the gospel is seriously impaired when this is neglected, and strongly enhanced when it is applied.

There are three areas we need to examine. Firstly, why applying biblical methods are superior to the prevalent evangelical position. Then we need to be alerted to going beyond Scripture and applying supernatural practices that are not biblical, as happens in some charismatic churches. That is not to say that everything that happens in charismatic churches is unbiblical, but some practices are. Finally we need to take cognisance of the fact that animistic practices also have power to heal, but there is a price to pay.

### **Superiority of Biblical practices over non-biblical evangelical practices**

Dickason (1992:47) observes:

Not only does the Bible present demons as a living reality, but it treats demonization as a tragic reality too. It is not superstitious misconception or a religionist's description of phenomena we can explain today in scientific and psychological terms. The phenomenon of demonization surpasses scientific and psychological explanation. It is marked by the influence of a demon personality within a human with certain rather well-defined characteristics – a demonic syndrome obvious in Scripture and in case studies today.

One weakness of a non-biblical evangelical position is that:

#### **Failure to liberate keeps people in bondage**

It was obviously important to Jesus that people should be liberated from the bondage of Satan. He even risked being criticised for breaking the Sabbath in order to set people free:

Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what

bound her? (Lk. 13:16).

Just as it was in the days of Jesus, there are people today who have been bound by Satan for many years, and will continue to be bound unless the biblical practice of liberating them is applied. In one of the empirical cases offered later in this chapter, it will be seen that a matric student had fallen into bondage with serious symptoms that would have been described psychologically as a mental breakdown and had tried a number of therapies by psychologists and psychiatrists, both in private practice and in hospital wards, to no avail. Most evangelical pastors would have referred her to a psychiatrist. But they did not have the answer. Four hours of reading Scripture and biblical application of deliverance brought immediate relief and the conversion of her entire family. Mercifully, in her case, the bondage lasted only four months. In another empirical case, also described later in this chapter, an eleven-year-old autistic child was healed through biblical deliverance. In her case the bondage had lasted eleven years. Both she and her family had suffered the consequences of her bondage and would have continued to suffer had she not been set free. Most evangelical pastors would have resigned themselves to this being the fate of the child and the family.

Another weakness is that:

**Failure to liberate gives the impression that animism has power that the gospel lacks**

There is no shortage of testimony of animistic healings and deliverances. In Scripture we find both in the Old and New Testaments that there are supernatural powers in animistic practices. A classic Old Testament example is the test between Moses and Pharaoh's astrologers, when every miracle performed by Moses was simulated by the astrologers until God intervened (Ex 7:8). In the New Testament, Paul teaches this in 2 Thessalonians 2:9, when he talks about "the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders." Then we find unbelievers imitating Paul in casting out demons:

Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed (Acts 19:13).

But it is not only in the Bible that we find cases of animistic miracles and deliverance. There is also abundant evidence in modern day religious activity.

Healing plays a very important role in African Independent Churches, especially Zionist and Apostolic-type churches. Independent churches practice healing extensively, even to the point of raising the dead. Daneel says that “from the inception it is important for any prophetic leader of the Zionist or Apostolic-type to gain renown as a faith-healer.” He states that there is no single factor that has been mentioned more often by members of the Spirit-type churches as the direct reason for their joining these movements than healing treatment received or witnessed in the case of some close relative (Froise 1989:65).

If healing and casting out evil spirits is successful in animistic practices, but is lacking in Christian practices, this can only demonstrate that the gospel is an inferior belief system. But the reality is that this is not the case. Christianity applied biblically does bring relief to people in bondage and even in ill health. This was put to the test during a teaching session of the Mount Zion Training Institute that taught theological education by extension to preachers of African Independent Churches. In the AIC, healing and exorcism is widely practiced. In order to demonstrate that biblical Christianity addressed these issues, it was the practice to share with students experiences of healing and exorcism that I had ministering in my local church. On one occasion a student requested prayer for healing, and I invited other students who wished to be prayed for. Thirteen students responded. Applying James 5:14 “Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord,” my colleague and I anointed the students with oil and prayed for healing. At the next session the students were asked to testify if God had answered their prayers. All thirteen spoke, one after the other, sharing what ailment they had had, and how they had been healed. The ailments varied, both in nature and in duration. One student had had a thirty-year complaint of a leg deficiency, but testified of having been healed. A student’s comment reflected the student body’s sentiments: “When we hear these testimonies, we have to believe.”

## **Failure to liberate gives witchcraft the edge over Christianity**

Warner tells of an incident experienced by Dick Hillis, subsequently director of Overseas Crusades. A young Chinese soldier came to his door asking, "Is your Christ all-powerful?" Hillis assured him he was, and the soldier said his wife was in the courtyard and was demon-possessed. He told Hillis that the demon had ordered her to kill herself, and that each time she had tried, she had been rescued. The soldier had heard that Christ was able to heal the demon-possessed and so he had come to the missionary. This was a new challenge for Hillis, but he knew he had to do something as he sensed his God was on trial. Warner writes:

Hillis's wife was standing with him and tried to encourage him with the truth that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Hillis's theological education had not equipped him to deal with demons, but he knew he had to do something. So the Hillises and a 'Bible woman' (church worker) took the young wife to the women's compound and began praying for her. Hillis says, "I confess that I prayed in doubt, wondering if I would need some special gift of healing." To make matters worse, Hillis says, "the demon-possessed woman would take words from our prayers and make ridiculous poems out of them. . . . She would scream and yell and make fun of what we were doing."

They struggled in prayer for three days with no results. That day the soldier showed up to get his wife, but the missionary asked for more time. The Lord also led him to ask if they had any idols in their home. When the soldier answered that they did, he was told to go and destroy them. The result was that the next morning the demons were complaining that their home had been destroyed. So Hillis knew that the soldier had indeed gotten rid of the idols, but the demons remained in the woman.

Hillis then reports:

'In our reading of the Scriptures, we were going through Ephesians 1 and 2, and God suddenly revealed that we were not only identified with Christ in death and in His resurrection, but that we were 'seated with Christ in heavenly places far above principalities and powers'; that we had ascended with Him. Taking this new position, our Christian postmaster, my wife and I sang in the presence of the woman, 'There's power in the blood,' and then after singing, we commanded the demon to come out of her in the name of Jesus. *She was instantly delivered!* (Warner 1991:69-70).

Here was a direct challenge between Satan's forces and Christ's messengers. Had the missionaries failed, the Chinese soldier would have been convinced that the missionaries' God was not all powerful, and the impression would have been made that witchcraft was superior to Christianity.

Paul Stephen was an Indian pastor working among Hindus in Lenasia. He related two cases where witchcraft had triumphed over Christians. In the one case, an American missionary with whom he was working complained of a series of bad experiences that were plaguing him and his family. These included a deteriorating relationship with his wife, illnesses affecting his children and a number of accidents that seemed to be more than coincidences. Stephen remarked knowingly: "I know what's happened. You have taken a worship symbol from a Hindu home and brought it to your own home." The missionary confessed that a converted Hindu family had indeed given him one of their worship objects and he intended to use it on his missionary display on his return to the United States to demonstrate to his constituency the witchcraft they were up against. Stephen said that was the missionary's problem, but he was unconvinced. In the weeks following things deteriorated further. Here is a case of a Christian missionary coming under the power of witchcraft.

The second incident Paul told about related to a member of his church. A Hindu man had been attracted to her and made romantic advances towards her. She rejected his advances on the basis that she was a Christian and he a Hindu, and she could not have a relationship with him on that account. In addition, she was already happily married, and she did not wish to jeopardise her marriage in any way. Her admirer was not satisfied with her response and appealed to his Hindu priest for help. A few days later, Stephen relates, her husband surprised her by returning home early from work. He told her he was ill, and she suggested he go and lie down and she would bring him some tea. He declined her offer and asked her to come to bed with him. She said, "I thought you were sick," but he insisted and she obliged. After they had spent a couple of hours in sexual experiences, he became invisible and disappeared. When her real husband came home at the normal time, he knew nothing of having come home during the day. Her suitor had in fact been an apparition. For several months she did not share her experience with anyone other than her husband, but observers noticed a

change in personality. Here again is an example of a Christian being overcome by the powers of witchcraft.

In the two incidents related above, a typical evangelical response would have been resignation, and possibly ascribing the incidents to psychological disturbances. But in both cases, a remedy was applied that proved the superiority of the power of Christ over witchcraft and evil forces. With regard to the American missionary, he finally asked Stephen to come and pray for him. Stephen asked him to produce the worship object and the missionary brought it out of a box stored under one of his children's beds. The article was destroyed and the power attached to it broken and circumstances returned immediately to normal. With regard to Stephen's church member, Stephen's wife asked the lady what had happened to her to change her personality. She confided in her and related her experience. Pastor Stephen's wife arranged for a team of intercessors and they conducted deliverance and set her free.<sup>15</sup>

Failure to have applied a biblical response in both of these cases would have given witchcraft the victory over Christianity.

Wagner concurs:

...In the present age the "power of darkness," as Paul says, and the Kingdom coexist. And this is where missions comes into the picture. Christian missions is what God sends us to do. He sends us out as ambassadors of His Kingdom into a world yet dominated by the evil one. The resulting conflict between Satan and his forces and God and His forces is the determining characteristic of mission. Victory over Satan is a chief sign of the Kingdom. Jesus says, "If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the Kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt. 12:28). George Ladd says that this is the "essential theology of the kingdom of God" (Wagner 1987:97).

### **Superiority of Biblical practices over non-biblical charismatic practices**

At the beginning of this chapter we saw the need for caution and the need to correlate scriptural teaching with praxis. Warner makes this observation:

One of Satan's perversions relates to the concept of power. He will deceive some people into seeking power from wrong motivations and to using it for wrong purposes. This is what leads to the idea that power corrupts. This seems to be especially true in relation to spiritual power. Satan has been

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<sup>15</sup> Adult Sunday School class, Randburg Baptist Church, 1990.

unusually successful in getting some people to define the Christian life, and especially church services, as a constant diet of spectacular demonstrations of spiritual power. The problem is, the question is not often asked as to where the power is coming from or whether the results are in harmony with the teachings of Scripture. On the other hand, the devil will get other people to overreact to the misuse of power and to accept a relative powerless life as normal (Warner 1991:47).

It is not without significance that Jesus warns about false prophets. He indicates that they will even be able to prophesy in his name, and in his name drive out demons and perform many miracles (Matthew 7:22). Paul confirms in 2 Thessalonians 2:9 that Satan's power is demonstrated in producing counterfeit miracles. It behooves us, therefore to be extremely vigilant and not to succumb to falsifications. Wagner quotes an example of these false powers:

Gasson specifically shows, for example, how false gifts of faith, miracles, healing, tongues and interpretation are produced by Satan. The counterfeit gift of discerning spirits he feels is clairvoyance and clairaudience. The gift of deliverance is cleverly reproduced by the devil as well, ... (Wagner 1994:94).

Quoting Gasson's experience he writes

Gasson recalls how Satan gave him the ability to prophesy, and points out that most of these counterfeit prophecies came true. On one occasion during the war years, for example, a man brought to Gasson an item belonging to the man's son who was in the service. The man wanted to find out where his son was. Through his 'spirit guide' (who purported to be the spirit of an African witch doctor) Gasson found out that the owner of the item was well and a prisoner of war. The father then proceeded to show him a telegram from the War Department stating that his son had been killed in action more than two weeks previously. Gasson went back to his guide and verified that the soldier's son really was not dead and that the father would have this confirmed in three days. Sure enough, three days later the father got a telegram from the War Department apologizing for the mistake and saying that the boy was well and a prisoner of war.

Some mistakenly interpret this kind of prophecy as a work of God. It is in reality the work of the devil. But it is no less real (Gasson 105, 106 1966 in Wagner 1994:94-95).

In my own personal experience there have been two occasions when I was

restricted from completing a deliverance, and on further prayer and investigation, a gift of tongues turned out to be the stumbling block in both cases. In one case we proceeded as follows: Upon enquiry of how the gift was received, it transpired that it was received under a theology that claimed tongues was the evidence of the infilling of the Holy Spirit, and the incumbent was encouraged to seek the gift for that reason. Since Paul teaches that the gift of tongues is not given to every believer (1 Cor 12:10, 15, 28, 30), it cannot be the evidence of being filled with the Spirit as every believer is enjoined to be filled (Eph 5:18). The method of receiving the gift was also unbiblical. When that was explained, the counselee agreed to renounce the gift and was immediately set free. In both cases, the gift had not been of the Holy Spirit, but a demonic counterfeit.

Application of purely biblical practices does not leave a person in bondage, whereas the conferring of gifts, or the acquisition of gifts contrary to biblical teaching may bring people into bondage. Warner relates an incident when a person was being counseled for depression, and no cause could be found after a lengthy spell of counseling. Finally the counselor asked whether the person had had any spiritual experiences. The counselee recalled having received healing of one leg that was shorter than the other. On enquiry as to where this had occurred, it emerged that it was at a service in a church that had a faulty theology of the Holy Spirit and the role of gifts and how they were received. On renouncing the healing, the healed leg reverted to its former length, but the depression departed.<sup>16</sup> This indicates that non-biblical charismatic practices should be avoided – clearly, they are inferior to biblical practices.

### **Superiority of Biblical practices over non-biblical animistic practices**

Using satanic power leads to bondage: depression, fear and inhabitation. While there are certainly well documented cases of healings taking place, there is also an abundance of evidence that one benefit may lead to other problems. Kurt Koch makes this observation in connection with people who have been subjected to occultic practices:

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<sup>16</sup> Timothy Warner, Course on Power Encounter, Johannesburg 1988.

In the many pastoral cases with which I have had to deal in the last fifteen years, occult subjection has been seen in relation to psychological disturbances which have the following predominant characteristics:

- (a) Warping and distortion of character: hard, egoistic persons; uncongenial, dark natures.
- (b) Extreme passions: abnormal sexuality; violent temper, belligerence; tendencies to addiction; meanness and kleptomania.
- (c) Emotional disturbances: compulsive thoughts, melancholia; suicidal thoughts, anxiety states.
- (d) Possession: destructive urges, fits of mania; tendency to violent acts and crime; inhabitation by demons.
- (e) Mental illnesses.
- (f) Bigoted attitude against Christ and God: conscious atheism; simulated piety; indifference to God's word and to prayer; blasphemous thoughts; religious delusions.
- (g) Puzzling phenomena in their environment.

A couple of cases will illustrate the point. Kurt Koch tells this story:

A woman who was a nominal Christian allowed her child whose body was covered with a skin infection to be treated by a magical charmer. A spell was said over the child three times in the name of the Trinity. The use of the names of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit was designed to give people the impression that the treatment was biblical, which it most certainly was not. The little girl, however, was healed. But that is not the end of the story. Afterwards the mother started to have difficulty in praying and reading her Bible. When she listened to sermons in the church her mind seemed unable to concentrate. Her daughter, too, began to suffer from depressions as she grew up, and the situation was sometimes so bad that both mother and daughter thought of committing suicide. Finally, on attending a mission meeting they both stayed behind to talk to the evangelist. Making a complete and open confession of their sins, they handed their lives over to Christ, and received the forgiveness which he alone can offer. A few days later the daughter's old eczema returned. This time two Christian brothers prayed for her healing, and God answered their prayers. She was healed for good (Koch 1973:117-118).

Ankerberg & Weldon include the story of a young lady who was searching for healing from her illness. She went to see a physician-nutritionist where she found some literature about the Himalayan Institute, of which the doctor was a staff member. She attended the institute and began lessons in hatha yoga. Eventually she was initiated and received her mantra from Swami Rama. As he laid hands on her she felt the transfer of occult energy.

Carole was in heaven: “Currents of electrical energy began to permeate my head and went down into my body. ... It was as if a spell had come over me, the bliss that I felt was as if I had been touched by God. The power that had come from his hand, and simply being in his presence, drew me to him irresistibly.”

Who would not want that kind of experience of the touch of God! But, although she experienced special powers and abilities over the next few weeks accompanied by spiritual visitations, she began to experience the reality of what the source of her bliss and special abilities had been. Ankerberg and Weldon continue:

However, after two weeks of daily meditation, Carole became engulfed in a nightmare of utter dread and terror. Voices which once claimed they were angelic turned threatening, even demonic. She was brutally assaulted, both physically and spiritually. During meditation, in the midst of being violently shaken, she could sense that the very same energy received at initiation ... was attempting to remove her life-essence from her body – in her words, “to literally pull the life from the shell of a body” (Ankerberg & Weldon 1993:19-21).

It is true that the kind of experience described above does not always happen immediately after a person becomes involved in the occult – sometimes it will be triggered by a spiritual event years later, and in Carole’s case the authors explain that her experiences finally did begin to subside after initially seeming “interminable”. But the cessation was shortlived, and over the next several pages Ankerberg & Weldon describe further attacks and attempts at release at the hands of various psychiatrists, psychics and spiritists. One such spiritist, Dr Leichtman, M. D., co-author of several dozen books received by revelation from the spirits, admitted that Carole’s condition was not uncommon among followers of Eastern gurus (22). They end the story with the fact that “Today, Carole is alive and well,” and even her psychiatrist was amazed at the miraculous transformation. She was now in perfect health, both mentally and physically. She knew she was free from spirits.

Carole attributes her health and her life to a living Jesus Christ who delivered her from a desperate plight.

Reflecting on her predicament, she is awed that such terrible destruction could be purchased at the price of a simple, supposedly harmless form of meditation (23).

## CHANGED PERSPECTIVES

Examples abound of people in ministry who have come to change their perspectives on demonisation following the evidence they have seen that conflicts with their western culturally based worldviews. The evidence they have seen has forced them to re-examine Scripture and their interpretation of it in the light of empirical examples that defy the views they have held, not only of demonisation in general, but even the possibility of believers being demonised. For many, this is not easy. Cherished views firmly believed for a lifetime are not easily discarded. Ensign and Howe make this observation:

All of us are too slow to realize how strongly our traditional teaching may prejudice us to new truth, yet it is something that happens to all of us. We assume too easily that we have been correctly taught and whatever we hold is true, orthodox, and final; therefore anything that contradicts “our truth” must be false (Dickason 1984:171, quoting Ensign & Howe: *Bothered, Bewildered, Bewitched?* P139).

Dickason makes his own comment that

It would be very easy for some to neglect the extensive evidence that has been presented and to return to a previous opinion that Christians cannot be demonized. A concept long ingrained does not change readily (Dickason 1984:325).

But more and more people are concluding that the evidence cannot be ignored and are crossing that boundary of belief. Dickason cites a few notable examples.

It was the evidence presented by missionaries and then his own case studies that compelled Merrill F. Unger, a leading scholar in the area of demonology, to change his view regarding the possibility of demonization of believers. He had written in *Biblical Demonology*, published in 1952, that only unbelievers are exposed to demonization. But in *Demons in the World Today*, published in 1971, he confessed that his previous position “was inferred, since Scripture does not clearly settle the question” (Dickason 1984:169, quoting Unger 59-60).

In another example he relates a case experienced by Kurt Koch. He writes:

Koch testifies that he met a missionary in Africa who had actually been possessed himself for a period of eighteen months. He, like many others, had previously believed it was impossible for Christians to be possessed. However his own experience made him change his earlier theological outlook (Dickason 1992:173 quoting Koch *Occult Bondage & Deliverance* 67).

### **CASE STUDIES**

In this next section, case studies will be given to indicate that the phenomenon of demonisation is as prevalent today as it was in the days of the New Testament. Contrary to the belief held by many evangelicals that a ministry of deliverance belonged to the days of Christ and his apostles and faded out in the first century, as indicated in chapter three, many people are experiencing liberty through Christ today, as then. We have already seen in chapter four that the church has continued through the centuries to practice exorcism, and that in the wake of the enlightenment period, this has been less popular, or even spurned, in the twentieth century, but is now gaining momentum. Case studies will be taken from various sources, and then some will be included from my own personal counseling experience.

#### **Other authorities**

##### **Dick Hillis of Overseas Crusades:**

Dickason writes

Well-known author Hal Lindsay reports a reliable case:

An example of a demon-possessed man was given me by Dick Hillis of Overseas Crusades. Dick is a man who knows the Scriptures, not just as a theologian, but as a warrior of the faith. A man of careful discernment, not given to sensationalism, he has spent most of his life on the mission field. Hillis told me of one incident that happened while he was in China, before the Communist takeover, when one of the elders of his church, who was unquestionably a believer, became so demon possessed that his personality changed. He became vile and profane in his language and extraordinarily strong. Some of the members in the church locked him up in a room and sent for Hillis.

When Dick walked in the door, this man became violent and a strange voice shouted, "I know who you are."

Hillis said, "And I know who you are," and began to speak to the demon.

This was a case when a believer was actually possessed by a demon who spoke in another voice (Dickason 1992:176).

Kurt Koch has counseled hundreds of demonized people and led them to freedom. On one occasion he encountered a Bible student in the Philippines who had been a Christian for a year. As Koch prayed with him a rough voice called out of him that this student belonged to the demons, and his family had belonged to them for over 300 years. Koch countered that he did not belong to them, but to Jesus Christ (Dickason 1992:177, quoting Koch *Occult Bondage*, 70-71). Reporting on the same incident in another book, Koch gives more details. He writes:

One of the teachers present ... addressed these voices: "In the name of the Lord Jesus, tell us why you have possessed Pat." (The student's name was Pat Tolosa). "Because he did not surrender completely," the voices responded. ... One of the teachers commanded the voices, "In the name of Jesus tell us ... where do you come from?" ... "From Manchuria." ... When I heard that the voice came from Manchuria, I recited a Russian Bible verse that I knew. Then came a surprise. The voice immediately began to speak in fluent Russian in spite of the fact that Pat Tolosa was acquainted only with English and his local Filipino dialect. ...

In the end ... Pat was wonderfully freed. ... At first he began to cry and then he began to praise the Lord (Koch 1973:141-147).

Mark Bubeck tells of a case when a man phoned him at 2 a.m. threatening to commit suicide. Bubeck asked if he could meet him to discuss what it was that was making him so unhappy, but the man responded that he didn't believe any purpose would be served as he had been to see some well respected psychiatrists that had been unable to help him. He said

"I'm a born-again Christian. I've tried to overcome my problem. Oh! I've tried, but it's no use. I've counseled with several different pastors and counselors, but no one can help any with my problem."

After further prompting him to share his problem, he declined, and said he was only concerned with whether he would still go to heaven if he took his life. Bubeck read Scriptures to him, assuring him of God's understanding, willingness to forgive and to help. Then he asked whether he had ever considered that his bondage might be

demonic. In spite of feelings of anger that ebbed and flowed in him, he later confessed that deep inside his being the first spark of hope was born in him. Nevertheless he protested that he was a Christian, and surely it couldn't be demons. He finally agreed to see Bubeck who writes:

Four wicked powers revealed their presence. One of them had a name that was the same as the man's problem. Another wicked power's name was suicide. These powers were commanded to leave and go to the pit, which they did. A marvelous deliverance from his problem resulted, and a whole new life opened to him, which he is now enjoying with his wife and family (Dickason 1992:179-180 quoting Bubeck, 90-92).

In a further case from Saskatoon in Canada, Dickason describes the deliverance of a Christian worker as related by her pastor, W.L. McLeod.

She related that while I was preaching she had felt some strange power rise up slowly inside her. She said, "I began to cut you in pieces and everything you said and stood for." Never before had she had an experience like this. She was greatly agitated as to why it should happen now. In talking with her I found she had had some involvement in the occult. She had allowed a friend of hers to display her occult powers in her presence. This had included the locking of doors without touching them. Out of curiosity she had also gone into a witchcraft shop. . . . She had a further involvement which she did not tell us about. This came out in a conversation with the unclean spirits who had invaded her life. I asked her if she would be willing to renounce the Devil and all his work naming the areas of involvement. She was willing to do this. However, when we got to the place where I led her to say: "I now renounce the Devil and all his works," she was unable to do so. There was a struggle as she attempted to get the words out but couldn't. . . . Kneeling, we went to prayer. Immediately the demonic powers rose to the surface and took over. The girl fell on her hands and knees. When we commanded these evil powers to tell us the names she hissed out the word "Satan" about fifty times. We then began to give her some advice as to how to get rid of them. At once she was blinded and deafened. They did not want her to hear the advice we were giving her. . . .

She told us that for awhile all she could see was Satan but that as we prayed she could suddenly see the blood of Christ. This was the stronger and the Satanic powers seemed to withdraw.

We then told her to pray to Jesus Christ and ask Him to completely deliver her. She did so and we all simply prayed and believed God for her. Suddenly all demonic activity ceased. The next morning I got a phone call from a very happy girl. She said simply, "I'm free, thank God!" (Dickason 1992:178-179).

Weatherhead lists a number of cases from his experience and research dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century and earlier. He gives one example from Cable's book, *The Fulfilment of a Dream*:

Our first woman patient in Hwochow Opium Refuge became interested in the Gospel, and on her returning home destroyed her idols, reserving, however, the beautifully carved idol shrines which she placed in her son's room. Her daughter-in-law who occupied this room . . . desired to become a Christian and gave us a warm welcome whenever we could go to the house. About six months later we were fetched, by special messenger from a village, where we were staying, to see this girl who was said to be demon-possessed. We found crowds of men and women gathered to see and to hear. The girl was chanting the weird minor chant of the possessed, the voice, as in every case I have seen, clearly distinguishing it from madness.

This can perhaps best be described as a voice distinct from the personality of the one under possession. It seems as though the demon used the organs of speech of the victim for the conveyance of its own voice. She refused to wear clothes or to take food, and by her violence terrorised the community. Immediately upon our entering the room with the Chinese woman evangelist, she ceased her chanting, and slowly pointed the finger at us, remaining in this posture for some time.

As we knelt . . . to pray, she trembled and said, "The room is full of gwei; as soon as one goes another comes." We endeavoured to calm her, and to make her join us in repeating the sentence, "Lord Jesus, save me." After considerable effort she succeeded in pronouncing these words, and when she had done so we commanded the demon to leave her, whereupon her body trembled and she sneezed some fifty or sixty times, then suddenly came to herself, asked for her clothes and some food, and seemingly perfectly well, resumed her work. . . . Her parents willingly handed over to the Christians present these valuable carvings, and joined with them in their destruction. From this time onwards she was perfectly well, a normal, healthy young woman (Weatherhead 1952:94-95).

A Dutch Reformed minister relates the experience of his family.

Even after being a minister for twelve years I hardly knew anything about [demonic bondage]. It was only after an experience in our own family circle that my eyes were opened to the threat of demonic bondage facing believers. One evening after I had thoroughly discussed with my children the question of assurance of salvation, our experience began.

My two daughters were eleven and nine years old at that stage. The younger one, an intelligent child, started hearing voices addressing her. Although I tried to offer various answers, words of comfort and explanations, she insisted that the voices were real. They told her that she could not become a Christian as her life belonged to them. On another night, my son, then five years old, came into the room telling us that Lucifer was in his room talking to him. He described Lucifer to us as he had seen him. Up to that stage we

had never discussed demonic bondage with any of our children, ourselves being totally ignorant about it.

Since then we have heard of the ministry of deliverance and have also met Ds. D. Pypers who prayed for us. All problems connected with this problem disappeared. We ourselves hardly had any contact with occult occurrences, but my grandmother was a spiritualist medium. When these occults [sic] bonds of our ancestors were broken, we and our children experienced deliverance ... (duPlessis 1987:197).

A case of deliverance without “deliverance.” Some counselors have found that deliverance sometimes occurs without the application of a formal deliverance procedure. The Petersons relate such a case in Kalimantan.

A blood-curdling scream shocked me out of my day-dreams as I sat waiting for the Sungei Duri bus. Looking up I saw six strong men trying to restrain one small, frail woman. But her strength was super-human. ... My only recourse was to pray for this hopeless, demon-tormented soul. ... Prayer proved the key to victory. ...

It was a full two years before the facts of Mrs Lo's possession became known to us. ... Mrs Lo was the mother of seven children. ... Mrs Lo's heavy burden compelled her to seek ways and means to maintain the family. Weighed down by her trials, her temper was often strained to breaking point, and one day it exploded. In an altercation with a neighbour, they hurled vicious abuse at one another and exchanged curses. That very night Mrs Lo became demon possessed. ...

The nights were the most trying, for then she used to see people long since dead in the room, and the demon on her actually impersonated the dead grandfather. When her baby cried she would answer, “How can I nurse you? I am your grandfather!” ...

Since the doctors were unable to do anything, the husband took her home again [from hospital], and it was then that I saw her for the first time at the bus station.

Soon after Mrs Lo's return home she expressed a deep longing to come and see us, although she had never met us and did not know why – a longing doubtless prompted by the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer. ... One day her sister came from the city to see her and brought her to us. ... I was away at the time, but my wife welcomed the little group and listened to the story.

Knowing nothing of the woman's past, and unaware that the neighbours were really frightened of her, my wife could see that she was greatly in need of help. Even then she was fairly sure that the difficulty was Satanic. After listening attentively for the very first time to the gospel, as it was explained to her with the use of pictures, Mrs Lo said, “It's true, I know it's true, my heart tells me it's true.” Her heart was truly prepared by the Holy Spirit to receive the Word of God. She accepted the Lord as Saviour on that very first hearing, and for several weeks continued to come each day for teaching and prayer. ... She had been completely freed from all attacks of the Evil One. ...

I had previously been of the opinion that no one could be delivered from demon possession until the demon was commanded to depart. But from this experience we have concluded that possessed persons can sometimes be delivered by prayer alone (Peterson 1989:78-81).

In one of my own experiences when I had the privilege of leading someone to salvation, I included, as I usually do when leading the person in the prayer of repentance and receiving Christ by faith, a statement renouncing any contact the person had had with the occult. He had confided that he had consulted an African faith healer on several occasions. After the prayer he commented that he did not like that part of the prayer, because, as he prayed it, he felt a pair of hands grip his lungs and squeeze him. I concluded that he was delivered at that point, since in a subsequent deliverance session, he was found to be free from any bondage.

### **My case studies**

I personally became involved in a deliverance ministry after completing a course entitled *Power Encounter* offered by Timothy Warner of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. I soon discovered that no two cases were the same, and different manifestations could be experienced in every case. Some of the cases were remarkably similar to those described in the New Testament. These would include the shrieking of the spirits as they departed (Acts 8:7), the demons talking to the counselor (Mark 1:24), pleading not to be expelled (Matthew 8:31); a multiplicity of demons (Mark 16:9); the demonised appearing to be dead (Mark 9:26), hurled to the floor (Luke 4:35), convulsing (Luke 9:42). During deliverance, some people's tongues would be tied so they could not repeat the prayer of deliverance they were asked to pray; some would experience physical symptoms, like stomach ache, head ache, a pair of hands gripping their chests, or other physical sensations; some would hear voices or see figures while others would not; many would not experience any physical manifestations at all, but their changed personalities or freedom from depression or other symptoms would confirm that they had been set free. Often the counselee is thoroughly drained at the end of the session, and in the days following they feel as if part of them is missing. This would tend to confirm the fact that when a spirit indwells a person, it feigns as being that person. This also accounts for the

multiple personality syndrome when a person appears as one personality at one time and another personality at another time. In reality the different personalities are simply different demons coming into prominence, feigning that personality.

The following are a sampling of case studies from my own personal experience as a counselor.

### **Instructions to Steal**

A mine worker on a gold mine in the Free State Goldfields had been arrested several times for stealing and other crimes. He told me he had heard voices that had instructed him to commit these crimes. These voices were so real to him that he felt obliged to obey them. After he had been delivered of evil spirits he had a sense of freedom and testified that he was now sleeping soundly through the night for the first time for as long as he could remember.

### **Ouija Board**

A high school teacher at a respected high school in Randburg phoned me about a matric student in her class. She was pretty, intelligent, athletic and popular. Suddenly everything changed and she began hearing voices and seeing things that no one else in her presence heard or saw. It seemed to her family and her peers that she had had a mental breakdown. On one occasion she was in the garden at her home with her mother and urged her mother to go into the house and lock the door. When her mother asked why, she said that she saw a man whom she recognised coming towards her. Her mother assured her that there was no one there, that she was there to protect her, and she had nothing to be afraid of. But the student said the man had just struck her, and her face swelled up and a cut appeared on the inside of her lip. At other times she also experienced other inexplicable phenomena, such as her blouse beginning to tear as she looked in the mirror and an asterisk appearing on her skin under the tear in the blouse. When she came for counseling she revealed two upside down crosses that had supernaturally appeared on her abdomen. The family had spent large sums of money for psychiatric help for her; she had been admitted to hospital psychiatric wards, but nothing had helped. In addition, other extraordinary things were happening in her home, including unnatural behaviour by the family pets. After four months of these experiences her school teacher phoned me asking me to see her student, whom she believed to be demon-possessed. During counseling it became evident that her school

peers had invited her to a ouija board party. Though she had declined the invitation, they had playfully put a spell onto her, not realising the seriousness of their prank. This had resulted in her changed condition. During counseling, we commanded the evil spirits that had entered her to depart, and saw a modern day replay of the incident recorded in Mark 9:19b ff:

[Jesus said] "Bring the boy to me." So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. ... [His father said] "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." ... Jesus ... rebuked the evil spirit. "You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

Apart from some of the details, this could have been the student's story. She was thrown to the ground. She was frothing at the mouth. She convulsed violently, and then she was free. She was restored to her normal condition to the utter amazement of everyone, and her entire family except one member was converted as a result.

### **A violent temper**

A young man in his early twenties had a violent, uncontrollable temper. Even though the family generations were churchgoers, both his father and his grandfather had similar temperaments. One day he called on an elder in the church, requesting him to help him rededicate his life to Christ. The elder prayed with him, and he went home and shared the news with his mother. She was excited to hear this, and phoned the elder to verify that this had really happened. Two hours later, however, his temper flared up again, and he then realised that he needed help beyond what he had been given. In his case, the sins of the ancestors had followed him down and he was labouring under that curse. Counseling in his case was also traumatic: he was shaken violently and demons voiced their objections to departing from him. However, they finally submitted and he was freed. He went away a changed person, his temper now completely under control.

### **Transcendental Meditation**

A young man was the son of a retired pastor and had rebelled against the values of his parents during his teenage years. He had opened doors for demonic oppression

through his rebellion and by engaging in the occult in the form of transcendental meditation. He had responded to a call for conversion in a charismatic church, where he had received a 'gift of tongues.' He found, however, that he had an uncontrollable urge to laugh during Bible studies. He was unable to concentrate on what was being said, nor could he contribute to discussions because all his energies were given to avoiding laughing. His deliverance also resembled the Mark 9 case quoted above, being thrown to the floor and convulsing. Finally he was apparently at peace, but when he was asked if he had 'peace that transcends understanding' (Phil 4:7), a cloud seemingly passed over him, and he confessed something did not feel right. There was still something there. We tried prayer and taking further authority over the spirit, but it refused to budge. We then resorted to asking the Holy Spirit to show us what obstacle there was to his being released. His 'gift of tongues' was impressed on his mind, and when he shared how and when he had received this gift, it became evident that he had not received it according to the biblical prescription in 1 Corinthians 12, nor had the doctrine of the church in question been biblically sound. Perceiving that this was a counterfeit gift (2 Thessalonians 2:9), he renounced the gift and he was immediately set free.

### **Territorial spirits**

A couple had recently moved from Cape Town to Johannesburg. Ever since their move, they had encountered problems of various kinds, including marital relational problems. Their pre-school child had become uncontrollable to the point that his pre-school teacher had sent home a letter, expressing concern that they did not know what to do with their son – they just could not control him. After learning some biblical truths about spiritual warfare in their Bible class, the couple asked me to visit their home where they shared about the occultic involvement of the previous occupiers of their home. They pointed out some damage to the house that the neighbours confirmed were the result of strange behaviour the people were engaged in. After sharing Scriptures together and holding a private communion service, we entered each room of the house and took authority over spirit beings in the name of Jesus, expelling them from the house. There was a dramatic change that took place in the boy, and the parents received another letter from the pre-school teacher to the effect that they could not understand what had happened to their little boy, but "this was not

the same person.” In this case, the problem was not one of inhabitation, but territorial spirits that had made themselves at home through the occultic activities of previous occupants.

Koch confirms the influence that magic and spiritism can have on a residence. He writes:

It is a matter of experience that Christians who have lived in houses where either magic or spiritism have been practiced, are much more likely to fall prey to possession than other believers. Already on a number of occasions I have been called to visit such houses in order to meet the actual people involved (Dickason 1992:177 quoting Koch *Occult Bondage* 70).

### **Autism**

An eleven year old autistic child was unable to speak more than one word at a time, making her wishes known by pointing or saying a single word. Her mother explained that a woman, jealous of the fact that she had married the man she had wished to marry, had placed a curse on the family two months before the child’s birth. We perceived that this curse had taken effect in the autistic birth of the child. After a quiet prayer, exercising authority over evil forces and breaking the curse, with no visible manifestation, the mother and child went home with instructions to return the following week for a follow-up assessment (Van Rensburg 1999:73). It was an excited mother who returned the following week, testifying that the child’s father had immediately noticed a change in his daughter. Likewise, the child’s school teachers had noticed a change. Six months later the mother wrote, sharing how her own faith had soared as she had watched her child develop after the curse of autism had been removed. By this time the child was learning to talk, draw and write, and was actively chasing other children and playing with them as a normal child. She had been totally healed.

The question may be asked, “Does this have any precedence in Scripture?” Some commentators believe it does. Evans (in Atkinson et al. 1995:197) says

To curse somebody is to call down evil upon him or her, and both prayers for evil and evil happenings can be described as curses. ... The most common use of blessing and cursing in Scripture is associated with the covenant. ... The blessing and curses of others (Neh. 13:2) ... is a way by which human beings can act as mediators of God’s power ... It is vital however to avoid misuse, which does not take God or his character seriously, but tries to ensure

that one's own desires are carried out.

Steyne (1989:227) comes out even more strongly in showing it has biblical precedence. He says

The casting of a spell ... is a common animistic practice. ... This practice may also be associated with the ritual of cursing. For example, when Balak called on the diviner Balaam (Josh. 13:22) to curse the people of Israel who were about to engulf his kingdom, he said: "Please come, curse this people for me since they are too mighty for me; perhaps I may be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that he whom you bless is blessed and he whom you curse is cursed (Numbers 22:6).

While in this case Balaam was a pagan seer and was overruled by God to bless Israel rather than curse her, it is clear that putting a curse on someone was his practice. Steyne continues that Scripture recognises the practice, referring to Isaiah 47:9, 12). He says

Isaiah refers to the practice of casting spells, or enchantments: "In spite of the great power of your spells ... stand fast now in your spells."

Commenting on the same two verses the NIV Study Bible says "*sorceries ... spells*. Magical practices to avoid danger and to inflict harm on the enemy (see 3:2-3 and note)." Then in the note on 3:2-3 it refers to the soothsayers and enchanters: "Occult practitioners and snake charmers whose activities were condemned."

There can be no doubt the Bible recognises the reality of casting spells and curses, though it roundly condemns the practice.

Another question is whether a curse can take effect when placed in the absence of the target of the curse. But if the NIV Study Bible is correct that spells were put to inflict harm on an enemy, it should not be difficult to see that this would often happen in that enemy's absence, lest the inflictor first be inflicted by the enemy. At least, the Bible does not indicate that a curse can only happen in the victim's presence.

This also brings us to the question of what Jesus meant in Matthew 6:13, rendered "Deliver us from evil" in the Authorised Version, or "Deliver us from the evil one" in the NIV. Green (2000:101) points out that

The word translated *evil* is a genitive which could be either neuter or

masculine. That is to say, it may refer to 'evil' (*to poneron*) or to 'the Evil One' (*ho poneros*). Maybe there is a nuance of both.

If it is to be taken as 'evil' it is quite understandable that this is a prayer we should learn to pray, since evil is always a temptation. This seems to be the Green's inclination. He says

All evil is inspired by [Satan]. And so Jesus, well aware of the dimensions of the spiritual battle which beset him and will always beset his disciples, bids the seek daily the Father's strength to be delivered from the seduction of the Evil One, leading them into temptation, and from the power of the Evil One, inducing them to sin.

Summarising the prayer, Green marvels at it: "... our needs supplied, our sins forgiven, our temptations overcome." Hill (1972:139) tends to agree, pointing out that "neither Hebrew nor Aramaic uses 'the evil (one)' to denote Satan, it is probably better to regard the word as neuter ..."

If, on the other hand, the alternative legitimate idea is to be taken, as deliverance from 'the evil one' Green reminds us that "Jesus had no illusions about the power of the Evil One." Thus, there is nothing in this text that either confirms or denies that deliverance from bondage was in Jesus' mind.

Ephesians 4:27 has a different slant to it. In the NIV this verse is rendered "do not give the devil a foothold." The Greek word translated 'foothold' is *topos*, and has a variety of translations in different English versions. The Authorised Version uses 'place', Modern Language and the Revised Standard versions use 'opportunity', the Living Bible says 'a mighty foothold' and the Message goes with the NIV again using 'foothold.' *Topos* is used extensively in the New Testament and in every other case it has the connotation of physical space. In John 14:2, Jesus says "In my Father's house are many rooms." The word used is *topos*. In Matthew 12:43, *topon* is used of the places a spirit expelled from a person seeks rest. In John 4:20 it is used of Jerusalem. Thus, to be faithful to the way the word is used in every other instance in the New Testament, this verse should be a warning not to give Satan physical space, or occupation, in your life. Moule (1977:123) gives it this connotation: "'Give Place':— as to one who would fain intrude at a half-open door, intent on occupying the house."

In Ephesians 6:16 we are commanded to wear “the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.” The context of this whole chapter from verse 10 to 18 is the spiritual battle in which we are engaged. It is a figurative passage, warning Christians to be constantly on the alert against the onslaughts of the devil. Verse 12 makes it very clear that Paul is, indeed, talking about spiritual forces of evil, and teaches that truth, righteousness, readiness as taught in the Gospel of Peace, faith, salvation, and the Word of God, to all of which he ascribes a figurative parallel in an armour of battle, are means at our disposal to stave off the attacks of the enemy. If all of these are in place, as Liefield (1997:165) points out “the various pieces of armor are interrelated and cannot be analyzed or deployed individually” then we are secure against Satan’s invasion. Exactly what Paul had in mind with the ‘flaming arrows of the evil one’ is open to speculation. Barclay (1972:218) sees it as temptation. Hodge (1994:218) sees it as a variety of temptations and attitudes:

[Satan] showers arrows of fire on the soul of the believer, who if unprotected by the shield of faith would soon perish. It is a common experience for God’s people that at times horrible thoughts – unholy, blasphemous, doubting, malignant – crowd on the mind, which cannot be accounted for by any ordinary law of mental action, and which cannot be dislodged. ... There are others which ignite passion, inflame ambition, excite cupidity, pride, discontent, or vanity ...”

In 1 Peter 5:8-9 we are told to resist the devil, who prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom to devour. There is nothing in the text to indicate exactly what this devouring is. One may assume that Peter is warning his readers that Satan is on the prowl to destroy Christians by whatever means he can find. If that relates to yielding to temptation, he will exert as much pressure as he can to accomplish that. If it means gaining a foothold, or finding a place in the believer, he will do everything he can to achieve his goals. Either way, we are urged to be on the alert and to be aware of his intentions for us. James instructs us to resist the devil and he will flee from us (James 4:7). The problem is when we fail to resist him, or even worse, when we dabble in his territory and thereby invite him to gain control in our lives. Barclay (1983:272) says “the devil is ever out to see whom he can ruin. ... the devil is like any bully who retreats when he is bravely resisted in the strength of Jesus Christ.”

One further passage that deserves examination is 1 John 2:13b: “I write to you,

young men, because you have overcome the evil one.” Stott (1998:102-103) writes:

The Christian life, then, is not just enjoying the forgiveness and the fellowship of God, but fighting the enemy. The forgiveness of past sins must be followed by the deliverance from sin’s present power, justification by sanctification. So in both messages to the *young men* it is asserted that they *have overcome* (NEB ‘mastered’) *the evil one*. Their conflict has become a conquest. ... It is significant that in each of these six messages the verb is in the perfect tense, which indicates the present consequence of a past event. John is laying emphasis on the assured standing into which every Christian has come, whatever his stage of spiritual development.

Thus Stott believes this is not a reference to day to day victory in Christ, but the fact of our standing in Christ even though, in our spiritual journey we may still be immature. It is not hard to see that there is a difference between the two, for in our standing in Christ we have been justified and rendered sinless, since our sins have been dealt with in the body of Christ on the cross, whereas in day to day life we continue to succumb to our fallen nature and need continued confession and forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Indeed, if we claim to be without sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8).

While all the verses in this section relate to victory in Christ in one way or another, none of them suggest that a Christian is immune from Satan’s foothold or a place (Ephesians 4:27) in our lives.

### **Ancestor altar of sacrifice**

A woman entered the bookstore at our church, and the bookstore manager asked her what was wrong – she looked pale and frightened. The lady explained that she had been terrified from what she had just experienced. The manager referred her to me and the lady explained how she had entered her maid’s room and seen something that had attracted her interest. Under the dresser she had seen a tray with some curious objects on it. She had approached it to satisfy her curiosity, and as she reached out to pull out the tray, she experienced something resembling a powerful electric shock. She shoved the tray back under the dresser and fled from the room.

After hearing her story I accompanied her to her home and into her maid’s room where the tray was under the dresser. I pulled the tray out without incident and observed some candles and a bowl containing burnt out weeds among other things.

This was the maid's altar of sacrifice to her ancestor spirits. On the wall hung her robe indicating her membership of a Zionist church and in her drawer was Jehovah's Witness literature. Upon questioning whether other problems were being encountered, the lady said that her seventeen and nineteen year old sons' relationship with her had changed over the past year. From being very close, her sons had become alienated from her and had developed an unhealthy addiction to heavy metal rock music, with accompanying books, posters and magazines pertaining to this music. The older son had also developed a relationship with a woman his mother was extremely uncomfortable about. We entered each room of the house, exercising authority in the name of Jesus, and expelling all evil spirits from the home. The lady had not told her sons or her husband about the incident or my visit, but of their own accord the sons had torn down the posters, destroyed the magazines and books and their relationship with their mother had been restored.

### **Occultic Games**

A family that belonged to our church in Randburg were concerned that a member of the family who was at University in Grahamstown was playing occultic video games, and questioned to what extent his activities could affect them in Randburg. I agreed to come to their home and share from my experiences and research on an informal basis and try to answer questions they might have. In my sharing, I mentioned persistent nightmares *inter alia* as a possible symptom of demonic activity. The reaction of the family indicated that I had touched a sensitive spot, and they explained that their seven-year-old daughter had experienced nightmares every night over a period of two years. After the informal meeting was over, and the extended family had dispersed, we went through every room of the house taking authority in the name of Jesus over evil forces and expelling them from the home. This incident took place on a Monday evening. By the following Sunday their daughter had not had any more nightmares. Three months later they confirmed that no further nightmares had bothered their child.

### **Pedophilia**

A woman explained to me that she had experienced difficulty over the past few months with being able to make decisions. She also had difficulty with maintaining male relationships. Just as a relationship was beginning to blossom she would do

something stupid that would end in the termination of the relationship. She couldn't understand why she did these things that were unintended. With further probing, it transpired that her problems ran a lot deeper than she had been willing to admit to. As a child, she had often been frightened by a lady in white that she saw standing at the end of the passage. That was no longer happening, but in its place, she now experienced a body weight that weighed down the mattress next to her own body when she went to bed at night. After some discussion, it emerged that she had been sexually assaulted by her father as a child. After deliverance, she was a changed woman. Two years later, her friend who had referred her to me, told me that she was a very different person. She was confident, outgoing, and displayed good social skills. Asked when the change had occurred, the time given by her friend coincided with the time of her deliverance.

### **Mormonism**

A young woman who had been converted to Mormonism because of the extreme care and friendliness she had experienced from Mormons was having experiences of presences in her room. When she attended Bible studies, she was unable to concentrate and realised something was not right. On one occasion the electric wall heater in the host home of her Bible study group was hot after this woman had been in the house, even though the heater was not plugged in. Her deliverance was another case similar to the ones described in the gospels. The deliverance was a long struggle, with stubborn demons refusing to leave. A demon said: "We will not leave. This is our home. We like it here." When I persisted that they had no right in this woman's life since she was now a child of God and had renounced all door opening sins, the demons said they would leave, but would take her with them. I told them they would do no such thing, and the woman was hurled to the floor and lay motionless. She appeared to be dead. When she came around, she admitted that she thought she was dead. This is reminiscent of the case in Mark 9:26f.: "The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, 'He's dead.' But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up."

### **"The third and fourth generation"**

A British missionary that assisted me as a co-counselor told of her experience

some years earlier. One day she was hurled off her bed onto the floor by an unseen force, and the furniture in her room levitated. For a period of three months she was incredibly suicidal, even though she was an outgoing person. Whenever she saw a bus or truck or train approaching she had a strong urge to throw herself in front of the vehicle, and it took all she had to restrain herself from doing so. She was bewildered with what she was experiencing and did not know where to find help. Few pastors were equipped to assist her. Finally she found someone who understood what she was experiencing, and they discovered that she had some North American Indian blood in her ancestry. Further probing revealed that her great, great, great grandmother had been a witch doctor. Now, four generations later, the generational sin in her ancestry had caught up with her, and she had become a victim of ancestral occultism. The curse of the past was broken, and she was set free.

### **Homosexual Orientation**

There have been six cases when I have counseled homosexuals, some who have been practicing, and others who have had a homosexual orientation but resisted homosexual behaviour. In each case they were freed from their orientation by the expulsion of evil spirits. In the case of one lesbian who was actively engaged with a partner, I encountered her pastor three months later. He asked if I recalled having prayed for this person, to which I responded in the affirmative. Then he said that she had come home from the camp where I had counseled her and announced to her parents that she was no longer homosexual. Skeptically they responded, “You can’t be homosexual one day and then not the next.” To which she countered, “That’s exactly what happened.” She was still free from her homosexual orientation at the time of my conversation with her pastor.

In chapter four we noted that physical ailments referred to in Scripture were attributed to various causes. It would be erroneous to assume that all ailments of a particular nature are caused by demonic powers, because some cases could be identified as being demonic in origin. What of the autistic child, for instance? Because she was clearly the victim of a demonic curse, would it be true to assume that all autism is therefore demonic in origin? The answer is “no” and in chapter four this was pointed out with particular reference to two deaf-mutes who were both healed by

Jesus. Mark 7 tells the story of a man who was simply deaf and mute, and Jesus healed him through a healing process not associated with any command to evil spirits to depart. In Mark 9, however, we have another case of a deaf mute who was healed by the casting out of the spirit. How then do we determine whether a person's ailment is demonic in nature or purely physical. This question was dealt with in chapter four with a chart, showing door openers that are generally found to lead to occultic involvement. In the case of the autistic child cited earlier, it was determined during the pre-counselling session that a curse had been placed on the child's mother, resulting in the autistic condition of the daughter. My praxis with deliverance is to spend an extended period of time with the counselee to determine if there have been occultic activities that make demonic influences possible or probable. Unless such "door openers" are found it is impossible to assume that a person's problems are of demonic origin and that deliverance will bring about a change. But if such a presence can be found, the deliverance results have proved to be remarkable.

The cases related above, and many other case studies demonstrate the power of the name of Jesus over the evil spirits that were defeated by his death and resurrection. They also demonstrate that the authority Jesus gave to his twelve apostles in Luke 9 and the other seventy-two disciples in Luke 10 was indeed intended as an ongoing ministry of the disciples of Jesus right into the twenty first century and beyond.

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick (Luke 9:1-2)

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you" (Luke 10:17-19)

Since Jesus commanded his disciples in the Great Commission to teach subsequent generations of disciples everything that he had commanded them to do (See Matthew 10:8), we can only conclude that a biblical worldview must be part of Christian ministry today.



## CONCLUSION

The glorious theme of the gospel is that Jesus came into the world to reconcile fallen man to his creator. Through the fall mankind was utterly lost, to the extent that even good deeds he tried to do fell far short of God's standard of righteousness (Is. 64:6). But because of the grace and mercy of God, Jesus came as the suffering servant to gain victory over the enemy. The Bible is full of paradoxes, and none is so succinctly portrayed as in the hymn that says,

“Make me a captive Lord, and then I shall be free.  
Help me to render up my sword and I shall conqueror be.”

This all began in the apparent paradox of the cross where Jesus died to give us life; where the apparent victory of the evil one was in effect his greatest defeat. The Bible concludes with the glorious book of Revelation which shows how Jesus has triumphed over evil and also how the whole realm of evil will ultimately be destroyed. His role in bringing salvation to people of all *ethné* and how it was accomplished is described in these glorious words:

“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:9-10).

This is followed by a picture of an infinite number of angels uniting with all the saints and every part of creation singing his praises:

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” (Rev. 5:13).

Paul champions the cause of the resurrected Christ's triumph over his archenemy. Again and again he makes reference to it, as for instance in Ephesians 1:20

... when he raised [Christ] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

George Ladd's understanding of this verse is referred to by Warner:

... Ladd understands the verse to mean that Christ has disarmed the spiritual powers, stripping them of their insignia of rank or of their arms. Thus the verse states that by His death Christ triumphed over His spiritual enemies, winning a divine triumph over the cosmic powers (Warner 1991:59).

It is clear that in the Christian faith, the temporal and the eternal, the spiritual and the material are intertwined. Jesus died a physical death on the cross of Calvary in order to win a spiritual triumph over his spiritual archenemy. We are enjoined to die spiritually: to sin and self, in order to live more triumphantly in this life (Gal. 2:20).

Jesus' death and resurrection were the ultimate victory that he won over the forces of darkness, showing his authority and his majesty. Even the very forces that he came to conquer recognised who he was:

What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?  
I know who you are – the Holy One of God! (Mk 1:24).

And the people around, when he cast the demon out of the boy, also recognised his authority:

The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him" (Mk. 1:27).

The theme of this thesis is the glorious victory of Jesus over the forces of darkness. Jesus came and during the three years of his ministry on earth he showed his authority, his power, and his majesty by many wonderful miracles. But none of his miracles were simply a show of power. Every one was performed in circumstances that brought blessing in one way or another to people he came to serve. In the synagogue he read a Scripture from Isaiah,

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Lk. 4:18, 19),

and expounded this passage to refer to his ministry when he said to his listeners: "Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (v.21).

The glory of the Christian gospel is the undeniable triumph of Jesus Christ over the arch enemy of God.

Ridderbos (1975:488) explains how the longing for Christ's coming empowers us to be new and free:

This expectation, which can be called the content of the apostolic testimony (2 Thess. 1: 10), is also a powerful motive for the Christian life (1 Thess. 2:12). Again and again the apostle confronts the church with the day of Christ, on which it will have to appear before its Lord pure and blameless (Phil. 1: 10; 1 Thess. 3: 13; 5:23; 1 Cor. 1:8). This motive is the more urgent because by this church Paul evidently does not mean the church in its already glorified mode of existence after the resurrection, but simply in its historical appearance, directed toward the *parousia*. Its calling to holiness and blamelessness he places in the very concrete light of the expected coming of the Lord, and it is the church with whom as his glorying he hopes to enter into the presence of the Lord at his coming (2 Cor. I: 14; Phil. 2:16), indeed it is his hope, his joy, and crown of honor before his Lord (1 Thess. 2: 19, 20). It is with a view to that approaching day that believers are to cast off the works of darkness and to put on the armor of light. It is now time to awaken out of sleep; salvation is already nearer than when they first believed. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand. One is therefore to walk becomingly as in the day and no longer in the sins of darkness (Rom. 13:1-13).

Because of this triumph it is possible for us to live lives of victory. In the Scripture already referred to, Galatians 2:20, Paul helps us to understand that our identification with Christ in his death and resurrection makes this possible:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

It is because of his crucifixion that I am crucified – my life is surrendered to Christ and it is now he who lives in me, thus making victorious living a wonderful reality, because it is the life of Christ living itself out through me.

According to Bruce (1977:463) Paul's message did indeed change life and brought new expectations to humans.

Four themes emphasized in his teaching call for summary mention because they still need to be emphasized.

(a) True religion is not a matter of rules and regulations. God does not deal with people like an accountant, but accepts them freely when they respond to his love, and implants the Spirit of Christ in their hearts so that they may show to others the love they have received from him.

(b) In Christ men and women have come of age, as the new humanity brought into being through his death and resurrection-life. God does not keep his children in leading-strings but calls them to live as his responsible adult sons and daughters.

(c) People matter more than things, more than principles, more than causes. The highest of principles and the best of causes exist for the sake of people; to sacrifice people to them is a perversion of the true order.

(d) Unfair discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, class or sex is an offence against God and humanity alike.

If these lessons are important, it is well to give grateful credit to one man who taught them.

In Christ salvation is possible. In Christ deliverance from evil is possible. He is the Powerful one!

What a glorious gospel! Peter pursues the same theme:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. **For this very reason**, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:3-8).

As this was true in the days when Christ walked on the earth, it continues to be true today. The mission of Christ's incarnation was not an end in itself, but the introduction to a deeper understanding of the message of salvation and victory. The power of Christ's life and work continues as the writer to the Hebrews affirms: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8). Victory in Christ is an ongoing reality for those who walk in the Spirit.

When Jesus said, "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36),

why is it that so many people who have put their faith in Christ, are not free?’

Van Rheeën (1991:304) puts it aptly:

When considering the reality of spiritual powers in the world and their confrontation with the powers of God, the Christian missionary must acknowledge the centrality of spiritual warfare. He is in battle with the spiritual forces of darkness. He must proclaim the sovereignty of God in word and deed. As God’s representative, he must have a passion for the purposes of God as he challenges the animist’s passion for self. He must proclaim God to be all-sufficient, the focus of all creation, the one for whom we live, the initiator and terminator of time, and the one deserving of all human allegiance. By proclamation of the sovereignty of God and total human allegiance to him, the principalities and powers are being defeated.

The theme of this paper is that the glorious, risen, triumphant Christ is still active in the world today through his disciples, to whom he has delegated his authority. Our world of scientific advancement has tended to minimize the power of the gospel in every day living. In the Introduction it was contended that there is an erroneous understanding of biblical teaching as it relates to demonic activity and the power of the gospel to curb it, and that this has resulted in a weakening of the effectiveness of the gospel and a return to animism. The purpose of this study was said “to show that a correct understanding of biblical teaching could have prevented this trend and forged a much stronger emerging Christian church.”

In Chapter One, we saw the problem of religious dualism: we saw the extent to which there has been a return to animism in South Africa. Spiritism is encroaching on the church. The government is resorting to the use of spiritism in its prayers. Academics are giving increasing support to animistic activity and credibility. Our secular media is becoming, not only more open to the occult, but giving it more and more support, feeling more comfortable about various forms of the occult than it is about evangelical Christianity. We saw how African Traditional religion is increasingly gaining credibility and that their divine healing methods are being recognised by our medical aid societies. In short, we saw that in every area of society, occultism is gaining ground.

Chapter Two was devoted to animistic belief systems, understanding what it is and evaluating it. In this chapter we saw the growing tendency to syncretise ATR with Christianity. We saw the demand for the acceptance of culture, but also that in that

demand, there is the cry to accept all religious practices as being an acceptable part of culture, and that these values should therefore be incorporated into an enculturated Christianity. Religious dualism is becoming a way of life. We saw how missionary criticism of African practices within the context of their religion without offering an adequate alternative, led to a conspiracy of secrecy. Then we saw how that secrecy is evaporating in the wake of increasing acceptance of every form of religion. We saw ultimately the formulation of an alternative theology to appease plaguing spirits. This could have been prevented if the true power of the gospel had been demonstrated.

In Chapter Three, we saw that western Christianity is equally as guilty of syncretism, as it has developed a belief system based on scientific advancement which rejects the face value presentation of the gospel. We saw how the majority of evangelical Christians have been lured into this enlightenment thinking, evidenced through exegesis based more strongly on an a priori position than on sound exegetical principles. We examined and countered arguments of theologians who contend that a deliverance ministry has no place in Christianity today. We saw how this position has deprived people of liberty in Christ – though saved from the penalty of sin, they remain in bondage to Satan’s influence in their lives. In this chapter we also dealt with the contentious issue of whether it is possible for a Christian to be in bondage, and showed that Scripture does not support a teaching that Christians cannot be bound, but rather, Scripture does not distinguish between believers and unbelievers in any discussion on either healing or demonization. On what authority, then, do we impose this distinction? Instead, arguments from Scripture and irrefutable empirical examples were presented to support the case that it is indeed possible for Christians to be bound.

In Chapter Four we sought to understand what the Bible really teaches about the reality of the spirit world. We examined arguments of theologians who discount the biblical narratives. We offered further evidence to show that Christians can be demonised. We also saw that the Christian Church, throughout its history, has believed and practised deliverance ministries, not only among unbelievers, but among believers as well. In this chapter we acknowledged that healing does occur in other religions, and saw that this was also true in Scripture, but noted that there is a profound difference between healing through the power of Jesus and healing through the power of other forces. Scripture offers only two alternatives: the power of God, or

the power of Satan.

Chapter Five is an empirical chapter. It warns against the danger of formulating a theology based only on experience, but it also questions the validity of a theology that lacks power in praxis, and shows that there is a case for testing our theology by the empirical evidence. This occurred in Scripture, God invites us to test his claims (Mal. 3:10), and it is part of every day life. We presented evidence of the effectiveness of a deliverance ministry from various New Testament personalities: the apostles, Philip and other disciples outside of the Twelve, Paul, Jesus, and added to this the experiences of modern evangelists. We saw that there are many people who have held firmly to a position that Christians could not be demonised, but have had to rethink their positions in deference to the overwhelming evidence, and have concluded that their reading of Scripture has been erroneous. Finally, numerous examples from a number of authors on the subject of deliverance were presented as evidence and this was supplemented from a number of examples from my own counselling experience. There is always the danger of imbalance on a theme such as this, and we conclude by reiterating the wise words of C. S. Lewis:

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them (Lewis 1942:9).

Jesus seems to agree, for when the seventy two disciples who had been sent out to witness reported back with glee that even the demons obeyed them in his name, he confirmed the authority he had given them, but warned them to keep things in perspective:

However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven (Lk. 10 20).

Deliverance is important, but not as important as the salvation of people through the vicarious death of Jesus Christ. But as important as it is not to over-emphasise the demonic, it is equally important not to under-emphasise the reality of Satan and his evil angels and the need to set people free from bondage. It is not the over-emphasis of demons that has weakened the gospel presentation, but the under-emphasis. Had

the bearers of the wonderful good news of forgiveness of sins and freedom from bondage understood and presented the message as powerfully as Scripture presents it, there would have been no need for new converts to invent their own solutions to the real problems they faced from the plague of evil spirits.

The conclusion of this research is that the gospel presented by and large by the western Christian missionary force has been lacking in its dealing with demonic forces. A consequence of this has been that converts from animistic backgrounds have been forced to develop their own methods of dealing with the demonic since demons are very real, and they experience them in daily life. This method turns out to be a syncretistic theology. This in turn has contributed to religious dualism, since the gospel did not stand out as being more powerful than other faiths in dealing with these very real problems.

Had our theology been more biblical missionary activity would have left us with a stronger church, more soundly based on biblical theology. It would have left us with a church more relevant to every day life. People in bondage would be set free, and John's statement that "the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4) would have more meaning. There would have been less incentive for converts to return to animism.

John Newport, in a paper given at the Christian Medical Society symposium on the demonic, held at Notre Dame University in 1975, said of this:

Fortunately . . . the victory, or triumphant view of the atonement is coming back into its own. The sacrificial, substitutionary, propitiatory and redemptive views of the atonement all have validity. However, the triumphant view must take its proper place. Much of the New Testament . . . has to do with the power of Satan and demons, and this victory view should be seen as quite important (Warner 1991:59).

Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever. His bringing freedom for the prisoners and to release the oppressed is a ministry available through his power today as ever.



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