Mental Illness and Demonization

Introduction

When I was doing an internship at the Community Mental Health Center in Benton Harbor the supervising psychiatrist was asked if he believed in ghosts. His response was: “Professionally no. Personally, I’m not sure. There are some ghosts that medication doesn’t seem to get rid of.”

Although science has provided a reliable way to understand the natural world, survey results show that at least privately most Americans do not believe that the material world is all there is. In fact, scientific research itself is beginning to question that assumption.

In order to understand what Americans believe related to the issue of demonization and illness, particularly mental illness, I will begin by reviewing survey research showing the range of beliefs within American society. I will then present the history of our understanding of the relationship between demons and mental illness, beginning with a brief overview of beliefs prior to the scientific era. This will be followed by a more in-depth examination of how current beliefs have been shaped since the founding of the field of psychology in the late 19th century. In conclusion, I will present what evangelicals and fundamentalists believe related to the issue of demonization as well as the types of mental health care they provide. Finally, I will share some of the challenges that Seventh-day Adventist caregivers face as they deal with the issue of demonization and mental health.

Current Beliefs

A 2012 survey done by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life showed that a majority of Americans actually believe in demon possession and the belief appears to be growing. Survey results show that 44%...
of Americans over the age of 65 believe in demon possession and 57% of those between the ages of 47–65 also do. According to Bruce Wilson, the most surprising finding is that 63% of young Americans, those between the ages of 18–29, now believe in “the notion that invisible, non-corporeal entities called ‘demons’ can take partial or total control of human beings” (Wilson 2014).

According to a 2014 study by the Pew Research Center, 70.6% of the American population is Christian. This is down from 86% in 1990. Other religions collectively make up about 6% of the population with 23% claiming no religious affiliation. Of those, 4% are agnostic and 3% are atheist. However, 26% of those who claim no religious affiliation also believe that a person can be demon possessed and that exorcism is an effective means of dealing with it (Firma 2013). A 2012 survey done by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life showed that a full 85% of those who declare no religious affiliation actually profess spiritual or supernatural beliefs (Wilson 2014).

In 2009 the Barna Group (2009) conducted a nationwide survey of the spiritual beliefs of American Christians. The beliefs surveyed relevant to this topic had to do the existence of God, as well as the actual existence of the Devil, the Holy Spirit, and evil spirits or demons.

The vast majority of American Christians, 78% of them, understand God to be the “all-powerful, all-knowing Creator of the universe who rules the world today.” The remaining 22% of Americans who identified themselves as Christian were either uncertain or had unbiblical views of who God is.

When it comes to the existence of Satan, only 35% of the American Christians who responded to the survey believe Satan is an actual being. Most, 58%, believe Satan is a “symbol” of evil.

Interestingly, only a third or 34% of American Christians believe that the Holy Spirit is a living being. The majority believe the Holy Spirit is a simply a “symbol” of God’s power.

The finding that is most relevant to our topic today is that two out of three American Christians, or 64%, believe that a person can be under the influence of demons or evil spirits. And most American Christians, 76%, believe that a person must either side with God or with the devil—that there is no in-between position.

_In summary:_ Most American Christians believe in God as both Creator and Ruler of the universe, yet most American Christians see both the Devil and the Holy Spirit as “symbols” of good or evil rather than actual beings. However, twice as many American Christians believe demons are real as those who believe that the Holy Spirit is real.

While the above statistics describe American Christians as a whole,
statistical differences were found between those who were defined as “born again Christians” and those defined as “notional Christians.” The researchers found that born again Christians were twice as likely to believe that the Bible was accurate in all the principles it teaches; that their life had been greatly transformed by their faith; that a person can be under the influence of spiritual forces such as demons, and that Satan is more than just a symbol of evil. They were also more than three times as likely to see the Holy Spirit as a living being.

While Christianity is the dominant religion in the United States and most Americans, even those who declare no religious affiliation, have spiritual or supernatural beliefs there is an outspoken minority who look on with ridicule and disdain.

George Yancey and David Williamson analyzed data from the American National Election Survey (ANES) and found a “relatively high level of animosity toward conservative Christians” in the United States today (2015: loc 40). This is particularly true in the media and academia (loc 63). They have written a book entitled So Many Christians, So Few Lions published this year in which they explore the extent of anti-Christian sentiment in the United States.

Yancey and Williamson found that the prejudice that exists within the American culture today is not toward all Christians. It is directed toward “fundamentalist or evangelical” Christians, the Christians that Barna identified as “born again” Christians. As Barna and other researchers have noted, born-again or evangelical Christians take the Bible and their relationship with God seriously, seriously enough that it impacts their daily lives. They see the Bible as an authoritative source of knowledge and take for granted the existence of a supernatural reality. Roughly one third of Americans identify as born again or evangelical Christians.

Yancey and Williams also found, according to the ANES data, that a little under a third of Americans are negatively biased against conservative Christians (2015: loc 2244). Many of these find it hard to believe that an intelligent person can hold conservative Christian beliefs (loc 1525). They see conservative Christians as intellectually inferior. They also see them as backward and limiting social progress. They see religious faith as the opposite of rationality (loc 1167).

Yancey and Williams point out that the degree of prejudice and hostility in the media and in academia towards conservative Christians is accepted and tolerated in a way that prejudice toward Jews, Muslims, homosexuals, or racial minorities is not. Christianity, particularly conservative Christianity, is often openly mocked and criticized within American society. Higher education, in particular, dis dains conservative Christian beliefs.
Seventh-day Adventists are conservative Christians who fall into the category of born again or evangelical Christians. In many respects Seventh-day Adventists are also fundamentalists. Adventist beliefs related to the origin of the universe would put them into the category of the 15% of Christians who are “hard-core young earth” creationists. David F. Holland, Associate Professor of North American Religious History at Harvard Divinity School, says that Ellen White was influential in the rise of creationism and fundamentalism in early 20th century America. He says that she was one of “the first writers to advance a pseudo-geological justification for a ‘young Earth,’ the belief that the Earth is only 6,000 years old” (Martinez and Cooper 2015).

History

Yancey and Williamson believe “the roots of animosity toward conservative Christians in the United States today extends back to the social and political dialogue of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europe, well before the birth of the nation” (2015:333). In order to understand the tension that has always existed between science and religion, particularly as it relates to the role of demons in both physical and mental health, it will be helpful to understand the history up to the present time. I will begin with a brief overview of how mental illness was viewed prior to the scientific era, which will be followed by a more in-depth review once the field of psychology and psychiatry were founded.

Pre-scientific Era

Before the Time of Christ

Ancient peoples of various religions and cultures associated illness and disease of all types with demonic activity (Alexander 1966; Harpur 1994; Porter 2002; Koenig 2005). This was particularly true of mental illness. In his book *The History of Psychiatry* Franz Alexander, MD, indicates that “medicine in all ancient civilizations, was shrouded in magic” (1996:62). Witchcraft and demonology flourished as “exorcistic practices and prayers were offered to the gods” (46). Egyptian medical papyri written toward the middle of the second century before Christ abounded “in incantations and occult explanations for diseases” (42). Constance Gane, Mesopotamian archeologist and specialist in Sumero-Babylonian religions mentioned in a conversation that the spiritual world of the ancient Babylonians was populated with various demons of varying degrees of power that were believed to be the cause of different diseases and causes of death.

This is in contrast with the ancient Hebrew belief in one God as the
controller of health and disease. While the Hebrew Scriptures often attributed both mental and physical illness to the judgment of God, there was a very strong association made between lifestyle and health. The Torah’s strict dietary and sanitation laws shaped Hebrew culture and lifestyle. While we know today, based on scientific evidence, that diet and sanitation impact health, in that pre-scientific era people believed that breaking these laws invited the judgment of God and would lead to illness. The Old Testament actually speaks very little of demonic activity.

Because religion played a less dominate role in the daily lives of the people of ancient Greece they sought to find naturalistic explanations for everything. Hippocrates (460 to 377 BC), known as the Father of Medicine, “was the first to explain consistently all diseases on the basis of natural causes” (Alexander 1996:53). Hippocrates taught that it is nature that heals the patient and that the doctor is merely nature’s assistant (53). Although Greek medicine was “rational,” it was not “scientific” (50).

In Summary: Ancient peoples of various religions and cultures associated illness and disease of all types with demonic activity. This is in contrast with the ancient Hebrew belief in one God as the controller of health and disease. Religion played a less dominate role in the daily lives of the people of ancient Greece. As a result they sought to find naturalistic explanations for everything.

During the Time of Christ

Although there were major differences among Jews, Greeks, and Romans at the time of Christ as to the identity and nature of God, all possessed a super-naturalistic worldview, which overlapped a naturalistic worldview. Diseases of all kinds were poorly understood and the widespread belief in the existence of demons and evil spirits led many to attribute illness to demonic activity. The very emblem of medicine that has come to us from ancient Greece is that of a rod with a snake entwined around it. “The Greeks worshipped the earth and believed the serpent was the symbol of the power of the underworld” (Alexander 1996:50).

The New Testament assumes the existence of evil spirits and makes numerous references to Jesus casting them out of people. The gospels record seven specific accounts, three of which appear in all the synoptic gospels, in addition to general references to Jesus casting out demons. Matt 8:16 says “When evening came, many who were demon possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick.” When Jesus began his ministry he proclaimed it to be one of healing and restoration. His focus was on the whole person with little distinction made between healing body, mind, or soul.
The book of Acts reveals that the early followers of Christ carried on the work that Christ had begun by teaching, healing, and casting out evil spirits. The ancient Hebrew and traditional Christian worldview maintained that mental and physical illness were the result of the Fall.

In Summary: Although there were major differences among Jews, Greeks, and Romans at the time of Christ as to the identity and nature of God, all possessed a super-naturalistic worldview, which overlapped a naturalistic worldview. The New Testament assumes the existence of evil spirits and makes numerous references to Jesus casting them out of people. The early followers of Christ carried on the work that he had begun, which included casting out evil spirits.

Middle Ages

When Constantine declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, the Christian Church gradually adopted many pagan practices. According to Roy Porter “many old healing practices were dressed up in new Christian garbs” with Christian healing shrines being built upon the ruins of pagan temples (1997:86). Nonetheless, the Christian Church profoundly impacted how the sick were cared for. Porter says the Christian Church built facilities to care for the sick throughout the Roman Empire (87). When plagues swept through Europe wiping out huge portions of the population, Christians attempted to care for the sick. In light of the limited understanding of both the cause and prevention of disease, people naturally attributed both death and disease to the judgment of God or the work of the devil. Life and death were mysteries that could not be understood.

During the middle ages the basic laws of health were not understood. Christians no longer followed the sanitation laws outlined in the Old Testament. The major cities of Europe made no provision for waste disposal, burial, or the provision of clean water (Golub 1994:13). The average life expectancy throughout the middle ages was approximately 30 years, with a 25% infant mortality rate and another 25% dying before they reached the age of 20. Only 10% of the population lived to the age of 60. According to Edward Golub, people lived with the “constant presence of death” (3).

Franz Alexander suggests that the Christian church emerged from the dark ages with a resurgence in the belief in demonic possession. Witch hunts arose across Europe just as the Renaissance was getting underway (1966:96). The Malleus Maleficarum, a treatise on the prosecution of witches was published in 1487. According to Michael Goldstein, the treatments prescribed in this volume appear to reflect the animistic beliefs commonly held at the time rather than the teachings of Scripture and the practice of the church in centuries past. “The priests would attempt to coax out
the demon with elaborate rituals that resemble incantations of witch doctors in primitive societies. The priest would reason with the demon, cajole him, or curse him out if other methods failed” (Goldstein 1986:38).

At one time Protestants and Catholics alike were involved in witch-hunting. The Anglican Church was among the first to question it as they saw both Catholics and Puritans using it to bolster their own religious authority (Goldstein 1986:25). In the 1500s Calvin taught cessationism so most Calvinists believed that exorcism was valid only in the early days of Christianity. For Calvin, exorcism was connected with Popish superstition (MacNutt 2009:138). He taught that demons had been banished after the resurrection and therefore the church did not need deliverance. Eventually religion, in general, was seen as a tool to control the people and to maintain authority over them.

By the 1600s both Catholics and Protestants were moving away from the whole concept of demon possession and exorcism. Although they appeared to maintain a slight belief in the possibility, demon possession was seen as rare and the practice of exorcism was something that should be highly controlled. “In 1614, the Catholic Church published the official Roman Ritual in an attempt to control and guide the practice of exorcise” (Cuneo 2001:129). This document “declared that the exorcist should not easily believe that anyone is possessed, and it gave some highly unusual symptoms to help determine whether a person was really possessed.” According to MacNutt, “these signs of possession included the ability to speak in an unknown tongue” (2009:138).

**In Summary:** The Christian Church gradually adopted many pagan practices with the church emerging from the dark ages with a belief in demon possession. Protestants and Catholics alike were involved in witch-hunting. In the 1500s Calvin taught cessationism which resulted in the belief that exorcism was valid only in the early days of Christianity. By the 1600s both Catholics and Protestants were moving away from the whole concept of demon possession and exorcism. However, it was believed to be theoretically possible but was considered to be rare.

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**Scientific Era**

**The Nineteenth Century**

The modern era unfolded in the shadow of the French Revolution, which ushered in the Age of Reason. As a result, the 1800s were a time of social, intellectual, and religious change. These changes had a huge impact on society and the development of our present day Western worldview. Changes were made in how people thought and lived that greatly impacted the lives of ordinary people.
In line with the intellectual climate of the Renaissance, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant taught that God had no reality beyond that of a theoretical belief, and that while we can think about God “there is no way we can encounter God” (Hay 2005:33). As a result, it was believed that people who claimed to have had a personal experience with God were deluding themselves (33). In addition, the religious experiences characteristic of eighteenth century Methodists meetings was considered religious madness (29). According to Roy Porter, “all belief in the existence of supernatural intervention in human affairs—was turned into a matter of psychopathology” (1996:31). People came to insist that even religion be rational. In order to do this the Bible had to be demythologized.

The rationalistic orientation of the Greeks, which characterized the Renaissance, made possible the development of all the natural sciences. As the scientific method began to reveal that the human body is governed by certain physical laws and properties, science developed a very mechanistic view of the human functioning. Sir Isaac Newton and Rene Descartes both contributed to the idea that the mind and soul were separate from the body and that the body operated in a mechanistic, cause and effect fashion.

Prior to the scientific era, death and disease were believed to be in the hands of God. According to Edward Golub, when medicine became “scientific” enabling humans to gain control over death and disease, people began to “replace faith in the measures of ‘religion’ with faith in the measures of ‘reason’” (1994:30). With the birth of the scientific era we entered what Larry Dossey defines as Era I medicine. “The classical laws of matter and energy described in the seventeenth century by Sir Issac Newton form the foundation of Era I medicine” (1999:18). The universe was believed to be governed by deterministic, causal principles. These concepts had a profound impact on the development of the fields of psychology and psychiatry.

In 1857, Charles Darwin published his famous book *On the Origin of Species* in which he convinced the scientific community of the occurrence of evolution. It is believed that Darwin “probably did more than any other individual to pave the way for Sigmund Freud and the psychoanalytic revolution” (Schultz 1992:420). Freud graduated from medical school in 1881. The phrase “God is Dead,” popularized by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche appeared in print for the first time 1882. While Nietzsche is the one who made this statement famous, he was not the first to express it. It reflected the times and was simply the logical progression of enlightenment thinking. Just as Immanuel Kant did not believe in an actual God who existed beyond that of a theoretical construct, Nietzsche did not believe in a God who once existed and then died in a literal sense.
Nietzsche simply meant that the concept of God is no longer credible. This view came to dominate science and philosophy.

Freud was a medical doctor trained in neurology. As an atheist and avid reader of Darwin, Freud was profoundly impacted by Darwin’s belief that human beings are driven by biological forces. As a result Freud developed a “deterministic view of the individual as a complex system that functions on every level in accordance with the laws of nature” (Boa 2004:83). Using the scientific method consistent with the basic assumptions of Era I medicine Freud developed and applied a systematic method of studying the mind. His psychoanalytic theory presented abnormal symptoms as rational and explainable. The far-reaching impact of Freud’s work is undeniable. “Freud was a masterful writer, brilliant thinker, and articulate speaker and teacher who was able to synthesize information from many sources into new ideas and then effectively communicate those ideas to others” (Koenig, McCullough, and Larson 2001:61). Freud wrote about the negative impact of religion on emotional health throughout his life. Not only is Freud known as the father of psychology, he is also known and “widely regarded as one of the most formidable enemies of religion in the twentieth century” (Dossey 1996:149).

Freud’s beliefs were made more credible as conditions in life began to improve.

The Second Great Awakening was a Protestant revival movement, which began in the early 1800s and reached its peak in the mid-1800s as a reaction against the skepticism, deism, and rationalism prevalent in the wake of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. It stimulated the establishment of many reform movements designed to remedy the evils of society and resulted in the emergence of new religious movements and denominations, including Seventh-day Adventists. In addition millions of new members joined existing denominations (Smith 1957:20, 21). According to James Collins, John Wesley believed in a personal devil and practiced exorcism (2009:140).

In Summary: The 19th century is characterized as the age of Reason and a time of social, intellectual, and religious change. Science revealed laws and properties that governed the physical world causing supernatural realities to be challenged. Understanding these laws and applying them to the human body led to advances in medicine. Darwin’s theory of evolution challenged the veracity of the biblical account of creation as well as the validity of the Bible itself. Sigmund Freud was impacted by Darwin’s belief that human beings are driven by biological forces. Freud is known not only as the father of psychology but as one of the most formidable enemy of religion in the twentieth century. The Second Great Awakening was a reaction against the skepticism, deism, and rationalism prevalent in
the wake of the enlightenment and the French Revolution. Adventism is one of the movements that came out of it.

The Twentieth Century

*Early Years:* As the Western world entered the twentieth century, the tension between scientific and religious systems of thought seemed to intensify. For many, science was becoming a religion and was proving its validity on multiple fronts. While many who embraced the scientific worldview dismissed or ridiculed the religious perspective, there were many intellectuals who did not.

Carl Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist who was strongly influenced by Freud, believed it was beyond the scope of scientific research to try to determine the existence or non-existence of God. Jung never dismissed the importance of religion on mental and emotional health. He believed that no one was really ever healed if they failed to regain a “religious outlook” (1970:229). Jung was influenced by the German theologian Rudolph Otto, who coined the term “numinous” to describe sacred or mystical experiences. Otto’s most famous work, *The Idea of the Holy,* published first in 1917, defined religion and God in “rational” terms yet he used the term numinous to try to “capture the major quality or the essential features of religious experience” (Sperry and Shafranske 2005:54, 55). Jung began to use Otto’s concept in the 1930s to “make sense of experiences he was hearing in the consulting room that clearly could not be reduced to psychopathology” (55).

William James, who is considered the father of American psychology, also recognized the validity of spiritual experiences and took an interest in the psychological study of religion in the early 1900s. Recognizing the inherent conflict between rational and spiritual systems of thought, James recognized that a spiritual experience produced a kind of “knowing” that could not be refuted by rational argument (1994:86).

Tanya Luhrmann says that “most Christian institutions across the United States, regardless of their denominational affiliations, began to liberalize” toward the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth (2012:305). They did so in order to preserve the validity of the Bible and the Christian faith from the challenges of science. Although they maintained that the Bible was inspired, they contended that it reflected the misconceptions of the world in which it was written. Their goal was to persuade their followers that science was not incompatible with Christianity (305). The result was that the Bible was no longer taken literally. By 1920 most of the mainline, urban churches of America had reconciled their views of the Bible with evolutionary theory and all the major denominational seminaries had become liberal.
Fundamentalism as a movement arose among conservative theologians as a reaction to this liberal theology. According to Luhrmann, the belief that the Bible was to be taken literally was a direct response to this undermining of the Scriptures. Fundamentalists saw liberal Christianity as false and un-Christian (Luhrmann 2012:309). “Fundamentalists understood their primary struggle to be with those who rejected traditional Christianity because it was irrational (307). Their goal was to prove that fundamentalism was completely rational.

Interestingly, although the Fundamentalists asserted the validity of the miraculous in the Scriptures, they denied that those same supernatural events were possible in their own day (Luhrmann 2012:306). They placed little value on religious experience and adopted Calvin’s theology of cessationism.

The early 1900s gave birth to a movement that not only embraced the miraculous and supernatural, but was the epitome of non-rationality. Its focus was experiential. Pentecostalism emerged in the early 20th century from the Holiness movement, which was an offspring of John Wesley’s Methodism. The movement began in Los Angeles in 1907 and by 1914 it had spread to almost every major U.S. city. According to Luhrmann, Pentecostalism grew steadily throughout the twentieth century in spite of the fact that it was “a stigmatized, déclassé kind of Christianity” (25). It attracted the poor and the uneducated and appealed to those who were socially marginalized.

According to Luhrmann, Fundamentalists saw Pentecostalism as a religion of “illiterates, hillbillies, and rednecks” (307). Fundamentalists were mistrustful of the “spiritual experiences” of Pentecostals. According to James Collins, they believed these experiences either left individuals open to or were the product of demonic deception (2009:118). Although the gift of tongues served as a validation of the message to those who accepted it, linguistic anthropologist William Samarin, says that since “the second century, the established church had interpreted tongues as evidence of demonic possession” (1972:13).

Deliverance played a prominent role in the ministry of many of the itinerant Pentecostal healing evangelists (Collins 2009:30; Cuneo 2001:88). Early Pentecostals “tended to view miraculous healing and exorcism as two sides of the same coin. Sickness was generally regarded by them as a kind of ‘demonic assault’” (Cuneo 2001:88).

The famous Scopes Trial, which took place in Dayton, Tennessee in 1925 was a theological contest between liberal and conservative Christianity over whether or not the Bible should be taken literally. Of the three strands of Christianity in the United States in the early 1900s, liberal Christianity appeared to have won the day. According to Luhrmann, after the Scopes Trial, Fundamentalist had “almost no presence in politics, in
mainstream media, or in major universities” (2012:308). By the 1930s Fundamentalists had opted out of mainstream culture—they did not dance, drink, smoke or watch movies. Whereas Pentecostals were socially marginalized, Fundamentalists purposely disengaged from the world (308).

In summary: Although science tended to undermine faith in the early 1900s, there were academics and scientists who affirmed the place of faith such as Carl Jung and William James. Mainstream Christianity liberalized to accommodate science. As a reaction, Fundamentalism was birthed. In addition, Pentecostalism arose and spread rapidly in the US and around the world. Liberal Christianity won public support and both Fundamentalists and Pentecostals were sidelined. Only Pentecostals believed the miraculous was possible in our day and practiced both healing and deliverance. They tended to see miraculous healing and exorcism as two sides of the same coin.

Mid Years: Social scientists in the mid-twentieth century held what was known as the secularization hypothesis, which predicted that religion would eventually disappear (Luhrmann 2012:302). Confronted by evidence from geology and evolutionary theory, liberal churches had already retracted the biblical account of Creation and pulled back on belief in supernatural intervention in our world. Scholars predicted that the next rational step would be the rejection of religion altogether.

In the aftermath of WWII, however, a number of significant developments occurred. According to Tom Harpur, war forced the psychological community to deal with the impact of trauma on the human psyche. War also led the Christian community to find spiritual means of dealing with the impact of trauma and to once again embrace the healing ministry of Christ. Physicians attending wounded soldiers during the war pressed Archbishop William Temple of the Church of England for help. They were finding science and medicine inadequate to deal with the “mental and spiritual scars left by the horrors of war” (1994:87). As a result, Temple began to actively endorse the ministry of healing within the Christian church and in 1942 he formally endorsed the ministry of spiritual healing within the church. Six months after his death, “officials of the major Protestant churches in England joined with the Anglicans to form the Churches’ Council of Healing” (87).

During this same time Agnes Sanford volunteered to help care for wounded soldiers. According to Sanford, the Lord began to reveal to her the relationship between past trauma and current emotional functioning as well as the power of Christ to heal. In her first book, The Healing Light, written in 1947, Sanford began to teach others what she believed the Lord had shown her. Sanford is considered the founder of the inner healing ministry within the Christian church.
During this time in the United States, itinerant healing ministries began among Pentecostals and gained acceptance among Fundamentalists and Mainstream Christians (Collins 2009:29). According to James Collins, these ministries produced a healing revival that later spawned the birth of the Charismatic Movement (40). This post-war healing revival “popularized deliverance ministry, taking it beyond the boundaries of Pentecostalism” (41).

Also during this time a group of Fundamentalists set out “to create a theologically conservative Christianity, committed to what they understood to be the biblical fundamentals but accepted and respected within mainstream American society” (Luhrmann 2012:309). They were “more concerned about bringing people in than about protecting the threshold over which those people would cross” (310). This weakened separatism as well as their commitment to biblical literalism. They called themselves the new evangelicals and founded Fuller Theological Seminary in 1947.

It is important to remember that these new evangelicals or “neo-evangelicalism is largely distinguishable from fundamentalism, its spiritual progenitor, by a greater willingness to embrace a diversity of hermeneutical viewpoints concerning scripture and by a tendency to try to engage with culture instead of to fight against it” (Weaver 2015:334). Billy Graham, as a “visible symbol of fundamentalists theology without fundamentalist separatism” (Luhrmann 2012:311), was associated with Fuller since the beginning and helped establish its prominence among conservative Christians. Fuller played a pivotal role in the emergence and widespread acceptance of evangelicalism. Luhrmann reports that by 1975 Fuller was “one of the largest and most powerful conservative Christian seminaries in America” (311).

In Summary: In the mid-1900s liberal Christianity dominated Western culture and social scientists predicted the eventual disappearance of religion. However, WWII created a need for healing ministries “as science and medicine were inadequate to deal with the scars of war” (Harpur 1994:87). In 1942 the major Protestant churches in England joined with the Church of England to form the Churches’ Council of Healing. Agnes Sanford founded the inner healing movement and itinerant healing ministries gained wider acceptance in the United States. Neo-evangelicalism was birthed as fundamentalists became more willing to embrace a diversity of hermeneutical viewpoints concerning Scripture and were willing to engage with mainstream culture rather than fight against it. Fuller Theological Seminary was founded in 1947 and quickly became the leading conservative Christian seminary in America.

The Sixties: The 60s were a time of social unrest in the United States. The scientific worldview allowed advances to be made that resulted in increased
life expectancy and a higher standard of living for most Americans yet it resulted in a sense of meaninglessness and failed to provide an ethical or moral basis for society. Liberal as well as conservative Christianity had become so “rational” that the mystery of God and the spiritual aspects of faith were no longer a part of mainline Christian churches. Young people rejected the values of their parents and actively protested the racial, gender, and social inequalities that existed at the time. The 60s are known the era of the hippies and the hippies protested not only the Vietnam War but were “relentlessly hostile to traditional authority and restraint of any kind” (Cuneo 2001:4).

According to Dinesh D’Souza, a great moral shift occurred in American society during the 60s (2007, 18). He says that with the rejection of traditional authority there was an “erosion of belief in an external moral order” (19). In spite of this, interest in spiritual things reached an all time high. Although the hippies were young revolutionists many sought spiritual experiences through eastern mysticism and mind-altering drugs. The growing popularity of Eastern mysticism among Americans in general was an indication that Americans were more interested in an experience of God than they were in knowing about God. They were looking for something deeper and more spiritually satisfying than the secular culture and mainline Christianity was offering.

Recognizing the failure of the Church to provide an experience of God to ordinary lay people, Father Thomas Keating and Father William Meninger began teaching a form of Christian meditation in the 60s and 70s that grew into the worldwide phenomenon known as centering prayer. The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) was also an attempt of the Catholic Church to make God real and accessible to the common people (Cuneo 2001:3).

During the summer of 1960 both Time and Newsweek ran stories of an upper-middle-class church in Southern California where 70 members received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and started speaking in tongues (Cuneo 2001:83). The birth of the Charismatic movement is typically identified as taking place at this time (Collins 2009:42). The movement spread quickly and in just a few years “spirit-baptism and tongue-speaking had made significant inroads within virtually every mainline Protestant denomination in the United States (Cuneo 2001:85).

In 1967 Francis MacNutt received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. MacNutt was a Roman Catholic priest educated at Harvard and the Catholic University of America who won the respect of Catholics and Protestants alike. Although MacNutt was primarily involved in a healing ministry he also got involved in deliverance. From his experience, he found that when Christians pray for healing often enough “you inevitably
come into contact with evil spirits” (MacNutt 2009:128). He was one of the first Roman Catholic priests to be involved in charismatic renewal. By 1967 there were almost as many Roman Catholics participating in Charismatic worship as there were Protestants (Cuneo 2001:85). Cuneo says that the Charismatic renewal had been accepted within most of the major Christian denominations in the United States by the early 70s (129). Those involved in the Charismatic Renewal placed a greater emphasis on spiritual experience than on biblical truth. Their goal was to know God not just know about him.

This appealed to young people who were seeking a genuine encounter with God. During the 60s and early 70s many of the hippies discovered Jesus and received the baptism of the Spirit. Luhrmann quotes a *Time Magazine* article of that time in which it was said that the one mark which clearly identified the Jesus people, was “their total belief in an awesome, supernatural Jesus Christ” (Luhrmann 2012:19). These young Christians saw Jesus as “not just a marvelous man who lived two thousand years ago, but a living God” (19). They focused on a personal relationship with Jesus as a living reality and read the Bible as if it were written for them. Mainstream Christianity, both conservative and liberal, simply did not view the Bible or one’s relationship with God in this way. The hippies took the Bible at face value.

Luhrmann notes that it was at this time that the “new evangelicals” encountered the hippie Christians and the streams merged. “The rebels became conservative, and the evangelicals more experiential” (310). By 1979 a Gallup survey showed that 19% of US population identified as either Charismatic or Pentecostal. (Cuneo 2001:129). By 1982 over 40% of Fuller students described themselves as charismatic. Membership in charismatic congregations has exploded since 1960 and mainstream denominations are down by over 50% (Luhrmann 2012:311).

Deliverance ministries emerged in the late 60s and early 70s along with the charismatic renewal (Weaver 2015:790). Many fundamentalists and conservative Christians came to the conclusion during the 60s and 70s that the social and spiritual unrest that existed in the United States was the result of demonic activity. They likened it to an invasion—“a wave of invading demons had gained a beachhead on America’s shores” (Wilson 2014). They believed these demons were taking control of individuals as well as whole geographic regions. Megachurch pastor John Hagee of San Antonio, Texas wrote a book that was published in 1973 entitled *Invasion of Demons: The Battle between God and Satan in Our Time*. Hagee proposed that an invasion of demons was spreading like wildfire through the occult practices that were sweeping through America. Hagee’s influence has been substantial. His books have sold in the millions and his television
and radio programs reach 150 million households globally (Wilson 2014).

Corrie ten Boom, the famous Dutch Reformed Christian who is known for hiding Jews during World War II, also believed that demons could possess human beings. According to Michael Cuneo, she was convinced that the Germans were possessed by demons. He says that after the war “she became a famous deliverance minister in Europe” and in 1966 introduced deliverance in the United States. (Cuneo 2001:95).

Derek Prince and Don Basham were leaders in the deliverance ministries that sprang up in the 60s and 70s reaching its peak in the late 80s. Both men developed these ministries as they were confronted by the need for deliverance among the people they were ministering too. As evangelicals and charismatics focused on the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer they also became aware of the presence of demons.

James Collins says that Derek Prince was the pathfinder of Deliverance Ministry within the emergent Charismatic Movement in the United States (2009:43). Prince experienced a supernatural encounter with Jesus Christ while serving in the Medical Corps during WWII and shortly afterwards received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He went to Kenya as missionary in 1957 and his views related to demon possession and deliverance where likely influenced by his time there. Educated at Eaton and Cambridge, Prince had “impeccable intellectual credentials” (44). This helped to solidify his influence and credibility.

Don Basham, a charismatic minister from Toronto, learned from Prince. Initially he was not convinced of the existence of demons or a personal devil but the experience of his parishioners as well as his own study of the Scriptures convinced him of their reality. Basham was a writer and in 1972 he published Deliver Us from Evil. His prominence is due in large to his success as an author (Collins 2009:44).

Demons and demon possession captured a great deal of popular interest in the late 60s and 70s. William Peter Blatty’s book, The Exorcist, was published in 1971 and quickly rose to the top of the best-seller list. The book was made into a movie and was released in the winter of 1973. A number of other films related to the demonic were also produced during this time. Michael Cuneo believes that The Exorcist and films like it pre-disposed American culture to focus on demons. Collins, on the other hand, believes it was the other way around. He believes the general revival of interest in the occult gave rise to the interest in exorcism and the popularity of films (Collins 2009:154). He also believes that the reaction of various Christian groups to the film actually heightened the films credibility and allure (154). Cuneo points out that following the release of the film, “thousands of households across America seemed to become infested all of a sudden with demonic presences” (Cuneo 2001:11). More than likely
people were willing to acknowledge and talk about this after seeing the film and the demand for deliverance ministries increased significantly as a result. Many books were written on the topic during the 70s and millions of copies were sold.

In Summary: The 60s were a time of social unrest in the United States. A great moral shift occurred in American society as young people rejected the values of their parents as well as belief in an external moral code. In spite of this, interest in spiritual things reached an all-time high. The Second Vatican Council was an attempt by the Catholic Church to make God real and accessible to the common people. The birth of the Charismatic movement took place in the early 60s and within a few years spirit-baptism and tongue-speaking had made significant inroads within virtually every mainline Protestant denomination in the United States as well as within Roman Catholicism. Deliverance ministries emerged in the late 60s and early 70s along with the charismatic renewal. Demons and demon possession captured a great deal of popular interest during this time with movies such as The Exorcist.

Later Years: When the Charismatic Renewal joined evangelical theology in the 80s it morphed into what is commonly called the Third Wave of Pentecostalism (Weaver 2015:346). Weaver says that the most characteristic theological idea of the Third Wave was its emphasis on disempowering ‘strategic level’ territorial spirits” (901). This concept was first presented in John Wimber’s course, Signs and Wonders and Church Growth, which he taught alongside C. Peter Wagner and Charles Kraft between 1982 and 1985 at Fuller (Cuneo 2001:202). C. Peter Wagner applied the concept of the “power encounter at a socio-corporate level and thus developed the concept of ‘strategic level spiritual warfare’” (Collins 2009:101). Collins says that this understanding of spiritual warfare helped to give charismatics a mission focus (105). It was also likely instrumental in the global expansion of charismatic theology. Interestingly, charismatics incorporated “prayer walks” into their evangelistic strategies. Teams would go ahead of missionaries and these prayer walks would occur on-site before evangelism ever began.

I left the states and went to Africa in 1979 and spent most of the 80s there. This type of prayer focus was not a part of the mission work that I was a part of. Although I had a theoretical understanding of the Great Controversy and of spiritual warfare, my Western worldview prevented me from acknowledging the spirit world that Africans lived in tension with. Even though I knew there were witch doctors and spirit trees I did not take them seriously. I wrote off most of what I heard as superstitions that education would free people of. Meanwhile, back at home, Michael Cuneo says that below the “smooth suburban surface, middle-class
America was churning with demonic activity, and thousands of otherwise ordinary people were trapped in conflicts that neither they nor virtually anyone else fully understood” (2001:30). It was definitely below the surface and unless you knew about it, it was not obvious. Demonism and demonic affliction had become leading concerns for many people and deliverance ministries flourished. Cuneo says that by “the late 1970s and early 1980s, middle-class charismatics were lining up by the dozens to have their personal demons expelled” (42).

While in Africa I heard about the bodies of people found with all the blood drained out of them by sorcerers. I heard about the need for human blood in their rituals. I also knew that witchcraft and sorcery were illegal in the country I was living in. I also remember hearing about the public hangings of witch doctors and sorcerers. I was not aware, however, of what was happening in my home country. James Collins says that in the United States in the 80s and early 90s many people—ordinary people as well as professionals such as police officers, lawyers, psychologists, and social workers—were convinced of the existence of Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA) (2009:148). Particularly in the years between 1983 and 1993 there were numerous reports of abuse from all over the United States. On October 25, 1988 NBC aired a two hour prime time special called “Devil Worship: Exposing Satan’s Underground,”’ hosted by Geraldo Rivera. It was a documentary which exposed practices such as ritualistic abuse, satanic breeding, and ritual cannibalism that were all believed to be happening in the United States at that time. The show featured first-hand accounts from victims of abuse. These victims revealed how occult practices and heavy metal music were avenues that pulled them into Satanism. Young people were particularly vulnerable. The show was the most widely watched syndicated talk show that year (Cuneo 2001:55). For many people this was a reality. Collins believes that the SRA panics of the 80s and 90s were largely unfounded (2009:149). His theory is that evangelical Christians were motivated to propagate the myth because it supported their worldview. Many evangelicals, however, do not believe it was or is a myth, not in the United States or abroad.

The emergence and interest in deliverance ministries coincided with a trend within mainstream American culture in which there was a focus on personal growth and transformation. Self-help books became very popular. “The social upheaval of the 1960s ushered in not only a spiritual revolution but a psychotherapeutic one” (Luhmann 2012:295). Deliverance was compatible with this new therapeutic ethic (Cuneo 2001:126). Cuneo says that deliverance promised possibilities of a renewed and improved self—almost instantaneously. He said that in spite of the fact that it sounded like something right out of the Dark Ages “deliverance was surprisingly at
home in the brightly lit, fulfillment-on-demand culture of the post-sixties America” (Cuneo 2001:126). Cuneo believes that deliverance was both a product of and reflection of the times. “Exorcism (or deliverance) had suddenly become the cure-all for virtually every middle-class affliction imaginable” (42). He also points out that the eighties were a time of enormous growth for psychotherapy within American evangelicalism. Several evangelical training programs were available and the graduates of these programs “were perfectly willing to incorporate exorcism into their therapeutic practice” (203).

It was in the 80s that the Sandford family, who had learned from Agnes Sanford, rose to prominence within charismatic circles. The publication of their book, The Transformation of the Inner Man, helped bring them and the methods they taught into prominence. They used an inner healing approach which incorporated deliverance into a Jungian psychotherapeutic model of Christian discipleship.

While deliverance ministries were flourishing among evangelicals, Cuneo says that relatively few bishops in the Catholic Church even believed in the possibility of diabolic possession in the 70s and 80s. Cuneo reports that “no more than two or three dioceses in the entire country had bona fide priest-exorcists” (2001:27). Unofficially however, priests on the right-wing fringes of American Catholicism were regularly performing exorcisms (27).

The existence of supernatural evil and the need for deliverance gained significant credibility in the 80s when M. Scott Peck, America’s most well-known psychiatrist, published People of the Lie. Not only had Peck studied at Harvard and gone to medical school at Case Western Reserve University, he published The Road Less Traveled in 1978 which stayed on the Times best-seller list for 260 consecutive weeks. The Road Less Traveled began with the statement, “Life is Difficult.” In People of the Lie Peck argued that not only is life difficult, life is sometimes fraught with evil—“the real flesh-and-blood, grimacing, dastardly sort of evil that the medical professions and social sciences had spent years trying to psychologize and environmentalize into nonexistence” (in Cuneo 2001:44). Peck claimed that “diabolic evil was an active force in the modern world, and conventional therapeutic techniques were utterly unequipped to deal with it by themselves” (43). Peck wrote the book in the hope that it would cause “the medical world to take a serious look at the phenomenon of possession” and to begin “intensive interdisciplinary research on exorcism” (45). Unfortunately, the medical establishment ignored him (46). Nonetheless, Peck’s was a voice in “mainstream legitimation” (43).

In Summary: When the Charismatic Renewal joined evangelical theology in the 80s it morphed into what is commonly called the Third Wave of Pentecostalism. The most characteristic theological idea of the Third Wave
is the emphasis on disempowering “strategic level” territorial spirits. This concept has shaped their focus on missions. In the United States, many people in the 80s and early 90s were convinced of the existence Satanic Ritual Abuse. There is debate today as to whether or not this really occurred or if it did to the extent that many believed at the time. The interest in deliverance ministries in the 80s coincided with a therapeutic trend toward personal growth and transformation within mainstream American culture and deliverance was compatible with this new therapeutic ethic. M. Scott Peck was the most important voice in the mainstream legitimization of demon possession and the value of exorcism or deliverance. He contended that conventional therapeutic techniques were utterly unequipped to deal with it by themselves.

The Twenty-First Century

The goal of this paper has been to address the question of whether or not there is a relationship between demons and mental illness and if so, how does one differentiate between the two? The question that must first be answered is whether or not mental or physical health is impacted by spiritual realities. Can the Devil or God impact health? Evangelical Christians who use inner healing prayer believe that both the Holy Spirit and demons are real and that both impact mental and physical health. Most other Christians do not agree with this concept.

John Weaver has written a book entitled The Failure of Evangelical Mental Health Care: Treatments That Harm Women, LGBT Persons and the Mentally Ill, which was published this year in which he “endorses medical naturalism to the extent that it conceptualizes both bodily and environmental factors as working within a materially bound universe” (2015:293). With this position there is no room for spiritual entities impacting our lives.

Scott Peck noted that the only thing preventing medical professionals from taking a serious look at the issue of demon possession “was an indefensible bias against the supernatural” (Cuneo 2001:45). Our biases definitely blind us. Before the 1960s medical professionals did not believe that there was a relationship between the mind and the body. The medical world at that time endorsed medical naturalism or the view that the human body is governed by the classical laws of matter and energy—just as Weaver is proposing in 2015. Beginning with the research done by Herbert Benson of Harvard University in the 1960s, an indisputable medical link was found to exist between the mind and the body. Although the medical world initially rejected Benson’s research, today no one questions the link between mental processes and physical health. In 1988 Benson established the Mind/Body Medical Institute in Boston and the medical world entered what Larry Dossey calls Era II medicine.
While the medical world was struggling to break out of the “materi-
ally bound universe” of Era I medicine in order to embrace a mind body
approach to health care, other researchers were discovering a mind-body-
spirit connection. In the early 80s, contrary to what was then commonly
believed and taught in academic circles, epidemiologist Jeff Levin found
that “people who follow a religious path are more likely to enjoy greater
longevity and a higher quality of health than those who do not” (2001:vii).
Levin’s findings demonstrated the “many ways that religion can prevent
illness and promote health and well-being” (183). Careful analysis of the
data revealed that religion promotes health and well-being in several
demonstrable ways—by reinforcing healthy lifestyle behaviors, by nur-
turing supportive relationships, and by promoting hope and optimism.
However, Levin found that naturalistic explanations, explanations that
can be scientifically validated, did not explain all the benefits derived from
a religious experience. Levin proposed “one more possibility—namely,
that there is a God or divine presence that can choose to bless us in ways
that may violate the apparent physical laws of the universe” (183).

Levin coined the term theosomatic and proposed a theosomatic model
of care in which the determinants of both mental and physical health
are based on “the apparent connections between God, or spirit, and the
body” (15). A theosomatic model of care is built upon treatment protocols
that work in accord with the laws of nature, yet recognizes the power
of God to interact in people’s lives in ways over and beyond naturalistic
explanations.

Numerous other researchers have confirmed this mind, body, spirit
connection.

Harold Koenig is director and founder of the Center for the Study of
Religion/ Spirituality and Health at Duke University, which is the world’s
first major research facility to comprehensively study the impact of peo-
ple’s religious life on their physical and emotional health. Koenig says
that although scientists cannot demonstrate whether God exists and in-
tervenes in people’s lives, science can certainly “explore and chart in a
scientific manner the effect of religious faith and practice on physical and
emotional health” (in Levin 2001:27). Koenig has made it his life’s work
to explain the impact of religion and religious belief on health in scientific
terms (23).

The field of psychology emerged during the time of Era I medicine
when scientists regarded the world in which we live, including human
beings, from a mechanistic perspective. Spiritual factors did not fit within
the scientific worldview of that time. According to Dossey, as we enter the
new millennium, we are entering a third era of medicine in which aspects
of health and healing can no longer be explained exclusively by using the
tools of science as we know it. This is leading many physicians to reconsider a spiritual connection (Dossey 1999). Levin’s theosomatic model is consistent with what Larry Dossey, MD, describes as Era III medicine.

**Exorcism and Deliverance in Modern America**

Michael Cuneo has written a book entitled *American Exorcism: Expelling Demons in the Land of Plenty*, which was published in 2001. In his attempt to understand exorcism and deliverance from a socio-historical perspective, Cuneo said he experienced a side of America that he never knew existed. In the course of his research he talked “with hundreds of people, from various walks of life, who are convinced not only that demons exist but also that they routinely cause trouble in the lives of ordinary men and women” (loc 54). His book is based on personal interviews as well as first-hand observation of more than fifty exorcisms (96). His book is a cultural commentary on the practice of exorcism or deliverance as it is practiced among mainstream, predominately middle-class Christians in 20th century America (102). Cuneo also examined how these ministries have been influenced by the therapeutic trends within the culture.

As surprising as it may sound to most people, Cuneo says that “exorcism is alive and well in contemporary America.” He says it is “a booming business—operating below the radar perhaps, invisible to anyone not specifically on the lookout for it” (loc 66). Since the late 60s an increasing number of well-educated middle-class Americans have become convinced that our modern world is heavily populated with demons—“real supernatural entities with their own identities and missions, their own strengths and foibles, and sometimes even their own odors” (82).

Interestingly however, Cuneo says that relatively few bishops in the Catholic Church even believe in the possibility of demon possession. Father Richard McBrien, from the University of Notre Dame calls the idea of demon possession a “delusional belief” (62). However, priests on the right-wing fringes of the Catholic Church regularly perform exorcisms as well as priests associated with the Charismatic Renewal. Francis MacNutt is the most well-known of these. MacNutt was prominent and influential in the charismatic renewal beginning in the 60s.

Official church exorcisms are increasing, however. Cuneo says that theologically conservative bishops are more likely to appoint exorcists than are liberal ones. Among the intellectual and leadership elite of the American Catholic Church, the priest exorcist is not taken seriously. Nonetheless, the number of officially appointed priest exorcists is increasing around the world. In 1993 Gabriele Amorth co-founded the International Association of Exorcists for Roman Catholic priest exorcists and by November 2000 Amorth claimed to have performed over 50,000
exorcisms. In September 2000 the Archdiocese of Chicago officially appointed a priest exorcist (Cuneo 2001:259). At the time of the writing of his book Cuneo said that officially sanctioned Catholic exorcisms were taking place in practically every country in the world with a significant Catholic population (265).

In investigating the practice of exorcism or deliverance in America, Cuneo found that the way it is practiced is “remarkably well suited to the therapeutic ethos of the prevailing culture” (90). With almost tongue in cheek he says that it would be difficult to imagine a better deal. “Whatever one’s personal problem—depression, anxiety, substance addiction, or even a runaway sexual appetite—there are exorcism ministries available today that will happily claim expertise for dealing with it” (84). The bonus is that one is not held responsible for it. “Indwelling demons are mainly to blame, and getting rid of them is the key to moral and psychological redemption” (90). He notes that the evangelical Christians who practice deliverance are middle-class Americans, among them doctors, nurses, and therapists, many of whom are willing to incorporate deliverance into their professional careers (142).

Although many Adventists may be unaware of it, Ellen White believed in demon possession and in the practice of deliverance. In the second volume of Selected Messages she says, “Satan takes possession of the minds of men today. In my labors in the cause of God, I have again and again met those who have been thus possessed, and in the name of the Lord I have rebuked the evil spirit” (1958:353). In relation to the question of whether or not a Christian can come under the influence of demonic forces, she said, “It is not by force that Satan takes possession of the human mind. While men sleep the enemy sows tares in the church. . . . When men and women are in this condition, when their spiritual life is not being constantly fed by the Spirit of God, Satan can imbue them with his spirit, and lead them to work his works (353).

So assuming that we accept that demons exist and that they can possess human beings, how does one differentiate between demonic affliction and mental illness in the “deliverance as therapy era” in which we are living today? Catholic exorcists are supposed to rule out all other possibilities before proceeding to exorcism (Cuneo 2001:12). Cuneo says that there are about a dozen psychiatrists around the country who evaluate suspected cases of demon possession on a pro bono basis for the Catholic Church (253). How does it work within evangelical or charismatic deliverance ministries? In particular, what approach do Seventh-day Adventists take in relation to the question of mental illness vs. demon possession?

First of all, it is important to recognize that Seventh-day Adventists share many of the ideological tenets of evangelical Christianity. Adventism
emerged along with other evangelical movements during the Second Great Awakening in the second half of the 19th century. Adventists, however, tend to be Evangelical Fundamentalists and often look down on the Neo-Pentecostal branches of Evangelicalism. Like other Fundamentalists, Adventists tend to be mistrustful of the “spiritual experiences” and are fearful that spiritual experiences are either the product of demonic deception or will leave individuals open to demonic deception (Collins 2009:118). In practice, Adventists tend not to behave as if they believe that human beings can be possessed by demons nor do they behave as if they believe a Christian has the authority to cast demons out. Although Adventists pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, in many respects, Adventists behave as if they are cessationists. These practical beliefs have limited Adventists in developing a practical approach to the ministry of deliverance.

Evangelical Mental Health Care

Tanya Luhrmann is a psychological anthropologist from Stanford University who has written a book entitled When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God. Luhrmann said that she wrote the book because the rift between believers and nonbelievers was so wide today that neither was able to understand the other. The prejudice and bias against conservative Christians in the media and in academia in the 21st century is very real. In order to understand how God can become real for someone in our modern world Luhrmann did an in-depth ethnographic study of evangelical Christians who belonged to the Vineyard, a denomination shaped by the theology and influence of John Wimber. By spending hundreds of hours with members of the Vineyard over a four-year period of time, Luhrmann came to understand how well-educated, predominately white, successful, middle-class Americans come to both experience and believe in supernatural realities, realities that she said seem almost absurd to those within the mainstream branches of American Protestantism and Catholicism as well as those within the secular culture of the United States. The Christians that Luhrmann came to know and understand where Christians who took biblical miracles at face value and who experienced God as vividly present in their everyday lives.

Luhrmann points out that the evangelical Christianity that emerged out of the 60s and 70s was fundamentally psychotherapeutic. Studies investigating the relationship between prayer and mental illness have found a positive relationship between frequency of prayer and mental illness for those who experience God as distant and unloving but an inverse relationship for those who experience God as loving and intimate (Luhrmann 2012:289). Evangelical Christians learned to pray in ways that made God real to them, in ways that they were able to experience his love for them.
personally. In her study she found that to the extent that prayer techniques can help make God real, they can also make demons real (265). She reports that demons actually play a central role in much Evangelical therapy (254).

Prior to the 1950s and 1960s most conservative Christians believed that all psychology was anti-biblical. Rather than this being a paranoid stance on the part of conservative Christians it reflected the reality that a majority of psychologists and psychiatrists were anti-biblical and saw both Christian beliefs and Christian practices as unhealthy.

In order to benefit from the gains that had been made in understanding mental illness from a scientific perspective and to make these available to Christians, particularly to missionaries, evangelical mental health professionals began to meet together in the mid-1950s to explore ways to integrate biblical principles into the fields of psychology and psychiatry. They replaced the anti-religious bias that was superimposed on the field with biblical principles and values. As a result, an integrated psychotherapeutic model was developed. In 1956 the Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS) was established to further this integration. In 1964, Fuller Theological Seminary developed a doctoral program in clinical psychology. Seven years later Clyde Narramore founded the Rosemead School of Psychology. Rosemead began to publish the *Journal of Psychology and Theology* in 1973, which was the first journal of its kind with a primary focus on the integration of psychology and theology. In 1982, the Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS) began publication of the *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*. Wheaton College also opened a clinical psychology program in the 80s. This integrated approach incorporates the science of psychology into a Christian value system. This integrative approach is basically the approach that is taught at Andrews within its clinical psychology program. However, it does not involve prayer or the use of Scripture in the therapeutic process. Nor does it incorporate a supernatural reality.

According to John Weaver, in addition to this integrated approach, there are two non-scientific and non-psychotherapy-based mental health models used within evangelicalism (2015:136). They are the biblical counseling and pastoral care model and the inner healing and deliverance model. The biblical counseling and pastoral care model was developed by Jay Adams and is used among Reformed evangelicals and fundamentalists. American Reformed theology is a product of Puritan theology. As a result, the focus is on sin and repentance and aligning one’s life with scripture (Weaver 2015:681). The Reformed movement takes a cessationist position. Weaver says that it is “the division over cessationism that fundamentally divides biblical counseling practice from deliverance ministries” (509).
Biblical counselors question both the theology and ethics of inner healing and deliverance. They frame their objections theologically: “to be a Christian is to be saved, and he who is saved is safe from demons” (Luhrmann 2012:32).

The inner healing and deliverance model evolved within the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. Physical healing was a part of the Pentecostal movement from the beginning in the early 1900s. In the 40s, Agnes Sanford began the inner healing movement. She herself had suffered from a severe and recurrent depression and through the ministry of a Christian pastor who believed in the healing power of prayer she was cured of her depression. As she came to understand the relationship between forgotten trauma and present emotional problems, she began to use prayer to bring healing to others. Sanford used Jungian concepts and terminology to explain the concepts of inner healing. According to Tom Harpur, Sanford’s healing successes are well-documented. In her first book, The Healing Light, written in 1947, Sanford began to teach others what she believed the Lord had shown her. Since this book was first published it has sold over half a million copies and established her as a leading lay healer and founder of the inner healing ministry within the Christian church. From the very beginning deliverance has been an almost inevitable part of both physical and inner healing ministries.

Evangelical Christianity has produced scores of books on inner healing and the practice of deliverance. In order to understand how to differentiate between mental illness and demon possession it is helpful to understand how evangelicals make the distinction.

Neil Anderson’s book, The Bondage Breaker, is considered one of the best and most balanced approaches to the practice of deliverance. Anderson says that effective counselors need “to learn to distinguish between organic or psychological mental illness and a spiritual battle of the mind” (2000:21). At the same time he believes it is hard to separate the two and trying to do so actually creates a false dichotomy. He says there is no inner conflict that is not psychological just as there is no inner conflict that does not have a spiritual dimension. Supernatural realities are always with us and they are just as real as our physical world.

Anderson notes that most attempts to scientifically study the impact of one’s spiritual life on mental and physical health neglects to investigate the impact of evil supernaturalism—the activity of Satan or demons. He points out that “approximately one-fourth of all the healings recorded in the Gospel of Mark were actually deliverances” (33).

Similar to what Ellen White wrote in volume 2 of Selected Messages, Anderson says that “Satan’s perpetual aim is to infiltrate your thoughts with his thoughts and to promote his lie in the face of God’s truth”
He believes our relationship to demonic influences is similar to our relationship to germs in the physical world. We have a responsibility to protect ourselves from them, through the blood of Jesus. Anderson also believes that the “chief condition for the working of evil spirits in a human being, apart from sin, is passivity.” He says that we cannot expect God to protect us from evil spirits if we do not partner with him—putting on the full armor of God. He points out that the Scriptures teach us to “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might” (Eph 6:10). In the book, Anderson walks people through the process of fighting against the devil in their personal life as is outlined in the Scriptures. He says that walking in the light is not sinless perfection. It means living in continuous agreement with God. It is part of the Christian’s “growth process.”

Anderson says that through the gradual process of deception and yielding to Satan’s influence, he gains control in our lives. He notes that no one loses control to Satan overnight. He estimates that only about 15% of the evangelical community is living in the freedom that Christ desires. Those who live in this freedom have a vibrant connection with Christ and possess the fruits of the spirit. Consistent with the teachings of Ellen White, Anderson says that “the Christian life should be characterized by humble obedience to God in worship.”

Anderson says that “dealing with the demonic should be seen as a truth encounter rather than a power encounter.” John 8:32 stays that truth sets people free. The power of the devil is in his power to deceive. Anderson outlines step by step the process of finding freedom in Christ through the confession of sin, forgiveness of those who have sinned against us, and renouncing the evil one. Anderson points out that Christians have been given authority over the kingdom of darkness, “but if you don’t believe it and exercise it, it’s as if you didn’t have it”.

Francis MacNutt published a practical manual on deliverance in 1995 entitled Deliverance from Evil Spirits in which he says that an increasing number of “counselors and psychotherapists now consider the possibility of demonic influence as at least a partial cause of certain psychological problems.”

MacNutt first got involved in the practice of deliverance when he was praying for the physical healing of others. He says that it was after he was baptized in the Holy Spirit he “began to see demonic manifestations in the people he was praying for.” MacNutt believes those suffering psychological problems will not be able to get the help they need from conventional psychotherapy and mainstream medicine if the source of their problem is actually demonic. He also believes that many people, even those confined to mental hospitals, can be either cured or helped through prayer for inner healing or deliverance.
As it relates to differentiating between demon possession and mental illness, MacNutt says that a spirit is by definition a non-material being. “Every evidence we have indicating the presence of a demon is bound to be ambiguous since we do not see the evil spirit itself, but only what it causes people to do” (53). He also acknowledges that these effects can also be explained in other ways. He recognizes that when it comes to differentiating between mental illness and demon possession that “on the human level—the level of reason and science—you cannot be sure” (53). M. Scott Peck agrees that we cannot prove the existence of the supernatural realm. Nonetheless, surveys show and MacNutt attests that many ordinary people claim that they have encountered a demonic personality, “not just the evil that we all encounter every day but a personified evil” (56).

Both MacNutt and Peck say they have never met anyone that they believed to be totally possessed. While most people involved in exorcism or deliverance ministries believe total possession to be extremely rare, MacNutt believes that many people in the general population need some kind of deliverance (72). That is to say, “in some part of their lives they are not free” (73). The Holy Spirit does not own their whole being. MacNutt says that “most sufferers from demonic infestation are good people who have aligned themselves with Jesus Christ and are thus particular targets for the enemy (89).

Since the “symptoms of demonic infestation are often the same as the symptoms of psychological sickness” MacNutt recognizes that is often hard to determine the cause of one’s suffering. He has found that often a person may be “suffering from a psychological problem as well as demonic interference” (79). MacNutt notes that Pentecostal ministers with no background in psychology have become aware of clusters of evil spirits that are similar to the clusters of psychological symptoms that are used to diagnose mental illness (92).

MacNutt and others talk about physical signs that indicate demonic involvement—many that could be explained in other ways but nonetheless signs that are indicators of demonic involvement. These include bodily contortions, changes in the voice and changes in facial expression. Other signs are the presence of unpleasant smells or the room growing unnaturally cold (83). However, MacNutt says that the only sure way to know if a demon is present is through the gift of discernment. He says that unless “God helps us in some way, we can never be certain what we are dealing with” (p. 85). He acknowledges however, that “a finely tuned, mature gift of discernment is relatively rare” (87).

MacNutt identifies four categories of evil spirits: (1) spirits of the occult, (2) spirits of sin, (3) spirits of trauma, and (4) ancestral or familiar spirits. He says that the most common need for deliverance is from spirits of trauma. Spirits of trauma enter an emotional wound in order “to dwell
there and aggravate it, preventing it from healing” (93). He compares it to a speck of dirt entering into a physical wound causing an infection. He says that based on his experience, most evil spirits seem to enter with trauma, primarily childhood trauma.

John Richards published a well-respected book on deliverance in 1974 entitled, *But Deliver Us From Evil: An Introduction to the Demonic Dimension in Pastoral Care*. Richards contends that the ministry of deliverance is “a small part of the Church’s ministry of healing” (5). He believes that God is the source of all healing and that “medicine and its allied disciplines should be seen to be channels of God’s healing” (6). Prayer is the first step in healing. It is our “invitation to commune with God whom we believe is a healing God” (9). Richard also acknowledges that no one can be involved very long in a ministry of healing without confronting evil. He stresses the importance of healing and deliverance taking place within the context of a caring community with the focus being on the health and well-being of the whole person.

**My Personal Experience**

After returning from Africa in 1990 I began the PhD program in counseling psychology at Andrews University. I began working with Adventist Frontier Missions in 1994 and at the same time began a private practice at the Medical Center in Berrien Springs. Over the years I used the tools of my profession to help many people deal more effectively with the challenges of their lives. I have had the privilege of helping hundreds of missionaries deal with the unique challenges of cross-cultural ministry. About 15 years ago, however, I begun to realize that the tools of psychology were limited or ineffective in dealing with certain mental health problems.

In June 2003 I attended a Formational Prayer Seminar in Ashland, Ohio, led by Terry Wardle. At that seminar God touched my life in a way that has changed not only how I work but how I live. As a result of that seminar, I enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry Program in Formational Counseling at Ashland in August 2003. Formational Prayer is a type of inner healing prayer developed by Wardle in the early 90s. Wardle defines Formational Prayer as “a ministry of the Holy Spirit, moving through a Christian caregiver, bringing the healing presence of Jesus Christ into the place of pain and brokenness within a wounded person” (2001:13).

In working towards the completion of that degree I chose to examine the clinical validity of Formational Prayer within the context of my work with missionaries in 2004 and 2005. I examined the biblical, theological, and historical basis of Formational Prayer in order to assess whether or not Formational Prayer was a theoretically sound and clinically effective
theosomatic approach to the treatment of trauma in missionaries. I borrowed the term “theosomatic” from Jeff Levin. In his book *God, Faith, and Health*, Levin proposed a theosomatic model of care that not only recognizes naturalistic means of healing but takes into consideration the power of God to bring about healing over and beyond naturalistic means (2001).

Based on my research, I see Formational Prayer as a biblically-based, theologically and clinically sound theosomatic model of care that is effective in promoting both emotional and spiritual well-being. Formational Prayer activates “certain mental, emotional, and behavioral processes” known to promote health and prevent illness, the very mechanisms involved in the first six theosomatic principles of medicine proposed by Dr. Jeff Levin. Formational Prayer also positions us for what Levin describes as one “one more possibility—namely, that there is a God or divine presence that can choose to bless us in ways that may violate the apparent physical laws of the universe” (2001:183).

Roy Gane says in the *NIV Application Commentary on Leviticus and Numbers* that “to ignore God, who holds our very breath in his hands (Dan 5:23), is not conducive to long-term health” (2004:213). “If we really want to help ourselves, the best way to do it is to follow the comprehensive ‘manufacturer’s handbook,’ that is, the Bible” (213). According to Gane, “the Bible rightly places our well-being within the context of our covenant connection with God, whose grace alone can give us ultimate health as a gift” (213). The early Hebrew understanding of health and healing corresponds to what Jeff Levin has defined as a theosomatic model of care.

As Seventh-day Adventists we recognize the importance of obeying the laws of God as well as the laws of health in order to live a healthy life. Scientific medicine has helped us understand the laws that govern our bodies and our health. We have a role to play in applying the laws of health mentally and physically. Ellen White says, “God’s miracles do not always bear the outward semblance of miracles. Often they are brought about in a way which looks like the natural course of events. When we pray for the sick we also work for them. We answer our own prayers by using the remedies within our reach” (1958:346). She says that “natural means, used in accordance with God’s will, bring about supernatural results” (346). I believe Jeff Levin’s seven principles of theosomatic medicine are consistent with the health message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Because most American Christians see both the Devil and the Holy Spirit as “symbols” of good and evil they are blind to the possibility that supernatural evil can impact mental or physical health. As Fundamental Evangelicals, we live as if we are cessationists. Most of us do not live as if we believe the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead and that he dwells within us. As Neil Anderson points out, we have been given
authority over the kingdom of darkness, but if you do not believe it and exercise it, it is as if we do not have it (2000:80).

It is important to remember that there are twice as many Americans who believe demons are real as there are who believe the Holy Spirit is real. Americans experience supernatural evil. Physicians and mental health professionals witness a great deal that cannot be reduced to psychopathology. Science and medicine alone are inadequate to deal with these aspects. Just as physicians attending wounded soldiers in the Second World War pressed Archbishop William Temple of the Church of England for help, it is time for the Seventh-day Adventist Church to develop strategies and provide services to help those who are in bondage to supernatural evil.

**Works Cited**


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