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Demonization of Christians: Missiological Perspectives and Implications

Introduction

This article is a missiological reflection on the phenomenon of Christian demonization from a Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) perspective. The article argues from the four voices approach in theology (see Cameron et al. 2010; Cameron and Duce 2013), and contends that Christians can *be demonized*, have been demonized throughout the Christian church history, and are still demonized today across all Christian denomination lines. This is the position that appears in a few SDA publications, and is not in contradiction with the Scriptures. I suggest that demonization and demon possession are etymologically and phenomenologically the same. Thus, this paper builds on the assumption that Christian demonization is not just a claim from deliverance ministry practitioners with an operant theology but a missiological phenomenon with inreach and outreach dimensions. The phenomenon is encountered in formal and normative theologies as well, as it is an exposed theology from an operant theology.

As such, this article points out that many mainline Christian denominations (Roman Catholics, Protestants like non-charismatic evangelicals, Seventh-day Adventists, etc.) have recently emphasized practical ministries in their denominations to face the needs of their members struggling with demonization. These denominations have moved from an attitude closed to the possibility of ministry to demonized members to a more open attitude with a willingness to consider the issue and explore potential solutions.

The article first addresses briefly the seeming controversy on the translation of the Greek terms *daimonizomenos* (participle), and *daimonizomai* (verb). These terms, together with *echo/echei daimonion,* are translated in some Bible texts "possessed with the devil" (Mark 5:15, 16, 18, KJV), "demon- possessed" (Matt 8:28–32; Mark 5:15, 16, 18, Luke 8:27, NKJV or NIV etc.). Second, this article asserts that Christians are best categorized by the centered set theory and not otherwise (see Hiebert 1978, 1994, 2008). Consequently, this missiological reflection emphasizes that Christian demonization has missiological implications for Christian mission in general and SDA mission in particular. Finally, the article argues that theological research is enriched when the four voices of theology–the formal or academic theology, the espoused theology, the normative theology, and the operant theology are brought "into conscious conversation so that all voices can be enriched" (Cameron and Duce 2013:xxxi). This means that each theological voice must interpenetrate the others and influence them (xxx).

Translation Issues with the Koine Greek Verb *daimonizomai*

The New Testament Greek uses the common verb *daimonizomai* in the synoptic gospels. Some contend that its general translation—*demon possession* or *to be possessed by a demon* (see Anrdt and Gingrish 1952:168; Brown 1975:453)—is improper and misleading (Dickason 1978, 1987:37-39; Kraft 1992, 1994:79-81, 2011:38-39; Unger 1991:97). The confusion in translation, according to many, lies in the fact that the English word *possession* suggests ownership (Dickason 1987:38; Kraft 2011:38). Charles Kraft, for instance, asserts that the translations *demon possession* or *demon possessed* give too much credit to Satan and too much control to demons (2011:38).

As such, advocates of the term demonization argue that a better translation for the Greek verb *daimonizomai* should emphasize the passivity of the victims of demonization and not an implication of ownership. To make his point Dickason gives special attention to the root and structure of the Greek verb and demonstrates that *daimonizomenos*, the participle form of *daimonizomai* with the same root is used only "in the present tense, indicating the continued state of one inhabited by a demon, or demonized" (1987:37).

> 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

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. (Dickason 1987:37)

Owusu-Antwi (2011:60) concurs and asserts that this passivity in the participle form *daimonizomenos* "depicts the active involvement of a demon or demons and indicates that the victim is passive *when* the demon acts." Owusu-Antwi further comments:

The expressions that usually are used to describe the condition of demon possession are *echo daimonion*, to be "held or possessed by a demon" (e.g., Luke 8:27) or *daimonizomai*, to "be demonized" (e.g., Matt 4:24; 8:28). It has been observed that the English expression "demon possession" may have originated with Flavius Josephus in the first century A.D. and then passed into ecclesiastical language (Owusu-Antwi 2011:59 referring to Unger 1971:101 and Edersheim 1969:1).

While I agree that the seeming confusion around ownership and passivity in the etymology of *daimonizomai*/*daimonizomenos* should be addressed, I do not share the view that demonization, the new terminology suggested and being adopted, describes a different phenomenon. If "the term for the condition of a demonized person may be derived from *daimonizomenos*" (Owusu-Antwi 2011:60), and *daimonizomai* as indicated earlier means to "be possessed by a demon (Anrdt and Gingrish 1952:168; Bietenhard 1975:453) demonization or to be demonized are etymologically and phenomenologically the same as the translations "demon possession" or "possessed by demon." This has been my understanding in my previous publications where I used the terms "demonized" or "demonization" (see Badé 2017:120, 2020:18). Carter points out:

While the addition of the word "demonization" to the English language has caused confusion, as long as it is used simply as a substitute translation for the Greek verb daimonizomai and the meaning of the original Greek word is retained, there is no problem in adopting this term. However, if, in the process of adopting this new word, the implied English meaning of the Greek word is changed, then the use of this new word is unacceptable (Carter 2000:22).

I believe Carter makes a fair point in this case (although I disagree with him in his later conclusions). Demonization or being demonized is the same phenomenon assumed by the New Testament Greek terms *daimonizomai,* which occurs 13 times in the gospels (Matt 4:24; 8:16, 28, 33; 9:32; 12:22; 15:22; Mark 1:32; 5:15, 16, 18; Luke 8:36; John 10:21), and

daimonizomenos, which occurs 12 times (see Bietenhard 1975:453; Carter 2000:26; Dickason 1987:37; Owusu-Antwi 2011:60). Consequently, when using demonization or demonized it is important that authors do not infer any less phenomenology.

Control Issues in the Implications of Demon Possession or Demonization

Merrill Frederick Unger (1909-1980) is one of the 20th century's well-known authors on the subject of biblical demonology. His understanding of a demon's control over the person they inhabit grew over the years from "complete control" while defining "demon possession" in 1971 (see Unger 1971:102-108), to an understanding six years later that demons do not have "complete control" when in the body of their victims (see Unger 1977:87). Below are Unger's two different definitions of demon possession mentioned above.

"Demon possession is a condition in which one or more evil spirits or demons inhabit the body of a human being and can take complete control of their victim at will. By temporarily blotting out his consciousness, they can speak and act through him as their complete slave and tool" (Unger 1971:102). "Both demon invasion and so-called 'demon possession' are, as already noted, more accurately defined biblically as "demonization" (Gk. *daimonizomai,* meaning "being demonized," i.e., 'under the control of one or more demons'; see Matthew 4:24; Mark 1:32; Luke 8:316). Another Greek expression means 'to have a demon' (*echei dairnonion,* see Luke 7:33; John 7:20)" (Unger 1977:86).

Dickason (1987:38) points out that like Unger, his understanding of the control that demons have over a demonized person developed over the years as well. According to Dickason, the use of *daimonizomenos* in the gospels (Matt 8:28; 9:32; 12:22) "means 'demon-caused passivity,' or control by one or more demons with various results in the life of the person including the physical and the psychological." It is true that the various Bible texts above used by Dickason describe cases of demonization with the demons' control leading to abnormal behavior, supernatural strength, and/or knowledge, etc. But one cannot conclude that these demonic manifestations imply the "*control* of human neurology and physiology—the control of an individual's higher centers, central nervous system, individual organs of the body, et cetera" (Donkor 2011:205).

Thus, referring to Unger, Dickason asserts that the term *demon possession*, unfortunately, "has been commonly used, not to refer correctly to all cases of demon invasion, but incorrectly to refer only to the basest and most enslaving forms, such as those represented by the demoniac of Gadara (Mark 5:1-20)" (Unger 1977:87 quoted in Dickason 1987:38).

So, although many sources present the Gadarene or Gerasene demoniac (s) of Mathew 8 or Mark 5 and Luke 8 as "typical" cases of demon possession or demonization in the Scriptures (see Carter 2000:22; Lane 1974:170; Wiyono 2017:47), it is accurate to say, based on a brief look at the different incidents of demonization in the Bible, that the type of demonization described here cannot be described as "typical" but as atypical, unusual, or exceptional. First, when something is "typical" it means that such a thing is common, regular, expected, representative, predictable, etc. It is something that represents the average distinctive characteristics of that type of thing (see *Merriam-Webster* 1984:839; Thompson 1993:989). For instance, <u>it</u> is right to say that *koinonia* (communion, fellowship, gathering) "is a typical Pauline term" because Paul used it 13 times in his epistles (Schattenmann 1975:641).

The narrative of Mark 5 with the demoniac (s) of Gadara is often used as a classic case of demon possession. One can count roughly ten characteristics in that type of demonization: dwelling among the tombs (v. 3), resisting binding by chains (v. 3), resisting discipline (v. 4), self-mutilation with stones while crying night and day (v. 5), instantaneous worship of Jesus (v. 6), imploration of Jesus with a loud voice (v. 7), the presence of up to 6,000 demons (v. 9), begging Jesus to stay in a territory (v. 10), begging Jesus to be allowed to enter animals (v. 12), and destroying animals life (v. 13). Unfortunately, less than half of the above characteristics are found in other cases of demonization in the New Testament. What one can call *typical* or *regular* of demon possession in the New Testament from the actual encounters and a few others cases could be: (1) physical violence like sudden outbursts or stiffness, convulsions, crying out, foaming, etc. (Matt 15:22-28; 17:14-20; Mark 1:23-27; 9:17-29; Acts 8:7), (2) sicknesses like being mute, blind, or having restricted mobility (Matt 9:32, 33; 12:22, 23; Luke 13:11, 16).

This so-called typical case of demon possession of the Gadarene demoniac(s) is often associated with the overemphasized and unrealistic notion of total, full, or complete control. If the demons' goal against human beings is the ultimate destruction of people it is hard to believe that a legion of demons (5,000-6,000) could control 2,000 pigs and cause the herd to run "violently down the steep place into the sea, and drown" (Mark 5:14) while but at the same time these same demons were unable to destroy a single man while "controlling" him for such a long period of time. They were even unable to control the man and prevent him from going toward Jesus who obviously was going to cast them out of the man. Mark says "when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him" (5:6). Luke asserts that "when he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him" (8:28).

It is true that "in causing the destruction of the swine, it was Satan's purpose to turn the people away from the Saviour and prevent the preaching of the gospel in that region" (White 1898:340). Satan, through his legions of demons, could not control the will of the demoniac(s). "They realized dimly that One was near who could save them from the tormenting demons. They fell at the Saviour's feet to worship Him; but when their lips were opened to entreat His mercy, the demons spoke through them" (White 1898:337, 338). The demons had control over their tongues, and maybe voices but not over their understanding and will. They ran to Jesus not necessarily to hurt him. Other similar instances of confrontations with Jesus show that demons felt tormented by Jesus' presence because they knew his power and authority over them. The demoniacs ran to Jesus because they wanted to be set free and the demons could not prevent them from such action. While it is true that the demons had some level of control over them, it is also true that it was not total or complete over every aspect of human anatomy or physiology.

Then there is the case of the boy with the demon who caused epilepsy, tried to kill him through water or fire, or who threw him down with foaming of the mouth, gnashing of teeth, and rigidness (Matt 17:14-20; Mark 9:17-29). Could it be that the authors of Matthew and Mark deliberately or unwittingly overlooking other cases of demonization recorded in the Bible and used one type of demonization to describe all the cases they had seen? Look for instance at the narrative in Acts 16:16-18 where a young female slave had a phyton spirit or a spirit of divination or fortune-telling.

This type of demonization was common in the first century with the influence of the astrological worldview of that time (Dybdahl 2010:1445–1466; see also my article on adorcism in this issue). Today too, mediums, soothsayers, diviners of all kinds predict the future for profit. Among them are counterfeits with no supernatural power while others have connection with fallen angels of high ranks and have real demonic powers. The slave python-spirit-possessed girl seems to have belonged to the latter group (see Fernando 1998:444). As the serpent or dragon in charge of protecting the oracle at Delphi in Greek mythology, the Python "was worshipped at Delphi as the symbol of wisdom" (Nichol 1980:6:330). General Greek belief attributed the power to foretell the future to the Pythiai–the priestesses at the Delphi to the python spirit (Rodríguez 2020:1514).

From a superficial point of view there was nothing wrong with what the python-spirit- possessed slave girl was saying about Paul and Silas. She was not doing them any harm, but rather she was speaking approvingly of them. "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation" (Acts 16:17, NKJV). However, a careful look at the narrative in its cultural context could show perhaps a totally

different picture. It would have been too good to believe that the evil spirit in the slave girl was supporting Christ's mission. White (1911:212) argues that the girl's "influence had helped to strengthen idolatry" and that Satan used the means of divination to oppose God's work, "hoping to mingle his sophistry with the truths taught by those who were proclaiming the gospel message." She further points out:

> The words of recommendation uttered by this woman were an injury to the cause of truth, distracting the minds of the people from the teachings of the apostles and bringing disrepute upon the gospel, and by them many were led to believe that the men who spoke with the Spirit and power of God were actuated by the same spirit as this emissary of Satan. (1911:212)

Although she spoke positively of Paul and Silas, just like the publicity given to Jesus by demons in Luke 4:33-37; 8:26-36, she herself was sowing tares. Diviners and soothsayers are exposed and condemned in the Scriptures (Lev 19:31; Deut 18:10-12). As such her exact revelation concerning Paul and Silas was not going to help the cause of Christ and produce good fruit—rather she was hurting Christ's mission. And Paul, empowered by the Holy Spirit, discerned this. Why Paul did not rebuke the python spirit the very first day or why he waited many days before doing so is not known. Some have suggested that "Paul patiently waited for several days, probably hoping to avoid the consequences of conflict" (Rodríguez 2020:1514).

But, when Paul decided to act, it was to avoid any confusion over the source of their teachings and the divinations of the spirit possessed girl. "Paul and his companions would have been perceived as mere clairvoyants, like her" (Rodríguez 2020:1514).

> Since she is said to have been possessed of a "Python spirit" (see on Acts 16:16), her words need to be considered against their pagan background. When, therefore, she spoke of "the most high God" she was probably referring to the common heathen conception of a vague divine being who was supposed to preside over the well-known Greek pantheon. Nevertheless, her words expressed great truth. The Christians whom she was following were truly the servants of the one and only most high God. (Nichol 1980:6:330)

It is good to know that the Greek word *manteuomai* (*soothsaying*) used in Acts 16:17 is always used in the LXX to designate lying prophets (Deut 18:10; 1 Sam 28:8; Ezek 13:6; etc.), and its usage only in Acts 16 in the New Testament "may be taken in the same sense: 'to pretend to foretell the

future"' (Nichol 1980:330). Nichol further asserts that "the girl's darkened mind was longing for a share in 'the way of salvation,' but the demon within her was challenging that 'way,' and her words impeded the missionaries' work" (1980:6:330).

Hence, like Christ (see Mark 5:7; Luke 8:29), Paul commanded, in the name of Jesus, for the python spirit to come out of the slave girl, and the spirit obeyed promptly, just as the spirits had obeyed Jesus in many instances (see Matt 15:28; Mark 1:31; 9:26; John 4:53). Nevertheless, it is important to note, not all commands made by Jesus or the disciples were always promptly obeyed or obeyed at all. For example, see Matt 17:16, 19 where the disciples commanded the demon to come out but with no response, or in Mark 5:8 where Jesus continued to command the spirits to come out. Nichol argues that Jesus was commanding the demon (s) to come out of the man but "the spirit startlingly interrupted and challenged Him" (1980:5604). White concurs in her comments on the same Bible text and asserts that "the demon resisted the power of Christ" (1996:184, 185).

Although nothing else is said in the narrative about the spirit-possessed slave girl after her deliverance, "it is surely permissible to think that she became a Christian [White 1911:213] and found shelter with the women who 'labored' with the apostle (Phil 4:3)" (Nichol 1980:6:331). That the slave girl expressed indirectly her need of physical and spiritual deliverance cannot be concluded from the literal text. But some have suggested, that while it is "not dogmatically stated" that the girl expressed in her repeated predictions about Paul and Silas a desire for a better knowledge of God (see Murphy 1992:325, cited in Fernando 1998:444).

Acts 16:16-18 presents a different type of demon possession or demonization often overlooked by some theologians but well known to anthologists and familiar to some missiologists. Some astrologers, fortunetellers, palm readers, psychics, tarot card readers, occultists, etc. have real satanic power and work with demonic entities in perfect symbiosis. These spiritists often advertise openly without sensing they are involved in any social abnormal behavior. Otherwise, they would be reported to law enforcement agents and not be able to make a living in many countries where their offices or centers are visible on main streets and well-known in the communities like any other legitimate practice. This type of spirit possession or demonization is called adorcism because the possessed person invites and welcomes the demons whose presence is deemed valuable to them and their communities (see Openshaw 2020:6).

Acts 16:16-18 reports a case of adorcism Therefore, not all cases of demonization in the Scriptures are characterized by abnormal behavior, supernatural strength, illness, or social isolation. Like the case of Acts 16:16-19, the demoniac in Mark 1:23-26 was in the synagogue unnoticed until he

came face to face with Jesus. This man had an apparently normal social life like many demonized people today. He might have been aware of his spiritual condition as are many today or he might not have been conscious about his demonization—also is the case today. The demoniac in Mark 1 was not a social outcast or quarantined like the demoniacs of Mathew 8 or the one in Mark 5 and Luke 8. These cases illustrate that there are various types of demonization.

Classification Issues—Category of Christians

It is important to briefly look at the question, What is a Christian? Simply put, a Christian, from the Greek *Christianos,* is a follower of Christ. The name was used first in Antioch of Syria about ten years or so after Jesus's resurrection to describe Christ's early followers, as groups or as individuals because their behavior, activity, and speech were like Christ (Acts 11:26) and in another two instances in the New Testament by Agrippa who confessed to Paul of almost being persuaded by his speech to become a Christian (Acts 26:28) and in 1 Peter 4:16 referring to suffering "as a Christian" as an honor. Among themselves, Christians used terms like brethren, (Acts 1:16; Rom 1:13; 1 Cor 1:26; etc.), elect, (Rom 8:39; Col 3:12; etc.), saints, (1 Thess 3:13; 1 Tim 5:10; etc.), believers (Acts 5:14; 1 Tim 4:12).

There were also many restorative titles used to describe Christians, such as body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27), born again (1 Pet 1:23), branches (John 15:5), children of light (1 Thess 5:5), new creature (2 Cor 5:17), habitation of God (Eph 2:22), sanctified (1 Cor 1:2), saints (Heb 6:10), temple of God, of the Living God (1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16), and washed (1 Cor 6:11) (Smith 1998:50-53).

Based on such titles for Christians and other biblical designations for God's people some have come to distinguish two uses of the terms *Christian*. First, the broad sense of the term Christian with no evaluation or approval either spiritual, moral, or doctrinal is "any individual or group that identifies Jesus Christ as its primary religious figure is 'Christian' and is part of the world religion known as Christianity. In this sense, really any group that identifies itself as Christian is defined as such for the purposes of religious classification" (Bowman 2018:127). The second use, which is narrower, classifies as Christian an individual or group with a doctrine and behavior "considered adequately representative of what Christ's followers should believe and do" (127).

From a missiological perspective, there are some limits with such classifications of the category Christian. Yes, a Christian is someone who repents from his/her sinful ways (Acts 17:30) and embraces by faith Christ's

death and resurrection for the forgiveness of his/her sin, while living in justification before God (John 3:16; Eph 2:1-10), and through an ongoing display of his/her sincere and genuine life of faith (2 Cor 6:15; 1 Tim 4:10, 12; Jas 2:14-26) while realizing that his/her works do not contribute to his/her salvation (Eph 2:8). Such a Christian is a part of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27), is call a "saint" (Eph 1:1, 5:3; 1 John 3:2) and will be resurrected at the glorious second coming of Christ and be given an imperishable body to reign with Christ forever in a recreated universe (Phil 3:20, 21; Rev 21, 22). However, such is not the reality of conversion in mission.

The narrow classification of Christian above generally accepted across many Christian denominations presents conversion as a bonded set. The origin of the theory of sets is attributed to the Russian-born German mathematician Georg Cantor (1845-1918) whose discovery stimulated 20th century exploration of number theory (Cunningham 2016:x, 20, 111).

Hiebert argues that most Westerners with their two-tiered view of life have a bounded set mentality, because many of their daily words (apples, oranges, pencils, and pens) refer to bounded set concepts, which he believes stem from Greek civilization (1978:26). Hiebert points out that in a bounded set mentality or worldview, objects that share some common characteristics are put together. For instance, fruits with characteristics such as from a rosaceous tree, eaten raw or cooked, usually red, yellow, or green, firm, fleshy, somewhat round, will be called apples (1978:26). Thus, with characteristics, such as uniformity and stationery, the category apple is created and identified. Every apple in that category belongs to a set with clear boundaries—creating a bounded set (1978:26-27).

Applied to the category Christian, a bounded set mentally among classical expectations from evangelicals and other mainline Protestant denominations in the case of proof of conversion to Christianity includes (1) a minimum Bible knowledge, and (2) the necessity to live a good life (Hiebert 1994:108; 2008:314). That is, a Christian is someone with specific characteristics within a defined group. However, Hiebert argues that such expectations are not realistic sometimes because the converts in a mission field are illiterate or for other reasons (1994:108; 2008:314). Therefore, Hiebert advocates for a centered set approach to conversion because the set does not have clear boundaries. Rather, the set makes a clear separation between objects moving into and those moving out of the set (1978:28). Thus, the set is formed by defining a center and the relationship of objects to that center. When the set is made up of all objects moving towards the center it is a centered set (1978:27-28; 1983:423). However, "objects within the set are not categorically uniform, some may be near the center and others far from it, even though all are moving towards the center" (1978:28; 1983:423-424). This makes the set a centered set that has variation within

a category (1978:28). To belong to the set, elements, although far from the center, will have to be moving towards the center. Hence, elements close to the center, but not moving towards the center, will be excluded from the set (1978:28).

Hiebert also recognized some limits in defining the category Christian from only two perspectives (bounded set and centered set). Pushing his thinking further, Hiebert arrived at four ways to view conversion.

Hiebert's Four Ways to View Conversion or the Category Christian

Intrinsic Well-Formed Bounded Sets

Hiebert describes intrinsic well-formed bounded sets in two presentations (1994:112-116; 2008:33, 34, 186-189, 311, 312).

Characteristics of Conversion: 1. To be an adherent of the set elements are expected to have an "existential" change. 2. Elements of the set are to be "ontologically homogeneous" and physically static. 3. Adherents of the set are expected to have a visible and similar inherent required essential character in a group with a "clear boundary."

Implications for Converts: 1. A person is only considered a convert when the required elements have passed the test of "orthodoxy and orthopraxy (right and same theology and behavior) with the expectation that entry into the set be similar to previous conversion." This means a verbal affirmation of belief in a specific set of doctrines. As such, conversion is "a single dramatic" and "essential change all Christians must experience to be saved" (1994:115). 2. Each convert must exhibit a Christian-like character. "Once a person is a Christian, he or she is 100 percent Christian" (1994:116; cf. 2008:311-112).

Well Formed Centered Sets

Hiebert describes well-formed centered sets in the 1983 July issue of the *International Review of Mission* (421-427) and in *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (1994:122-127)

Characteristics of Conversion: 1. To be an adherent of the set, elements must relate to the "defined center" of the set which is the "reference point." 2. The sharp boundary of the set between members and non-members of the set is created by the elements' relationship and allegiance to the central point of the set. 3. "Membership or entry into or exit from the set is not about distance but direction."

Implications for Converts: 1. Each convert accepts and makes "Jesus Christ the center and Lord of his/her life" [and] . . . acquires knowledge about Jesus through the relationship he/she has with Him (Deut. 34:10; Judg. 2:10; John 17:3) and not through "a mental assent on biblical and historical facts about Jesus" (1994:125). 2. "There is no cheap nor costly grace" since conversion is both a "definite event" and "an ongoing process" and as such, "a Christian is not a finished product the moment he or she is converted" (1994:127). Thus, each Christian is "expected to grow because each decision taken by a Christian . . . (Deut. 4:10; 1 Sam. 7:3; Isa. 55:7 Josh. 20:6; Judg. 21:1) leads him/her towards or away from Christ" (1994:127).

Intrinsic Fuzzy Sets

Hiebert refers to intrinsic fuzzy sets in his 1983:425-427, 1994:118-121, and 2008:311 presentations dealing with sets.

Characteristics of Conversion: 1. There are no fixed conditions expected of adherents who wish to be elements of the set since the "intrinsic nature defines membership in the set." 2. The set has "no sharp edges," "no *either-or*" reality for adherents of the set, "rather degrees of inclusion or a continuum of variability like most of life's matters" (1994:119). 3. Adherent of this set "may belong to two or more sets at the same time" (1994:119).

Implications for Converts: 1. Conversion takes place after a cumulation of many decisions to follow Christ. Hence, conversion is "a gradual movement from outside to inside the set based on the gradual acquisition of the necessary beliefs and practices or on a series of small decisions and not a decisive event like in a well-formed set. Conversion to Christianity will have "no point in the process where the person suddenly becomes a Christian" (1983:425; 1994:121; 2008:311). 2. Converts could be "half Christians, three-quarter Christians, etc., according to the number of beliefs they affirm. Christians will be qualified in terms of degree, which unfortunately could shift in the area of moral judgments of "bad or good" or "false or true" (1994:121).

Extrinsic Fuzzy Sets

Extrinsic fuzzy sets are described by Hiebert in his 1994 article (131, 132) and in his 2008 book, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (311).

Characteristics of Conversion: 1. "Membership in the set is based on elements' relationship among one another and/or a defined center with fuzzy boundaries." This means that "relationship within the set can move from one extreme to the other, from near to nonexistent, from being in to

being outside the set" (1994:131). 2. There is "no sharp point transition" between adherents' entrance or exit of the set. "Degrees of membership and distance of members from the center qualify the differences in the strength of members' relationships" with the center (1994:131).

Implications for Converts: 1. The process of conversion has no beginning point and needs no "turning around and going in a new direction." As such, converts are people who relate to Christ and see him "as Lord, guru, philosopher or any other good man" who can show them the way and teach them the truth (1994:132). 2. Christians in this set are not different from non-Christians. "There are only degrees of being Christian because a person might make Christ the Lord of some areas of his/her life but not others. Thus, a faithful disciple of Christ is of the same value in the set as a casual follower, a person only interested in his teachings, or even a person indifferent or opposed to Christ" (1994:132).

Hiebert argues that out of the four ways to view conversion above, the "well-formed centered set" approach to conversion seems the most theologically balanced and culturally acceptable (1983:123-125; 1994:125-127). First, because "a mental assent" to "biblical and historical facts about Jesus" is not a prerequisite before conversion. What is needed is an individual allegiance of each convert to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior with the expectation of growth in knowledge about Jesus through the relationship he/she has with Him" (Hiebert 1994:125). Second, the centered set approach to conversion or mission solves the problem of cheap or costly grace, because conversion is both a definite event and an ongoing process. As such, "a Christian is not a finished product the moment he or she is converted" but, each Christian is expected to grow because each decision taken by a Christian leads him/her towards or away from Christ (1994:124, 127).

Hiebert rejects a bounded set approach to mission because it is too legalistic with its focus on boundaries and maintaining the purity of the set (1994:115). For instance, a convert in a bounded set church will be one who has passed the test of orthodoxy and orthopraxy (right and same theology and behavior) with the expectation that entry into the set will be similar to all those who have joined the set through previous conversions (Hiebert 1994:115). According to Hiebert, conversion in such Christian communities means a verbal affirmation of belief in a specific set of doctrines and a single dramatic and "essential change all Christians must experience to be saved" (1994:115). Hence, Hiebert contends that a bounded set approach to conversion, mission, and church overlooks the work of the Holy Spirit and underestimates the dynamic relationship each member progressively has with the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (1983:427). However, Hiebert's biggest contention is against "a fuzzy set approach to conversion" because that approach "raises difficult theological questions" (2008:309-310).

Hiebert's writings on set theory and its related concepts have been generally welcomed and appreciated among missionaries and missiologists where conversion in a Christian life is a determining factor in mission (Yoder et al. 2009:182). But, contrary to missiologists, some theologians engaged, warned, and disagreed with one another on Hiebert's concept (184). However, one can point out that Hiebert's overall conclusion on set theory, as indicated above, was balanced with sufficient safeguards against its misuse.

Bruce Bauer (2007:73,74), for instance, suggests a new model that combines the strengths of both bounded and centered set approaches. Bauer (71) describes such an approach as a funnel—a pipe or tube often used to guide liquid or anything into a container with a small opening because it is wide at the upper part and narrow at the bottom. According to Bauer, such an approach makes mission biblical and practical in the sense that the initial approaches to converts in the mission field are those of a centered set approach and the final perspectives of the approach are those of a bounded set approach (74, 75). Arguing from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective, Bauer contends that such an approach preserves specific denominational traditions and identity (75). Bauer asserts that in his suggested model, "as people move toward the spout there is a narrowing and movement towards the center or even movement towards a bounded set in the center of the centered set" (71). See Bauer's different presentations of bounded, centered, and combined centered-bounded sets below.
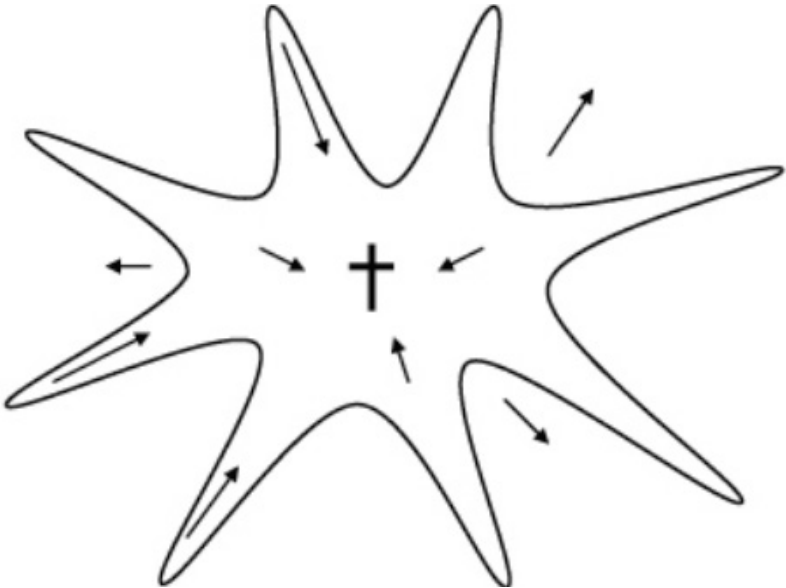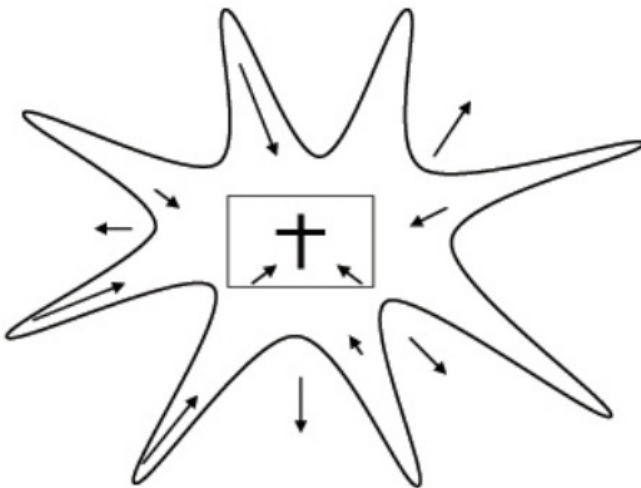
Bounded Set
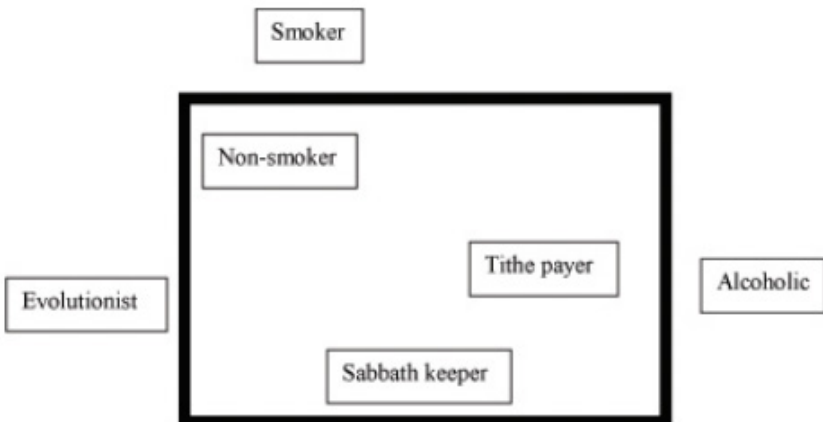
Bauer 2007:61

Centered Set

Bauer 2007:67

Bounded Set with a Centered Set

see Bauer 2007:75

Christian Demon Possession or Demonization
Issues among Christians

Implication for Christian Missions

As seen above some of the restorative titles of Christians such as body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17), temple of the Living God (1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16), etc. imply for many Christians that a born-again believer, Christian cannot be demon possessed or have a demon (Carter 2000; Hart 2001; Stanford 1988; Wan 2003; Wiyono 2017 etc…). These opponents to the thesis of Christians' demonization further point to many other Bible verses to support their view (see Dickason 1987:80-100).

Suggested Biblical Evidence against Demon Possession among Christians

Bible Passage	Texts (ESV)
Psalm 5:4	"For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you."
Matthew 6:13	"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."
John 10:22-29	"My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one."
John 12:31	"Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.
John 16:11	"…Concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."
John 17:15	"I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one."
Acts 26:18	"open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'"
1 Cor 10:21	"You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons."

2 Cor 6:14-16	"Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawless-ness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?"
Col 1:13;	"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."
Col 2:14-15;	"by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him."
2 Thess 3:3	"But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one."
Heb 2:14-15	"Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery."
1 John 4:4	"Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."
1 John 5:18;	"We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him."
Rev. 20:1-3	"Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, hold-ing in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thou-sand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the na-tions any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while."

The Bible verses above touch on issue of spatial delimitation, ownership, identity, security, moral presence, modified presence, and salvation (in Dickason 1987:129-140). For instance, some argue that the Holy Spirit and demons cannot inhabit the same body (1987:129). However, there are many Christians who support a contrary view (Bubeck 1975, 1984; Dickason 1987; Kraft 1994, 2011, 2015; Moreau 1996; Unger 1977, 1991).

Bubeck, Unger, and Kraft have used a partitive anthropology to explain their point, although Kraft's approach is more from a dualistic anthology (1992:67). Kraft represents humans as beings with innermost part (spirit) and outer parts (mind, emotions, body, and will), and demons can only occupy the outer parts (1992:67).

Bubeck and Unger particularly, based on 1 Thessalonians 5:23, argue from a tripartite concept of man: body, soul, and spirit and claim that demons can occupy a believer's body or soul, but they cannot invade his spirit where the Holy Spirit resides (Bubeck 1975:87-88; Unger 1977:86-87). Like Dickason, I believe that this attempt to theologically demonstrate the demonization of Christians is faulty. Dickason for instance points out that most standard theologians will say that the above view has very little support in the Bible because only 1 Thessalonians 5:23 puts body, soul, and spirit together in the Scriptures (1987:136). The human being is a holistic being that cannot be divided or compartmentalized. "The Bible teaches neither a trichotomist (spirit, soul, body) nor a dichotomist (soul, body) view of humans. Humans are unified beings" (Donkor 2011:101).

Dickason rather asserts that Psalms 5:4 states a clear principle: "That is, God does not take pleasure in wickedness is the same concept as God does not dwell with evil" (1987:95). Dickason contends that the "mutual exclusion of the presence of God and evil" cannot be supported from this passage "but the lack of pleasure or fellowship of God with evil" (1987:95). Consequently, Dickason concludes that God tolerating evil in his presence and having fellowship with evil "are certainly different" (1987:95). In other words, it is not impossible for God and evil to co-exist, rather, it is impossible to think of evil without thinking of God. From a Christian perspective, physical or natural evil such as natural disasters—earthquakes, hurricanes, tornados, wildfires, or diseases like cancer resulting in great loss of human life, leads to the question of evil in the world despite God's holiness, goodness, and justice in governing the world.

Theodicy, from the Greek words *theos* (God) and *dikē* (justice), is "the theological or philosophical vindication of the justice of God, in view of His toleration of the existence of evil, both in the sense of wickedness and of calamity, in the world" (Cains 2002:481). However, while God has a sovereign reign over the world, Satan and his host still have an evil influence over earth and sea (Rev 12:12) and will continue to do so until the end of time (John 12:31). Thus, though Christians are citizens of the heavenly kingdom, they are still living on earth and are still under the influence of evil (1 John 2:13). Evil is present and is an affront to God and causes a dilemma; yet the Scriptures were not written specifically to give a rational argument of how God is holy, just, loving, and sovereign in the face of evil.

Unfortunately, those who defend the spatial delimitation of God and Satan or the Holy Spirt and demons often overlook the logic of one of God's three key divine attributes: His Omnipresence.

> The biblical God is able to relate to space in a way that is impossible for limited human beings. God's historical, personal, direct presence is real and simultaneous in all places of His vast universe. This capability of God's being is known in theological language as God's omnipresence. (Dederen 2001:118)

Consequently, it is a fallacy to omit God's omnipotence in the idea of special delimitation. The Psalmist declares:

> Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you. (Psalm 139:7-12, ESV; cf. Job 26:6)

There is no place in this universe where God's presence is not manifested. That is what it means to be God. So, wherever Satan or demons are, or are planning to be, God is already there. God was present during Eve's temptation in Eden (Gen 3:1-7), He was present when the Israelites melted the gold earrings to make the golden calf (Exod 32:1-5); God was present when Saul went to the witch at Endor (1 Sam 28:1-25); God the father, God the Holy Spirit and God the Son were all present during Christ's temptation in the desert (Matt 4:1-11). It was in their holy presence that Lucifer became Satan (Ezek 28:11-19). The Bible declares that Lucifer dwelt in the very presence of God (Ezek 28:14).

> The moral descent of this heavenly being to wickedness is incomprehensible. One thing is clear, namely, that he was a creature (vv. 13,15). Evil originated not in God but in a creature. Moses states that the serpent, whom NT writers later identified as Satan (Gen. 3:1; Rom. 16:20; 2 Cor. 11:14; Rev. 12:9; 20:2), was created, yet by sophistry and subtlety it deceived Eve. Like Tyre, this powerful angel was successful in trafficking (Ezek. 27:3; 28:5, 16, 18), albeit in iniquitous acts that generated violence (28:16; Heb. *khamas*, "malicious intent"; cf. Ex. 23:1) and sin. The notion of trafficking pictures a trader in wares going back and forth, plying his trade with skillful artistry to enrich himself in some way. . . . Just as Israel's iniquity profaned (24:21) God's sanctuary, so

the cherub corrupted his sanctuaries (v. 18; some manuscripts have the singular "sanctuary"). which presumably could refer to himself as the object of God's holiness or perhaps to his profanation of God's dwelling (v. 18). This was redressed by his expulsion from it. Like Tyre, all would be appalled that one so blessed of God could rebel and come to such an inglorious end (v. 19; see also 27:36). (Rodríguez 2020:1008)

Did God the father, God the Holy Spirt and God the Son share the same space with Satan? Yes. For how long, we do not know. Is the body of a born again Christian holier than God's heavenly abode? You will agree with me that this is an ironical question. From deductive reasoning it is logical that the answer to the above question is no. Although not always, deductive reasoning in theology leads to a logically confident conclusion. This is where I disagree with Charles Kraft and others (Dickason on a lesser grade) when they argue for a Christian's demonization from clinical evidence (see Dickason 1987:149; Kraft 1992:34, 64-70; Unger 1991:150). An inductive approach with clinical experience may be logically probable but may cloud people's understanding of God's attributes such as his omnipotence, his holiness and righteousness. Moreover, I believe that clinical experiences fit better in the practice of a deliverance ministry. Christ's disciples learned from practical experience that some spirits are more resistant than others. They also learned that faith and fervent prayers must accompany the "command" in the name of Jesus (Matt 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29).

The reality of Christians being demonized throughout Christian church history is a phenomenon recognized by advocates and non-advocates (see Arnold 1997:108-112 cited in Ott et al. 2010:257). Toner (1913:710-712) points out that "the present rite of exorcism as given in the Roman Ritual fully agrees with patristic teaching and is a proof of the continuity of Catholic tradition in this matter." This has not been the case for Protestant churches. Catholics, for instance, during the fourth Council of Carthage (398), prescribed the rite of ordination for exorcists in its seventh canon (Toner 1913:711). According to Toner, the priest exorcist being ordained was given power to exorcise both baptized and non-baptized members (1913:711). Catholics follow that same dynamic today. To face the increasing demands of exorcism among its members since the late 1980s (see MacNutt 2009), the Vatican opened its doors for its annual exorcism course to 250 priests from 50 countries (See BBC News 2018).

Neither non-Charismatic nor Pentecostal Protestant authors and churches are doing as well when facing present reality. Some have developed official church documents on the Ministry of Healing and Deliverance (see Währisch-Oblau and Wrogemann 2015). Scott Moreau for instance makes these interesting comments.

While experience is not the final arbiter of doctrinal formulation, our experience should be in accord with our doctrine. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that Christians may be demonized and that the warnings to stand against Satan are not just to stop his attacks against the church or his control over those who do not believe. Whatever our conclusion on demonization of believers, Christians clearly have the identity (being in Christ), the authority (being seated with Christ), and the mandate to resist Satan and his demons. We do so not on the basis of our own goodness, but on the basis of Christ's finished work on the cross. Because the One who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world (1 John 4:4), we can successfully stand against demonic schemes. Our weapons in this ongoing struggle include our authority as seated with Christ at the right hand of God, far above every power (Eph. 1:15-2:6), the name of Jesus (Phil. 2:10), our spiritual armor (Eph. 6:18), prayer (a must in some cases, Mark 9:29), simple resistance (James 4:7), forgiveness (Eph. 4:26–27), and exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23; Eph. 4:22–29; 6:10–18). (Moreau 1996:165)

Among Seventh-day Adventists, there are advocates (Allen 1993; Ewoo 2011; Mensah 2011; Badé 2017, 2020; etc.) and non-advocates (Donkor 2011; Ewoo 2011; Onongha 2019; etc.) as well. The Biblical Research Institute (BRI) publication of 1983 was written in the context of a crisis that surrounded the often-questionable teachings and practices from extreme positions of certain deliverance ministries of that time. Although (my critical assessment) the tone of the official document was more from a systematic and biblical theology perspective, considering the context of the time, the document is balanced. One of the concluding points of the document (no. 4 in 1983 and no. 3 in the revised version of 2011) unequivocally states this: "The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes that there is a place for ministry to those who are tempted and controlled by Satanic agencies; and, furthermore, it is not a ministry to be limited to professional clergy, psychologists, and psychiatrists" (BRI 1983; Donkor 2011:224). Thus, before the adoption of the church's 28th fundamental believe in 2005, there was already provision for ministry to the demonized in the Adventist Church both as an in-reach and outreach ministry. This is later confirmed in the 2015 *Seventh-day Adventist Ministers' Handbook*. The *Safeliz Ministers' Bible* co-produced with the Ministerial Association of the Seventh-day Adventist Church reads:

The anointing service in James addresses primarily physical illness and forgiveness. However, there is also a ministry in Scripture that addresses possession by demonic powers. "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the

rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12, 13). While this struggle is not manifested equally in all places, there are occasions during which demonic power becomes evident (Safeliz 2015:1528).

As this missiological and ecclesiastical dynamic seeks to meet church members' needs, the World Mission Department of Andrews University and Adventist Frontier Missions produced *Finding Freedom in Jesus: A Deliverance Ministry Manual* (see Bauer 2018). The warning of White seems to be taken more seriously by Seventh-day Adventists in the past decade. She wrote: "Have Seventh-day Adventists forgotten the warning given in the sixth chapter of Ephesians? We are engaged in a warfare against the hosts of darkness. Unless we follow our Leader closely, Satan will obtain the victory over us" (White 1903:8, 9).

Implications for Christian Missions

There are several missiological implications in this area of demonization of Christians from the perspective presented above.

Evangelism Is First Offensive, Not Defensive as Some Think

When we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior we are at enmity with Satan. There is no neutral or middle ground. Either we are with Christ, or we are against him. Either we gather with Christ, or we scatter (Matt 12:30). Christ said: "Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house" (Matt 12:29, ESV). Satan is the prince of this world (2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2).

Mission cannot take place unless Satan is bound. The unbelievers are satan's goods. This is one of the reasons why when sending the 12 or the 70 Christ first gave them power over demons (Matt 10:1, 8; Luke 10:17). "By this greater power Jesus is binding 'the strong man' and plundering his 'house.' So, the kingdom of heaven is forcefully advancing" (Carson 1984:290). This explains why the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God (Eph 6:12). As an offense weapon, Christians attach Satan's kingdom with the Word of God as the foundation of their prayers for mission, when claiming God promises, and when praying for the lost (Matt 24:14, 28:19)—even before beginning mission.

Mission Is First Inreach before It Is Outreach

"But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And proclaim as you go, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay" (Matt 10:6-8, ESV). "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8, ESV).

Conversion and Maturity Are a Process

The 10/40 window where Christian mission is concentrated in these last years has Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus in the majority. They practice different folk versions of their religions with strong animistic backgrounds. Their journey to become matures Christians cannot be evaluated from a bounded set perspective. This means they often carry over from their previous religions attitudes, assumptions, and even inhabiting demons that often are not addressed during their conversion and baptism.

Journey Toward Discipleship
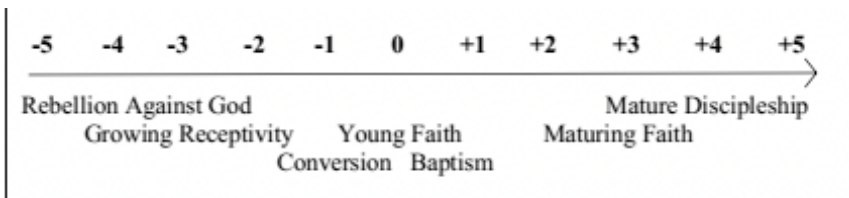
Doss 2018:271

The "Already—Not Yet" Concept in Missiology

Even though "Christian theology should never ignore or overlook the fact that on the cross Christ defeated once and for all the cosmic evil powers" (Rodriguez 2008:17), these powers have not been "totally divested of their power" (19). As such, these evil forces still seek to control humanity redeemed by Christ and they still tempt, harass, oppress, and torment even believers (19). This tension between the present age and the age to come (the "already" and "not yet") should not be absent in our mission theology, rather, it should be used adequately so that we do not communicate any wrong message when we emphasize one over the other.

Conclusion

This article has argued that *demon possession* and *demonization* are etymologically and phenomenologically the same. Although the idea of ownership is avoided in the term demonization, it does not mean any less of a phenomenon. The article argued from a deductive perspective and not from an inductive approach with clinical cases from the Bible such as Saul, Judas Iscariot, the daughter of Abraham paralyzed for 18 years by an evil spirit.

The formal theology presented to defend the reality of the demonization of Christians was missiological and in agreement with the normative (Toner 1913; Ott et al. 2010) and operant theologies (Dickason 1987; Kraft 1992, 2011). Unfortunately, many non-advocates who deny that Christians can be demonized fail to enrich their theology with other points of view.

Yet, the logic of the demonization of Christians does not negate God's sovereignty in people's lives nor his holiness and righteousness. It just means that as there was a time for Satan to be cast out of heaven, demonized Christians also need such a time when they can be set free for the demonic influences in their lives.

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