A Biblical and Theological Foundation for a Seventh-day Adventist Practical Approach to Deliverance Ministry

Introduction

The Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church believes that during Christ’s earthly ministry Jesus had victory in all his encounters with Satan and his demonic forces (Ministerial Association 2005:149). Adventists argue that although “spiritual wickedness in heavenly places” (Eph 6:12) still exists with Satan roaring today like a lion seeking whom he may “devour” (1 Pet 5:8) or operating with discretion and subtlety like a snake seeking whom he may “deceive” (Gen 3:1, Matt 10:16, Rev 12:9), every disciple of Christ can be empowered by the Holy Spirit to have victory over the deceptive, destructive power, and malice of Satan and demons.

Unfortunately, the biblically sound doctrinal statement on “Christian Spiritual Warfare” (Ministerial Association 2005:149) that clearly emphasizes Christ’s dominant authority and power over Satan and his agents has been a source of debate, dissension, and polemics concerning its practical aspects in some Adventists quarters (see Biblical Research Institute 1983; Koranteng-Pipim 2005:163–205).

Objectives

The first goal of this article is to suggest an holistic approach for a “Practical Spiritual Warfare and Deliverance Ministry” that can be in conformity with the 28th Fundamental Belief (Growing in Christ) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that was voted during the 2005 General Conference Session in St. Louis, Missouri. To meet that overarching goal, this article will ground its suggestions on two principles that are important to Seventh-day Adventists. First, faithfulness to the Scriptures, and second, relevance for mission in every culture.

Another goal of this article is to raise awareness concerning the fact
that after 10 years the 28th Fundamental Belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church still does not take into account the full breadth of biblical evidence in the area of spiritual warfare topics. This is particularly true regarding the interplay between the Bible and many practical aspects of such ministries in those cultures for which the 28th Fundamental Belief was initially intended where demon possession is a common occurrence. Nyundi argues that the new doctrine was mainly to provide for African Adventists a doctrinal position to “express the church’s understanding of God’s power to give [a] victorious life over the powers of evil to the believers in Jesus Christ (2007).

This article uses case studies to present several missiological needs for a practical “deliverance ministry” in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. With an attitude of humility and with no desire for defiance, prejudice, misjudgment, or self-confidence, this article cautiously and candidly investigates, examines, and evaluates controversial assertions in practical deliverance ministries. It is important to study the Word of God while fasting and engaging in earnest prayers in the study of teachings concerning this topic, for that is the only way to decide any controversial issue and has always been the way to establish Adventist doctrines and practices (1888 materials vol.1 p. 46; Damsteegt 2005:129).

Scope and Limitations

This paper will not evaluate the terminologies and practices seen and used in current deliverance ministries such as “foothold,” “familiar spirits,” “soul ties,” “generational bondage (sins),” “vice spirits,” “territorial, institutional, and religion or cosmic levels spirits or warfare,” “power Christianity,” “aggressive prayer warriors,” “prayer offensives;” “prayer walks.” “Jericho marches,” “praise marches,” “prayer expeditions,” “deliverance of cities,” “prayer journeys,” “prayer on-site,” “generational bloodlines curses,” “binding of demons,” “strategic-level spiritual warfare” (SLSW), or “set” or “fixed ritualistic prayers.” Arguing from the premise that a proliferation of counterfeit bills does not mean that genuine money does not exist, this article describes vocabularies and practices present in Jesus’ model of spiritual warfare that remain largely absent in current Seventh-day Adventist approaches to spiritual warfare and deliverance ministries. In the next section I define the terminologies and concepts within this paper and offer a proposal for a Seventh-day Adventist methodology on practical deliverance.
Need for a Seventh-day Adventist Methodology for Practical Deliverance

My Background and Experience

My 20 plus years of experience in deliverance in five countries including the United States with over 50 actual cases of demon-possessed people delivered by the grace of God begun in 1984. I was only in my early teenage years when I witnessed my first deliverance session of a demon-possessed woman by pastor Baba Fofana, an Ivorian Seventh-day Adventist minister with a Muslim background who is today my father-in-law. Today we are both known for our active involvement in deliverance in the West Sahel Union Mission made up of five French-speaking West African Countries (Cote d’Ivoire, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, and Niger). But before giving more details concerning my experience I want to acknowledge that personal experiences cannot be the ‘final authority on religious matters” for only the living Word of God and the teaching of the Holy Spirit have that role (Glass 1992:12).

However, Adventist theologians believe that as God uses history and nature, he also uses human experience as a mean of his revelation (see Koranteng-Pipim 2005:40; Ministerial Association 2005:25). Ellen G. White writes that because Christ was “in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15) He knows by experience what our weaknesses and wants look like, and “where lies the strength of our temptations” (2014:615, 616). She also reveals that Satan, by exercise and experience has increased his power and control over human minds a hundredfold (1948:3:328).

Charles Kraft argues that it is a myth to believe that it is possible to be objective in one’s interpretation of the Scriptures without using or referencing one’s personal life experiences (2015:47, 48). This is true also for many Bible teachings (e.g. prayer, fasting, the laying on of hands, anointing, baptism, Holy Communion, witnessing, prophesying, and healing, etc.) but this is particularly true in a deliverance ministry. You either have experience of those Bible truths or you lack experience. And on the subject of deliverance many Seventh-day Adventists have only intellectual knowledge. A small number in our midst have had genuine observational knowledge and very few have experiential knowledge.

Thus, in 1995, while studying at the Adventist Seminary of West Africa (ASWA, now Babcock University) in Nigeria for my pastoral training, my life and worldview faced a major shift in the area of Christian spiritual warfare. My late immediate younger brother Clement (called to rest in Christ with the hope of the first resurrection in 2002) with two of his friends and a deliverance team of prayer partners had an experience that was similar to the seven sons of Sceva (Acts 19:13–16). But their case was
even worse. The three old women they were praying for claimed that they were being harassed by demons, but in reality they were dealing with witches who were running away from some occult duties. While praying, my brother and his two friends (all in their early twenties) were literally attacked by the evil spirits living in those witches. The spirits attacked their minds causing them to instantly become mentally unbalanced. The witches left the three fellows in a pitiful condition and the scene where the confrontation took place was unbelievable with Bibles and hymn books ripped in pieces.

I heard about the attack while at school and when I went home a few weeks later for the summer holidays I was shocked to see the condition my brother was in. He had been indoors for weeks, had not bathed, and had not communicated with anyone except when my parents would take him from time to time to different churches for prayer. His supernatural strength required many people to control him.

I was confused. What should I do? Here I was, the future minister of the family and I had no clue what to do to deliver my brother or heal him and have his personality restored. When I was alone I often dropped to my knees imploring God to intervene. God had mercy and answered our prayers, but it took two months of intense persistent prayer and fasting before my brother was set free from the mental illness caused by those evil forces.

In 1998 my brother joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church and was later elected as a deacon in the local church. But the scars of his encounter with those powerful demons were still visible. Though he was delivered and able to return to his normal daily activities, he was no longer able to make long-term plans and saw no need of going back to school to complete his education, or to get married.

It was sad to see my mother in tears as she struggled to accept his new personality. Although I had read intensely on deliverance from demonic possession while trying to help my brother, and had seen actual instances of deliverance sessions on TV or in some charismatic churches, I was too proud as an Adventist to copy non-Adventist practices. So my only sources of information on what to do in such cases in those early years of ministry were the Bible and the deliverance session I had witnessed in my teenage years with Pastor Baba Fofana.

The experience with by brother and his condition even after being freed has had a huge impact on me. Since then, my prayer has been, “Please Lord, use me to set captives free who are under Satan’s control or influence.”
A Possible Seventh-day Adventists Approach

Free from Prejudices and a Willingness to Be Pioneers

This article has assumed from its insertion that the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s controversy surrounding “Deliverance Ministries” is not about the legitimacy per se of such ministries, which are clearly outlined in the Scriptures and the writing of Ellen White, but on the “dangers inherent in misapplication, misuse, and mishandling of this kind of ministry” (see Biblical Research Institute 1983; Koranteng-Pipim 2005:182). It is an indisputable fact that many Seventh-day Adventists are actively involved in deliverance sessions in different parts of the world. Unfortunately, however, the Seventh-day Adventist Ministers Manual is silent on the subject. Very few suggestions are presented in Adventist seminary classes, in Adventist pastoral magazines, or in Adventist textbooks concerning practical approaches to setting people free from evil spirits. Adventists have all kinds of books on how to preach a sermon (homiletics), how to conduct a divine worship service, how to do public evangelism, a child dedication service, a wedding, a funeral, how to make a church budget, and many other activities related to pastoral ministry and the duties of local church elders, yet there is no practical holistic model on how to conduct a deliverance session. The argument often given is that “there are no given formula or secret technique that Christ passed down to his disciple to that effect (Donkor 2011:173).

As a result of this void and silence toward deliverance ministries and because those Seventh-day Adventist authors who try to offer some approaches or models (Torres 2013:79–81; Donkor 2011:133–239) are not very explicit concerning the “how” to practically engage in a demon deliverance session, much more work is needed in this area. Some of those who write on this topic lack experience and sometimes they are influenced by the strong negative reinforcement Seventh-day Adventists have concerning spiritual warfare and deliverance ministries.

I was among those who praised God in 2005 when a new fundamental belief was added on this topic, but I was sad to see how the importance of the topic was downplayed by calling it “Growing in Christ.” This title hardly matches the content of the doctrine which says in its first sentence, “By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom” (Ministerial Association 2005:149). This is even more remarkable because in the preceding and following doctrinal statements (the 10th fundamental belief on the “Experience of Salvation” and the 12th belief on “The Church”) their opening
sentences say: “In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God” (133) and “The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior” (163).

The link between the titles of those doctrines and their first statements is obvious, but that is not the case for the 11th belief “Growing in Christ.” My guess is that this title was an acceptable formulation for the new doctrine by those who did not see a need for it in the first place (Koranteng-Pipim 2005:101–121).

Another milestone was achieved with the publication of The Church, Culture and Spirits: Adventism in Africa that dealt with some of the issues of demon possession in the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Donkor 2011). While I agree that there is no magic formula or secret approach for dealing with demonization I also believe that it is important to have some guidance in this area.

Therefore, I offer a proposed Seventh-day Adventist framework for deliverance ministries based on what God has revealed in the Scriptures, what Ellen White suggests, and also based on my personal experience. Christians are called to be agents of God in setting people free (White 2006:2:353). To bring freedom and relief to the victims of Satan’s influence and control “a true doctrine calls for far more than mere belief—it calls for action” (Ministerial Association 2005:6).

Twelve Steps in Holistic Deliverance

Step 1 — A Divine Calling: A person’s diving calling can be identified by a God-fearing lifestyle that includes things like spirituality, a good reputation in the church and in the community (Exod 18:21; Matt 7:16, 20; Acts 6:3; 1 Tim 3:7). The Bible says that different gifts of the Holy Spirit are bestowed on church members for the “perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12). For Paul, Christ’s church cannot be edified without the presence of all the ministries. Though each Christian is given the potential power to cast out evil spirits through the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, not all Christians are gifted by the Holy Spirit to have a deliverance ministry.

In 1983 the Biblical Research Institute wrote: “Not every Christian who names the name of Christ is called upon by God to engage in the work of casting out evil spirits” (emphasis mine; see also Koranteng-Pipim 2005:181). Those able to minister in this area usually have an awareness of spirit activities and influence. They feel the need for preemptive prayers when visiting certain evil places and have developed a spiritual warfare consciousness, a conflict sensitivity, and a mentality that suits them to be agents of deliverance.
Step 2—Discernment: For many Christians, the discernment of demonic oppression or possession is difficult and complex. For others it is easy. The question is how to differentiate phenomenology from ontology. How does one differentiate between the symptoms of mental illness and symptoms of demonic manifestations? How does one separate someone seeking emotional attention from one looking for deliverance from the harassment of evil spirits? How does one rule out physiological and biophysical causes in a diagnosis of bizarre human behaviors? Experts in the social sciences can help, but tidy and ideal scenarios are not always what one encounters in real-life occurrences. Thus, as the deliverance team prays for discernment it is important to note that Ellen White states that those who desire to be acceptable co-workers with Christ must also strive for efficiency, increased knowledge, and deeper discernment (1942:116).

Step 3—Consent of the Demon-possessed or a Request from a Relative: Because it is difficult, if not a waste of time, to try to pray for the deliverance of a demon possessed person who does not want to be set free for one reason or another, it is crucial to have an explicit consent and a sincere desire of the demon possessed for deliverance before undertaking any deliverance ministry. The Scriptures says, “Let him call for the elders of the church” (Jas 5:14).

I dealt with two major cases where the victims were young ladies (Larissa in 2009 and Vanessa in 2013) and they experienced torn desires over deliverance. For Larissa, her dilemma was that although her personality, her health, and her studies were affected by the demons living in her, she wanted to keep some of the power she received from them (Acts 16:16). She could travel to distant places without moving physically and hurt people that were not favorable to her demands in certain areas. She also had the power of divination and levitation that she wanted to keep. In the case of Vanessa, she felt cared for when family members were all around her taking care of her whenever the demons would take over and control her behavior. She felt loved and did not want to lose those moments of attention she received from her family and husband.

Such cases demand discernment, prayer, and should cause us to not rush to engage in a deliverance session. However, victims still need to be set free because the demons might be responsible for their dilemma and indecision as to whether or not they really want to be free. In the case of children or people who cannot express their will, it is important to have a close relative (parents if possible for children) request and consent to the deliverance session.

Step 4—Preparation of the Demonized Person through Prayer and Fasting: Once the deliverance team has the expressed and sincere desire for deliverance of the demon possessed person or family, the next step is to
prepare the person for the deliverance session. This preparation generally begins with several days of fasting (generally three or four) and regular reading of selected Bible texts and prayers. When the demonized person is a female, the female members of the deliverance team should instruct her in advance to be dressed with strong under-clothing under her regular clothes. (The next point will explain the need for this precaution). These steps are desirable in ideal circumstances and should include the use of a questionnaire to give the team added information when they conduct the interview (MacNutt 1995:161; see also Michael 2014:670–729).

The questionnaire is designed, if answered with honesty and openness, to reveal the spiritual history of the demonized person and prepare him or her for the deliverance session. It also helps in reducing the fears the person might have (Michael 2014:670–681).

In my experience (with an African background and an African context for most of my experiences) I have had only a few cases where I conducted an interview, and this was required when the deliverance session was taking longer than normal and the demons were more resistant than usual. In most cases I just have the people briefly describe what their condition is and what they want Jesus to do for them. Then I ask the victims to confess all their sins in a short prayer and ask them if they believe that Christ can deliver them.

This brief interview that can be conducted with or without a written questionnaire sometimes helps clarify the reasons for the demons presence in the person’s life. Sometimes those reasons have no relationship to the person’s actions or choices. For example, I witnessed a pitiful scene with Esperance, a young, beautiful, Adventist teenage girl, who became demon possessed because she refused the invitation of her classmate who wanted to go out with her. The young man put a love spell on her (most Africans will know what I am talking about) so that she would be favorably inclined towards him and accept his request for a date. I learned from Esperance’s case that not all demon possessed girls involved with love spells are of loose morals or involved in sexual promiscuity. Esperance was a committed Adventist. She had been fighting alone for months and years the demons living in her who had a mission to make her become a prostitute and a sex-slave to the young man who placed the spell on her. During her deliverance session, she quoted long Bible passages by memory and through her personal involvement in the deliverance session one could see that she earnestly desired and wanted to be set free.

How could such an innocent child of God who loved God that much be victimized by the enemy was a mystery to me. After that case I encountered other similar cases where Satan attacked innocent victims in his attempt to enslave them. Maybe the words of John 9:3, “that the works
of God should be made manifest in him,” could be applied to these cases. Thus, although there is always a reason for the demons to be in a person, sometimes the demonized person is not directly at fault.

**Step 5—Preparation of the Team through Prayer and Fasting:** MacNutt shares four good reasons (and most exorcists will agree with him) why it is preferable to engage in a deliverance session with a team: (1995:152–165).

1. **To Avoid Scandal.** Team members should include both genders to prevent the possibility of scandal with the opposite sex. When praying for a demonized person, the spirits’ reactions are often unpredictable. The person can undress herself involuntarily under the violent body movements caused by the spirits (Matt 8:28; Matt 15:22; Mark 9:18; and Luke 9:39), and it is not appropriate for a team member of the opposite sex to help the female get dressed in such situation.

2. **To Give Team Members Rest.** Only people without any or much experiences in deliverance argue that there are no evidences in the Scripture for long deliverance sessions or long prayer times in the lives of Jesus or his disciples. My question to them is, why did Christ have to fast for 40 days and nights in preparation for his ministry? Did he not pray during those 40 days and nights? Ellen White suggests that in some cases demons also tried to resist our Lord’s power (1942:91). We should also never forget that “Satan and his angels are unwilling to lose their prey. They contend and battle with the holy angels, and the conflict is severe” (White 1930:60).

3. **To Restrain the Demonized Person.** Team members can also help restrain a demonized person if the need arises.

4. **To Utilize a Variety of Gifts.** Teams come with a variety of gifts that can better assist in the deliverance session.

These four reasons are so important that I have many times postponed a deliverance session in order to have at least one of my team members with me. My wife Elmire is an important part of my team, especially since many of the demon possessed victims are women. Since she is usually available I can usually go to help on short notice (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1).

There is no divinely inspired number for a team, but a team of five (two women and two men who demonstrate evidence of divine gifting in addition to the team leader) seems to be a very effectively working number.

An important aspect of team preparation is personal spiritual examination because of the possibility of embarrassment or public exposure of life’s secrets and hurt (Acts 19:13–16). The most important reason for spiritual preparation of the team is to avoid any sin that can be a possible blockage to answers to prayer (Isa 59:2). However, it is not preparation, confession, freedom from sin, prayer for protection, fasting, or discernment that protect us from embarrassment, the spirits’ taunts, or intimidation, or give us success in deliverance. Rather, it is simply God’s grace and
his own desire for salvation for his lost children under Satan’s control. I have had many instances where the deliverance was quick and successful for the glory of the Lord when I was spiritually and emotionally in a mess. My only preparation was words of confession while driving to the deliverance session, asking for the blood of Christ to cleanse me from all unrighteousness, and telling God that this is not my call but his call and his work. His Grace and leading were sufficient! I have learned after all these years that I am 100% powerless, and that Satan is too cunning and much more experienced than I am. I am no match for the evil one. But still God has used me during the many past years to defeat the enemy. All I can say is that all glory belongs to God and his mighty name.

Step 6—Choosing the Time and Place: I have learned during the past 20 years two important truths. First, the best place for a deliverance session is in a dedicated church building—a place dedicated to God for his adoration and service. However, it is not always possible to have such an ideal place to minister in, in which case the deliverance team can dedicate any place (the demonized person’s own house if necessary or any other place) to God through anointing and prayer (time will not permit me to share more on how to cleanse a place or object). Always look for a place away from curious eyes and children (this is not always possible), but the Lord knows the circumstances, so do not be too worried. Instead trust God and his leading in discernment.

Second, regarding the best time for deliverance sessions, I have found the Sabbath hours (from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset) to be the best hours for a deliverance session. Witches and people experienced in the occult have testified that during those hours, their power is limited. There are certain things they cannot do. I strongly believe that the Sabbath hours remind Satan each week of the millennium when he will be in “chains” with no one to tempt. Our Lord Jesus Christ said that “the Sabbath is made for man” (Mark 2:27). Two extreme cases of healing and deliverance Christ performed were on the Sabbath (John 5:1–16; Luke 13:10–16). The promises of doing God’s will during the holy hours are also clear. “If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honorable; and shall honor him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words. Then shall you delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride upon the heights of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it.” (Isa 58:13–14). By affirming that the “Sabbath is made for man” Christ meant that the Sabbath was made to recreate, restore, and set free. Ellen White explains that in Mark 2:27 Jesus was teaching that “the institutions that God has established are for the benefit
of humankind. . . . The law of Ten Commandments, of which the Sabbath forms a part, God gave to His people as a blessing. ‘The Lord commanded us,’ said Moses, ‘to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive’ (Deut. 6:24).” (1940:288).

Thus, it is important to choose the time of the deliverance session and not just allow circumstances to force the choice on the team, otherwise it will be Satan who will be choosing the time, and often that will be when the team is most tired, the most susceptible, and the less likely to challenge him and his demons.

Step 7—Choosing Scripture Texts and Songs: Like many others involved in active deliverance ministries I have learned that certain Bible texts have a more visible effect on demons than others. I do not know why this is, and I pray that God will help me understand the reason behind this if it is necessary. Here are a few texts I have often used: Matt 8:28–32; Matt 10:1, 7–8; Matt 17:21; Mark 16:17–18; Luke 10:17–19; Acts 10:38; Eph 6:12; and Rev 12:7–11.

This is not an exhaustive list of Bible texts that seem to have a special effect on evil spirits. There may well be other powerful texts that I have yet to discover. There are also the other Bible accounts of different cases of demon manifestation and deliverance which can be selected and used. Using such texts seem to create the right atmosphere for spiritual warfare and help the demons realize that they are being specifically addressed. The deliverance team leader’s faith, spiritual authority, and experience will be shown by how the texts are emphasized. I often sings hymns or songs of consecration, dedication, and songs of victory along with the reading of the above texts.

Step 8—Evaluation of Demonic Power and the Number of Demons: Because of the “degrees of difficulty in deliverance,” (MacNutt 1995:151) it is important to evaluate the power, the number, the level of influence, or control of evil spirits involved. Deliverance sessions are approached differently depending on the ranks and number of demons one is dealing with. Satan was once in God’s kingdom, and with that background he mimics God’s organization and model of operation (what I call a diabolic symmetry).

The Scriptures present God as the commander of a great army of celestial beings, the “Lord of Host” (P’s 24:10). Some of those angelic beings have personal names: Gabriel (Dan 8:16), Michael (Dan 12:1; Jude1: 9), or a name that indicates their order: Seraphim (Isa 6:2–3), Cherubim (Gen 3:24), and archangel (1Thess 4:16). Their rank and number in God’s kingdom is also revealed in the Scriptures. For instance an archangel in Greek indicates a chief or lead angel. Christ gives some indication of the number of angels in Matt 26:53 when he mentions twelve legions of angels, with a legion being a number that could be from 3,000 to 6,000. Job describes
angels as morning stars (Job 38:7) and Daniel calls them heavenly messengers numbering “ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands” (Dan 7:11; see also Rev 5:11). Paul uses the expression “an innumerable company of angels” (Heb 12:22). Ellen White calls these heavenly hosts, who are at God’s service, an “invisible armies of light and power” (1911:154.).

Unfortunately Satan rebelled with a third of God’s heavenly army (Rev 12:4), making him also a commander of a host of evil angels. In Mark 5:9 a single person is possessed with “a legion of demons.” Jesus gave us some insight into the intent and purpose of these evil angels when he said that when a spirit is cast out, “he goes, and takes with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first” (Matt 12:45).

In God’s kingdom, holy angels work in connection with God for (1) the protection of people (Acts 12:6–10); (2) the redemption of people; (3) to attend the Redeemer; (4) to serve and do God’s will; (5) are present in the assemblies of saints (Ps 68:17 and 1 Cor 11:10); (6) have a desire to look into the mysteries of the Gospel (1 Pet 1:12); and (7) succeed in the salvation of man.

Ellen White suggests that in Satan’s kingdom, evil angels “leagued together for the dishonor of God and the destruction of men” (1950:513) and are thus likewise in hierarchy and confederacy with various orders. She says that their goal is to maliciously destroy people’s peace and happiness. Evil angels have a mission, various functions, and assignments from Satan that they accomplish with crafty, art, and cunning (White 1945:90). White lists at least nine types of demons that use specific functions: (1) the demon of unkindness (1956:16); (2) the demon of intemperance (2005:79); (3) the demon of liquor (1949:32); (4) the demon of strife (1952:106); (5) the demon of ambition (1988:135); (6) the demon of tobacco (1956:31); (7) the demon of selfishness (1940:294); (8) the demon of jealousy (1958:650); and finally (9) the demon of passion (1958:668).

Torres supplies a list of eleven assignments for demons. Six of them are not in the Ellen White list given above and include (10) the demon of greed; (11) the demon of delusion; (12) the demon of darkness; (13) the demon of hystericis; (14) the demon of heresy; and finally (15) the demon of appetite (2013:172–177).

Carson Michael expands the list of assignments given to demons to include things like (16) the demon of infirmity; (17) the demon of error; (18) the demon of prostitution; (19) the demon of pestilence; (20) the demon of plagues; and finally, (21) The demon of pride and arrogance (Michael 2014:792, 1201, 1748, 1849–1850, 1941, 2000).

Koranteng-Pipim and his colleagues give a list of 10 demonic
assignments. Their list also provides additional light regarding demons’ assignments not already mentioned. These include (22) the demon of unbelief; (23) the demon of anger; (24) the demon of lust; (25) the demon of stupidity; (26) the demon of immorality; (27) the demon of lying; (28) the demon of hypocrisy; (29) the demon of materialism; and finally, (30) the demon or spirit of poverty (2005:145, 148, 158, 187).

Kraft prefers to understand demons’ activities in terms of “making bad things worse,” which is in other words their reinforcement of various human compulsions such as “lust, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, overeating, anorexia, bulimia, pornography, gambling, materialism, competitiveness, and the need to be in control” for bad compulsions and “work, study, attractive dress, religion, doctrinal purity, family, achievement and success” for positive compulsions (1992:109, 119,120). Kraft also prefers to talk about function names of demons. He lists over 100 function names of demons, grouping them together, and giving names of the demon heading each particular group. Because of some disagreement with the grouping and because of space I will not list them here. The list of 30 names, functions or assignments given above are repeated in Kraft’s list (1992:133–136).

Based on the above insights, I believe it is important when dealing with demon possession to evaluate which possible order of evil angels you are dealing with and what possible number are involved. Ellen White states clearly that evil angels or evil spirits were, “in the beginning created sinless, were equal in nature, power, and glory with the holy beings that are now God’s messengers” (1950:513). Therefore, an exorcist should not expect the same resistance from a fallen “seraphim” (an evil seraphim will be more powerful, more evil than a mere fallen angel because it surrounds Satan like the holy seraphim surround God and are most likely involved in reverent adoration of Satan just as the holy seraphim (Isa 5:2–3) reverently adore the triune God) when compared with the resistance of a simple evil angel. Evil seraphim can quote Scriptures like Satan, (Matt 4:4–9), and be in Christian assemblies like Satan (Job 1:6; Zech. 3:1 and Jude 1:9) without being challenged to any great extent by the worship and adoration of the true God. This insight into demonic power and their numbers help in a deliverance session. Such information is crucial for the decision of postponing the deliverance prayer, for team involvement, and for preparation in prayer for anticipated violence or other scary things that could happen.

Step 9—The Deliverance Prayer with Spiritual Authority: Ellen White reveals that the man possessed with a legion of demons (Mark 1) was engaged in a terrible conflict with those evil spirits and was in danger of losing his life (White 1942:92). She also says that these evil powers were fighting the man’s sincere desire for freedom, (92, 93) and when Christ
met him, He “spoke with authority and set the captive free” (1942:92). Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is usually presented in the Bible speaking to Satan or demons with authority. Here are a few instances to illustrate the Lord’s authoritative command and order: “Be gone, Satan” (Matt 4:10); “rebuked the demon” (Matt 17:18); “allowed not the demons to speak” (Mark 1:34); “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit” (Mark 5:8); “I charge you, come out of him, and enter no more into him” (Mark 9:25), “Hold your peace, and come out of him” (Luke 4:35), “commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man” (Luke 8:29). I believe that Christ gave those order with an authoritative and even militaristic tone. Notice how, as a result of Christ’s authority, evil spirits responded: “And the spirit cried, and convulsed him terribly, and came out of him” (Mark 9:26).

Those with some experiences in casting out demons know how important it is to use authority in the deliverance prayer. Although it is not the authority of the Christian exorcist, but that of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is important to use that authority with conviction and faith, for whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom 14:23).

MacNutt argues that “while all Christians have the basic authority needed to cast out evil spirits, some people exercise more of it than others in dealing with the stronger spirits” (1995:154). Thus, MacNutt suggests that the deliverance prayer as a command is not directed to God, but backed up by God’s authority and directed to Satan or demons, ordering them in the name of Jesus Christ to depart (167). This was also the experience of Paul: “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her” (Acts 16: 18). MacNutt reminds us that a deliverance prayer is not a “polite request we make of the evil spirits” because if there is doubt or hesitation in your voice, the spirits will pick up on your fear and try to further intimidate you” (167; see also Kraft 2015: Chap. 15).


From my experience, touching (which is not exactly the same as the laying on of hands) a demonized person has been very effective in localizing areas of the body under greater demonic influence or senses that served as avenues for the demons. I have seen violent reactions while praying and claiming back to God as the Creator a particular sense or body part of the demonized person. God, like Satan, works through human culture “rather than above or outside it” (Pilch 1991:159; see also Bauer and Sanou 2015:176).
Touching, in most cultures where demonization is common, often has cultural implications. When it is a taboo within a culture to touch a demonized person it often denotes fear. For instance, some shrines or fetishes with evil sources of power cannot be touched by common people. In such cases people believe that *mana*, a supernatural force like electricity found throughout Melanesia and other parts of the world, (Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou 1999:1138–1140) located in things like rocks or trees, can kill when touched.

In a similar way Muslims believe that anything with *baraka* (supernatural blessing from Allah’s divine favor) blesses anything it touches (2415). As a biblical parallel, in the Old Testament it was forbidden to touch the ark, a symbol of God’s presence. When touched, it brought God’s judgment (2 Sam 2: 2). In the New Testament, sick and demonized people begged to touch Christ or his garment for healing and deliverance (Mark 3:10, 5:28–34, 6:56; Matt 14:36). In some cultures, as it was in Jesus’ time, a healer or an exorcist has to touch the victims of all kind of suffering, not only as a sign of love and care but also as a demonstration of his healing or deliverance power. It is believed that physical contact is something that evil spirits cannot tolerate (Luke 4:40–41; Mark 16:18; Heb 6:1–2).

Oftentimes, evil spirits will seek to intimidate exorcists during a deliverance session by warning, “Do not touch me” (MacNutt 1995:171; see also Eckhardt 2014:1968, 1969). Since the deliverance team’s power is God’s power (Hab 3:4), they also have power in their hands (Acts 5:12; 19:11). Thus, touching a body part, which makes a demonized person react with pain is an indication of a weak point, a point of demonic connection, or demonic entry. I have found it useful to anoint such parts of the body.

When sacred people and objects were anointed in the Old Testament it “signified their being set apart and consecrated to the service of God; and the costly and fragrant mixture appointed for this purpose was forbidden for all others” (Rand 2014:1137, 1138; see also Exod 30:23–33; Ezek 23:41). Therefore, when a sensitive area of the demonized person’s body is touched with anointing oil there is often a reaction. With faced with prayer, faith, and authority, evil spirits connected with a particular part of the body often react with discomfort by crying out. That is the time to exercise authority in Jesus’ name and command the spirits to depart before they move to another part of the body. The result is often spectacular and deliverance follows quickly.

Anointing a demon-possessed person by faith and authority in the name of Jesus is like a powerful seal of the Holy Spirit that will break previous demonic or satanic seals. Dedicating the person through anointing to the triune God, the Creator of the universe and the source of all power is a very important message to Satan and his demons. The anointing with oil as a symbol of the Holy Spirit is an act Satan and his demons are forced...
to acknowledge, often with sadness, because it represents the canceling and breaking of any type of dedication (blood, words, contact, etc.) that gave them ownership and rulership over the demonized. Anointing also signifies that from now on the person is dedicated to God and protected by him. MacNutt writes extensively about how and who to break satanic seals and contracts and replace them with God’s seal—the Holy Spirit (MacNutt 1995:220–222).

Scripture reveals that because of anointing, the “burden shall be taken away from off your shoulder, and his yoke from off your neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed” (Isa 10:27). Anointing has a much wider purpose than a ceremony just before death (extreme unction). James 5:14 may be focused on believers, but Mark 6:13 seems to focus on evangelistic outreach to non-believers (Rand 2014:1133–1135).

Step 11--Healing Prayer: It is quite clear in Scripture that demons can be the cause of many sicknesses. “Then was brought unto him one possessed with a demon, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, so that the blind and dumb both spoke and saw” (Matt 12:22). Matthew 9:32 mentions “a dumb man possessed with a demon. And when the demon was cast out, the dumb man spoke.” These Bible texts and others like Mark 9:17–26 and Luke 11:14 offer strong theological evidences that the combination of healing (either inner or physical) and deliverance is “the key to wholeness for the demonized” (Kraft 2015:188).

Physical and mental healing after the departure of certain demons that cause people to be deaf, dumb, blind is not guaranteed in Scripture even after a person is delivered from evil spirits. I personally learned that bitter aspect of dealing with the demonic world in my brother Clement’s case. While authoritative prayers for deliverance are addressed against Satan, demons, or evil spirits, prayer for healing is directed to God. Christians cannot force or command God to do anything, instead we simply ask him and plead with him for healing of the demonized. The harm the demons cause when leaving a person (see Luke 4:35) can sometimes damage one of the eleven physiological systems, and in most cases their presence has already done damage. That is why in order to restore a demonized person’s wholeness Christ both rebuked and healed all aspect of the person’s life—emotional, physical, and even the social aspects.

Mark 5:18–20 reveals that “when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the demon asked him that he might be with him. But Jesus permitted him not, but said unto him, Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and has had compassion on you. And he departed, and began to announce in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.” Ellen White says that Jesus “healed the sick and cast out demons” (1942:66).
Like Christ we must pray for the healing and freedom of the oppressed. We must pray for God’s light to shine on the demonized person’s entire body and on every system.

Step 12—Post Deliverance Ministry: There is always the risk that expelled demons will return to the former demonized person (their former habitation) and find it empty and invite in more evil spirits, causing the person’s condition to be worse than it was before (Matt 12:45). This scriptural insight and warning needs serious consideration or the deliverance team could fail to be instruments of God to bring perfect healing and perfect deliverance. Hiebert and his colleagues argue that, “Deliverance is most effective when it involves a holistic pastoral ministry that leads the delivered to faith and maturity in Christ” (1999:3143). In response to this need I suggest three simple but urgently needed areas of pastoral ministry and care for formerly demonized people.

First, help the person get rid of anything associated with the occult. Acts 19:18–19 says that “many that believed came, and confessed, and told of their deeds. Many of them also who used magic arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men” In the same way, anything that has been soiled or that has any element of evil or occult association in the possession of the formerly demonized person needs to be destroyed or cleansed. This could include the person’s house, a particular room, and sometimes even the compound where the person lived in his former condition. Anything he knows of that has been dedicated to any spirit needs to be cleansed if it cannot be destroyed. This could include family objects or land and has implications for the whole family. If there have been any spirit manifestation such as furniture moving around, lights going on and off by themselves, screaming, dishes being thrown around, and slamming doors without anyone present, it may be helpful for such items in the house to be cleansed through anointing. I have also used this approach with any object even with no occult symbols on them but that influenced the formerly demonized person to feel cold or fearful. Such objects also need cleansing if they cannot be destroyed (see Michael 2014:1653–1684 for many insights into why a cleansing process is important).

Second, help the person become involved in a Christian community. It is important to make sure that people delivered from demon possession are not stigmatized in the church community. They need the faith community’s support and nurture. Those set free from Satan’s bondage need the seven hallmarks of growing in Christ: (1) a life born of the Spirit (John 3:5), (2) a life of love and unity (John 13:34). (3) a life of study (2 Tim 3:16, 17), (4) a life of prayer (Eph 6:18, (5) a life of fruit bearing (John 15:4), (6) a life of spiritual warfare (Eph 5:12, 13), and (7) a life of worship, witness, and hope (Acts 2:42–47) (Ministerial Association 2005:155–161).
Third, follow-up with holistic healing processes. Some people, because of tragic circumstances, have very fragile or multiple personalities, often arising from severe abuse in childhood or Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA). For such people, holistic healing (inner healing, physical healing, and social healing) may take longer. Therefore, pastoral care after the deliverance should take that into consideration (Heibert, Shaw, and Tiénou 1999:3143).

**Five Practices to Avoid that Can Block Deliverance**

Unfortunately not all deliverance sessions are successful. Christ’s disciples asked Jesus why they could not cast out the demon in a young boy (Matt 17:19). Christ’s response suggests two reasons why a deliverance session could fail: (1) a lack of faith (Matt 17:20) and (2) the absence of prayer and fasting (Mark 9:29). Both reasons placed the responsibility on the disciples, and are also reasons for failure by present day deliverance teams.

But before addressing these two reasons in greater detail, I will briefly list a few other factors related to the demonization which can also lead to failure in a deliverance session. As mentioned earlier in this article (see Step 3 above), one of the first steps in a deliverance session is to receive the consent of the demonized person. Failure to receive consent could also block deliverance. In addition, the demonized person could have hidden sins that are too embarrassing to confess. The person could have a wrong concept of sin, or see exorcism as a quick fix.

Michael shares the story of a lady who expressed her preference for exorcism because it was fast and she “feels better right after” in contrast to attending counseling which she believed took too long and had no immediate effect (2014:1430–1439). Some demonized people believe the demons’ lies when they tell the person that they are too powerful for God to overcome or they are not that evil if they have given the demonized person supernatural power to heal, for divination, or to levitate. Believing such lies keeps the demonized person under the demons’ power and deliverance for such people is a challenge. Michael also shares another lady’s story who refused to stop seeing a white witch because she considered her as someone who could save her life by casting good spells to help her (1446–1454). Other causes for failure could be when demonized people decide to test the deliverance team’s spiritual alertness and to test if God really cares for them. In such case they will purposely hide some sins to see whether the team can discover them. They argue that “if God really cared he would expose the hidden sin or issue.” This approach is used as a sign that the exorcism is genuine and will be effective (1454–1463). Most of the reasons listed above for failure in setting a person free should be addressed during the preparation of the person (see Step 4 above).
In addition to the above, I suggest five Scripture-inspired potential causes for failure in a deliverance session.

**Cause #1—Curiosity or Experimenting with New Approaches:** Acts 19:13–17 reveals that as a custom in the apostles’ time, there were some vagabond Jews going about pretending to be able to expel evil spirits, or to cure diseases by charms, incantations, etc. Today the word “vagabond” means they had no home, but properly translated, the word “vagabond” means wandering from place to place, practicing exorcism. Those exorcists had set formulas they used as an oath, and adjured the demons or compelled them to leave the possessed persons in the name of God.

Christ himself made reference to these practices in Matt 12:27 when he asked the Pharisees, “And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.” Luke 9:49–50 shows that one of the vagabond exorcists had tried and even succeeded in creating a new formula of exorcism in Christ’s name. When the disciples drew Christ’s attention, saying “Teacher, we saw one casting out demons in your name; and we forbade him, because he follows not with us,” Christ replied, “Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.”

It is also possible that the seven sons of Sceva likewise wanted to try this new exorcism formula using the name of Jesus as a possible powerful new charm. They probably knew that Jesus had expelled many evil spirits, and that it was in his name that Paul was working miracles. Unfortunately, theirs was a vain undertaking! They sadly learned that demons are cast out and Satan’s power conquered only by the power of “divine faith” and that Satan’s craft can only be known by the Spirit of God (Wesley 2014:84173–87180).

**Cause #2—Triumphantism:** It is important to learn from the counsel Christ gave his disciples when confronting their triumphantistic mentality as displayed in Luke 10:17: “And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the spirits are subject unto us through your name.” Christ said “Nevertheless in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20). Ellen White suggests that God’s people are not to rejoice in the possession of power, lest they “lose sight of . . . dependence upon God” (1940:493). They must also be careful “lest self-sufficiency come in” causing them to work in their own strength, rather than in the spirit and strength of the Master (493).

**Cause #3—Sensationalism or Using Magical Approaches:** Acts 5:15 describes sick people being healed by Peter’s shadow and in Acts 19:11, 12 the Ephesians experienced “signs and wonders” associated with healing by means of a handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched Paul. Although I believe that these strange practices can still happen today according to our
faith and God’s will, were reflected in the ministry of Christ himself (Matt 9:20–22), and the promise was given that Christ’s disciples would do even greater things (John 14:12), it is important to warn against a deliberate seeking after signs and wonders as key elements of a deliverance ministry.

Any sensational practice associated with healing and deliverance ministries such as magical tendencies (special words or right gestures) must be avoided in the deliverance process. It is not our words or actions that frees people but Christ’s power through the Holy Spirit (Hieber, Shaw, and Tiénou 1999:3140). Pride and self should never be allowed to take credit for what only God can do.

Cause #4—Getting Information from Demons: There are theoretical controversies and diverse practices concerning dialoguing with Satan or demons (Job 1:7–12: Matt. 4:3–10: Mark 5:9–13). Bruce Bauer’s article in this issue addresses this matter more fully, but from my own experience I once, out of curiosity and just for an experience, asked a demon his name. He ironically answered me, “Why do you want to know my name?” I did not know what to reply and instantly knew through a moment of spiritual insight that I had made a huge mistake.

I humbly confess that God could not use me to deliver that lady till today. That is the only case of a deliverance session that has challenged me to the point of losing faith that God could use me in delivering a person. In my 20 plus years of experience, that case is written with indelible ink. While preparing for this presentation, she wrote twice in September 2015 to my wife while we were in the United States to ask for prayer because the spirits are still bothering her at work, stopping her from going to work, and she is worried about losing her job.

I know it is important to have as much information as possible about the demons involved in a person in order to have a quick and successful deliverance session, but I believe strongly that God’s people should not look to the demons for assistance in freeing people. Christ said in Luke 11:18 that, “If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?” God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are all God’s people need. God will provide, through the Holy Spirit, everything needed for the battle.

Cause #5—Using Practices that Could Hurt or Harm the Demonized: MacNutt, a Roman Catholic author, argues that the exorcist has to “bless and not harm the person suffering from demonic oppression” (1995:147). Christ came to set Satan’s captives free. The deliverance team should never tie a demonized person with chains or ropes. Demons will often try to kill or hurt their victims. Mark 9:22 says that the demon cast the boy, “into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him.” I have learned to clear the area where the deliverance session is taking place of any metal, wood, or other object that could hurt the person. I also believe that the Holy Spirit can give us additional wisdom in this area.
Conclusions

In some parts of the world, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is losing members because most of its pastors have no clue how to conduct a practical deliverance ministry. Ellen White suggests that only Christ’s method will bring true success in mission. She offers four steps in soul winning that were used by Christ: (1) the Savior mingled with people and showed that he desired their good; (2) He showed sympathy for people; (3) He ministered to their needs; and (4) He won their confidence. Then he urged them to follow him (1942:143).

Joe Kidder argues that thriving “congregations conduct everything they do from a sense of spirituality and care” (2011:107). He explains that every ministry of the Church should be meaningful and relevant (107). It is true the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a worldwide church has responded with the 28th Fundamental Belief to cultures beliefs and practices found in many parts of the world. But this response to date has been primarily focused on biblical and theological rationale with very little offered for practical ministry that will give members suggestions in ways to address demonization among members.

Herbert and his colleagues argue that if Christian missionaries teach Bible doctrines with their cultural biases, the people in the target culture will “reject Christianity as irrelevant or become Christians for other reasons and continue their old customs in secret” (1999:2133–2136). Unfortunately this is what is happening to Adventism in some parts of Africa. In French speaking West Africa where I am from, and where I have been working as a pastor for the past 20 years, many Adventists are still waiting for answers to their spiritual warfare questions. God has led in his church in Africa so this issue has not been totally unaddressed. However, because of strong prejudices within the Adventist Church towards delivery ministries, some have become unwilling to minister in this area out of a very real fear of losing their employment with the church. Some have gone farther astray in practicing extreme, fanatical, and unbiblical approaches because of inadequate and official guidelines in how to conduct a practical deliverance ministry.

Ellen White challenges us to awake to spiritual realities in these terms:

If professing Christians were all sincere and earnest in their efforts to promote the glory of God, what a stir would be made in the enemy’s ranks. Satan is earnest and sincere in his work. He does not want souls saved. He does not want his power upon them broken. Satan does not merely pretend. He is in earnest. He beholds Christ inviting souls to come to Him that they may have life, and he is earnest and zealous in his efforts to prevent them from accepting the invitation. He will leave no means untried to prevent them from leaving his ranks and standing in the ranks of Christ. Why
cannot the professed followers of Jesus do as much for Him as His enemies do against Him? Why not do all they can? Satan does all he can to keep souls from Christ. He was once an honored angel in heaven, and although he has lost his holiness, he has not lost his power. He exerts his power with terrible effect. He does not wait for his prey to come to him. He hunts for it. (1948:2:286)

Recommendations

In order to address the increasingly urgent need to answer Adventists in many cultures who are seeking counsel and guidelines that are biblical, rational, adequate and culturally relevant to their demonic harassment and possession cases I offer three recommendations:

1. The Biblical Research Institute should work on establishing and proposing an exorcism protocol for the Minister’s Manual. This will help avoid extremes of fanaticism and other pitfalls.

2. A Seventh-day Adventist approach to deliverance ministry should be taught in all Seventh-day Adventist schools and seminaries where pastors are being trained.

3. The new edition of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual should explicitly mention deliverance ministries or ministries of deliverance.

Works Cited


Donkor, Kwabena, ed. 2011. The Church, Culture and Spirits, Adventism in Africa. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald.


2015, vol. 11 no. 2
Michée Badé has worked as a frontline missionary church planter for Adventist Frontier Missions since November 2006 in Kandi, northern Benin. He is from Cote d’Ivoire (Ivory Coast), married to Elmire and has three children: Marina (23 adopted), Eliora (10) and Elie-Dana (7). Michee will be joining the Doctor of Missiology program at Andrews University in 2016.