

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

VOLUME 3

I. DOCTRINAL ISSUES

Spiritual warfare and the ministry of deliverance

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INTRODUCTION

The intention of this paper is to provide the Church with a framework for understanding the Lutheran approach to the issue of spiritual warfare and deliverance. Since the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) has no official teaching on this matter, it can accommodate differing opinions so long as they are in harmony with Scripture and the Lutheran confessions. The Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations (CTICR) hopes that the paper will assist the Church in this process of discernment.

The paper was originally intended as a theological response to the challenges associated with the new wave of Pentecostal/charismatic theology that entered the Church in the first decade of this millennium. That wave has now substantially subsided and with it an approach to exorcism that was at odds with Lutheran practice. However, this paper is designed to help the Church understand how phenomena like exorcism, deliverance, and spiritual warfare are to be evaluated from a confessional Lutheran standpoint.

We do not go into questions of demonology, such as the nature of demons and whether they exist inside people or only outside people or both. In our opinion these questions are too speculative and finally are not helpful pastorally to people in the grip of an unclean spirit or suffering from some form of demonic affliction and to those ministering to them. Although initially the commission's brief was to address the problem of exorcism, it became clear in the course of our research that a Lutheran approach to spiritual warfare does not put exorcism at the centre but instead focuses on the ministry of deliverance

which it sees as belonging to the church's enactment of the gospel.¹ Exorcism, which may be deemed necessary in certain rare instances, is a special case of the ministry of deliverance and is not the subject of this paper.

The term spiritual warfare is understood in different ways within the Protestant world.² Luther says that the Christian's daily battle is against the devil, the world, and the flesh. Each entity of this unholy triumvirate can be used to focus on one type of spiritual warfare.³ The first type, which is found in certain Evangelical, charismatic and Pentecostal circles, focuses especially on the devil and sees this battle at three different levels: 1. ground level (the practice of deliverance ministry that involves breaking demonic influences in individuals; 2. occult level (which involves resistance to a more ordered level of demonic activity which is evident especially within witchcraft, Satanism, freemasonry, séances, and other forms of occultic activity); and 3. strategic level (which involves power confrontations with high ranking demonic powers assigned to certain geographical areas and social networks. We will discuss this latter form of spiritual warfare later in the paper.

A second form of spiritual warfare focuses on the world. This model is associated especially with Walter Wink and is more common in liberal Protestantism than in conservative evangelical circles. It focuses on world systems and structures and the way in which these structures can be demonised. It dismisses the ontological status of Satan and the demonic and understands the 'principalities and powers' (Rom 8:38; Eph 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:15; Titus 3:1) as worldly structures that have been demonised and perverted into oppressive systems of domination and that need to be overthrown by simply believing in the power of good over evil (which Wink calls 'intercession').

A third and more common form of spiritual warfare focuses on the flesh. This view, based on the principle of cessationism, denies that Christians can be demonised today (a view common in the Reformed tradition) and holds that spiritual warfare is a moral battle against the sinful flesh rather than against demonic powers. It holds that repentance, not exorcism, is the key to ministry to people involved in the occult.

This paper recognises some truth in each of these positions but identifies with none of them. We develop our own view based on Scripture and Lutheran theology as we engage with various views and traditions. We will begin by looking briefly at the biblical teaching on the Christian's spiritual warfare as this will be fundamental for the whole paper.

While this paper speaks about demons and demonic spirits, we should not forget that, biblically, demons are also called evil spirits or unclean spirits. The paper therefore speaks

¹ Historically, the term 'exorcism' has been used by the Roman Catholic Church which normally employs the services of an exorcist to expel a demon from a 'possessed' person through the use of a particular ritual. Protestants, on the other hand, including Lutherans, often prefer to use the term 'deliverance' to describe the expulsion of a demon. James M. Collins, *Exorcism and deliverance ministry in the twentieth century: an analysis of the practice and theology of exorcism in modern western Christianity* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 4, confirms this distinction and makes the further point that the term 'exorcism' is usually used for 'the sacramental rite by which an evil influence, more specifically, an evil personality which has in some sense taken possession of a human subject, is removed'. On the other hand, Collins notes that 'deliverance' ministry could be called a charismatic ministry because it relies on the 'charisma' of the practitioner. But he stresses that he is using 'charisma' and 'charismatic' here in their accepted sociological sense rather than their ecclesiological sense. On the other hand, this paper will show, supported by the historical survey in the appendix, that deliverance ministry in the Lutheran tradition does not rely on a special spiritual gift (*charisma*) but principally on the word of God and prayer. Thus the Lutheran tradition uses the word 'exorcism' in a wide sense (dealing with possession) and a narrow sense (the ritual aspects), affirming the first, while criticising the second. However, the terminology is not always consistent so that Bugenhagen, for instance, will speak about exorcism but means much the same as we mean by deliverance (see appendix).

² See *Understanding spiritual warfare: four views*, edited by James Beilby and Paul Eddy (Baker Academic, 2012). The three views summarised below draw on this analysis.

³ Luther's triumvirate or unholy trinity can be understood in different ways to describe different views. The following is just one example of how it may be understood in relation to contemporary views on spiritual warfare.

to any situation where people feel the need to be delivered from any sort of alien spirit that is afflicting them—whether it be ‘evil’, ‘unclean’, or ‘demonic’—and that would lead them away from God’s Holy Spirit.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Lutherans have traditionally understood spiritual warfare⁴ as waged by Christians to be defensive warfare.⁵ The foundational texts for the biblical teaching on spiritual warfare are Ephesians 6:10–17; 1 Timothy 1:18,19; 6:12; Matthew 12:43–45; Revelation 12:11. But the most developed passage is Ephesians 6:10–17. Here Paul describes the armour that God supplies for the battle. Elsewhere, he speaks of the ‘armour of light’ (Rom 13:12) which is Christ himself clothed in his righteousness, purity, and holiness. To put on this armour then is to put on Christ, which in turn means stripping off the old self and putting on the new (Col 3:9,10) — in other words, living in the power of our Baptism. We have no resources within ourselves to fight the battle against the cunning tricks of the devil.⁶ Whatever we need comes from Christ. He is our champion, our deliverer. All we have to do is stand our ground. Christ does the rest.

Lutherans follow Paul in understanding spiritual warfare to be defensive warfare rather than an offensive attack. This is where we differ from Pentecostalism.⁷ It is defensive warfare as we are not told to actively seek out demons and expel them. Rather, Paul tells us to stand firm and keep watch so that the evil one does not snatch away from us the victory won by Christ and take us back under his control. The Christian is given two weapons to fight this battle: the word of God and the power of the Spirit in the word (Eph 6:17; see 1 John 2:14; Matt 4:1–10, where Jesus repels the temptations of Satan with the word of God).⁸

The important thing to stress is that Christ has won the victory already, he is the cosmic Lord and nothing will separate us from him, so long as we remain in him through faith. Spiritual warfare is predicated on the clear gospel message that God has won the final victory over Satan and all demonic powers and that we too share in that victory through faith. God’s victory through the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central message of the book of Acts and is foundational for the whole New Testament (NT). It is also the burden of the church’s message today and it needs to be the first thing that is emphasised in any paper dealing with spiritual warfare and the church’s ministry of deliverance. The proclamation and sacramental enactment of Jesus’ victory over the powers is at the heart of the church’s deliverance ministry and its teaching on spiritual warfare.

Jesus is the victor: this is also the title of a spiritual classic by the famous German Lutheran pastor Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt (1842-1919) who is remembered for his evangelistic preaching and his ministry of deliverance. Blumhardt (like his father Johann Christoph) was

⁴ For some people, the term ‘spiritual warfare’ sounds too militaristic. The term of course has a long tradition in the church and cannot be given up lightly since much of the imagery of the NT uses the language of warfare and battle. The spiritual battle that all Christians are called to engage in against the powers of darkness is clearly described by Paul in Ephesians 6:10–20.

⁵ It should be noted that there is another type of spiritual warfare that is waged by God himself against Satan and the powers of darkness where he wins the battle for us (see Col 2:15). It is only because of his victory over the ‘rulers’, the ‘authorities’, and the ‘cosmic powers of this present darkness’ (Eph. 6:12) that our warfare is primarily defence rather than offensive.

⁶ For an imaginative account of the strategies of the devil in attacking the Enemy, see CS Lewis, *Screwtape letters*. This classic in Christian spirituality exhibits a profound understanding of human nature as well as the subtle wiles of the devil in securing the damnation of the English ‘patient’.

⁷ It should be stated at the outset that Pentecostalism is no monolithic entity and is made up of a variety of groups and traditions some of which are diametrically opposed. Therefore, although this paper refers to Pentecostals in a collective sense, in actual fact we mean some Pentecostals. The Australian Christian Churches (the old Assemblies of God in Australia) is the largest Pentecostal denomination in Australia but some of its members have departed from the classical Pentecostal tradition and have embraced the prosperity gospel.

⁸ Other weapons are also available: 1. the name of Jesus; 2. prayer (Rom 15:30,31; Eph 6:17,18) coupled with fasting (Mark 9:29).

both a charismatic healer and a committed Lutheran. Simon Zahl argues from a Pentecostal perspective that Blumhardt was successful in synthesising two theologies and that this synthesis tries to forge a middle-way between charismatic theology and Lutheran theology that takes account of the benefits of both without falling prey to what he perceives to be their failures. Whether Zahl's analysis of the data holds up under scrutiny remains to be seen. He holds that Blumhardt takes the biblical data and develops the theme of Jesus as the victor over sin, death, and hell within the framework of a theology of the cross. But he does not simply relate it to God's Good Friday and Easter victory which he won in and through Christ. He applies it rather to the victory Jesus wins over the power of sin, death, and hell in the life of every believer through the power of the Holy Spirit. Zahl rightly points out that Blumhardt carefully keeps the focus on Christ and the authority of Christ over the demonic rather than shifting it to the believer and the authority of the believer over the forces of darkness.⁹

All who are involved in the church's ministry of deliverance need to know that whatever battles still need to be fought against the evil one and his minions, the war has been won, finally and definitively, by Christ through his resurrection. He is the all-mighty and all-powerful one, the pantocrator (Rev 1:8), whom John the Divine celebrates as the Lord of lords and King of kings (Rev 17:14). Paul expresses Christ's cosmic lordship most eloquently in the Christ hymn of Colossians: 'He (Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together' (1:15–17). In a similar vein, Paul says elsewhere that God has made Christ lord over all the powers of darkness (all rule and authority and power and dominion) and has put everything under his feet (the ancient symbol for victory) (Eph 1:20–23). And when the 70 (or 72) returned from their mission and reported to Jesus 'in your name even the demons submit to us', he immediately said: 'I saw Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning' (Luke 10:17–18). These words are meant to give reassurance to every Christian that Jesus is the victor over the powers and that none of these powers can ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:39). They should also reassure every practitioner of deliverance that their task is to announce this victory of Christ in the face of demonic attack and pray to Christ that he would make his victory known to any belligerent spirit that would appear to challenge it.

⁹ Any study of Blumhardt today will have to take account of Zahl's dissertation on Blumhardt's preaching and healing ministry which tries to situate him at the intersection of Lutheran theology and Pentecostal theology. See Simeon Zahl, 2010, *Pneumatology and theology of the cross in the preaching of Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt: the Holy Spirit between Wittenberg and Azusa Street*, T&T Clark London. The book identifies the impasse between classical Protestant and contemporary charismatic and Pentecostal pneumatologies as a fundamental theological problem. Its goal is to contribute a constructive pneumatological proposal for moving beyond this impasse, based on the theological convictions of Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt. The disagreement is over the question of the unmediated experience of the Holy Spirit. Luther's rejection of 'enthusiastic' pneumatologies, on the basis of what his critics call a narrow concept of the mediation of the word and a 'pessimistic' anthropology, has become standard teaching in both Lutheran and Reformed orthodoxy. In classical Protestantism, on the other hand, the primary theological distinctive of charismatic theology is its strong affirmation of an unmediated experience of the Spirit in Christian life and worship. The Pentecostal movement's rapid growth in the past century has brought this difference to the fore. Zahl believes that Christoph Blumhardt's theology, which attempts to integrate a pessimistic (biblical) anthropology and unmediated experience, is well-suited to exploring the impasse between the two theological traditions. We, on the other hand, would hold that Zahl has put his finger on a significant aspect of Blumhardt's theology that departs from the Lutheran confessional tradition and which we therefore cannot accept.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS PART 1: THE SYNOPTIC TRADITION

Close scrutiny of the gospel tradition reveals that exorcism was an essential part of Jesus' activity.¹⁰ In this study we look at six narratives in the gospels that deal with exorcisms. We then briefly attempt to evaluate theologically the place of exorcisms in Jesus' ministry. Finally, we address the question: How might one assess and understand this feature of Jesus' ministry, so unfamiliar to most of us today?¹¹ The broader NT tradition has only been touched on. No accounts of exorcism are found in John but only in the synoptic tradition and Acts.

A. Jesus heals a man with an unclean spirit

(Mark 1:21–28; Luke 4:31–37)

In Mark's Gospel this is the opening scene in Jesus' public ministry after the call of the first disciples, while in Luke it is the first episode after Jesus' inaugural sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth. In that sermon Jesus startled his hearers by authoritatively declaring himself to be the Isaianic servant of God anointed with the Holy Spirit to preach good news, proclaim release to captives and let the oppressed go free (Isa 61:1–2). What was proclaimed in word now happens indeed in this first of Jesus' acts: the exorcism of the man with an unclean spirit at Capernaum.¹² In this episode and in what follows Luke follows Mark closely, in characteristic style editing out unnecessary words and making stylistic improvements. This first miracle takes place on the Sabbath in a synagogue—on a holy day in a holy place. Jesus impresses the people as one who teaches with authority, and yet his teaching is questioned by the Pharisees because he does not teach according to the Jewish rabbinic authorities.

Confrontation is inevitable, and occurs immediately because of the presence of a man possessed by an unclean spirit: 'the unclean spirit is in a holy place on a holy day, where it ought not to be'.¹³ Often in healing stories an appeal for healing follows the description of the malady. Not in this case, because the man is helpless—he is under the power of the evil spirit. This unclean spirit, confronted by the one anointed by the Holy Spirit, recognises Jesus as a threat and attempts to disempower him by revealing his name and identity: 'Aha! What is there between us and you, Jesus of Nazareth? Did you come to destroy? I know who you are, the Holy One of God!' (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34). The spirits recognise him and tremble, for their time is up. Although evil and unclean, they know the truth and rashly attempt to 'out' Jesus by dramatically naming him. Jesus' response is even more dramatic. Jesus rebukes the spirit, commanding it to 'be muzzled' and come out of him—'Shut up and get out of him,' would be a way of saying it in down-to-earth English.

In healing stories, the response of bystanders to the healing miracle is recorded as a sort of testimony. With insight the crowd spontaneously acclaims not just the miracle, but the authoritative and performative word that is integral to Jesus' ministry. The exclamation 'a new teaching!' (Mark 1:27), or 'what kind of word is this?' (Luke 4:36), expresses amazement, not at a doctrine, but at the lesson Jesus is teaching the demons. They are awed by the Spirit-empowered living voice that has authority to command and subdue unclean spirits.

¹⁰ Gujjarro, 'The politics of exorcism' in Stegemann et al, *The social setting of Jesus and the gospels*, 164. Later on we will make a comment about the language of exorcism in the Lutheran tradition.

¹¹ This is an adaptation of the question put by Strecker (119).

¹² Mark records that Jesus expelled an unclean spirit from the man (1:23,26). The NT calls demons spirits. It basically makes no distinction between an unclean spirit (Mark 1:26), an evil spirit (Acts 19:12), or an unclean demon (Luke 4:33). The fact that they are often called 'unclean' spirits could signal that impurity or morally unclean behaviour is in some way an invitation to demonic activity. We note also that the precise relationship between Satan and the demons is difficult to pin down. Since we cannot here enter into a discussion of demonology, we will simply continue the tradition of assuming that the demons are under the control of Satan and do his bidding, even though we cannot make a direct equation between Satan and the demons.

¹³ Juel, *Mark*, 41.

The command to the demon to be silent about Jesus' true identity ushers in the theme of the messianic secret in Mark. Yet paradoxically the authoritative new teaching/word points beyond itself to the one who utters it. This emphasis is more pointed in Luke's scheme of things. Jesus is indeed the anointed one who by a word releases the captive and frees the oppressed. This exorcism is a demonstration that he is the true prophet with God's word in his mouth (Deut 18:18).

B. Jesus heals the demoniac who lived among tombs
(Mark 5:1–20; Matt 8:28–34; Luke 8:26–39)

The healing of the demoniac who lived among tombs is without doubt 'the most elaborate and powerful story of possession in the Gospels',¹⁴ particularly as it appears in Mark. Luke follows Mark reasonably closely, except that the details about the harassment of the wretched man are given after rather than before Jesus' initial confrontation with him. Matthew on the other hand has stripped the story right back, leaving out entirely the description of the harassment of the two demoniacs (in Matthew's telling) and the account of what happened to them after the demons had departed. In all three gospels the story occurs after the stilling of the storm and is followed by another dramatic miracle, a sequence demonstrating that by the power of the word Jesus has mastery over the forces of nature, mastery over demons even in Gentile territory, and mastery over debilitating illness, death (Mark/Luke) and sin (Matthew). Mark's relish for dramatic and fulsome description is to the fore, so our focus will be on his narrative. Knowledge of lore about the demonic is assumed in all three accounts. It is assumed that the audience would know that demons have an aversion to water (cf Luke 11:24, 'seeking waterless regions'), that demons are unclean and characteristically have their abode in unclean places like cemeteries, and that demons can manipulate people by disclosing their names and identities.

The story begins with Jesus and his disciples arriving by boat at the other side of the Sea of Galilee, the country of the Gerasenes, and this indicates in a general way that they have crossed over into Gentile territory. Along with numerous textual variants, Matthew seems to be aware of the geographical problem with 'Gerasene' (30 miles south east of the lake) and gives a similar sounding name that belongs to a place much closer. For Jews there is something unclean about landing in Gentile territory, and in this story that is dramatically heightened by their being met by a person from the tombs, a man with an unclean spirit. The signs of demonic possession are graphically depicted. Such is his demon-powered superhuman strength that he can rip off and smash shackles and chains as if they were flimsy toys. Rejected by the society of the living, the wretched man dwells in the realm of the dead, where he wanders about wild, uncivilised, howling and self-harming on jagged stones.

On seeing Jesus he came running and bowed down before him, not in worship but in servile fear—the demons already knew what they were up against. In desperation the man, speaking for the demons, cried out, attempting to fend Jesus off and disempower him by disclosing his true identity: 'What do you have to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?' He then adjured him by God—who are demons to call on God's name?—not to torment him. It feels like torment because Jesus is already commanding (imperfect tense) the demon to depart in formal exorcistic language: 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!' Jesus further shows his mastery over the spirit by demanding of him his name. He replied, 'My name is Legion, for we are many'. The answer is wily and evasive for, it is not a name but a number. Matthew omits the name, possibly because its use in this story 'could be construed as criticism of the Romans and their military

¹⁴ Tiede, *Luke*, 172.

presence'.¹⁵ But a deeper reason for the strange 'name' Legion could be bound up with the custom of using the singular for the plural.¹⁶

It seems the demons win out in their counter-strategy, for not only do they succeed in concealing their real names from Jesus, but they even talk him into letting them take leave of the man and enter a herd of swine. The request is appropriate, since both evil spirits and swine were considered unclean. So Jesus gave them permission, but now the fate the demons hoped to avoid befalls them. They thought to outwit Jesus, but Jesus uses their trickery to vanquish them. Jesus has control over demons even without knowing their names, and he converts their ploy to escape into utter destruction. 'Deprived of their victim,' writes Danker (183), 'the once-united legionary force breaks up and the swine leap into the sea.' For unclean spirits who haunt waterless places, plunging into the sea is like plunging into the 'abyss', the prison-like abode of the dead (Rom 10:7) and of evil spirits (Rev 9:1–11).

This is a story of salvation, a point underlined by Luke: Bystanders witnessed that the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed/saved (Greek: *esōthē*, Mark 5:36). There is more said about him, but here we will leave off, as does Matthew, who shows no further interest in the two men after their deliverance. Mark and Luke pursue the story, and portray the healed man as a would-be disciple and precursor of the Gentile mission, as he sets off to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him.

C. Jesus heals the daughter of a Syrophoenician woman

(Mark 7:24–30; Matt 15:21–28)

Like the previous episode, this too is a story of exorcism in Gentile territory. By contrast, however, the exorcism is barely mentioned, since the focus of the story is rather the courageous faith of a Gentile woman. The story occurs in both Mark and Matthew, and the situation is similar. During the course of his Galilean ministry Jesus faces increasing opposition, which is escalated by the arrival from Jerusalem of Pharisees and scribes who challenge Jesus on the issue of clean and unclean (Mark 7:1–23, Matt 15:1–20). Jesus then withdraws to the north-west, to the region of Tyre and Sidon—old pagan cities on the Mediterranean coast.

It is not exactly clear where this miracle takes place—whether Jesus is near the border of Phoenicia and the woman comes to him, or whether Jesus has crossed over into Gentile territory. More to the point is that Jesus is sought out by a woman, a Gentile and therefore 'unclean'. Matthew calls her a Canaanite, and Mark double-underlines her Gentile origins: she is Hellenistic and a Syrophoenician by birth. Like others who come to Jesus, she is in great need: she has a daughter with an unclean spirit (Mark 7:25)—my daughter is badly demonised, she tells him (Matt 15:22). Her plea for help is rebuffed, and in Matthew's version on two counts. First, her request is out of order because Jesus' mission is to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (v 24). Secondly, her request cannot be countenanced because it is not fair to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. This little parable is a hard saying indeed, a cutting insult. No doubt Jesus was echoing what was commonly taught and said. For example, a saying preserved in the Babylonian Talmud reads: 'As the sacred food was intended for men, not for the dogs, the Torah was intended to be given to the chosen people, but not to the Gentiles.'¹⁷ The woman's reply is a gem of humility and wisdom. Absorbing the insult she tells Jesus that she has no problem with being regarded as a dog, just so long as she might have some of the crumbs that fall from the master's table. But it is not her humility and wisdom that Jesus praises, it is her *faith*: 'For

¹⁵ Harrington, *The gospel of Matthew*, 121.

¹⁶ The house blessing (LCA, *Rites and resources*, 195–203) follows a common biblical pattern of referring to Satan or the devil in the singular (see Mark 4:15, 1 Cor 7:5, 1 Tim 5:15, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8) where clearly it is his broader army of demonic spirits that is implied.

¹⁷ B. Hagigah 13b; cited in Juel, *Mark*, 108.

saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter' (Mark 7:39). Matthew highlights her faith even more strongly: 'O woman, great is your faith!' As is customary, there is a brief description of the result of the healing word that was pronounced: So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone (Mark 7:30). Matthew is more cursory, with not even a mention of the demon: Her daughter was healed from that hour (15:28).

The one new thing in this story is that, unlike most Jewish exorcists, Jesus does not even have to be physically present to effect the cure.¹⁸ Such is the power of God's presence in the word he speaks that all Jesus need do is speak the word—a performative word indeed!

D. Jesus heals a boy possessed by a spirit

(Mark 9:14-29; Matthew 17:14-21; Luke 9:37-43)

In all three synoptic gospels this story occurs at the same place in the narrative structure: after the descent from the mount of transfiguration and immediately before the second passion prediction. Mark describes the episode fulsomely, whereas in Matthew and Luke it is stripped down almost to half, omitting various details, and in particular Jesus' extended discussion with the boy's father. In our study we follow Mark's version, with a comment or two about the other two. Matthew and Luke simplify the story to focus on Jesus' power to heal, which at this time the disciples lack. In all three accounts God's dominion over the oppressive power of unclean spirits is revealed in Jesus' words and deeds.

When Jesus and the three return from the mountain to the other disciples, they find them at the centre of a scene of much confusion. Scribes are disputing with them, and a great crowd is milling around them. When Jesus comes on to the scene the attention of the crowd immediately switches to him. They are overcome with awe and rush forward to greet him—a reaction reminiscent of the crowd greeting Moses when he came down from Mount Sinai.¹⁹ The dispute is about the inability of the disciples to heal the boy with a dumb spirit (*pneuma alalon*); that is, a spirit that makes one unable to speak. Luke simply calls it a spirit, whereas Matthew's description is somewhat different: the child is moon-struck and doing badly ('is an epileptic' [NRSV] is more interpretation than translation). Among the gospel writers Mark in particular highlights the weakness and failure of the disciples—as here. In the detailed complaint of the hapless father Mark shows just how abysmally they have failed. All three evangelists concur on the main point: that the father brought the child to the disciples and that they were unable to heal him (Mark 9:18, Matt 17:6, Luke 9:40). The telling of the story is somewhat diverse, but the three accounts come much closer together in Jesus' almost despairing remark about a faithless generation and how much longer must he bear with it. Jesus' exasperation is not only at the inability of the disciples to heal but also at 'the old cry for miracles, for signs, for power...the common thirst for marvels' (Smith: 212). Exasperation yields to compassion and command: 'Bring your son here' (Luke 9:41).

The story is told in a way that is typical of healings and exorcisms, with the detailed description of the malady, the pronouncement of healing, and the reaction of the bystanders. To modern readers the description of the malady sounds like epilepsy, but in the story the symptoms are attributed to the work of a spirit (Mark 9:20) that is variously described as a dumb spirit (9:17), a dumb and deaf spirit (9:25), an unclean spirit (Mark 9:25, Luke 9:42), a demon (Matt 17:18, Luke 9:42). In the face of a spirit totally bent on the child's destruction as so vividly described by Mark (9:21-22), the father's desperation is palpable: 'But if you are able to do anything, have compassion upon us help us'. It is here that Jesus strongly emphasises faith: 'If you are able!—all things are able

¹⁸ However, this may not be entirely new. Twelftree, *Christ triumphant*, 48–49, cites the story of a Jewish exorcism at a distance via a letter written to the possessed person.

¹⁹ Juel, *Mark*, 131.

to be done for the one who believes'. The father responds with faith and a humble plea that Jesus will make up for his lack of faith.

An unusual feature of the story is that Jesus does not take the boy away from the crowd, but instead exorcises him precisely when the crowd comes running together. While Matthew and Luke simply describe the act of exorcism, Mark more dramatically gives the word of exorcism in direct speech: 'He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "Dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never again enter into him!"' The people are witnesses both of the exorcism and the immediate result—which they misunderstand. So dramatic is the convulsion accompanying the departure of the spirit that the crowd thinks the child is dead. But no. As with the young girl who did in fact die, Jesus takes the boy by the hand and raises him up. A further expected reaction of the crowd—astonishment and thanksgiving to God—is mentioned only by Luke and concludes his narrative: 'And all were astounded at the greatness of God' (9:43).

Mark and Matthew moved directly from the miracle to the house where the disciples ask Jesus privately why they had not been able to heal the boy. Jesus' answer is about the necessity for faith and prayer, Matthew picking up faith, and Mark prayer. They were not able to heal because of their smallness of faith (*oligopistia*); if they had faith the size of a mustard seed, they could move mountains (Matt 17:20). The answer given in Mark (and added as v 21 in some manuscripts of Matthew) is just as unequivocal: 'This kind can only come out through prayer' [and fasting, according to some manuscripts]. The connection between faith and prayer is well made by Juel:²⁰

Jesus' comment suggests that there are varying degrees of possession and illness. The most potent weapon against the forces of darkness is prayer. The faith to which Jesus calls the child's father will find expression in petitions addressed to God. Jesus promises that prayer is efficacious. The disciples will have to learn about prayer if they are to carry on Jesus' ministry.

E. The healing of a mute demoniac and the Beelzebub controversy

I. The healing

(Matt 12:22–23; Luke 11:14)

In both Matthew and Luke the healing of the mute demoniac is described in the fewest possible words, a verse or two (Matt 12:22–23, Luke 11:14), which 'compress the most astonishing day of a man's entire life into a single sentence' (Smith: 164). In Luke the demon is characterised by what it does to the man: it renders him mute (*kōphos*). Matthew adds that the man was also blind. This fulfils Isaiah 35:6, which Jesus has claimed for himself as a sign to John the Baptist that he is indeed the one who is to come: 'Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf (*kōphoi*) hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news preached to them, and blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me' (Luke 7:22). In this briefest of accounts, the main elements are there: a description of the malady, the cure, and the response of witnesses. The response is wonder (*ethaumasas*) and amazement (*existanto*). In a twin of the story earlier in Matthew the crowds commented, 'Never has anything like this been seen in Israel!' (9:34), but now with deeper insight they ask: Is this not the Son of David?

II. The Beelzebub controversy

(Mark 3:22–27; Matt 12:24–32; Luke 11:14–23)

This particular exorcism, so briefly told, becomes the occasion for a heavy controversy about what kind of power and authority stand behind Jesus' exorcisms. Mark places the

²⁰ Juel, *Mark*, 132.

controversy earlier in Jesus' ministry (3:20–30), immediately after the call of the Twelve, when Jesus' family has come to rescue him thinking that he is beside himself (*exestē*).

'And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me' (Luke 7:23), but some do. While the crowds are ecstatic and wonder, others take offence and make most serious allegations. Luke does not name them, but Matthew identifies them as Pharisees and Mark as scribes. The accusation is that it is only by Beelzebub, the ruler of demons, that this fellow casts out demons. In saying that Jesus is in league with Beelzebub, they are really saying that not only is he beside himself, but indeed that he has an unclean spirit. In all three versions Jesus responds indirectly, using three illustrations (*en parabolais*), but the message is anything but cryptic. Attributing Jesus' power to cast out demons to his own demon possession is absurd because it defies common sense. For a king to wage civil war would spell disaster for his kingdom; divided households disintegrate; and if Satan attempts to cast out Satan, he is done for, and so is his kingdom.

If it is not by the power of the evil spirit that Jesus performs exorcisms, then what? Then it must be by the Spirit of God: But if it is by the Spirit of God [Luke: 'finger of God'] that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you (Matt 12:28, Luke 11:20). The strong man has been bound by a stronger one, who is now plundering his house, sweeping it clean of the demons that haunt it. The lesson of these illustrations is stark and uncompromising: Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters (Matt 12:30, Luke 11:23). Mark and Matthew go on to show just how dire the consequences are. Those who speak against Jesus are not just speaking against the Son of Man, but are blaspheming against the Holy Spirit of God—an unforgivable, eternal sin. And of this Jesus' opponents are guilty, comments Mark, for they had said, 'He has an unclean spirit' (3:30).

Conclusion to synoptic study: the place of exorcisms in Jesus' ministry

The witness of the gospels makes it very clear that exorcism was an essential feature of Jesus' ministry. Looking back to the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, the central message is described in Acts as 'how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him...They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear' (10:38–40).

Those most obviously 'oppressed by the devil' were those possessed by unclean spirits and demons. Jesus healed them because he had compassion on them. This compassion is manifested in the story of the healing of a woman with a spirit of infirmity when Jesus, challenged by his opponents for healing on the Sabbath, indignantly retorts, 'You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?' (Luke 13:15–16).

At the same time, the exorcisms of Jesus point beyond themselves to a truth of cosmic significance: 'If it is by the Spirit of God [Luke: 'finger of God'] that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you' (Matt 12:28, Luke 11:20). In the drama of salvation, the powers of evil rise up with all their fury against God's anointed one, because his coming will mean their going, and his doing will be their undoing, as the kingdom of God breaks in through his words and deeds.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS PART 2: ACTS AND PAUL

Acts has a notable reference to 'exorcism' in relation to Paul's visit to Ephesus where the seven sons of the Jewish high priest named Sceva were trying to emulate Paul in using the name of Jesus to cast out evil spirits but the man with the demon leapt on them (Acts 19:11–20). We find similar encounters in Acts 13:6–12 (Elymas the magician who misused and misapplied God's word) and 16:16–24 (the slave girl with the spirit of divination). In Acts Jesus continues his ministry of deliverance through the apostles. Therefore just as he drove out demons during his public ministry on earth, so now he continues to expel demons through the ministry of the apostles who cast them out in his name.

We conclude this brief section on Acts with a comment and a question. First the comment: it appears as if these victims of demon-possession, as in the synoptic accounts, are not Christians; this will have to be looked at more closely later. We will also have to consider the case of Ananias in Acts 5 when we take up the question of whether a Christian can be demon possessed. The question: does the apostolic ministry of deliverance provide a mandate for the church today? We will return to this question in the section below on the ministry of deliverance.

We now turn our attention to the Pauline writings, and in particular 1 Corinthians 10.

In Paul's letters we find no references to *daimonizomai* and only two references to *daimonia* (1 Tim 4:1; 1 Cor 10:20, 21). 1 Timothy 4:1 speaks of those who attend to 'deceitful spirits' and to the 'teachings of demons'. Since Satan is the father of lies, all false teaching in the church, which ultimately means teaching that contradicts the teaching of Christ and the truth of the gospel, is satanic and demonic.

For the purposes of our discussion, 1 Corinthians 10 seems to be particularly helpful. Paul is appealing to baptised Christians who in their super-sacramentalism are taking God's grace for granted much like the Israelites did during their time in the wilderness: 'All were baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink' (10:2–4). After reciting various ways in which the Israelites succumbed to temptation – desiring evil things, idolatry, sexual immorality, tempting Christ, grumbling – Paul says the judgments that fell on Israel serve as warnings to us. He goes on: 'So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall' (v 12). He follows up with the assurance that our faithful God will not let us be tested beyond our strength (v 13).

From this OT basis Paul urges the Corinthians to flee from idolatry. Having spelt out the essence of the Lord's Supper as the communion with the body and blood of Christ, he warns against reclining at dinner in a pagan temple: 'What pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. 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. Or are we provoking the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?' (v 20–22). In other words, the people of God who are united with Christ through Baptism and the Lord's Supper should flee idolatrous situations and not expose themselves to the realm of the demonic.

THE REALITY OF THE DEMONIC TODAY

Now that we have looked at five main accounts of Jesus healing demon possessed people, as well as other NT texts, we are in a position to speak briefly about what the NT says regarding the demonic. However, describing the NT teaching on demons is relatively easy. The hard part is grappling with the question of how the church is to receive that teaching today.

Living in a scientific age may make it difficult for some people to believe in the reality of demons or to accept that there are such things as spiritual beings that can inhabit a person, manifest physical characteristics, and need to be expelled. Scientifically-minded people will tend to rationalise them as non-existent theological constructs or interpret them psychologically. Certainly there are natural, rational, psychological or psychosomatic explanations for just about everything, but at the same time the church must beware of capitulating to naturalistic reductionism.²¹ However, scepticism is not the only problem. In some cultures, the opposite tendency prevails, the tendency towards fanaticism where phenomena that can be explained medically or psychologically are naively attributed to the demonic.

There are some people in the church of an orthodox and confessional stripe who would rule out the possibility of the demonic possession of Christians on theological grounds.²² On the other hand, there are others who are equally convinced by Scripture and the Lutheran tradition of deliverance that demonic attack and possession are possible.²³ For evidence of this, see the notes on the history of deliverance within Lutheranism in the appendix. Since the testimony of the Lutheran tradition is that a baptised Christian may be 'possessed', this paper will work with that assumption while at the same time stressing Christ's victory over the demonic which he shares with those who are united with him in baptism.

The key to solving the problem, it seems, is bound up with the way in which the term 'possession' is understood. The LCA's *Rites and resources* works with the distinction between oppression and obsession, on the one hand, and demonic possession, on the other. This is a good and useful distinction but it does not help us see how in certain instances it is possible for a baptised Christian to be possessed by a demon, not just oppressed or attacked. The CTICR suggests that a way round this dilemma is to make a distinction instead between possession and ownership. Without this distinction, it would mean that a demon-possessed person is necessarily under the mastery of Satan which, by definition, would be impossible, since in Baptism God has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his Son (Col 1:13). And St Paul makes it clear that there can be no partnership between Christ and Belial (2 Cor 6:14–17). However, if we make a clear distinction between possession and ownership, it is not a contradiction to say that, in rare cases, a baptised Christian may be possessed by a demon, for that person would still be under the ownership of Christ even if for a time they are under the functional control of a demon. Seen in this light, Baptism becomes the ground of a Christian's eternal security rather than the reason for denying the possibility that he or she could ever become demon possessed. Because of our baptismal identity, in pastoral practice we can affirm categorically with the New Testament that we are God's possession and under the lordship of Jesus Christ. We have been purchased and won back from the power of sin, death and the devil by the suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord. This is the ground of our confidence in the face of all demonic attack and assaults of the devil. As the apostle says, 'we belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God' (1 Cor 3:23), therefore nothing in all creation, certainly no demonic or unclean spirit, 'will ever be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom 8:39).

This paper claims that there is biblical warrant for making a distinction, not between oppression, occupation and possession, but between oppression, occupation, and possession, on the one hand, and ownership, on the other. In other words, possession must not be equated with ownership. A baptised Christian may for a time be 'possessed' by a demon, in the sense of being under demonic influence and control, but they never cease

²¹ This is the danger of the second type of spiritual warfare, typified by Wink, mentioned in the introduction.

²² This corresponds to the third type of spiritual warfare that presupposes cessationism.

²³ Nigel Wright also speaks of two views within Christendom along similar lines. See Wright, *A theology of the dark side: putting the power of evil in its place*, 112–115. This is an extremely helpful and sober minded book which approaches the problem of demonology, both biblically and theologically, in a responsible and balanced way.

to be the Father's own possession, with their divine ownership being sealed by the Holy Spirit in the covenant of baptism, and they have Christ's promise that no one can ever snatch them out of the Father's hand (John 10:29). Paul adds his voice to the chorus when he says that God has set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come, namely, our final redemption in Christ (2 Cor 1:22).

Before we go any further we need to clarify the relation between Satan and the demonic. We should be careful not to equate a demon or demons with Satan. Demons belong to Satan's army; they are his minions. Therefore, to say that a person is demon-possessed does not mean that the person is possessed by Satan. Satan may control the demon and the demon may represent Satan but we cannot say that the demon is Satan.

Now to come back to the main point. The distinction between possession and ownership has profound significance, both theologically and pastorally.²⁴ It allows us to take seriously the testimony of the deliverance tradition, also within Lutheranism, that Christians may be attacked, inhabited, and possessed or in some way afflicted by a demon which needs to be cast out or exorcised. For Lutherans, except in the case of severe possession, the means of deliverance is normally word and prayer. Demons may exercise degrees of influence or control over baptised Christians for a period of time but at no time do they ever cease to remain God's children. This means that unless Christians intentionally renounce Christ, Christ continues to remain their lord and master during the 'enemy occupation' (1 Cor 6:20). And even if there is any renunciation of Christ under demonic influence, the Christian (who it is said is usually unaware of what they say and do under demonic control) can take comfort in the saying of the apostle that even if we are faithless, God remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself' (2 Tim 2:13). We refuse to speculate as to why God might allow an evil spirit to attack, oppress or inhabit Christians in the first place, or whether the affliction they are experiencing might even have some other explanation.²⁵ The important thing, pastorally, is to ensure that the demonic spirit is not given any foothold by way of unconfessed sin that it might take advantage of and use against the afflicted person. Luther says that spiritual attack (*Anfechtung*) will be experienced by those who take the word to heart or handle holy things. However, this paper maintains that spiritual attack is not of the same order as demonic possession but that these things lie at opposite ends of a continuum of demonisation.²⁶ We cannot say with certainty how they are related except that spiritual attack is not uncommon among Christians who handle the holy things of God (especially pastors and those preparing for the office) and is usually overcome by word and prayer, as well as confession and absolution within the framework of pastoral care. Spiritual attack may even prove to be a time of spiritual catharsis where Christians can scrutinise themselves in the light of God's word. Severe cases of demonic possession, on the other hand, are comparatively rare and require the special ministry of a pastor who is trained and experienced in exorcism.

So far we have distinguished between oppression/occupation/possession, on the one hand, and ownership, on the other. We have argued that it is possible for a Christian to be demonised, even demon-possessed, but not demon-owned, for a baptised Christian has one master, who is Christ the Lord. We now need to consider the term demonisation since this term sometimes causes problems.

²⁴ This distinction often fails to be made in the deliverance tradition. Peter Horrobin, who writes from the Pentecostal perspective, is a good representative of this tradition. On the one hand, he distinguishes between 'occupation' and 'possession' but, on the other hand, he argues that the word 'possessed' implies not only occupation but a total takeover of ownership. Hence for him, no baptised Christian could ever be possessed by a demon for a Christian is under the lordship of Christ and is totally possessed by the Holy Spirit (*Healing through deliverance*, 272). Our position is the exact opposite to that of Horrobin and is based on the critical distinction between occupation/possession and ownership.

²⁵ Assuming there is no evidence of involvement in the occult, witchcraft, satanic rituals, or the worship of idols, all of which may open the door to demonic attack.

²⁶ This is also the view of Neil T Anderson in *Victory over the darkness* (Regal 2000) and *The Bondage breaker* (Harvest House Publishers 2000).

The English phrase 'to be demonised' translates the Greek *daimonizomai* which is used in the synoptic gospels to describe someone who has fallen under demonic influence or is demon-possessed.²⁷ Hence the term 'demonisation' makes no distinction between believers and unbelievers, nor does it distinguish between oppression, occupation, or possession or any other points on the spectrum.²⁸ Some argue that the way the term is used in the gospel tradition makes it of little value in answering the question of whether a baptised Christian can be possessed by a demon. Others hold that since the term demonisation covers the full spectrum of demonic affliction, it is too broad to be of any real pastoral value.²⁹ Others take the contrary view and argue that the very imprecision of the term is in fact its virtue³⁰ because the most important thing is not trying to make distinctions between oppression and possession or other markers along the spectrum but assuring those afflicted that they belong to Christ through Baptism and that come what may, they can trust Christ throughout their ordeal because they are safe in his arms. That is also the position of this paper. It is a call to the baptised to be confident in Christ and his victory in the face of demonic attack, oppression or possession.

However, regardless of our views on demonisation (and opinions on this matter vary in the LCA as they do in CTICR), we can all agree that where Christians come under spiritual or demonic attack, irrespective of what we call it or whether we think it comes from the inside or the outside, no matter how severe the attack, their baptismal identity as children of God is at all times safe and secure because no demonic spirit is ever able to snatch them from the Father's hands (John 10:29) and in addition to that Christ remains their sole owner and lord.

Luther admits it is possible for a demon to inhabit a baptised Christian but he distinguishes between body and soul. This is a most important distinction but it must not be understood in a dualistic way as if he were making a false separation between body and soul.³¹ Luther is no Platonist! When he says that it is only the body that can be affected by the demon, not the soul, he is making a pastoral statement, not a dogmatic assertion. He further holds that since the demonic spirit can only inhabit the body and not the soul, the believer's salvation is never at risk.³² The distinction between body and soul that Luther makes here is of a piece with the distinction that Jesus makes when he warns that those who persecute his followers may kill their body but they cannot hurt or kill their soul in the sense that they cannot rob them of that life with God that is secure in Christ (Matt 10:28). We know that biblical anthropology sees human beings holistically. This is best illustrated by 1 Thessalonians 5:23 which can be rendered: 'May your whole being—spirit, soul, and body—be kept blameless at the coming of our lord Jesus Christ'.

There are two arguments often given for why a baptised Christian cannot be 'possessed' by a demon. The first is that in baptism Christians come under new ownership; they are no longer slaves to sin and the powers of darkness; they are no longer owned by the devil but come under the lordship of Christ (Rom 6:12–14). Paul also asks what fellowship there can

²⁷ For example: Matt 8:28, 8:33, 9:32, 12:22; Mark 5:15; Luke 8:36.

²⁸ Consequently, *daimonizomai* is translated with demon-possessed (KJV, NIV, TNIV), demon-oppressed (ESV), demoniac or one possessed by demons (NRSV).

²⁹ They prefer not to use the language of demonisation because they are not convinced that Christians can actually 'have' a demon or be demon-possessed, unless of course they deliberately expose themselves to demonic activity. They hold rather that Christians can only be under demonic oppression from the outside.

³⁰ See Wright, *A theology of the dark side*, 106–113 for four accounts of demonisation.

³¹ Here we need to distinguish between dualities (such as body and soul), which are common in Scripture, and dualisms, which are unbiblical. It would be more faithful to the scriptural witness, which teaches a unitary view of human nature, to say that humans 'are' body and 'are' soul (each emphasising a particular aspect of biblical anthropology) rather than saying that humans 'have' a body and 'have' a soul (Gen 2:7: God breathed into Adam the breath of life and he became a living soul = a living being; Ezek 18:20: the soul (NRSV: person) that sins shall die). At the very least, we should be aware that the language of body and soul is susceptible to a neo-Platonic interpretation that understands the 'good' soul as being of a higher ontological order than the 'evil' body.

³² See the section on Martin Luther in the appendix.

be between light and darkness. What accord does Christ have with Belial? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? (2 Cor 6:14–16). The second argument is that there is no scriptural support for the proposition that a baptised Christian can be 'possessed' by a demon. However, these arguments are not compelling. The first, as we have seen already, fails to distinguish between possession and ownership. The second is not true and can be refuted by careful exegesis of the relevant texts. We now turn to the biblical data.

The argument against the possibility of Christian demonisation claims that the five synoptic stories of Jesus casting out evil spirits that we discussed earlier are almost all instances of exorcisms prior to conversion and so cannot be used to prove that a Christian can have a demon. However, on closer examination it would seem that the claim is not defensible. Three of the stories (A: the healing of the man with an unclean spirit;³³ D: the healing of a boy possessed by a spirit,³⁴ and E: the healing of the mute demoniac³⁵) are arguably dealing with members of God's covenant people, not apostates. In the story of the healing of a boy possessed by a spirit (D), the father actually approaches Jesus in an act of faith. On the other hand, one story that clearly supports the counterclaim that Christians can in fact be demonised is the healing of the woman bound by a spirit of disability (Luke 13:15–16) who, as a 'daughter of Abraham' would have been a believer, a member of God's covenant people. In the same way, we could also refer to the story of Ananias in Acts 5. He is a Christian, whose heart had been 'filled' by Satan and who subsequently sinned against the Holy Spirit.

Apart from these biblical accounts, strong evidence for the possibility of the demonisation of Christians is offered by the testimony of experience—as is evident from the historical survey of deliverance within Lutheranism (see appendix) as well as from the contemporary literature on deliverance. However, in spite of this anecdotal evidence and the interpretation of the pertinent biblical passages offered above, there are some theologians and pastors who remain unconvinced and hold rather to the opinion that baptised Christians cannot be demon-possessed unless they deliberately expose themselves to the demonic realm.

This paper, as already stated, rejects the absolute distinction that some make between demonic oppression and demonic possession because it is too speculative and thus unhelpful.³⁶ We have seen that the biblical term for demonisation (*daimonizomai*) makes no linguistic distinction between demonic affliction, oppression, occupation, or possession. This paper proposes that we follow this biblical pattern of language and abandon the simple twofold distinction between oppression and possession and use instead the term demonisation to describe the full spectrum of demonic influence whether we call it affliction, oppression, inhabitation, occupation or possession,³⁷ while at the same time stressing that the demonised Christian is secure in Christ with respect to their salvation based on the earlier distinction we made between possession and ownership.

The virtue of this proposal is twofold: 1. it recognises that we cannot easily distinguish between the different modalities of spiritual or demonic attack, and 2. it allows for the possibility that a baptised Christian may be under the influence of the demonic (as clearly

³³ Mark 5:1–20.

³⁴ Mark 9:14–29.

³⁵ Matt 12:22–23.

³⁶ As we have already seen, those who make a distinction between oppression and possession often equate oppression with demonic attack from the outside and exclude *a priori* the possibility of demonic attack from the inside (possession) for the reasons pointed out earlier.

³⁷ It is best to operate with the idea of a spectrum of spiritual or demonic attack rather than with categories. We cannot speculate on whether the attack comes from outside or inside (the conscience), or whether it is from God who has become my enemy or from a demon that God has allowed to afflict me. (John Kleinig, Seminar for SA pastors on ministry to people under spiritual attack, Adelaide, 2012).

attested by the Lutheran tradition of deliverance) without in anyway implying that they no longer belong to Christ. According to the Lutheran approach, pastors will normally minister to demonised Christians through the word, prayer and the use of an appropriate formula where necessary (as we see from the practice of Luther). However, in serious cases of demonisation where the demon seems intractable and an exorcism³⁸ appears to be required, the pastor will always confer with his bishop and brother pastors and the exorcism will normally be performed by an experienced person.³⁹

Lutheran theology has always stressed baptismal assurance, that baptised people are in Christ and that Christ dwells in them and that therefore they are protected from the evil one. A text such as 1 John 5:18— 'We know that those who are born of God do not sin, but that the one who was born of God [Christ] protects them, and the evil one does not touch them'—also supports that teaching.⁴⁰ However, it applies specifically to those that 'do not sin', that is, to those who do not deliberately persist in sin but live a life of repentance.

A Christian is 'possessed' by Christ, united with him through Baptism (Rom 6:5) and enslaved to God (Rom 6:22). Since we belong to the triune God, he will protect us and not surrender his rightful claim on us to a usurper—unless of course we deliberately expose ourselves to satanic attack by venturing into alien (demonic) territory in defiance of God's clear commands. The devil has lost all legitimate claims on us, so long as we remain in Christ. The sheep of Christ's flock, who listen to his voice, need not fear the enemy, for they are given a double assurance: Christ will not let anyone snatch them out of his hand (John 10:28) and the Father too will not let anyone snatch them out of his hand (John 10:29).⁴¹ Yet even though our salvation is assured, we need to be vigilant in watching and praying (which lies at the heart of spiritual warfare) for the apostle reminds us that Satan prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour' (1 Pet 5:8).

POINTS OF VULNERABILITY OR ATTACK

Some Pentecostal literature on deliverance ministry speaks of 'entry points' as the source of demonic activity within Christians. This terminology is foreign to the Lutheran tradition so we first need to understand it and then assess it. The same applies to the later sections on generational sin and soul ties which, in some Pentecostal literature, are considered to be demonic entry points.

³⁸ This paper has argued that exorcism is a special case of deliverance which requires, if not a charism, at least specialist knowledge and experience. While the term exorcism is often used to describe deliverance ministry in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the practice of exorcism with its elaborate ritual and ceremonial was sharply criticised by Luther. The main difference between exorcism and deliverance is that the former is only performed where there appear to be supernatural manifestations of demonic power and then only performed by authorised and experienced ministers. Apart from other differences, in the case of an exorcism, the demon (or demons) is usually addressed directly and sometimes interrogated before being commanded to leave. The closest we come to that in the ministry of deliverance is the use of the formula of rebuke (which may be used in certain circumstances in the Rite of Baptism but does not assume demon-possession). For the most part however, the Lutheran tradition sees the ministry of deliverance as part of a pastor's gospel ministry of word and prayer.

³⁹ In the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches only an authorised priest is permitted to perform the solemn rite of exorcism, and then always in the company of other priests and/or Christians. The practice we follow in the LCA does not mean that a pastor does not have the 'power' to perform an exorcism but that, for the sake of good order and the protection of all concerned, he should not attempt it without proper authorisation and in consultation with his bishop. See LCA, *Rites and resources*, 138.

⁴⁰ 1 John 5:18 says the evil one cannot touch those born of God who do not sin. Luther would interpret this as a reference to Christians insofar as they are saints (i.e. holy and righteous). When Christians sin, it is not Christians, insofar as they are holy and righteous, that sin but it is Christians, insofar as they still have the old nature, that sin (see Rom 7:17-20).

⁴¹ The LCA's *Rites and resources for pastoral care* (see Schubert, 1998: 138-145) has an important section on spiritual oppression (which this paper calls demonisation) where it offers both a rite and pastoral resources. Notes 1, 6 and 9 (138-9) should be studied. A vital part of the rite is the confession and renunciation (140). Note: it says that the rite is not intended for use in cases of suspected 'possession' (see notes 1 and 8 (138-9) as there is no word that commands the demonic powers directly. In the light of our earlier discussion, we would take that to mean that the rite is not intended for use in cases where an exorcism might be required.

Entry points are said to take various forms but one of the most common is said to be ancestral or parental sins, especially sexual sins and sins involving the occult, witchcraft and the practice of idolatry in connection with satanic rituals. These sins against the first commandment are said to give demonic spirits the right of entry down the family tree to the children of the third and fourth generation (i.e. the grandchildren and great grandchildren). It is at this point that there is general agreement with Lutheran theology and spirituality. Luther and the Lutheran tradition regard sin against the Ten Commandments, especially idolatry and living a life of impenitence, as the main reason for vulnerability to spiritual attack.⁴² Hence Luther's emphasis in the *Large Catechism* that the commandments are a protecting wall against the devil. However, the specifically Lutheran emphasis comes out in the way in which he ties the commandments to station and vocation in life where they act as a defence against Satan in the three holy orders. Finally, the catechism teaches that just as impenitence is an open window to the devil, so conversely, living baptismally by dying each day to sin and rising again to new life in Christ, by hearing God's word and receiving the holy sacrament regularly, is the best defence against the attacks of the evil one and any unclean spirit.

The foundational text that speaks of the spiritual consequences of ancestral sins is Exodus 20:5–6 (see also Ex 34:7 and Deut 23:2). We will come back to this text when we deal with generational sin in the next section.

The idea of demonic entry points has important elements of truth even if it is not a Lutheran way of speaking. The theological conceptuality behind it works with the understanding that sin is not just an individual act but is communal in nature and therefore also has communal consequences. It also recognises that abuse is a spiritual problem which may open a person to spiritual or demonic attack.

Although we can affirm these elements of truth behind the idea of demonic entry points, the way the concept is used in some Pentecostal circles becomes extremely legalistic and as such is foreign to Lutheranism. We are on safer ground if we stay with the apostolic injunction to be alert, to watch and pray, and to be on guard against the schemes and deceptions of the evil one (and his demons) that are calculated to lead us astray or take us captive. But as soon as we start to compile a list of dozens and dozens of entry points and to attribute common ailments to demons, the danger is that our conscience will soon become burdened and the joy of the gospel exchanged for a new form of legalism. Furthermore, this way of thinking grows out of a weak doctrine of original sin. Without making any direct link between particular sins and their spiritual affects, either in the same person or in their descendant generations, Lutheran theology simply teaches that all sickness and suffering, including demonisation, is related in some way or other to our condition as sinful human beings.

Rather than the term 'entry points', which to some will sound too frightening, it might be better to adopt the language of 'points of attack' or 'points of vulnerability'. This sort of language is more in keeping with the Lutheran tradition. It can also be used by Christians who feel uncomfortable with the idea of a demon physically entering their bodies. Of course, it was standard teaching in the ancient and medieval church that all the orifices of the body were potential entry points for demonic spirits. However, many Christians today find that sort of thinking difficult to appropriate. Therefore, to speak of points of vulnerability to spiritual or demonic attack would seem better all round.

⁴² It is not sin per se that is the problem here, but sin that is not dealt with baptismally, that is, through daily repentance and faithful use of the means of grace. When we put on the full armour of God we are protected from the attacks of the evil one (Eph 6:10–18). It is when we allow falsehood and unrighteousness to take root in one or more areas of our lives, without uprooting these things through daily repentance and regular recourse to God's word and the gospel of Jesus Christ, that we allow ourselves to become vulnerable.

The best wisdom distilled from the Pentecostal deliverance tradition, which finds some resonance with the Lutheran tradition, teaches that while Christians may become demonised in different ways the following sins make them especially vulnerable:

1. involvement with the world of the occult and satanic activities; 2. acts of sacrilege and defilement, e.g. the abuse of holy things; 3. idolatry and especially idol worship involving sexual immorality; and 4. sins of violence, e.g. abortion, murder, rape, and sexual abuse.

The Pentecostal deliverance literature⁴³ claims that these 'demonic entry points' can be both direct (e.g. involvement in the occult) and indirect (intergenerational sins, curses and soul ties). Lutheran theology, on the other hand, emphasises that the most common way that a person can come under the influence of the demonic is through involvement with the occult. It is not without good reason that Moses warned Israel that 'the secret things belong to the Lord our God' (Deut 29:29). Things to avoid (and to see that children do not experiment with) include spells, charms, curses, witchcraft, magic, tarot cards, Ouija boards, séances, divination, fortune telling and anything else having to do with the occult. Sometimes occultic practices can be linked with drug taking.

The classical Pentecostal tradition attributes a far broader range of conditions, afflictions and phenomena to the work or presence of demonic spirits than do the Roman Catholic and Lutheran traditions. One only has to consult the handbooks of the Pentecostal deliverance tradition, which are freely available on the internet, to see that there is hardly a sin, habit, disposition, or tendency that is not regarded as a potential entry point for some demonic spirit. Congruent with this tradition is the practice of assigning a particular spirit or demon to each of these sins, dispositions, sicknesses, or weaknesses. So, for example, there is a spirit (or demon) of sloth, gluttony, promiscuity, disability, asthma, pride, drunkenness, greed, to name but a handful. The Lutheran church, on the other hand, understands these things (but not diseases and medical conditions) as manifestations of the sinful flesh that need to be overcome again and again by a daily return to Baptism through repentance and faith to claim the victory of Christ. The Lutheran tradition teaches that sickness and disease are symptomatic of the fallen world generally but, following the teaching of Jesus, it refuses to draw a straight line between a specific sin and a specific disease or illness.

Contemporary Lutheran theology, while aware of the possibility of various forms of demonic attack, would point out that one reason for the excessive emphasis on demonisation in some branches of Pentecostalism could well be its faulty anthropology and weak doctrine of original sin. Where Lutherans would normally point to sin and the fallen world to explain why sickness and disease have entered God's good creation, some strands of Pentecostalism will more often than not speak of the activity of demons as the primary cause. To be fair, however, an objective examination of the history of deliverance within Lutheranism over the centuries might show that it too has had a similar tendency to produce lists of possible causes of demonisation and at times has even lapsed into dualistic thinking.

Generational sin

The concept of (inter)generational sin is frequently mentioned in some of the literature from the Pentecostal/charismatic movement. Our task here will be first to understand the teaching and then assess it against Scripture and Lutheran theology to determine what we can learn from it and what we must reject.

⁴³ See, for example, Horrobin, *Healing through deliverance*, 340.

The foundational text for the idea of generational sin is Exodus 20:5 where it says that God will 'visit' the sins⁴⁴ of the parents on the children to the third or fourth generation.⁴⁵ The first thing to notice about this verse is that it says that God will visit the iniquities of the parents⁴⁶ on the children *to the third and the fourth generation*. The ancestral 'punishment' is understood by some Pentecostals to be a generational curse. Although the word curse is not mentioned in the text, the 'punishment' is said to be akin to a family curse.

Lutheran exegesis recognises that the problem of sin and its consequences is a topic of theological reflection within Israel since the prophetic literature teaches that it is no longer permissible for later generations to blame the fathers for their sufferings. Jeremiah, for instance, says that the children's teeth will no longer be set on edge by the sour grapes that the parents have eaten. 'But all will die for their own sins; the teeth of everyone who eats sour grapes will be set on edge' (Jer 31:29, 30). The prophet Ezekiel especially takes up the old proverb that the parents are to blame for the woes of the children and well and truly debunks it (Ezek 18:1–32, esp v 20; cf Deut 24:26). People were accusing God of injustice but the prophet makes it clear that each person in Israel will be individually accountable to God for his or her own sin. Yet in spite of the prophetic insistence on individual responsibility, the OT idea of corporate personality comes out in Nehemiah's prayer where he says, 'we confess the sins that we have committed and those of our ancestors' (Neh 1:6). Ezra also prays in abject humility that God would have mercy and not punish his people for the sins of their fathers, specifically the sin of intermarriage (Ezra 9:6–15). Finally, the consequences of (inter)generational sin is also evident from Ezekiel's intercession on behalf of his people that God would spare the remnant of Israel and not punish them for the syncretistic and idolatrous practices of their ancestors (Ezek 9:8). Thus the OT holds two things in tension: on the one hand, the corporate nature of sin and its consequences, and on the other, the principle of individual accountability.

There are also NT texts which should be taken into account for they point in the same direction as the OT prophetic literature with its emphasis on individual responsibility rather than corporate accountability where the children have to suffer because of the sins of their parents. Two sayings of Jesus in particular break the causal nexus between sin and retribution: John 9:1–3 (the question of the link between sin and blindness); Luke 13:1–5 (the link between sinfulness and destruction). Jesus consistently refuses to support the rabbinic doctrine of retribution which holds that there is a direct linkage between a specific sin of an individual or ancestor and a corresponding punishment.

It is important to understand the foundational text in perspective. Exodus 20:5 certainly says that the sins of the parents will be visited on the children until the third or fourth generation but there is grace here even with the visitation because the 'punishment' is not endless but *limited* at most to four generations. In other words, it is limited to a household since in OT times it was common for the extended family of three or four generations (parents, children, grandchildren, and sometimes great grandchildren) to live in the one household under the one roof. This is foreign to our modern western experience where the nuclear family is the norm, our concept of corporate identity is weak, and our sense of self is highly individualistic.

In the case of an extended family, as envisioned by the statement in Exodus 20:5, it is easy to see, even from a simple sociological or psychological perspective, that the behaviour of the parents (especially the father as head of the household) would have a profound impact on the lives of the children and grandchildren. In other words, the essential truth of

⁴⁴ The Hebrew word *avon*, sometimes translated here as 'iniquity', means also the guilt and punishment of the sin.

⁴⁵ See the parallel texts Exodus 34: 7; Deuteronomy 7:9–19.

⁴⁶ Although most English translations render the Hebrew *pōqēd* ('to visit') with 'punish', the sense of the Hebrew is not that God will punish future generations for the sins of the parents, but that he will 'visit' the ancestral sins on them by allowing them to suffer the consequences of their parents' and grandparents' sins. The literature on generational sin invariably speaks of punishment with reference to Exodus 20:5.

the ancient legal principle of the 'punishment of the children for the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation' could be understood today from a purely psychosocial and common-sense perspective even without the biblical context. Children often repeat the sins of the parents and then suffer the consequences.⁴⁷ In that case, modern psychology would agree with the ancient prophets in saying that they should not simply blame their parents for their predicament but need to take responsibility for their own actions. In other words, from a kingdom on the left perspective, we do not have to resort to the idea of (inter)generational sin with its concomitant idea of demonic entry points to explain certain phenomena that can quite readily be explained on the basis of common-sense or elementary psychology. On the other hand, secular science and common-sense, unaided by biblical revelation, will refuse to recognise the divine agency that lies behind the phenomena.

Apart from the *limits* that God sets to the effects of generational sin, Exodus 20:5 goes on to speak of God's *mercy* which is infinitely greater than his wrath. The Exodus text signals God's mercy by highlighting the limits he sets to the consequences of ancestral sin. The consequences of the idolatry of the parents may extend as far as the fourth generation of those who hate him (that is, reject him), but he promises steadfast love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.⁴⁸ However, Exodus 34:6–7 goes much further in extolling God's steadfast love and mercy and actually identifies this with God's name: 'The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin'. Only after this magnificent amplification of God's mercy and compassion which is synonymous with his name⁴⁹ does the text say, 'yet he will by no means clear the guilty but visit the iniquity of the fathers ...to the third and fourth generation' (Ex 34:7).

It is often forgotten in the deliverance literature of Pentecostalism that this threat of 'punishment' to the third and fourth generation is specifically attached to the *first commandment*. It is not a general threat associated with all sins (even though it is true that every sin carries with it its own consequences), but a threat specifically tied to idolatry, the sin against the first commandment. So if we are going to be strictly biblical, we would have to say that the foundational text for the teaching about (inter)generational sin (Ex 20:5) is limited in its application to ancestral idolatry and is more corporate than individual.⁵⁰ The text specifically says that the consequences of this idolatry may extend to the third and even the fourth generation of those who *hate* God and so perpetuate the idolatrous behaviour of the parents, grandparents, or great grandparents. Again, the text refers in the first instance to the families of God's people rather than to individuals within a given generation. This corporate context is generally overlooked by the literature.

Another important exegetical point needs to be made that is often overlooked. The words about 'visiting the sins of the parents upon the children' does not talk about believers but unbelievers. The Lord says that consequences of ancestral sin will extend to the third and fourth generation 'of those who hate me'. The phrase 'those who hate me' is a circumlocution for unbelievers just as, on the other hand, 'those who love me' is a

⁴⁷ 2 Kings 17:41 is a classic illustration of this truth: 'Even while these people were worshipping the Lord, they were serving their idols. To this day their children and grandchildren continue to do as their fathers did'.

⁴⁸ Hate and love need to be understood within the covenant context of ancient Israel where these terms are conventionally used to indicate rejection of or loyalty to the covenant of the Lord. Those Israelites who deliberately violate God's covenant and break his commandments, especially the first, and thus show that they reject the Lord as their king, will bring down judgment (and so release the covenant curses; cf Deut 28:15–68) on themselves and their households. See e.g. Numbers 16:31–34 (divine punishment on Korah and his household) and Josh 7:24 (divine punishment on Achan and his household). Both of these stories illustrate the OT principle of corporate solidarity where the whole community is represented in one member (especially the head of the community).

⁴⁹ Exodus 33:19: God explicates his name. As Yahweh he says, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion'.

⁵⁰ In Exodus 34:6–7 the link between the punishment and the first commandment is not explicit.

reference to believers. In other words, those who are most likely to experience the full consequences of ancestral idolatry are the generations of unbelieving children and grandchildren who follow in the same footsteps. It also needs to be remembered that it is not simply the sin of unbelief (culpable as it is) that God threatens to visit on the children of the third or fourth generations, but the iniquity of the fathers. Given both the immediate context (the link to the first commandment) as well as the wider context (where idolatry is often mixed up with sexual immorality), it would seem that the most plausible interpretation would be that where a generation of parents has engaged in idolatrous practices (which might include involvement in Satan worship or the occult), the consequences of their sinful behaviour will most likely be felt by later generations of unbelieving children and grandchildren who have placed themselves outside the reach of God's mercy and forgiveness and continue to participate in the iniquitous ways of their ancestors.

Furthermore, the Exodus text, which belongs to the Old Testament law, cannot be interpreted in a purely Jewish sense but finds its fulfilment in Christ, and thus must be read and understood in the light of the New Testament gospel. In the Christian church, no individual is left to bear the spiritual consequences of ancestral sin, because this too has been encompassed by Christ, who carried the sin of the world to the cross where he suffered its curse (Gal 3:13) and broke its power.

Wrath and grace are the twin themes of Scripture but we have already seen that the key OT texts, not to mention the NT, do not give them equal weight. The reason for making this point is to call attention to the need for a rebalancing of the Protestant deliverance tradition and its teaching on demonic entry points, which is closely connected with generational sin, at one of its own most vulnerable points, and that is its overemphasis on the causal nexus between sin and punishment and its associated curses and, on the other hand, its corresponding underemphasis on the sovereignty of God's grace and mercy expressed most concretely in the gift of the forgiveness of sins in the absolution. While Lutheran theology does not downplay God's law, it reserves its greatest emphasis for God's grace and forgiveness, for this comes from its Christocentric heart which is anchored in the gospel. This emphasis on God's grace and mercy is a contribution that Lutheran theology can make to the deliverance tradition which in modern times has largely been the preserve of Pentecostalism.

Soul Ties

Our first task will be to briefly lay out the data on soul ties as found in the Protestant deliverance tradition and then evaluate it from a Lutheran standpoint. The term itself is not found in the Bible but is inferred from the use of such biblical words as 'knit' and 'join'. The general idea is that souls can be knit together and become one flesh as a consequence of sexual relations, close friendships, or as a result of vows or commitments.

The literature speaks of both good and bad soul ties. A good soul tie, for example, is said to be the bond between husband and wife. Genesis 2:24 says that the man is *joined* to his wife and the two become one flesh (Matt 19:5). This is said to be the most intimate soul tie that exists. By extension the bond between parents and children and also that between siblings is regarded as a soul tie. Finally, a soul tie is said to exist between close friends. The classical example of a good soul tie between friends is the bond between David and Jonathan where the deep affection between them is described with the words, 'the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul' (1 Sam 18:1).

A bad soul tie, on the other hand, is said to exist where two people are united through adultery, fornication, rape or any other immoral act. An immoral person might have many such soul ties. A bad soul tie is said to be akin to a channel by which demons can move from one person to another or control can be exercised by one person over another.

However, this matter is highly speculative as there is no solid biblical teaching to base it on and for that reason alone Lutheran theology rejects it.

It is instructive to note that when the apostle Paul has to warn the Corinthian men against sexual immorality, he reminds them that when they have sexual intercourse with a prostitute, they are in fact joining Christ to that person. He says: 'Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, "the two shall be one flesh". But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him' (1 Cor 6:16–17). If Paul knew of such things as soul ties and their potential for demonic possession, surely this is the place he would have made the point. But instead, Paul makes an ethical point based on Christology.

If we wish to indulge in speculation ourselves, we could point out that there is a form of soul tie in Scripture; however, it is of an entirely different kind than that taught by Pentecostalism, and that is the 'soul tie' of original sin that binds us all together in solidarity with our proto-parents Adam and Eve. As Paul says in Romans 5, sin entered the world through one man. In a similar way, all sin has been atoned for by that other man, Jesus Christ, the second Adam, and all who are baptised into him are united with him in his death and his resurrection. Although the Bible does not use the world soul tie to describe this solidarity of all people in Adam and all Christians in Christ, the biblical teaching of original sin amounts to a genuine soul tie that binds all people together under God's wrath and judgment. Conversely, the teaching of grace tells us that through faith we receive the benefits won for us by Christ on Calvary so that the bond of faith that unites us with Christ is also a sort of soul tie in its own way, if we may use that language to make a point.

It is clear from this brief discussion that there is no biblical basis for the teaching about soul ties as such, let alone the claim that bad soul ties act as a conduit for the transfer of demons. The only evil 'soul tie' that the NT knows of (without using that vocabulary) is the union with the demonic that comes about through a Christian's participation in an idolatrous cult or a satanic ritual, the diabolic counterpart to participation in the Christian Lord's Supper. Paul argues that those who participate in idolatrous cults (such as Satan worship with its cup of demons) reify the false gods they worship by placing themselves under their influence. Hence he warns the church at Corinth, 'I do not want you to be partners with demons. 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' (1 Cor 11:20,21). Christians cannot worship the triune God and a false god at the same time; neither can they participate in the rites of both. Those who become involved in the occult (including such things as séances, necromancy, tarot cards, psychic attack, devil worship, witchcraft, the Black Mass, evil charms and spells), even if only out of curiosity, open themselves to the possibility of demonisation.

TERRITORIAL SPIRITS AND STRATEGIC LEVEL SPIRITUAL WARFARE

A pervasive teaching stemming from evangelical Protestantism, associated especially with C Peter Wagner, has to do with territorial spirits or demons and how these ruling spirits are to be bound and dethroned by means of strategic level spiritual warfare (SLSW).⁵¹ Once again our task will be to understand the teaching and then assess it against Scripture and Lutheran theology. However, a word of caution needs to be sounded at the outset. The area of ministry under discussion here is highly contested and speculative and lies outside the Lutheran tradition. Those who write and teach in this area come mainly from the Evangelical, Charismatic, and Pentecostal traditions and there is a good deal of cross-

⁵¹ Elizabeth Guntrip (ACU Thesis 2006) has argued that, contrary to popular opinion, C Peter Wagner is not Pentecostal but belongs rather to the Third Wave neo-charismatic movement, which distances itself from Pentecostalism. Therefore, according to her research, the teaching of strategic level spiritual warfare is not consistent with Classical Pentecostalism and therefore should not be labelled Pentecostal. URL for ACU Digital Theses: <http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/digitaltheses/public/adt-acuvp139.17052007/>.

fertilisation. Furthermore, Wagner, by his own admission, is well aware that his whole teaching on territorial spirits depends on whether demonic spirits can legitimately be seen as occupying territories. The purpose of this section is to show why the LCA cannot endorse the teaching of strategic level spiritual warfare. What we present below is based mainly on the work of C Peter Wagner, which, in our opinion, provides one of the most considered responses.⁵²

Simply defined, a territorial spirit is said to be a supernatural being that seems to be bound to, or is especially active in, a certain location. There is perhaps no reason why the term territorial spirits should not apply to holy angels, except that it is most commonly used to refer to fallen angels and demons. Since angelic beings are not omnipresent (this attribute is unique to the one holy God), by definition, they must be singularly located at any point in time. We see this most clearly in the description of the 'comings and goings' of the unclean spirit in Luke 11:24–26.

Just as demons may attach themselves to a person, so too they may reside in given locations and may even be bound to a place because of the occult rituals, idolatrous acts, sexual perversions, or other ungodly abominations that are being practised there. This understanding that unclean spirits can be bound to a particular location is evidenced in the opening collect of the LCA's rite for the blessing of a house.⁵³ It is interesting to observe that the second concluding note to the rite for spiritual oppression suggests that this house blessing collect should be particularly emphasised if the person believes his or her house is haunted. With haunted houses reportedly being on the increase, the commercial world is now seeing businesses that advertise their services as ghost busters and claim to come to the house to perform a house purification ritual to protect the family from ghosts and evil spirits whether they have been conjured by an occupant's enemy or are trapped there from a previous occupant's satanic, occultic, or otherwise perverse activities. Since there is much that we do not understand in the area of the paranormal we need to be cautious in what we say and do. But the church has a good antidote that can allay people's anxieties in the form of the rite of blessing for a house where the word is read and prayers are addressed to the triune God to protect the house and its occupants from Satan and the powers of darkness. Pastors should speak more of the benefits of the house blessing and at the same time explain that it has nothing to do with superstition.

The collect contained in the house blessing includes the request for God to 'drive away the devil and remove every trap he sets; let your holy angels stay in this place in peace'. Some suggest that this driving away of the devil can only be understood if the devil was somehow previously bound to the house. In this context the word devil is probably meant to include one (or many) of his powers and principalities (Eph 6:12). According to that view, just as the devil (a fallen angel, an unclean spirit, a demon) can be bound to a house, he could also be bound on a smaller scale to an individual room or (for example) a wardrobe in a child's bedroom. Similarly, he could be bound to a house or even (on a larger scale) a street, a suburb, a city, a region, a state, a nation etc. It has been suggested this is what is alluded to in Daniel 10 where reference is made to the Prince of Persia and the Prince of Greece.⁵⁴ However, all of this is mere opinion and highly controverted and needs further discussion.

⁵² C Peter Wagner, *Engaging the enemy: how to fight and defeat territorial spirits* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1991).

⁵³ LCA, *Rites and resources for pastoral care*, edited by David Schubert (Adelaide: Openbook, 1998), 196.

⁵⁴ The comment of Keil and Delitzsch here is instructive (9:770): The prince of the kingdom of Persia, briefly designated in v 2 'the prince of Persia', is not king Cyrus, or the *collectivum* of the kings of Persia, as Calvin and most of the reformers, think, but the guardian spirit or the protecting genius of the Persian kingdom, as the rabbis and most of the Christian interpreters have rightly acknowledged. For the angel that appeared to Daniel did not fight with the kings of Persia, but with a spiritual intelligence of a like nature, for the victory, or precedence with the kings of Persia. This spirit of the kingdom of Persia, whom, after the example of Jerome, almost all interpreters call the guardian angel of his kingdom, is as little the nature-power of this kingdom as Michael is the nature-power of Israel, but he is a spirit being; yet not the heathen national god of the Persians, but, according to the view of Scripture (1 Cor. 10:20f), the δαίμόνιον (spirit, demon) of the Persian kingdom, i.e., the supernatural spiritual power standing behind the national gods, which we may properly call the guardian spirit of this kingdom.

This brings us to another understanding of territorial spirits, which has been developed most fully by C Peter Wagner, and which is far more contentious and problematical. He claims that Satan is not the sole enemy in spiritual warfare. Wagner and other practitioners teach from personal experience that there is an entire hierarchy of demons in the world and that it is these higher ranking demons (the 'principalities and powers') that are called territorial spirits. They claim that Satan hands over control of specific areas or domains such as towns, cities, regions, and even countries, as well as particular social structures and organisations within these areas to ranking demons. Their task is to prevent God from being glorified in their territory, in other words, to thwart the mission of the church. The ministry of identifying territorial spirits and exercising Christ's resurrection authority over them to weaken or bind them is a crucial part SLSW, as is prayer warfare which includes prayer walks and spiritual mapping. The defeat of these territorial spirits in a given place is a central plank in the ministry of deliverance as practised by some in Evangelical, Charismatic, and Pentecostal circles.

SLSW, which originally grew out of the Church Growth Movement, has an important application in evangelisation. It is believed that when the authority of a territorial spiritual is confronted and crushed by means of SLSW, those individuals within the domain of the spirit's influence are freed to accept the gospel. This is a new kind of spiritual warfare where ruling demons are named, their territory identified, and they are then bound or cursed.⁵⁵ Evangelism and mission are then said to proceed rapidly with dramatic results. This belief is also promoted by 'kingdom now' theology and supported by The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE).⁵⁶ SLSW is therefore sometimes understood as the groundwork that precedes Christian revivals in various regions.⁵⁷ Corporate repentance or 'identificational repentance' is sometimes seen to be a necessary part of SLSW, especially if it is perceived that particular historical wrongs have given the demonic realm some formal right to exert a level of territorial control.

In a nutshell, 'SLSW is praying against territorial spirits, seeking to "map" their strategies over given locations by discerning their names and what they use to keep people in bondage, and then binding them so evangelism may proceed unhindered. "Spiritual mapping" has to do with researching an area and identifying the spirit(s) in charge so that "smart-bomb" praying may loosen their hold over the people, who may then freely come to Christ'.⁵⁸

While most of Wagner's teaching on territorial spirits and strategic level spiritual warfare is extrabiblical, the three scriptural passages that he claims are foundational to SLSW do not in fact support his teaching. His interpretations are highly speculative, they stand outside the exegetical tradition of the church catholic and cannot be demonstrated as true.

First he holds that in the LXX version of Deuteronomy 32:8 (the Song of Moses), God is said to have divided the earth at creation among the nations according to the number of his angels as their guardian spirits. According to Wagner, these guardian spirits have now become evil angels who are intent on bringing curse not blessing. Second, he holds that in Daniel 10 the archangel Gabriel fights, with the help of the archangel Michael, against two such tutelary angels, 'the prince of Persia' (10:13) and the 'prince of Greece' (10:20). Finally he teaches that in 2 Corinthians 10:4–6 Paul says that he and Timothy use God's

⁵⁵ Practitioners of SLSW teach that these demons need to be identified by those who have the gift to discern spirits or by prophetic revelation in answer to prayer. The discernment of these spirits is often associated with a prayer-walk around the perimeter of a targeted area. Once these territorial spirits have been identified they can be bound and then driven from those places by an act of exorcism.

⁵⁶ Website: <http://www.lausanne.org/en/> (accessed March 2014).

⁵⁷ There is also a connection here with City Transformation Ministries which is an international organisation with branches in Australia whose aim is to transform cities spiritually through various means including prayer (often as prayer summits), repentance, and strategic level spiritual warfare.

⁵⁸ Moreau, 'Gaining perspective on territorial spirits' in *Deliver us from evil: an uneasy frontier in Christian mission* (World Vision Intl 2002), 260.

powerful spiritual weapons to demolish 'the strongholds' that oppose the gospel and imprison people. However, traditional exegesis would argue that there is no warrant for understanding these strongholds geographically as demonic 'strongholds' but that they are rather to be thought of as the unbeliever's wall of self-defence built on false arguments and ways of thinking. While the gospels suggest that the places where Christ encountered unclean spirits were significant, whether they be holy places such as synagogues or unclean places such as the cemetery in Gerasene territory (Mark 5:1–5) and the pagan region of Tyre (Mark 7:24), they do not report that Jesus ever engaged with any territorial spirit.

However, apart from the three problematical passages Wagner cites, there is an important body of teaching in the NT on Christ's lordship over the supernatural powers or the powers of darkness that needs to be considered. These powers go by various names in the NT: angels, principalities, powers, authorities, lordships, and thrones (Rom 8:38–39; 1 Cor 15:24; Eph 1:21, 3:10, 6:12; Col 1:16, 2:10, 2:15; 1 Pet 3:22). An earlier generation of scholars did not view these as real spiritual powers but saw them as the construct of a gnostic worldview. If however we take the NT data at their face value, we have to concede that they are malevolent spiritual powers under the dominion of Satan which Christ has conquered by his death and resurrection. But there is no conclusive textual support for a hierarchal ranking of these demonic powers, such as we have in the teaching of SLSW.

Wagner makes the unwarranted assumption that exorcisms performed by Christ and his command to the disciples to cast out demons are directly applicable to Christians today. The application is made by appealing to two broad arguments: the commissioning of the 70 or 72 (Luke 10:1–12) and the great commission (Matt 20:18–20). The latter, by perverse means, is said to be the occasion where Jesus transfers authority to his disciples and through them to us. But the great commission mentions nothing of a delegated authority. Jesus explicitly says that all power belongs to him. The alleged transfer of power signals a worrying aspect of deliverance ministry in some Protestant circles, and that is the level of importance it places on the person of the practitioner. The warfare against territorial spirits is too much about the soldier of Christ and not enough about Christ and his victory, even though that victory will remain hidden, under the cross, till his triumphal return. This is where a good dose of Luther's theology of the cross can be a healthy antidote to a certain type of spiritual high-mindedness that needs to be brought down to earth—often through cross and suffering.

How are we to assess the teaching of territorial spirits and SLSW as propounded by Wagner and others? We begin with the notion of territorial spirits and the role of SLSW in world evangelisation. There is no doubt that behind Wagner's approach to spiritual warfare lies a solid commitment to what he calls 'power evangelism'—the need for signs and wonders to promote the gospel. Wagner's own mentor is John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard Church and leader of the Signs and Wonders movement (also known as the Third Wave, and recently identified with the Toronto Blessing). In Wagner's opinion, God is still communicating to the believer through audible voices, visions, dreams, prophets, personal appearances, and the gift of discerning spirits. In view of the emphasis they are given, these charismatic phenomena are regarded as the main means of the Spirit instead of the written and proclaimed word and its sacramental enactment.⁵⁹

One of the problems with Wagner's understanding of territorial spirits is that it lacks a clear and cogent scriptural basis. This is evident from the unjustified distinction he wishes to make between the two Greek words *logos* and *rhema*, where *logos* is said to refer to God's written word and *rhema* to the word that God speaks directly to believers today.⁶⁰ However, there is absolutely no exegetical basis for this distinction since *logos* and *rhema*

⁵⁹ Reference needs to be made here to the paper on prophecy adopted by the CTICR (2014) and located on the LCA website.

⁶⁰ C Peter Wagner, *Confronting the powers* (Gospel Light Publications 1997), 52–55, 62, 64, 155.

are usually used synonymously in the NT. Even a cursory check of the concordance will show that *rhema* is not used for God's direct communication to the believer in voices or dreams. Wagner has overlooked the words that Jesus spoke to the devil at his temptation: 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word (*rhema*) that comes from the mouth of God' (Matt 4:4), unless of course he is going to perversely argue that *rhema* here is to be understood as words of direct revelation rather than the word of God written in Scripture that Jesus himself quotes here.

SLSW takes such a no-holds-barred approach compared with traditional spiritual warfare that it makes the latter look weak by comparison. Rather than following the apostolic model of defensive warfare outlined in Ephesians 6, where every Christian individually is called on to be vigilant in guarding the victory that Christ has won for us already (including the conquest of the enemy 'territory' within us), SLSW calls Christians to arms in an offensive battle against the enemy's kingdom, to capture demonic strongholds and win back territories held by high level spirits and their minions. However, we have no biblical mandate to engage with territorial spirits, if there are such things. We are not called to attack ruling demons but to defend the victory that Christ has won already. This is why traditional spiritual warfare is defensive, not offensive. Paul portrays the spirits as vanquished and captive while the proponents of SLSW hold that never in history have they been stronger. These two perspectives cannot be reconciled.⁶¹

The 'warfare prayer', which is a form of intercession intended to break demonic strongholds in a particular area, is a key way that SLSW proponents engage in what they call 'power evangelism'. However, it has no biblical basis. A study of the prayers in the NT epistles shows that they are not a call to arms. Not once does Paul pray against Artemis, the alleged territorial spirit of Ephesus. Never once did he ask his readers to pray against the ruling spirit over Rome.⁶² Interestingly, prayer does not form a part of the Christian's armour for spiritual warfare as Paul describes it in Ephesians 6: 10–17. However, right after this passage, Paul exhorts his readers 'to pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication' (6:18) and then goes on to ask them to pray also for him that God would give him boldness to make known the mystery of the gospel (6:19). Following Paul's example both here and elsewhere, our prayers for the church's mission should not be that God would dethrone some high-ranking spirits in a particular place which are allegedly impeding the spread of the gospel—spirits of which we have no knowledge and which have been disarmed already anyway (Col 2:15)—but in our prayers we should intercede for all the saints and for all pastors, missionaries and church planters, both here and overseas, that they may preach the gospel effectively against the powers of darkness in heaven and on earth (Eph 6:18–20) and that people may be given the ears to hear the message in faith (Rom 10:17).

The church may be in danger of spiritual abuse if it does not clearly teach the triumph and lordship of Jesus over all unclean spirits and evil powers. This clear teaching of the NT has been consistently upheld by the church catholic since apostolic times. The church father Origen (c185–c254) insisted that humans have nothing to fear from demons because God protects them, whether directly or through the agency of guardian angels. The only time demons can defeat Christians is if Christians deliberately place themselves in their orbit of influence; all they need to do to defend themselves is to pray to God and to use the spiritual armour that he provides (Eph 6:11–12).

The only aspect of SLSW that the medieval church might seem to support is the attempt to reconstruct spirit hierarchies. Even here, however, the similarity is only partial as none of the various reconstructions matches SLSW, neither was there any consensus among the fathers

⁶¹ Chuck Lowe, *Territorial spirits and world evangelisation: a biblical, historical and missiological critique of strategic-level spiritual warfare* (Mentor 2001), 58.

⁶² Lowe, *Territorial spirits and world evangelisation*, 64–65.

on this matter. Most importantly, the fathers were more interested in angelic than demonic hierarchies.⁶³ Luther expressly rejected the teaching of Pseudo-Dionysius, which is the closest parallel to SLSW that we find in the Christian tradition.

For Luther the world was full of demons and the devil was very real. But he held unequivocally that both devil and demons had been defeated once and for all by Christ's death and resurrection and that Christians had nothing to be afraid of. Accordingly, there is nothing in Luther's writings that would validate the claims of SLSW. His pastoral advice is very sober. When consulted by a pastor who complained of ghosts making a racket in his house at night, Luther counselled him to pray and to utter a simple rebuke: 'Be off, Satan! I am lord in this house, not you'.⁶⁴

Luther's weapons for spiritual warfare are very traditional. He nowhere counsels people to seek the names of demons through divine revelation, nor anything about special techniques designed to make prayer powerful. Instead, he urges reliance upon the scriptures and the sacrament, and especially the former. Luther writes: 'God provided his church with audible preaching and visible sacraments. Satan resists this holy ministry in all earnestness, and he would like it to be eliminated altogether because by it alone is Satan overcome. The power of the oral word is truly remarkable. To think that Satan, that proud spirit, may be put to flight and thrown into confusion, by such a frail word on human lips!⁶⁵ Luther warned the spiritualists (*Schwärmer*), who sought direct revelation from the Spirit rather than illumination from the word, that 'the devil has no better way to conquer us than by leading us away from the word and to the Spirit...But one should hold fast to the word and not concede the Spirit to people apart from the word'.⁶⁶

It is clear from the above that Wagner's teaching on SLSW and territorial spirits is not acceptable to Lutheran theology because it is too speculative and not grounded in solid scriptural exegesis. On the one hand, this is not to say that there is no such thing as territorial spirits per se only that we cannot be certain. The comparatively slender biblical data that comes into play here can be interpreted in different ways to give different outcomes. But even if they do exist, we have no revealed biblical knowledge of them and certainly no mandate to engage with them. On the other hand, those who claim to have had experience of them cannot expect the church to make the experience of some the norm for all. The church cannot and must not make SLSW an aspirational goal for all Christians. The church may only teach with authority what her Lord has commanded. Neither Christ nor his apostles have commanded us to go on the offensive against demonic spirits or to use SLSW as a means of evangelism. On the contrary, Scripture clearly warns against having any involvement with the supernatural for 'the secret things belong to the Lord our Lord' (Deut 29:29).

GOD'S WORD AND SACRAMENTS AND THE MINISTRY OF DELIVERANCE

A. Introduction

The means of grace, or better, the means of the Spirit, namely, the divinely proclaimed word and the divinely enacted sacraments, are a powerful resource in the ministry of deliverance. It is interesting to note that Karl Barth's little book of sermons on the central themes of the gospel (1961) is titled *Deliverance to the Captives*. The title, if not the content, beautifully captures the Lutheran emphasis in preaching (which includes holy

⁶³ Lowe, *Territorial spirits and world evangelisation*, 93. The tradition of angelic ranking is best seen in the proper preface to Holy Communion where we join our praise 'with angels and archangels' and the whole company of heaven.

⁶⁴ LW 54:279–80.

⁶⁵ LW 54:318.

⁶⁶ LW 54:97.

absolution): it is not to convey information but to do something, or better, to let the triune God do something to those who hear his word. Both the sermon and absolution are performative words because through the power of the Spirit what the word promises it does. If we consider that all who hear the word are in some way enslaved to their sinful passions, the proclaimed word brings about deliverance; it restates what God said in Baptism: you are free. The ministry of deliverance is an eminently suitable title for the regular ministry of the parish pastor because through the use of the word of God (including absolution) and the holy sacraments together with prayer, the pastor, following in the footsteps of Jesus, is plundering Satan's kingdom and again and again delivering those whom he holds captive. The way in which the ministry of deliverance has been described in this paper is simply a special case of the pastor's ministry of word and sacrament together with prayer and intercession and using, as appropriate, such additional things as baptismal reminders, the sign of the cross, the laying on of hands, hymn verses, and words of rebuke as in the option provided in the Rite of Baptism.⁶⁷ The means of the Spirit, which are the means of salvation and rescue, are the most effective resource available to the pastor in his ministry of deliverance, whether that be his everyday ministry to all sorts and conditions of people or the special ministry of healing and deliverance to those suffering from demonisation.

One fruitful area for further exploration could be the connection between possible points of attack and vulnerability and confession and absolution as well as Holy Communion. Some authors in deliverance ministry with a Roman Catholic background point out that in the literature of the Roman Catholic deliverance tradition, prayers of confession and forgiveness on the part of the individual are required to address any sins committed by them or against them that have opened a door to the demonic, and to deal with sins of the past generations in like manner. This includes asking God to extend forgiveness to the offender in the case of being sinned against or in dealing with sins of past generations. It is held that unless this repentance–confession–forgiveness process is engaged first, the actual commands of deliverance will remain ineffective. However, a pastor or pastoral carer who is ministering to a person who feels that he or she is suffering the consequences of a generational sin must be very careful not to probe into the person's family tree in order to uncover some past sin lest in doing so they commit spiritual abuse against the person and end up leaving them in a worse state than they were in before.

B. Baptism

In the Lutheran tradition, the ministry of deliverance has been associated with Baptism for it is there that God has rescued us from the powers of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son (Col 1:13). Jesus' ministry is a ministry of deliverance. Immediately after his Baptism he confronted the devil in the wilderness and defeated him (Matt 4:1–11). According to Mark, the first miracle Jesus performs is an exorcism (1:21–8). In inaugurating the kingdom of God, Jesus must first defeat the counter-kingdom of Satan. The exorcisms are signs that the strong man has been bound by the stronger (Mark 3:27) and that Jesus is the promised Messiah come to inaugurate the kingdom.⁶⁸ He himself says that if it is by the Spirit of God (rather than by Beelzebul) that he casts out demons, then you know that the kingdom of God has come upon you (Matt 12:28). Satan's defeat is ultimately assured by Jesus' resurrection victory over death and all demonic powers (Col 2:15).⁶⁹

⁶⁷ See LCA, *Church rites*, 4 (The rebuke of the unclean spirit). This matter was also the topic of a casuality item at the 2013 General Pastors Conference.

⁶⁸ Jesus' healing miracles, as fulfilments of the Isaianic signs (Isaiah 35 and 61), point in the same direction.

⁶⁹ This is powerfully proclaimed and celebrated by JS Bach's cantata for Easter Day: *Christ lag in Todesbanden* (BWV 4) based on Luther's text: *Christ Jesus lay in death's strong bands* (LHS 89). Verse 2 is especially moving as Luther proclaims the death of death: 'It was a strange and awesome strife/ when life and death contended;/ the victory remained with life,/ the rule of death was ended:/ stripped of power, no more it reigns,/ an empty form alone remains:/ death's sting is gone for ever. *Hallelujah!*' (LW 53:257)

In Baptism God the Father incorporates us into Christ and so delivers us from the domain of darkness and transfers us to the kingdom of his Son (Col 1:13). In Baptism God anoints and seals us with his Spirit as a guarantee (2 Cor 1:21,22; Eph 4:30). We are no longer under the rule of Satan and the powers of darkness but under the lordship of Christ (Eph 1:21). All baptised believers share in Christ's victory over the devil and all demonic powers (1 John 4:4) and are under his protection (1 John 5:18). It is with this confidence and assurance that Christians engage in spiritual warfare.

C. Individual confession and absolution

Individual confession and absolution is a vital resource for the ministry of deliverance, not only for release from the guilt of sin committed against God and others, but also for healing the anger, shame and hurt that people feel when they have been sinned against, especially where this involves sexual abuse.⁷⁰ In the one case, deliverance can be found through confession of sin, prayer and absolution, in the other case through confession of abuse, prayer and blessing.

Corporate confession and absolution in the divine service can be a healing and renewing gift for those who have sinned as well as for those who have been sinned against, but private confession and absolution must be regarded as being of unparalleled importance in dealing effectively and pastorally with sin⁷¹ or anything that the charismatic literature might call 'demonic legal rights'.⁷² In fact, after administering some 30,000 exorcisms during his long term in office, diocesan exorcist of Rome, Gabriele Amorth, has come to describe individual confession and absolution as even more powerful than exorcism!⁷³

Lutherans are invited to confess whatever sins are troubling them, but they are not under any compulsion to confess every sin, nor are they made to feel guilty if they cannot remember some sins. Pentecostal theology, however, ends up putting the onus back on the penitent: Have you confessed everything? The Augsburg Confession (Art XXV), on the other hand, says that 'we teach that no one should be compelled to recount sin in detail, for this is impossible. As the psalmist says, "Who can discern his errors?" Jeremiah also says, "The heart is desperately corrupt; who can understand it?"'⁷⁴ It finishes by emphasising that confession is to be retained not for its own sake but because of the absolution, which is its chief and most important part.

D. The Lord's Supper

The Lutheran tradition will want to stress the importance of Holy Communion in the ministry of deliverance, alongside the ministry of the word. In receiving the blood of Christ in the Lord's supper, we come under the protection of Christ much as Israel was kept safe from the angel of death in Egypt by the blood of the Passover lamb (Ex 12:21–27; Heb 11:28). 'Thus we overcome the evil one by the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God (Rev 12:11).'⁷⁵ In fact, one of the most powerful ways in which we can steel ourselves against attacks by the

⁷⁰ A useful resource in this regard is the final report written in 2009 by the LCA taskforce titled: 'Toward freedom: the practice of forgiveness in the LCA', available on the LCA website. Of special importance for the ministry of deliverance is the point made by the report that forgiveness may be offered and given not only to people who have sinned, but also (and more importantly, because of its neglect) to people who have been sinned against (abused) and who, because of that, are saddled with a double burden of anger and guilt.

⁷¹ Stephen van der Hoek (2008), 'The unique contribution of Wilhelm Löhe to the renewal of the practice of private confession', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 42/2, pp 100–108. Also Fred Precht, 'Confession and absolution: Sin and forgiveness' in *Lutheran worship: History and practice*, 322–386. See pages 334ff and 354–358.

⁷² Horrobin analyses these so-called 'legal rights' in the second volume of his work *Healing through deliverance*. The CTICR is wary of the claim that demonic spirits can have justifiable 'legal rights' to enter the baptised, even though it agrees that when Christians deliberately open themselves to the power of the demonic by engaging with the occult, they do in fact give demonic powers the 'right' to enter their conscience.

⁷³ Gabriel Amorth, *An exorcist tells his story*, 86. For the reference to 30,000 exorcisms, see p169. In the Lutheran tradition, confession and absolution is a form of exorcism.

⁷⁴ Theodore Tappert, ed, *The book of concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 62.

⁷⁵ John Kleinig, *Grace upon grace* (St Louis: CPH, 2008), 249.

evil one is through regular participation in the corporate divine service and especially the Lord's supper, for it is the power of the blood of the Lamb that cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

The liturgy of the Lord's Supper contains the Lord's Prayer with its petition 'deliver us from evil'. This prayer is answered in the meal that follows where Christ gives us his holy body and blood to eat and to drink whereby he delivers us from the power of the devil and the evil that takes hold of us as a result of the collusion between Satan and our sinful flesh. Where a Christian is under some form of demonic affliction, this deliverance may not be immediate but may call for faithful persistence in prayer and frequent attendance at worship, especially participation in Holy Communion.

With the increasing sexualisation of society and the rise in the use of pornography, pastors need to stress the importance of the blood of Christ in Holy Communion as the means by which God purifies people, not just from the guilt of their sins but also from all their uncleanness (1 John 1:7 and 5:6).

THEOLOGICAL CONCLUSIONS

In the Lutheran tradition, the ministry of deliverance, generally speaking, does not focus on exorcism but on delivering Christians from spiritual oppression and demonisation. It is enacted publicly in and through the divine service of the church, particularly in confession and absolution, in the Sacrament of Baptism, in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, and in the proclamation of the gospel. It may also be enacted individually through the use of prayer, Scripture, the announcement of deliverance using the divine name—if needed also the words of rebuke from the Rite of Baptism—and blessing.⁷⁶

Certain traditions within Pentecostalism that assign a demon to every malady teach that the ministry of deliverance, focused on exorcism, is a part of the ministry of every Christian, not just the pastor, and is no less important than the preaching of the gospel. The basis of this claim is the Marcan 'great commission' (Mark 16:14–18) that adds the promise that Jesus' disciples will drive out demons in his name (14:17).⁷⁷ Yet Jesus has to tell the seventy: 'Do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven' (Luke 10:20). Secondly, it is argued that just as Jesus and his disciples (in Acts) performed exorcisms, so too must Christians today. However, the exorcisms carried out by Peter and Paul in Acts are meant to be seen as certifications that they stood in succession to Jesus, that their ministry was truly dominical and that they operated with the authority of Jesus.

The Lutheran response to this claim is twofold: First, not everything that Jesus and his apostles did must be continued by their successors in the ordained ministry, only those tasks that Jesus specifically mandates: teaching and baptising (Matt 28), forgiving and binding sin (Matt 16; John 20), celebrating the Lord's supper (Matt 26; 1 Cor 11). Second, the Pentecostal and charismatic traditions often read the narratives in the gospels and

⁷⁶ The LCA's *Rites and resources* has several notes on spiritual oppression as well as the outline of a rite (See Schubert, 1998: 138–143).

⁷⁷ The earliest manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have the longer ending (Mark 16:9–20) but stop at verse 8. Serious doubts exist among text critics as to whether these verses are authentic. Most see them as a later addition. However, the Vulgate accepts the longer ending as canonical and Luther likewise had no hesitation in using Mark 16:16 in his *Small catechism* as one of the foundational texts for the doctrine of Baptism. The verses 17–18 ('In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well') present something of an interpretative crux (at least for churches outside of the Pentecostal tradition), but Lutherans generally understand them in much the same way as they understand the miracles performed by the apostles in Acts. That is, they understand the signs descriptively, not prescriptively, and so do not take them as mandates or blueprints for the church's ministry today.

Acts prescriptively. They do not distinguish between description and prescription. This is evident in the way that some Pentecostals appeal to the accounts of glossolalia in Acts as proof that this phenomenon is to be present in the church today as one of the signs that accompany and confirm the preaching of the gospel (Heb 2:4). Lutherans, on the other hand, maintain that the NT should not be read prescriptively as if it were a blueprint for the life of the church today. They recognise that there are phenomena unique to the apostolic age, even if we grant that the Spirit and his gifts are still present in the church today.⁷⁸

While, as we have seen, some Pentecostal churches tend to put the ministry of exorcism at the centre of their ministry, the Lutheran church makes the ministry of word and sacrament central and sees the ministry of deliverance (rather than exorcism as such) as part of that. Pentecostalism tends to equate the ministry of deliverance with exorcism while Lutheranism ties the ministry of deliverance to the ministry of reconciliation, which is ultimately the ministry of the gospel. This one ministry that has been given to the church has two aspects, as does the ministry of Jesus: proclamation and healing. The ministry of deliverance is an aspect of the ministry of healing. The church's healing ministry is a broad field and should not be reduced to physical healing and exorcism. Exorcism, which may have immediate benefits for people who have been in bondage to a demonic spirit for a long time, is only one small part of the church's ministry, and certainly one that has not figured as prominently as it does in the Pentecostal tradition—although there has been a long and venerable history of exorcism in the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox churches,⁷⁹ and the Anglican church. While the ministry of exorcism has not been absent from the Lutheran tradition (see the appendix on the history of deliverance in Lutheranism, and especially the ministry of Johann Christoph Blumhardt), by the same token it has never been prominent and where it has been practised, it has usually been seen as part of the church's ministry of the gospel and not a separate ministry.

Classical Pentecostalism, on the other hand, not only tends to make exorcism the brief of every pastor but also of every Christian. The LCA would say that a pastor exercises the ministry of deliverance (not exorcism) not only when he meets with troubled souls to bring them healing through the word, absolution, and prayer, but also when he proclaims the gospel in the divine service and ministers to them with the holy sacraments. For that word is a powerful and efficacious word that does what it says (Isa 55:11). By the power of God's Spirit that is at work through the proclaimed gospel, God delivers believers from all forms of spiritual oppression and demonisation, he brings release to the captives, sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf. This messianic promise of deliverance announced in Isaiah 61:1–3 is a promise that applies also to the proclamation of the gospel in the church today—although it will only be completely fulfilled with the resurrection—for the ministry of the church is simply the continuation of Christ's own ministry through the modality of the Spirit.

Lutherans and Pentecostals both agree that the ministry of Jesus, which is carried on by the church, comprises two parts, word and deeds; Jesus not only preached, he also healed the sick and cast out demons (Mark 1:39; 3:14; 6:12–13; cf Matt 10:7–8; Luke 9:1–2). But the traditions differ in how they interpret this in ecclesial practice. Lutherans see the deeds of the risen Lord continuing in the church today first and foremost through the holy sacraments, especially the Lord's Supper, which is also for the healing of the body, not only the soul. Pentecostals, on the other hand, tend to see the deeds of Jesus being carried out today through the ministry of deliverance. Lutherans can also accept that Christ continues his ministry today through church's ministry of deliverance as long as this is seen more broadly, as outlined above, and is not reduced to exorcism. While Lutherans reserve the church's sacramental ministry to the pastorate, Pentecostals do not distinguish

⁷⁸ For more on this, see Vic Pfitzner, *Led by the Spirit* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1976).

⁷⁹ It is customary for many larger Roman Catholic archdioceses to employ the services of a trained exorcist. Gabriel Amorth, mentioned earlier, is a Roman Catholic priest who formerly served as exorcist in the diocese of Rome.

between lay and ordained in the same way, neither do they have a sacramental ministry as such. On the other hand, both Lutherans and Pentecostals affirm that Christ continues his work of healing, reconciling, and deliverance in his church today through the office of the word as it is exercised by both the ordained ministry and the priesthood of all believers.

We need to reemphasise in the light of the paper, supported by the appendix, that the Lutheran church can affirm the centrality of the ministry of deliverance as long as it is understood as an aspect of the NT's ministry of reconciliation and not a separate ministry, and as long as it is not equated with exorcism per se. Exorcism is a special subset of the ministry of deliverance which still needs to be properly addressed if that is the wish of the Church.

PASTORAL GUIDELINES

1. The LCA needs to find a way between scepticism and fanaticism since, in the opinion of the CTICR, the truth concerning the reality of the demonic today lies somewhere between the two. Since Satan is a liar and deceiver and can disguise himself as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14), care needs to be taken to avoid a thoroughgoing scepticism, on the one hand, and an obsession with demons, on the other.
2. Lutheran pastors will normally be guided by medical or psychiatric opinion unless there are clear and credible grounds to suspect the presence of the demonic. Lutherans acknowledge that all forms of health care, physical as well as mental, are God's good gift and therefore see the church's ministry of deliverance and medical, psychiatric, and professional counselling services as basically complementary. However, it is readily acknowledged that working with healthcare professionals, especially non-Christians, has its own problems and complexities. At any rate, whatever the means of determination, once it is clear that the problem is not simply physical or psychological, the pastor can work towards a broad spiritual diagnosis with the ministry of law and gospel. To try to deliver a person of a demon when they have no demon amounts to spiritual abuse. Real spiritual harm can occur if a pastor tries to do something extreme that goes beyond the normal ministry of word, sacrament, and prayer.
3. Pastors have a responsibility to warn their people against dabbling in the occult but also against becoming fascinated with the black arts and demonic spirits and looking for demons everywhere. At the same time, in keeping with 1 Corinthians 10:13, pastors will not frighten baptised Christians by giving them the impression that at any moment, even without renouncing the faith or flirting with the occult, they can become possessed and in need of exorcism. Instead, they will reassure their people, and especially those people who worry about these things, that the God who brought us to faith and baptism will continue to remain our faithful protector against Satan and the powers of darkness and that no matter what trials and tribulations we are called to endure this side of heaven, our salvation is assured and secure in Christ.
4. Pastors should promote the importance of the house blessing and encourage people to ask for it whenever they move into a new home and are worried about the presence of evil resulting from the possibly occultic practices of the previous owners (see LCA, *Rites and resources*, 143). The house blessing, however, is not an exorcism but a use of word and prayer to ask God to keep Satan and his evil spirits away from this place and to protect and bless the occupants and to keep them from all harm and danger.
5. A topic that needs further reflection is the place of prayer in ministering to demonised people. It is surely significant that in two of the five instances of 'exorcism' in the NT, someone came to Jesus and asked for his help on behalf of the afflicted person. This

at the very least says something about the importance of intercession in the ministering to those who are suffering spiritual or demonic affliction (LCA, *Rites and resources*, 144).

6. Pastors will normally minister to demonised Christians through the word, prayer, reminders of Baptism and, if needed, an appropriate formula of rebuke (as we see from the practice of Luther in the appendix below). However, in serious cases of demonisation, where a pastor suspects that an exorcism might be needed, he will never act alone and will never attempt it without the prior authorisation of his bishop. Where a pastor believes that a person manifests signs of severe demonic possession (such as stentorian voice, supernatural strength, different appearance, bizarre behaviour, blasphemous talk and other unusual phenomena) and is in need of exorcism, he should not attempt it without proper authorisation and in consultation with his bishop (see LCA, *Rites and resources*, 138).
7. To sum up: the commission makes a clear distinction between the ministry of deliverance through word and prayer, which is an integral part of the pastoral ministry, and the ministry of exorcism, which is a specialised ministry which should only be undertaken by those who are authorised by the Church and have the requisite training and experience.

APPENDIX: NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF DELIVERANCE WITHIN LUTHERANISM

Martin Luther

Luther believes that human beings live out their lives between God and the devil. He believes in the existence of a personal devil that works with and uses the world and our sinful flesh to do his work. Luther's thinking is dualistic to the extent that in the matter of salvation he holds that whoever is not under the power of the Holy Spirit is under the power of the devil. The devil tempts human beings to sin and puts evil thoughts into their minds, even taking them over. He is behind heresy and false teaching⁸⁰. The devil is also at work in everything that contradicts God's will for his creation and hence can be seen in melancholy, sickness and death.⁸¹

Luther's 'dualism' is, however, strictly limited. Ultimately, all experiences, whether good or bad, come from the hand of God. Satan in the end serves God's purposes, being both the enemy and instrument of God's work.⁸² God keeps him in his service and uses him for his own work, primarily as a tool of his wrath. In the final analysis, the devil is 'God's devil'.⁸³ While Satan's purpose in suffering will be to destroy, God's deeper purpose is always to save. The appropriate response to suffering is to have faith in Christ and submit oneself to God's chastening while praying in faith that he will deliver from the circumstance. The appropriate response to demonically instigated suffering is therefore also submission to God.⁸⁴

In Luther's worldview, the things of 'ordinary Christianity' are part of the battle against the devil, the world and the flesh. The fundamental basis of deliverance ministry is, for Luther, always Christ and faith. The Christian joins this warfare through the means and expressions of faith such as meditating on the Word, the daily return to baptism, confession and absolution, the Lord's Supper, resisting temptation, following the Ten Commandments, and the consolation of the saints.

Luther claims to have 'restrained many similar spirits in different places...' and also to have been 'harassed by so many dissimulations, artifices, frauds, lies, tricks, etc., that I am necessarily reluctant to believe everything and everybody; I must believe only what I know I have myself done and said'.⁸⁵ Thus, he affirms his own practice of deliverance, but warns of the preponderance of deceptions whether intended by the victim or not.

⁸⁰ Then comes the devil, who baits and badgers us on all sides, but especially exerts himself where the conscience and spiritual matters are concerned. His purpose is to make us scorn and despise both the word and the works of God, to tear us away from faith, hope, and love, to draw us into unbelief, false security, and stubbornness, or, on the contrary, to drive us into despair, denial of God, blasphemy, and countless other abominable sins. These are snares and nets; indeed, they are the real 'flaming darts' that are venomously shot into our hearts, not by flesh and blood but by the devil. Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 454.

⁸¹ But you say: 'After all, the devil can work miracles and signs like Christ's. How, then, can we found our belief on the miracles of Christ?' It is true that the devil can torment people and lay them low; or he can blind them temporarily or lame a member, as he often did through his witches and devilish whores, and then heal them again. (LW 24:73–75 [Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, 1537]). See Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 162.

⁸² See Althaus, 161–168, esp. p 165, for his exposition of Luther's understanding of the devil and our position between God and Satan.

⁸³ LW 13:97.

⁸⁴ Dr. Luther spoke further, 'One should drive out the devil with and through prayer in such a way that one prescribes for the Lord Christ no rule, no means and manner, no time or place when and how he should drive out the devils, for that would be tempting God. But we persist in prayer so long, knock and rap [at the door] so long, until God hears our prayer' (Höcker, in Ludwig Dunte, *Decisiones casuum conscientiae* [1664], pp 100–103; translated by Benjamin Mayes)

⁸⁵ Letter to Andrew Ebert [August 5, 1536], in *Luther: letters of spiritual counsel*, 44–45.

Luther's methods for driving out the devil in deliverance are largely the same for all spiritual warfare – the Word, prayer, and faith. In one of Luther's dealings with a possessed person, he inquired as to the faith of the afflicted and then recommended her to his normal sermon in the church the next day. After the service he took her with others into the sacristy, laid on hands, spoke the Apostles Creed and the Lord's Prayer, quoted John 14 about answers to prayer, prayed for her deliverance, and then told the demon he would get no ceremony.⁸⁶ In advising on the deliverance of John Kerner he recommends 1) confidence that the pastor has the authority of the ministerial office, 2) the laying of hands on his head, 3) saying the Creed, 4) Lord's Prayer, 4) quoting John 16:23-24, Psalm 50:15 and then 6) prayer, and 7) assurance of the deliverance through Mark 16:17-18. This was to be repeated three successive days. Meanwhile, prayers were also to be said from the chancel of the church.⁸⁷ Luther told Bernhard Wurzelmann that he had experienced 'a very wicked demon, but we succeeded in subduing him by perseverance and by unceasing prayer⁸⁸ and unquestioning faith'.⁸⁹ Although he does not usually mention it, Luther can also enjoin fasting in connection with prayer for deliverance, perhaps connecting it with persistence in prayer.

Luther took a qualified cessationist view that the special gift of exorcism was no longer generally active in the church of his day, as at the time of the apostles, and hence the practice of direct command to the demons was discouraged.⁹⁰ The practice was further discouraged insofar as Luther seemed to perceive it as another 'ritual'.

Luther and those who followed him display a strong aversion to 'exorcism', which refers to the papistic *Rituale Romanum* along with accreted ceremonies, superstitions, and semi-magical practices of the day, as they obscure the simplicity and centrality of Christ and faith.⁹¹ Thus the Lutheran tradition uses the word 'exorcism' in a wide sense (dealing with possession) and a narrow sense (the ritual aspects), affirming the first, while pouring scorn on the second.

Important for the development of a Lutheran approach to deliverance ministry is the distinction between spiritual and bodily possession. Luther says:

People are possessed [by the devil] in two ways: some corporally, according to their [external] humanity, and others spiritually, according to their spirit [or soul], as is the case with all the godless. In those who are corporally possessed and frenzied, the devil inhabits and vexes only the body, not the soul. So the soul remains secure and unharmed. The demons can be driven out of such people by prayer and fasting.⁹²

Luther interprets 1 Timothy 1:19,20 to mean that the body of a Christian can be harassed by the devil, but that such a person dying in this state dies saved.⁹³ Luther had no trouble accepting the faith of the possessed, and did not see baptism as a complete veto of the possibility of 'possession', although it is a resource on which to base believing prayer.

⁸⁶ (Höcker, in Ludwig Dunte, *Decisiones casuum conscientiae* [1664], pp 100-103; translated by Benjamin Mayes)

⁸⁷ Letter to Severin Schulze [June 1, 1545], in *Luther: letters of spiritual counsel*, 52.

⁸⁸ The need for persistence is also a reminder that deliverance was not expected to come immediately.

⁸⁹ Letter to Bernard Wurzelmann [Nov. 2, 1535], in *Luther: letters of spiritual counsel*, 42-43.

⁹⁰ Some later writers believed that the charism of exorcism remained but as a special occasional gift of God rather than an ongoing spiritual ability present in some individuals. This is not incompatible with Luther's own position.

⁹¹ This aversion is reflected in his reworking of the baptismal exorcisms.

⁹² LW 58:75 (Table Talk No 1170, 1530).

⁹³ LW 54:386 (Table Talk No 5074, between June 11 and 19, 1540).

The 16th and 17th Century Tradition

Johannes Bugenhagen (1485–1558), the pastor of St. Mary's, the Wittenberg town church, followed Luther in taking the same low-key approach to exorcism that Luther took. On the eve of All Saints 1530, Bugenhagen was called to attend a girl showing many traditional signs of demonic activity. He first spoke to the girl and found that she gave 'proper Christian answers and a good understanding of her baptism'. He assured her that she did not belong to the devil just because he tortured her. He then knelt, laid hands on her head, and prayed. She thanked him as he left, but he was later summoned again. Again, he simply assured her that she was baptized, knelt, lay hand on her and prayed claiming Christ's promise in Mark 16:17–18. The girl became comatose and after she had recovered, he again knelt, lay on hands, and prayed. Bugenhagen's method of deliverance here is marked by calm, confident prayer for release and trust in God's powerful word.⁹⁴

In June 1546, just four months after Luther's death, Bugenhagen performed an exorcism at St. Mary's Church. Once again, there is no elaborate ritual, but instead a clear word of Scripture, a reminder of Baptism, a confession of the faith (in the words of the Apostles' Creed), the laying on of hands, and prayer for release.⁹⁵ There is nothing here in this act of deliverance that lies outside the work of the parish pastor in ministering to people suffering from demonic attack, even if the account is called an 'exorcism'. Wengert and Krey list five aspects of this exorcism (we would prefer to call it a deliverance) that mark it as characteristically Lutheran: 1. It is grounded in the promise attached to Baptism; 2. it contains elements of catechesis—here it is the Creed but it could also be the Lord's Prayer; 3. it involves, as it always should, a pastoral conversation; most importantly, Bugenhagen treats her as a Christian, not as an unbeliever or damned person;⁹⁶ 4. the exorcism is performed in the presence of the whole congregation so that the pastor's words can strengthen their faith as much as that of the afflicted person and her family; 5. there is no trace of magic or superstition (in the sense of excessive fear of the supernatural or irrational belief).⁹⁷

Bugenhagen clearly believed that a Christian could be possessed, but distinguished between such possession and loss of salvation. He shared Luther's reliance on persistent, faithful prayer and the promises of Scripture.

Luther's followers retained his belief that the devil was encountered daily. They attributed many failings of morals and theology to the presence of demons. For example, Nikolaus Amsdorf, Joachim Mörlin and other Gnesio-Lutherans were of the opinion that the devil was the mastermind behind the adiaphorists and the Augsburg Interim. By the late 16th century the *Teufelbücher* (books on specific demons, including for example, the demon of Calvinism) amounted to perhaps 10% of the Protestant book market.⁹⁸

This increased literary output regarding demons corresponds in the upsurge in reported demonic possession in the late 16th century beginning at about 1560, and including many cases of mass possession. This upsurge was particularly experienced in the Lutheran territories. Lutherans accepted demonic possession as something that might happen even

⁹⁴ The whole story is recounted in a letter to the Wittenberg theologians (i.e. Luther, Melanchthon, and Jonas) written by Bugenhagen. For the letter, see John Warwick Montgomery, 1975, *Principalities and Powers: A New Look at the World of the Occult*, new rev. and enlarged edition, Bethany Fellowship, Minneapolis, 196–200.

⁹⁵ For the brief account, translated from a newly discovered manuscript, see Timothy J Wengert and Philip DW Krey, 2007, 'A June 1546 Exorcism in Wittenberg as a Pastoral Act' in *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 98: 72–73.

⁹⁶ This is significant because, as we mentioned earlier, there are elements within Protestantism, as well as the Lutheran tradition, that would deny that a baptised Christian can be 'possessed'. However, as we have seen, based on the New Testament the term *daimonizomai* can describe the full spectrum of people suffering from demonic attack with varying degrees of intensity. Therefore, properly understood, it is not a contradiction in terms to say that a baptised Christian may be demon-possessed.

⁹⁷ 'Exorcism in Wittenberg', 82–3.

⁹⁸ Nischan, *Lutherans and Calvinists in the age of confessionalism*, V 5.

to the pious, and followed Luther's approach in dealing with it.⁹⁹ The general approach is well illustrated by the commission that investigated the mass possessions in Friedeberg (1593) and (Spandau) 1594 which 'urged prayer and fasting, and, in true Lutheran fashion, greater reliance on God's word and frequent communion...', avoidance of superstitious exorcism, and that after deliverance liberated people avoid sin (VII,18). Melchior Neukirch in 1596 also published prayers and hymns so that the whole city could pray for deliverance for a woman. These included a prayer previously published for the same purpose by his predecessor Martin Chemnitz performed a deliverance in 1574 while superintendent of Braunschweig, as had Joachim Mörlin before him.

There is no doubt that the Lutherans were aware of psychological, sociological and physical factors in the cases of purported demonic possession and did not simply naively assume that all was as it appeared. From the perspective of today, however, we may attribute more to these factors than they did. It may even be that the practice of attributing moral and theological failings to demonic activity contributed to the increased reporting of possession in Gnesio-Lutheran territory. This reminds us that a discourse that emphasises the devil may be counterproductive.

In the 17th century, Balduin's *Pastorale* 1628 repeats the distinction of spiritual and corporeal possession, and hence encourages pastors to assure people that possession does not mean that their salvation is at risk. He warns pastors to use a differential diagnosis to distinguish from other sources of abnormality, and to consult doctors. The tools of ministry are faith, prayer, penitence and everything is to happen by the Word and prayer. He knows that it is not always effective. He encourages pastors to avoid superstition. Hartmann's *Pastorale* of 1678 discusses among other things, bodily and spiritual possession, the mysterious permission of God and the affliction of the pious and impious.

Johann Christoph Blumhardt

Johann Christoph Blumhardt 1805-1880 was a respected Lutheran pastor and mission coordinator. He is most famous for his encounter with possession in the person of Gottliebin Dittus in the town of Möttlingen, which is one of the most extensive case studies of Lutheran approach to deliverance that we have.¹⁰⁰ We should not forget, however, that Blumhardt evaluated the significance of this deliverance in part from the way that it opened the door to a spiritual awakening in the town of Möttlingen (focussed on confession and absolution) and his later ministry of healing in Bad Boll.¹⁰¹ We must also not forget that, from the beginning, Blumhardt believed that healing and deliverance are secondary phenomena, even though connected to the advancement of God's kingdom. The real issue is always that of conversion (thought of as an ongoing coming to Christ).

⁹⁹ Wengert reminds us that the exorcistic controversy took place in this milieu in which, 'the same pastors who were driving out the devil in baptism as a matter of course also, on occasion, shielded parishioners from later attacks by the same devil through exorcisms' (Wengert:74).

¹⁰⁰ The struggle took place over about two years. Gottliebin Dittus displayed in those two years many of the hallmarks of possession recorded in other literature. These included writhing, contorted body, strange voices, other languages, living creatures coming from her mouth (once 6 bats), suicide attempts, visions, possible astral projection, knitting needles and odd items extruding from inside her body and needing to be pulled out, poltergeist activity and strange lights, huge bleeding for no apparent reason, dreams of being touched by a burning hand corresponding with real burns all while being watched in bed, vomiting sand, bent nails, and other items of a size that seems incredible could fit in her throat. The activity of the pastor seems to bring about a defiant worsening of the conditions, blows from nowhere, claims that multiple (hundreds) of demons are present, and a seeming hierarchy among them.

¹⁰¹ He also believed that it meant that he was living in the last days, an expectation and hope that he was disconcerted to find he was mistaken about in his own last days.

Blumhardt's firm conviction is that all spiritual warfare and deliverance takes place on the very simple assumption that 'Jesus is Victor'.¹⁰² If God is the victor, then much human activity is not required, but simple faith that God will act faithfully and powerfully, according to his will. Prayer is the essential. But prayer will be the simple prayer of faith. Many words are not required. Even a deep understanding of the health problems is not required. God, after all, knows all that already. (Occasionally, Blumhardt insulted people by the brevity of his prayer for them. In a few instances they were angered, but healed on their way home anyway.) This simplicity of faith in prayer also means that human beings are not to set agendas for God. Neither the time nor place nor manner of the healing may be set; all things must be allowed to be conditioned by God's will. On the other hand, the Father enjoins us to persistence in prayer and often prayers that seem unanswered at first are answered after a vast amount of persistence, patience, and submission to God's will has been exercised.

When Blumhardt dealt with Gottliebin Dittus he was at the start of his healing career and on unfamiliar ground. Hence some of his approaches and actions do not reflect his mature reflections.¹⁰³ What follows are some of the practical lessons he learnt during the episode and also affirmed or modified later in life.

Blumhardt always avoided the traditional rite of exorcism and various ceremonies, fearing that they gave ground to superstition. He also avoided the semi-magical practices of his day for dealing with evil influences, believing that they were themselves evil temptations.¹⁰⁴ His emphasis in the end lay on simple faith and simple prayer. Even for a serious case at Bad Boll he was more interested in creating an effective loving community around the person than exorcism.

It is remarkable how Blumhardt used the local doctor, apothecary and mayor in his work with Gottliebin Dittus. Any questions he had about the medical profession disappeared in later life when he worked closely with an asylum and regularly sought the help of doctors. He also was quite able to use the help of others to be witnesses to what happened, never visiting the woman alone. On the other hand, he discouraged curiosity and crowds of witnesses if there were disturbing things to be seen. He used people and a police officer to a set watch to look for other possible sources of seemingly paranormal phenomena. Above all, he viewed the local congregation as a church militant and asked for the prayers of others.

Throughout his life (in the deliverance of Fraulein Dittus, the awakening at Möttlingen and at Bad Boll), Blumhardt's approach to dealing with people was remarkably consistent. He listens briefly to a person, prays with them a little, promises his own personal private prayer for them and tells them to go to church services. The pastor is simply a guide in the approach to God.

¹⁰² His core conviction is perhaps formed by two quotations from the beginning and end of what he called 'the struggle'. Somewhere near the beginning Blumhardt really entered into the struggle when, indignant at the affect that the demonic was having on Gottliebin, he took her hands in prayer and shouted in her ear 'Gottliebin, put your hands together and pray, "Lord Jesus, help me!" We have seen enough of what the devil can do; now let us see what the Lord Jesus can do!'. That marks the beginning of Blumhardt's full engagement in the struggle with the evil spirit. The second is found in the mouth of the departing demon then afflicting Gottliebin's sister at the critical moment when the powers of darkness seemed to be broken. At 2 am the demon cries out 'Jesus is victor! Jesus is victor!' and then dies down and is gone by 8 am. Some activity remains in the next few weeks but the battle is over.

¹⁰³ For example, he developed a slightly odd demonology based on what he heard from the mouth of Dittus, while in later practice he refused to allow demons to speak and left the room if they did so. 'Now I permit no demon to speak; I command it to keep silence, and if it does not keep silence, I go' (Ising: 170).

¹⁰⁴ Writing Christ's name on paper and pinning to the doorway, repeating a bible verse multiple times, reading prescribed texts, was an example of the sort of thing he eventually refused to do. Even the more scientific magnetism (what we might now call hypnotism) was eschewed. Blumhardt regularly affirmed his distaste of exorcism (in the narrower sense) and combated the rumour that he practiced it. (Ising: 321)

Ising says that for Blumhardt, his pastoral practice of healing was unthinkable without the practice of preaching and worship. He regularly tells people to go to services and listen to preaching. He gives public instruction in house groups, catechetical classes, and sermons, and recommends that those seeking help go to them, rather than giving them private instruction in their own home. He taught people how to confess and seek absolution and how to attend the Lord's Supper.

In dealing with Gottliebin Dittus he also had his small group of attenders (her family and other trusted volunteers such as the mayor, doctor etc.) sing hymns, and the Bible was read. This last brings us to the reminder that always for Blumhardt 'the criterion of whether such experiences are authentic is always the Scripture. This was the only way he was able to maintain his balance and avoid fanaticism'.¹⁰⁵ It was for him the final and sure test. In later years he disavowed some practices because he could not see them in scripture. He insists that he is committed 'not to go further than the scripture leads us'. Ising claims that Blumhardt's practice, if not always his theory¹⁰⁶, was always scriptural – 'He refrains from any special measures; nothing but prayer and fasting, as in Matthew 17:21 and Mark 9:29, is his policy'.¹⁰⁷

Blumhardt sought to remain 'sober' in his faith and judgements. He tried to avoid publicity wherever possible, and was concerned that phenomena not be misattributed to paranormal sources where they may simply have trickery, illness, or self-deception at the core. He constantly refuses to panic or be alarmed at what happens and a few times leaves just as others would think that things are at a height and staying would be compulsory. When confronted by poltergeist activity, he simply moves the victim to a new house. Blumhardt even avoided the laying on of hands because of its association with hypnotism in his day. He wanted it to be clear that the only basis of healing was prayer. In later years, he refuses to allow people suffering from depression to come to Bad Boll for the very good reason that the place is too isolated and there is not enough to keep them busy.

Blumhardt exhibits a genuinely Lutheran approach to deliverance. He does not see himself as an exorcist but as a pastoral counselor (*Seelsorger*).¹⁰⁸ He refuses to use any exorcistic ceremonies; he does not recite any prescribed text, such as the *Rituale Romanum*, nor does he even have set Bible texts that he repeats in case they are understood superstitiously. For him the main thing is prayer and pastoral care.¹⁰⁹ He often shows a casual disdain for the evil spirit, does not interrogate it or engage it in conversation or do anything to dignify it but simply ignores it and acts as if it was not even there. In fact he does not even permit the demon to speak.¹¹⁰

Kurt Koch – 20th Century

Kurt Koch, a Lutheran in dialogue with charismatic and psychoanalytical sources, was a major player in the presence of the occult explosion after World War II and through the 1960s and 70s. Koch consistently discusses 'exorcism' under the heading of 'pastoral

¹⁰⁵ Ising, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt*, 45.

¹⁰⁶ For example, things he heard from the mouth of Gottliebin Dittus influenced some of his early theorising about the spirit realm. These theories he held rather lightly in his later years.

¹⁰⁷ Ising, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt*, 182.

¹⁰⁸ Ising, *Blumhardt*, 321 makes the point: 'Blumhardt also finds himself combating the rumor that he practices exorcism. Certainly, he believes in demonic possession; yet in his pastoral practice exorcism is not a feature. It is precisely such [demon possessed] people whom he merely directs to his church services and devotional times'. Again, 'the task of the pastoral counselor can normally be limited to prayer with the seeker in all brevity, or to silent prayer ... Healing people is beyond his power, he admits; but we can go together to One who does have it in His power' (322).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 168-9.

¹¹⁰ Blumhardt's contemptuous disregard for demons is clearly evident from this statement: "Now I permit no demon to speak; I command it to keep silence, and if it does not keep silence, I go;" see Ising, *Blumhardt*, 170.

counselling of those in subjection' and like terms. The ministry is therefore a part of pastoral counsel and not divorced from the usual approaches to spiritual battle.

Briefly his outline for dealing with occult subjection is: 1. A differential diagnosis to distinguish it from mental disorders, 2. confession of sin, 3. renunciation of the devil, 4. absolution, 5. spiritual struggle and 6. the ongoing sanctified life of the delivered. The 'spiritual struggle' consists of prayer and fasting, the intercession of others, and exorcism.¹¹¹ The term occult subjection is his way of referring to demonization and signifies the occult penetration of dark powers into the life of a human being. He notes that the Old Testament provides a catalog of forbidden practices known to lead a person into subjection to the powers of darkness associated with the occult (Deut 18:10, 22).¹¹²

Koch had much experience with 'occult subjection' but believed cases of pure demon possession to be rare. He did believe that Christians can be subjected, especially where there is deliberate sin or involvement with the occult. He notes though that there is little evidence for the subjection of those who live in pious obedience to the Lord. However, he holds that Christians can fall under demonic influence, especially where they deliberately sin or expose themselves to the world of the occult, but that it is unlikely to happen otherwise.¹¹³ He always works closely with the medical profession to ensure that a case of suspected demonization does not have a purely physical or mental causation.

In exorcism 'every tendency to the sensationalist is the very opposite of the help which is required. This implies a rejection of all externalized displays of exorcism, such as were practiced in the medieval church. This limitation also means a rejection of the pseudo-exorcism of some Christian groups, and particularly sectarian movements, in our day'.¹¹⁴ His conviction that 'the sovereign subject of this liberating ministry is never the pastor, but Christ, whose presence becomes a reality through the Holy Spirit',¹¹⁵ holds clear echoes of Luther and Blumhardt's approach which stresses that 'Jesus Christ is Victor'. Again the simplicity of faith and prayer is central.

Koch also warns of the detrimental effect on faith of mistaken exorcisms, which leave the victim with the impression that they are afflicted by Satan and that God's help is illusory. Both proper diagnostic practice and discernment are needed to distinguish the subjected from the medically or mentally ill. This is a repeat of the Lutheran respect for God's work through the disciplines of the left-hand kingdom, and the desire to avoid any sort of sensationalism or deception whether intended or not.

¹¹¹ Kurt E. Koch, *Christian Counseling and Occultism* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1965), 305-332. See also Koch, *Occult Bondage and Deliverance: Advice for Counselling the Sick, the Troubled, and the Occultly Oppressed* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1972), 88-122. Koch is ambivalent about the laying on of hands; in one book he seems to suggest it while in another he seems to say it should be eschewed.

¹¹² Kurt Koch, *Demonology, Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1973), 141, notes that the Roman Catholic Church has specified four criteria that could indicate demonization: 1. the knowledge of a language previously unknown; 2. knowledge of hidden or secret things; 3. demonstration of superhuman strength; 4. an aversion to the things of God. Koch himself offers eight indications of possible occult subjection based on Luke 8:26-39: a resident alien personality; unusual strength; inner conflict; resistance/opposition to the things of God; clairvoyance; ability to speak with voices not one's own; sudden deliverance possible; and finally, transference of demons to people or animals (pp. 136-141).

¹¹³ Kurt Koch, *Occult Bondage and Deliverance: Counseling the Occultly Oppressed* (Grand Rapids MI: Kregel Publications, 1972), 190.

¹¹⁴ Koch, *Christian counselling and occultism*, 323.

¹¹⁵ Koch, *Christian counselling and occultism*, 325.

Summary of Lutheran approach to deliverance ministry

The confessional Lutheran tradition teaches that any discussion of 'possession' must begin by stressing that possession first and foremost is to be understood as unbelief.¹¹⁶ The question of our salvation through faith in Christ is always the main issue. On the other hand, Lutheranism historically does not deny the reality of corporeal demonic possession. Christians can be afflicted by demonic subjection ('possession' is the usual term), but this does not in any way affect their standing before God. It is an evil of the body rather than of the spirit. People are encouraged to understand their baptism and not be in doubt as to their salvation.

On the other hand, possession is admittedly viewed as more likely in instances of dabbling in the occult or magical practice and these breaches of the first commandment will of course have their own effect on faith and salvation. A regular part of dealing with spiritually subjected people is the investigation as to the state of their faith and morals.

The main approach to deliverance is based on the unshakable conviction that, as Blumhardt might say, 'Jesus is Victor'. This leads to a practice of simple, even short, but persistent, prayer in full faith, as the means of deliverance.

Other things may be included in the deliverance as an aid to faith, but they must never obscure the simplicity of simple believing prayer in Christ who is the victor. Lutheran approaches will avoid pomp and ceremony, either of a ritualistic or enthusiastic kind. Such additions may include the Creed, a sermon, assurance that God answers prayer, Bible texts, baptismal reminders, the signing of hymns by those assembled, the laying on of hands, and perhaps fasting along with the prayer. Prayers are normally deprecatory rather than imprecatory. The tradition accepts that deliverance may not be immediate and emphasises faithful submission to God resulting in prayer which is not prescriptive for God but which is carried on with great persistence. The wider congregational community may at times be involved in this prayer, and deliverance ministry in general cannot be separated from the normal spiritual battle of the church, carried on through word and sacrament with prayer and faith.

There is also a marked refusal to panic or rush action in the face of unusual manifestations. A sober, common-sense approach is maintained without insisting that deliverance be immediate and on the spot. Differential diagnosis is sought with full awareness of the possibilities of mental and physical disorders, and the dangers of deception, whether witting or unwitting. Lutherans respect medical and health professionals and will not be slow to refer anyone suspected of possession to a doctor or psychiatrist for an expert medical opinion.

¹¹⁶ A distinction needs to be made between unbelief, on the one hand, and doubt or struggle, on the other. Faith and doubt are opposite sides of the same coin. They coexist. Doubt is not the opposite of faith but an element of it because faith by its very nature will always entail a struggle to believe God's promises in the face of the claims of the unbelieving world that God, if he even exists, is unjust, unreliable, and not to be trusted.

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