

## DEMON POSSESSION

Various contributors

Demonic possession is when an evil spirit takes possession of an individual by a malevolent preternatural being, commonly known as a demon or devil.

Obsessions and possessions of the devil are sometimes placed in the rank of apparitions of the evil spirits among men. It is obsession when the demon acts within a host and against the person whom it besets, and possession when he acts internally against an innocent person causing injury pain and even death. The demon may agitate the host, excite their ill humour, make them utter blasphemy, speak in tongues they have never learned, discovers to them unknown secrets, and inspires them with the knowledge of the obscurest things in philosophy. This is why Pentecostals and charismatics should take this fact on board concerning their belief that speaking in tongues is relevant today.

Most cultures contain some concept of demonic possession. The oldest references to demonic possession are from the Sumerians, who believed that all diseases of the body and mind were caused by "sickness demons" called gidim or gid-dim. The priests who practised exorcisms in these nations were called ashipu (sorcerer) as opposed to an asu (physician) who applied bandages and salves. Many cuneiform clay tablets contain prayers to certain gods asking for protection from demons, while others ask the gods to expel the demons that have invaded their bodies.

The innocent victim plagued by the demon in the host may suffer respiratory problems and pains in the limbs which can lead to death. In the case of Anneliese Michel a medium performed an exorcism and the demons came out with such force that she died.

Demons can and do choose a host in which to dwell and generate pain and injury to a third party. The host is invariably a person of no real merit or purpose and whose own life style may well be questionable. The host causes pain, injury and great discomfort to an innocent party whose life is usually exemplary since evil spirits are bent on hurting good people. The argument that the host is not aware of his bad conduct is untenable since his own life will display elements of his own sordid life and personality, The host may be suffering for an illness which needs regular treatment.

There are many cases of someone possessed by an evil spirit who has a neighbour or relation who is friends with the victim of this evil. As the offending host is a neighbour it may be felt that he cannot be shunned but, on the other hand, the victim is suffering and his health and well being are far more important than the neighbour.

We have many cases of asthma sufferers who have died because of an evil spirit in a host inflicting respiratory problems on an innocent victim.

The possession of evil spirits is acknowledged by spiritualists, mediums and psychics who in themselves are often motivated by evil. Tarot cards were originally playing cards but spiritualists have used them for other purposes with evil consequences.

Shamanic cultures believe in demon possession and shamans perform exorcisms. In these cultures, diseases are often attributed to the presence of a vengeful spirit (or loosely termed demon) in the body of the patient. These spirits are more often the spectres of animals or people wronged by the bearer, the exorcism rites usually consisting of respectful offerings or sacrificial offerings.

Demon possession derives from the Devil, i.e. Satan, or one of his lesser demons. Satan and his demons are actually fallen angels

"In the Old Testament...We are told that "an evil spirit from the Lord troubled" Saul (1 Samuel 16:14). The Hebrew *rûah* need not imply a personal influence, though, if we may judge from Josephus (Ant. Jud., VI, viii, 2; ii, 2), the Jews were inclined to give the word that meaning in this very case. In New Testament times, however, the phenomenon had become very common." However, the Old Testament does contain numerous references to evil spirits, often interacting in malevolent ways with people.

- 1 Samuel 16:23 So it came about whenever the evil spirit from God came to Saul, David would take the harp and play it with his hand; and Saul would be refreshed and be well, and the evil spirit would depart from him.
- 1 Kings 22:21: A lying spirit entered the mouths of false prophets

### **Book of Job**

According to the Book of Job, demonic entities are unable to inflict torment upon a person unless under the direct permission of God. Satan does so as an attempt to lead Job to curse God.

2:4 "Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. 5 But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face." 6 The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life." Job 2:4-6

- Job 2:7,12: Job is afflicted with painful sores to the extent he was unrecognisable
- Job 7:5: Job's body is clothed with worms and scabs, his skin is broken and festering
- Job 7:13-16: Job is tormented with nightmares

### **Book of Tobit**

In the book of Tobit, Sarah resided in the city of Media was tormented by a demon. had been married to seven husbands, all of whom the evil spirit Asmodeus had killed before they had lain with her; indicating that the demon caused her to strangle them. Tobit 3:8 Tobias had previously caught a fish in the story and was instructed by Brother Aarias on how to cast out the demon: "if a devil or an evil spirit trouble any, we must make a smoke thereof before the man or the woman, and the party shall be no more vexed. Tobit 6:7 As for the gall, it is good to anoint a man that hath whiteness in his eyes, and he shall be healed." Tobit 6:8 It was stated previously that his father developed blindness but was not stated it was directly from the cause of a demon.

### **New Testament**

The New Testament mentions several episodes in which Jesus drove out demons from persons:

- Matthew 4:23-25: Demon-possessed persons are healed by Jesus (also Luke 6:17-19).
- Matthew 7:21-23: Many will drive out demons in Jesus' name (also Mark 16:17; Luke 10:17; Acts 5:16; 8:7).
- Matthew 8:14-17: Jesus healed many demon-possessed (also Mark 1:29-39; Luke 4:33-41).
- Matthew 8:28-34: Jesus sent a herd of demons from two men into a herd of pigs ("about two thousand" pigs, according to the account at Mark. Mark's account and Luke 8:26-39, mention only the one man).

- Matthew 9:32-34: Jesus made a demon-possessed mute man speak, the Pharisees said it was by the power of Beelzebul (also Mark 3:20-22).
- Matthew 10:1-8: The Twelve Apostles given the authority to drive out evil spirits (also Mark 3:15; 6:7; 6:13; Luke 9:1; 10:17).
- Matthew 11:16-19: "this generation" said that John the Baptist was possessed by a demon (also Luke 7:31-35).
- Matthew 12:22-32: Jesus healed a demon-possessed blind and dumb man (also Luke 11:14-23; Mark 3:20-30).
- Matthew 12:43-45: Jesus told an allegory of nasty spirits coming back home, that is, to the human body where they have lived before (also Luke 11:24-26).
- Matthew 15:21-28: Jesus expelled a demon from the body of the daughter of a Canaanite woman (also Mark 7:24-30).
- Matthew 17:14-21: Jesus healed a boy by driving out a demon from him (also Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-49).
- Mark 1:21-28: Jesus expelled an unclean spirit from a man (also Luke 4:31-37).
- Mark 9:38-40: A non-Christian is seen driving out demons in Jesus' name (also Luke 9:49-50).
- Mark 16:9: Jesus had driven seven demons out of Mary Magdalene (also Luke 8:2).
- Luke 7:21: Many people are cleansed from evil spirits by Jesus.
- Luke 13:10-17: Jesus expelled a spirit of disease from the body of a woman on the Sabbath.
- Luke 13:31-32: Jesus continued to cast out demons even though Herod Antipas wanted to kill him.
- Luke 22:3: Satan entered into Judas Iscariot (also John 13:27).
- John 7:20: A "crowd of Jews" that wanted to kill Jesus said he was demon-possessed.
- John 8:48-52: "The Jews" said Jesus was a Samaritan and demon-possessed.
- John 10:20-21: Many Jews said Jesus was raving mad and demon-possessed, others said he was not.
- Acts 5:3: Satan filled the heart of Ananias.
- Acts 5:16: The Apostles healed those tormented by evil spirits.
- Acts 8:6-8: At the teaching of Philip the Evangelist in Samaria, evil spirits came out of many.
- Acts 8:18-19: Simon Magus offered to buy the power of Laying on of hands.
- Acts 10:38: St. Peter said Jesus healed all who were under the power of the Devil.

- Acts 16:16-24: Paul and Silas were imprisoned for driving a future-telling spirit out of a slave girl.
- Acts 19:11-12: Handkerchiefs and aprons touched by Paul cured illness and drove out evil spirits.
- Acts 19:13-20: Seven sons of Sceva attempted to drive out evil spirits by saying: "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches,

I command you to come out."

But because they did not have faith in Jesus, they were unsuccessful and were actually driven from that house by the possessed.

- Revelation 18:2: The Whore of Babylon is a home for demons, evil spirits and unclean birds.

Acts of the Apostles also contains a number of references to people coming under the influence of the Holy Spirit (1:8, 2:4, 2:17-18, 2:38, 4:8, 4:31, 6:3-5, 7:55, 8:15-19, 8:39, 9:17, 10:19, 11:12-16, 11:28, 13:9, 16:6-7, 19:2-6, 20:23, 21:11, 23:8-9) which is believed to be a good thing (see Baptism with the Holy Spirit) in contrast to demonic influence.

The 1902 work *Demonic possession in the New Testament* by Rev. William Menzies Alexander attempted to explain accounts of possession in the Synoptic Gospels, outlining their historical, medical and theological aspects.

It must not be taken that only Christians acknowledge demons, evil spirits etc. Christianity tends to get blamed for everything

## **Judaism**

According to Antoine Augustin Calmet, the Jews attributed the greater part of their maladies to the works of demons and they were persuaded that demonic torments were a punishment for some crime either known or unrevealed. He also states:

Although the Jews were sufficiently credulous concerning the operations of the evil spirit, they at the same time believed that in general the demons who tormented certain persons were nothing else than the souls of some wretches, who, fearing to repair to the place destined for them, took possession of the body of some mortal whom they tormented and endeavoured to deprive of life

## **Christianity**

Catholic exorcists differentiate between "ordinary" Satanic/demonic activity or influence (mundane everyday temptations) and "extraordinary" Satanic/demonic activity, which can take six different forms, ranging from complete control by Satan or some demon(s) to voluntary submission:

- 1 Possession, in which Satan or some demon(s) takes full possession of a person's body without their knowledge or consent, so the victim is therefore morally blameless.
- 2 Obsession, which includes sudden attacks of irrationally obsessive thoughts, usually culminating in suicidal ideation, and typically influences dreams.

- 3 Oppression, in which there is no loss of consciousness or involuntary action, such as in the biblical Book of Job in which Job was tormented by a series of misfortunes in business, family, and health.
- 4 External physical pain caused by Satan or some demon(s).
- 5 Infestation, which affects houses, things, or animals; and
- 6 Subjugation, in which a person voluntarily submits to Satan or some demon(s).

In *Hostage to the Devil*, Malachi Martin also mentions a type of demonic attack called "familiarisation". He writes:

The possessing spirit in "familiarisation" is seeking to "come and live with" the subject. If accepted, the spirit becomes the constant and continuously present companion of the possessed. The two "persons", the "familiar" and the "possessed", remain separate and distinct. The "possessed" is aware of his "familiar".

True demonic or satanic possession has been characterised since the Middle Ages, in the Roman Ritual, by the following four typical characteristics

- 1 Manifestation of superhuman strength.
- 2 Speaking in tongues or languages that the victim cannot know.
- 3 Revelation of knowledge, distant or hidden, that the victim cannot know.
- 4 Blasphemous rage and an aversion to holy symbols or relics.

The Bible indicates that people can be possessed by demons but that the demons can respond to Jesus's authority:

In the synagogue, there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, 34 "Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" "Be quiet!" Jesus said sternly. "Come out of him!" Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him. All the people were amazed and said to each other, "What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!" And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area. (Luke 4:33-35 NIV)

It also indicates that demons can possess animals as in the exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac:

When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places. Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss. A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. When the demons came out of

the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. (Luke 8:27-33 NIV)

The literal view of demonisation is held by a number of Christian denominations. Official Catholic doctrine affirms that demonic possession can occur as distinguished from mental illness, but stresses that cases of mental illness should not be misdiagnosed as demonic influence. Catholic exorcisms can occur only under the authority of a bishop and in accordance with strict rules; a simple exorcism also occurs during Baptism (CCC 1673). In charismatic Christianity, deliverance ministries are activities carried out by individuals or groups aimed at solving problems related to demons and spirits, especially possession of the body and soul, but not the spirit as ministries like Ellel Ministries International, Don Dickerman Ministries and Neil T. Anderson explicitly teach that a Christian can not have demons in their spirit because the Holy Spirit lives there, though they can have demons in their body or soul due to inner emotional wounds, sexual abuse, satanic ritual abuse.[15] This is usually known as partial possession or demonic infestation, as opposed to outside demonic oppression which does not reside in any of the 3 parts of a person: body, soul, spirit.

A great deal of controversy surrounds the book *War on the Saints* by Jessie Penn-Lewis published in 1912 as a resource to the Christian faced with combating demon influences.

In the New Testament Jesus is reported to have encountered people who were demonised and to have driven the "evil spirits" out of these demoniacs. In the 4th century, Saint Hilary of Poitiers asserted that demons entered the bodies of humans to use them as if they were theirs, and also proposed that the same could happen with animals.

The New Testament's description of people who had evil spirits includes a capacity for hidden knowledge (e.g., future events, innermost thoughts of the people around them) (Acts 16:16) and great strength (Act 19:16), among others, and shows those with evil spirits can speak of Christ (Acts 19:16, Mark 3:11). According to Catholic theologians[citation needed], demonic assault can be involuntary[8] and allowed by God to test a person (for more details about God's tests on persons see Job). Involuntary demonic assault, according to these theologians, cannot be denied because this would imply the negation of the cases mentioned in the New Testament (12, some of them repeated in more than one Gospel). However, in the overwhelming majority of cases of alleged demonic possession in modern times, the victim can suffer due to any of a number of personal initiatives: occult practices, mortal sin, loss of faith, or psychological trauma, among others. Furthermore, Malachi Martin goes as far as to say "...no person can be Possessed without some degree of cooperation on his or her part," and "The effective cause of Possession is the voluntary collaboration of an individual, through his faculties of mind and will, with one or more of those bodiless, genderless creatures called demons."

In previous centuries, the Christian church offered suggestions on safeguarding one's home. Suggestions ranged from dousing a household with Holy water, placing wax and herbs on thresholds to "ward off witches occult," and avoiding certain areas of townships known to be frequented by witches and Devil worshippers after dark.

T. B. Joshua, a Nigerian pastor, has one of the most prominent 'deliverance' ministries, releasing hundreds of videos on YouTube and his Christian television station, Emmanuel TV, purporting to show individuals being 'delivered' from apparent 'demonic possession'.

Again we want to stress that it is not just Christianity that raises these issues.

## **Buddhism**

In Buddhism, a demon can either be a soul suffering in the hell realm, or alternatively, it could be a delusion.

Practitioner will go to the local Buddhist healer for treatment. The healer will commonly take their pulse and urine while offering counsel - the aim being to divine the origins of the patient's suffering. In the case possession they may use medications, like sleeping pills, to take care of the symptoms. They will also prescribe actions to appease the demon, like giving away food and clothing in its name. Afterward, it is believed that the demon will depart to a different realm.

## **Medicine and psychology**

Several of the obsessions and possessions noted in the New Testament were simple maladies, or fantastic fancies, which made it believed that such persons were possessed by the devil. The ignorance of the people maintained this prejudice, and their being totally unacquainted with physicians and medicine served to strengthen such ideas.

Demonic possession is not a valid psychiatric or medical diagnosis recognised by either the DSM-5 or the ICD-10. Those who profess a belief in demonic possession have sometimes ascribed to possession the symptoms associated with physical or mental illnesses, such as hysteria, mania, psychosis, Tourette's syndrome, epilepsy, schizophrenia, conversion disorder or dissociative identity disorder

Additionally, there is a form of monomania called demonomania or demonopathy in which the patient believes that he or she is possessed by one or more demons.

## **Notable proven cases**

In chronological order:

- Aix-en-Provence possessions
- Loudun possessions
- Dorothy Talbye trial
- Louviers possessions
- The Possession of Elizabeth Knapp
- George Lukins
- Antoine Gay
- Johann Blumhardt
- Clara Germana Cele
- Exorcism of Roland Doe ("Robbie Mannheim")
- Michael Taylor (demoniac)

- Anneliese Michel

### **List of Dissertations**

- Daemonologie by King James VI of Scotland
- Traité sur les apparitions des esprits by Antoine Augustin Calmet

### **In fiction**

The 1973 film, *The Exorcist*, is based on the book of the same name and portrays a fictional case of demonic possession loosely inspired by the case of "Robbie Mannheim".

Demonic possession is an important element in the *Evil Dead* film series, the first of which was released in 1981. In the films, possessed people take on a zombie-like appearance.

In 1995, the U.S. daytime soap opera, *Days of Our Lives*, featured the character Dr. Marlena Evans, played by Deidre Hall, in a demonic possession storyline.

Demonic possession is a common theme in the American TV series *Supernatural*, which was first broadcast in 2005. In one episode, protagonist Sam Winchester is possessed by the demon known as Meg Masters in an attempt to get revenge for Sam exorcising her. She is eventually forced from his body but is shown to retain an understanding of Sam from the possession. The show also features angels possessing humans similar to demons, but unlike demons, angels need the people they are possessing's permission. As shown in season 9's *Road Trip*, the possessed person can kick the angel out if they no longer wish to be possessed. Occasionally powerful ghosts are able to possess people similar to demons as well.

In the 2006 film *Five Girls*, several characters are possessed by the demonic spirit named Legion.

In the 2007 Spanish horror film series *REC*, people (and animals) become infected with a contagious demonic virus. The outbreak started with the possession of a Portuguese young girl, Tristana Medeiros.

Several characters are possessed by a demonic spirit named Toby in the *Paranormal Activity* series. Katie is possessed and kills her boyfriend Micah in *Paranormal Activity*. Kristi (Katie's sister) is briefly possessed and is successfully exorcised by her husband Daniel, but both are killed by a possessed Katie who then kidnaps their son Hunter in *Paranormal Activity 2*. Toby takes over Katie (as a child) at the end of *Paranormal Activity 3*. Katie reappears and the demon still is in her in *Paranormal Activity 4*.

A manga titled *Blue Exorcist* or *Ao no exorcist* by Kazue Katō deals with issues such as demon possession and the rise of Satan in the human realm.

Demonic possession does exist. Devils enter weak people known as hosts to work their evil upon innocent and decent people and, as the cases quoted above, some innocent victims have died. As this is a physical phenomenon it shows that the work of such physics is dangerous, wrong and evil.