

## DEMON POSSESSION AND THE CHRISTIAN<sup>1</sup>

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### 1. Introduction

“Clinical evidence abounds that a Christian can be demon-controlled as a carry-over from pre-conversion days or can fall under Satan’s power after conversion and become progressively demonized, even seriously.”<sup>2</sup> The “clinical evidence” referred to here appears to be impressive. People like Mark I. Bubeck, C. Fred Dickason, Kurt Koch, Charles H. Kraft, Merrill Unger and C. Peter Wagner all give numerous examples of born-again Christians who have been diagnosed as suffering from “demonization.”<sup>3</sup> The official Assemblies of God position,<sup>4</sup> on the other hand, has rejected their view and maintains that it is not possible for Christians to be demon-possessed.

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Annual Lectureship of Asia Pacific Theological seminary in January 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *What Demons Can Do to Saints*, rev. ed. with a forward by Mark Bubeck (Chicago: Moody, 1991), p. 150.

<sup>3</sup> Mark I. Bubeck, *Overcoming the Adversary* (Chicago: Moody, 1975), pp. 87-92; C. Fred Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, with a forward by Mark I. Bubeck (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1987), pp. 187-213; Kurt Koch, *Occult Bondage and Deliverance: Advice for Counseling the Sick, the Troubled and the Occultly Oppressed* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregal, 1970), pp. 67-71; Charles H. Kraft, “Dealing with the Demonization,” in *Behind Enemy Lines: An Advanced Guide to Spiritual Warfare*, eds. Charles H. Kraft, Tom Whilte, Ed Murphy and others (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine, 1994), pp. 79-120 (89-91); Unger, *What Demons Can Do*, pp. 141-67; C. Peter Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry without Making Your Church Sick* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1988; reprint ed. Manila: OMF Literature, 1990), pp. 189-96.

<sup>4</sup> The General Presbytery of the Assemblies of God, *Can Born-Again Believers Be Demon Possessed?* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1972).

This paper will attempt to identify the arguments used as support for the assertion that Christians can be demon-possessed and will seek to show that such assertions have been based on *a priori* theological presuppositions, and questionable exegesis. It will then seek to identify the implications, which this view raises in the areas of soteriology and biblical anthropology. In the process, it will also be shown that the scriptures most often utilized to support this position, do not teach that demons can invade the lives of born-again believers.

## 2. Demon Possession or Demonization?

One of the controversies surrounding this issue is how best to translate the Koine Greek verb *daimonizomai* into English. The argument is made by many advocate writers,<sup>5</sup> that translating *daimonizomai* as “demon-possessed” is misleading and they prefer to use the term “demonization.”<sup>6</sup> While the lexicons and wordbooks translate *daimonizomai* into English as “to be possessed by a demon,”<sup>7</sup> C. Fred Dickason,<sup>8</sup> for example, argues that the present passive participle form of *daimonizomai*, *daimonizomeno* should be translated as “a demon caused passivity.”<sup>9</sup> For him, *daimonizomai* should not be understood to infer the complete control of the invaded individual by the inhabiting demon.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The term “advocates” will be used during the remainder of this paper as a term for all those who believe that Christians can be demon possessed.

<sup>6</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, pp. 37-39; Ed Murphy, *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1992), pp. 51-52; Unger, *What Demons Can Do*, pp. 97-98.

<sup>7</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 169; Werner Foerster, “*daimwn, daimonion, daimonizomai, daimonizomai*”, *deisidaimwn, deisidaimonia*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., eds. Gerhard Kittel and others, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-76), II, pp. 1-20 (19); William D. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan-Harper Collins, 1993), p. 130.

<sup>8</sup> C. Fred Dickason is chairman of the theology department at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

<sup>9</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>10</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, pp. 37-38.

The problem with using the word “possession,” according to Dickason, is that it implies “ownership.”<sup>11</sup> He asserts that the New Testament depicts demons “as squatters or invaders of territory that does not belong to them.”<sup>12</sup> Consequently, the term “demonization” is offered as an alternate English translation and is defined as “a demon caused passivity or control due to a demon’s residing within a person, which manifests its effects in various physical and mental disorders and in varying degrees.”<sup>13</sup>

There is scriptural support for Dickason’s assertion that demons are incapable of “owning” those they possess. In Luke 4:16-21 it is recorded that on the Sabbath Jesus went into the synagogue at Nazareth and read Isa 61:1-2 and then proclaimed that “today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21).<sup>14</sup> One of the statements from Isaiah which Jesus applied to himself was that he would “proclaim freedom for the prisoners” and “release the oppressed” (Luke 4:18). It is significant that in the next recorded public appearance of Jesus (Luke 4:31-36), He is again in a synagogue and while there, exorcises a demon from a man. The phrase, *ἄνθρωπος πνεύματος δαιμονίου ἀκαθάρτου* (one who has an unclean demonic spirit) is used to describe the condition of the man from whom Jesus cast out the demon (Luke 4:33). While the Greek verb *daimonizomai* is not used to describe the demon-possessed man’s condition, the phrase utilized by Luke gives the same meaning.<sup>15</sup> Although, demons clearly are invaders of that which God created in his own image (Gen 1:26), the point is well taken that *daimonizomai* should not be misunderstood to refer to the “ownership” of the possessed by the inhabiting demon.

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<sup>11</sup> The primary definition for the word “possession” of *Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam, 1965) is “the act of having or taking into control.” While this definition does not deal with ownership, the secondary definition does. It states, “something owned, occupied, or controlled” (p. 663).

<sup>12</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, p. 38.

<sup>13</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, p. 40.

<sup>14</sup> All scripture references were taken out of the New International Version.

<sup>15</sup> In Luke 8 a man is introduced with the words *ἄνθρωπος δαιμονία* (one who has a demon) and later referred to with the first aorist participle *daimonisqēi'* (one who had been demon possessed) which is from the verbal root *daimonizomai*. The importance of this is that the condition of being demon possessed is referred to in two different ways, both with the same meaning.

While the addition of the word “demonization” to the English language has caused confusion, as long as it is used simply as a substitute translation for the Greek verb *daimonizomai* and the meaning of the original Greek word is retained, there is no problem in adopting this term. However, if, in the process of adopting this new word, the implied English meaning of the Greek word is changed, then the use of this new word is unacceptable. Demonization is nothing new; it is simply a new word applied to an old concept.

Unfortunately, when advocates use the term “demonization,” the implied meaning of *daimonizomai* has often times been changed. Dickason stated in his definition that there were “varying degrees” of demonization.<sup>16</sup> However, an analysis of the word’s biblical usage does not support his assertion. The word *daimonizomai* is used thirteen times in the New Testament, occurring only in the gospels.<sup>17</sup> Of these it is significant that it is used a total of six times in reference to the Gadarene demoniac.<sup>18</sup> This man<sup>19</sup> was totally controlled by the demons inside of him, as Mark’s record indicates:

This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones (Mark 5:3-5).

This is a case of typical demon possession. This man was clearly under demonic control and the demons possessing him seem to have determined his every action.

Of the other passages which use the word *daimonizomai*, only two record symptoms for this condition. Matthew 9:32 states that the demon-possessed man was blind (*kwfoh*), while Matt 12:22 states that the demon-possessed man was blind and mute (*tuflo' kai kwfo'*). Although, scripture does not give a detailed description of all the

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<sup>16</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, p. 40.

<sup>17</sup> Scripture references which use a form of the word *daimonizomai*; Matt 4:24; 8:16, 28, 33; 9:32; 12:22; 15:22; Mark 1:32; 5:15, 16, 18; Luke 8:36; John 10:21.

<sup>18</sup> Matt 8:28, 33; Mark 5:15, 16, 18; Luke 8:36.

<sup>19</sup> Matthew refers to two demon-possessed men, while Mark and Luke only record one demon-possessed man.

symptoms surrounding demon possession, the symptoms that are recorded are significant. Demons are not just depicted as subjecting mankind to their fiendish whims but also as seeking to destroy and distort the divine image within mankind.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, it should be observed that these passages do not indicate variations in the degrees of demon possession. Many advocate writers assert that there are degrees of *daimonizomai*,<sup>21</sup> which seem to be a logical construct that is not validated by the biblical text.

What is at issue here is the degree of “control” exercised over the demon-possessed person by the invading spirit. Dickason asserts that it is logical to assume that “the more demons [there are] inhabiting [a person], the greater the hold the spirits have upon the person. This could result in more control and possibly more violent manifestations.”<sup>22</sup> While this view may seem “logical,” the biblical texts do not support this idea. The reason this is an important concern, is that advocates argue that demons are only capable of exercising limited control within the demon-possessed Christian.<sup>23</sup> Murphy states very clearly, “Satan can gain partial control over the hearts of believers who willfully sin.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, what advocates are claiming is the possibility that Christians can be *daimonizomai*, yet in a less severe way than the biblical examples. However, this assertion is based only on a logical construct. Thus, it must be rejected, since there is nothing in scripture to support such a view.

The terms “demon possession” and “demonization” have their genesis in the same Koine Greek word, yet each has been defined differently. While “demon possession” should not be understood as the “ownership” of a human by a demon, it does convey the meaning of its Greek root well. “Demonization,” on the other hand, as it is being used by advocates, brings with it an extra-biblical meaning and, thus, should not be used. The New Testament writers have established the meaning of

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<sup>20</sup> Foerster, “*daimwn*,” pp. 18-19.

<sup>21</sup> Unger, *What Demons Can Do to Saints*, pp. 98, 111-40 argues for three levels of demonization: mild, moderate and severe. Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, pp. 44-45 asserts that there are various degrees of demonization, though he does not label them.

<sup>22</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, p. 44.

<sup>23</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, pp. 134-35; Kraft, “Deanling with Demonizatin,” p. 91; Murphy, *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, p. 314; Unger, *What Demons Can Do to Saints*, pp. 87, 150.

<sup>24</sup> Murphy, *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, p. 314.

daimoniζomai and no one has the authority to add to or subtract from that meaning.

### 3. The Implications of the Advocate's View of Demonization

For those who believe in the demon possession of Christians, two searching questions come to mind; "Can God and evil reside in the same person?" and "What happens to the salvation of a supposedly demon-possessed Christian?" By looking at the responses to these issues, some of the theological presuppositions which advocates bring to the scripture will be identified. While it is acknowledged that advocates come from many varied theological traditions and backgrounds, their responses to these questions are very similar.

#### 3.1 Biblical Anthropology

"Is it possible for God and evil to coexist?" To put the question another way, "Can the Holy Spirit and a demon simultaneously inhabit a Christian?" Advocates will universally respond with a "yes" answer. The reasons they give as support for their conclusion are crucial in understanding how they interpret the scripture.

In John 3, we read about the interaction between Jesus and the Pharisee Nicodemus. Jesus told Nicodemus that "no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit" (John 3:5-6). It is clear from this passage that the Holy Spirit is the agent of human regeneration.<sup>25</sup> Thankfully, the Holy Spirit's work in people does not end there. Paul reminds us in Rom 8:9 that Christians "are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in [them]. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ." Basically, the Holy Spirit must be resident within a person in order for that person to be a born-again Christian. If the Holy Spirit is not dwelling there, then that person is simply not a Christian. Advocates and non-advocates alike will agree on this point. The disagreement arises when it is asserted that a demonic spirit is capable of cohabiting with the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>25</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, one vol. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), p. 873.

In order to justify their assertion, advocates claim that man is “a tripartite creature composed of spirit, soul and body.”<sup>26</sup> This view is based largely on 1 Thess 5:23: “May the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit (pneuma), soul (yuch) and body (swma) be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is then asserted that the Holy Spirit resides in the “spirit” of a human being and consequently demons are unable to gain access to the “spirit” of a Christian.<sup>27</sup> However, a demon “may invade and cause upheaval and chaos in the believer through his body and soul.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, by dividing a person into three distinct parts, the Holy Spirit and demons are not seen as residing in the same part of the demon-possessed Christian.

While this argument may make logical sense, it does not stand up to biblical scrutiny. In Mark 12:30, Jesus stated, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart (kardiā) and with all your soul (yuch) and with all your mind (dianoia) and with all your strength (iſcuō).” If this passage is interpreted in the same way as 1 Thess 5:23, then man is not composed of three parts, but of at least six parts. Likewise, Luke 1:46-47 should also be considered, where Mary is recorded as singing, “My soul (yuch) glorifies the Lord and my spirit (pneuma) rejoices in God my Savior.” Here, “soul” and “spirit” seem to be used almost interchangeably.<sup>29</sup> There is no universal consistency in the way these various terms are used in the scripture.

1 Corinthians 6:15-20 also has some significant contributions to make to this issue. “Do you not know that your body (swma) is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body (swmati)” (1 Cor 6:19-20). It should be noted that Paul uses the same Greek word for “body” in both 1 Thess 5:23 and 1 Cor 6:19-20. “Through the phenomenon of the indwelling Spirit, Paul now images the body as the Spirit’s temple, emphasizing that it is the ‘place’ of the Spirit’s dwelling in the individual believers’ lives.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Unger, *What Demons Can Do to Saints*, p. 86.

<sup>27</sup> Unger, *What Demons Can Do to Saints*, p. 87.

<sup>28</sup> Unger, *What Demons Can Do to Saints*, p. 87.

<sup>29</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, p. 522.

<sup>30</sup> Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 264.

Consequently, the conclusion can be drawn that the Holy Spirit not only resides in the spirit (*yuch*) of the Christian, but also in that same Christian's body (*swma*). This passage clearly speaks against the Hellenistic concept of dualism, which sought to separate the "material" body from the "immaterial" soul or spirit.<sup>31</sup> Christians are holistic beings whom God, through Christ, has wholly redeemed.<sup>32</sup> Paul is emphasizing in v. 20 that Christ has redeemed Christians' entire being and thus, they are totally free to serve God.<sup>33</sup>

The above distinction is vitally important. Christians are not to live for themselves. "Do you not know that your bodies (*swmata*) are members of Christ himself?" (1 Cor 6:15). Fee argues that the term bodies (*swmata*) is used by Paul, not as a reference to the "church," but as a reference to the Christian's relationship with Jesus himself.<sup>34</sup> Fee states, "this means that the believer's physical body is to be understood as 'joined' to Christ's own 'body' that was raised from the dead."<sup>35</sup> Christians have been radically changed and have the Spirit of God resident within them. This does not mean that just the Christian's "spirit" has been changed, but also his entire being. Thus, instead of cutting a person up into different, autonomous parts, it is better to think of a human being as a unified and integrated being.

Dickason responds to the above question in a different way. He acknowledges that Christians are holistic beings and should not be divided into various parts.<sup>36</sup> Yet, he asserts that the Holy Spirit and demons are capable of cohabiting in the same, fully integrated being.<sup>37</sup>

He argues that Psalm 5:4, "You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with you the wicked cannot dwell," shows that God will not "fellowship" with evil. Dickason makes the point that this verse is a synonymous parallelism and that the first and second parts "have the same or similar meanings."<sup>38</sup> Thus, that God is not taking pleasure in evil

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<sup>31</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 266.

<sup>32</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 266.

<sup>33</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 2nd ed. (London: A. & C. Black, 1971), p. 152.

<sup>34</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 258.

<sup>35</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 258.

<sup>36</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, p. 136.

<sup>37</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, p. 96.

<sup>38</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, p. 95.

is equivalent to God not dwelling with wickedness. He writes, “The main idea is not the mutual exclusion of the presence of God and evil but the lack of pleasure or fellowship of God with evil.”<sup>39</sup> For him, “presence” and “fellowship” are two different concepts that should not be confused. It is then asserted that this passage “denies the possibility of evil’s having fellowship with God.”<sup>40</sup>

Dickason also points out that in Job 1:16; 2:1 and Zech 3:1-2 God has allowed Satan into His presence which “does not defile God or destroy Satan.”<sup>41</sup> These passages are seen as further evidence for the distinction between “fellowship” and “presence.” Consequently, while God will not “fellowship” with Satan or demons, Dickason does not believe that this means that God will not allow demons into his presence.<sup>42</sup> He concludes by stating, “One could speculate that a demon might be present in a believer’s body but certainly not have fellowship with God.”<sup>43</sup>

While Dickason makes an interesting argument, it does not deal with why God would allow a demon to reside in the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19) or to reside within Christ’s own body (1 Cor 6:15). It is a huge logical leap from asserting that Satan may periodically be present before God, to God being willing to share residence with demons within his own possession, the Christian. There is no scriptural support for this view, and as we have already seen, scripture contradicts the possibility of this very thing.

### 3.2 Soteriology

Now to the second question, “What happens to the salvation of a supposedly demon-possessed Christian?” The basic issue here is whether or not a person who has come into a saving, born-again relationship with Jesus Christ, can ever, for any reason, have that relationship severed. Advocates like Dickason, Murphy and Unger are addressing the question from the Calvinistic viewpoint that it is impossible for truly born-again

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<sup>39</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, p. 95.

<sup>40</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, p. 96.

<sup>41</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, p. 132.

<sup>42</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, p. 96.

<sup>43</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, p. 96.

Christians to ever lose their salvation.<sup>44</sup> The advocate's position colors their exegesis of the text and is a crucial reason why they have concluded that Christians can be demon-possessed. This will be seen by an examination of 1 Cor 10:14-22.

This passage begins with the words, "Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry" (1 Cor 10:14) and contains a stern warning for the Corinthians to stay away from the worship of demons, which is what idolatry is all about. This is a similar injunction to those found in the Old Testament (Exod 20:3-6; Ezek 14:6; 23:49). Idolatry is a serious affront to God and Paul is warning the church at Corinth not to repeat the mistakes made by Israel in the past (1 Cor 10:1-13).

What is interesting about this passage is that the consequences of idolatry are not clearly delineated. Dickason reads this passage and understands that Paul is warning Christians to stay away from demonic activities because this is "a testing of God that may evoke dire consequences."<sup>45</sup> Romans 1:18-32 is referenced to show that God will allow the unsaved to suffer the consequences of their actions. He then states, "Is it logical for us to allow that God would chastise through circumstance, illness and even death but that he would never allow demonization as a form of punishment for the unsaved or discipline for the saved?"<sup>46</sup> Thus, he sees that these "dire consequences" may include the demon possession of Christians.<sup>47</sup>

It is clear that Paul is giving a very stern warning to the Corinthian church to stay away from idolatry. However, Dickason's assertion that the result of such action may lead to the demon possession of Christians is simply based on speculation. Paul's primary intent was to admonish the Corinthians to never involve themselves in the worship of demons and he had previously referenced the history of Israel, which clearly showed what could happen to them if they did engage in these activities. "God

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<sup>44</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, pp. 56-7; Murphy, *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, p. 95; Unger, *What Demons Can Do to Saints*, pp. 37-39. Unger states that Christians "can sin immorally and scandalously if they recklessly give in to the old nature and seriously grieve and quench the indwelling Spirit" (p. 39). He even uses the term "carnal Christians" to describe such people (p. 83). Even so, he then goes on to add that "no saint can ever lose his sainthood; no one saved can ever be unsaved" (p. 39).

<sup>45</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, p. 117; also see, pp. 146-47.

<sup>46</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, pp. 146-47.

<sup>47</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, pp. 146-47.

was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert” (1 Cor 10:5).

For Paul, there is an “absolute incompatibility” between idolatry and being a Christian.<sup>48</sup> This is very similar to Matt 6:24 and Luke 16:13 in which Christ asserts that, “No one (or servant) can serve two masters.” There is no middle ground with God! One is either for him or against him. God is a jealous God (Exod 20:5) and Fee contends that the word jealousy (*parazhoulomen*) in verse 22 is to be understood in the Old Testament sense of God being “so absolutely without equal that he will brook no rivals to his devotion.”<sup>49</sup> Fee also notes that Paul makes a reference to Israel (v. 18) and that in v. 22 an allusion is made to the Song of Moses in Deut 32<sup>50</sup> where it is stated that due to Israel’s idolatry, God “rejected them” (Deut 32:19). Paul clearly intimates that participation by Christians in idolatry will provoke God today, just as it did when Israel fell into idolatry during Old Testament times. It appears that the consequence of participating in idolatry is, ultimately, to reject and be rejected by God. Salvation, not demon possession is at issue in this passage. In reality, what more severe consequence could there be than to lose one’s salvation?

Advocates allow only one explanation for a person who once showed signs of being a born-again Christian and later manifests signs of demon possession. Believing that Christians cannot lose their salvation, they conclude that Christians can be demon-possessed. There is no room in their theological constructs for a person to be a born-again believer, with a right relationship with God, then later fall away from the faith and subsequently become demon-possessed. Furthermore, due to their theological presuppositions, advocates are unwilling to entertain the possibility that the stern warnings found in scripture concerning sin were put there for any other reason than to warn Christians of the possibility that they might be adversely afflicted by the demonic. The closest that Dickason is able to come is to present the following as a hypothetical possibility:

It may be argued that if a believer persists in sin and if that sin leads to distrust and unbelief in Christ, this results in rejection of Christ and the

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<sup>48</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 463.

<sup>49</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 474.

<sup>50</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, pp. 470, 473-74.

loss of salvation. In the process demons may possess the person either before or after the loss of salvation.<sup>51</sup>

He rejects this argument based on his presupposition that Christians can never lose their salvation. However, “for the sake of argument,” Dickason acknowledges that if the above view is valid, then Christians cannot be demon-possessed.<sup>52</sup> This is a significant admission. Dickason is basically acknowledging that his theological presupposition on the security of individual’s salvation determines his or her interpretation of scripture. He is so certain of the validity of his beliefs that he is unwilling to entertain any other explanations.<sup>53</sup>

As a result of the advocate’s approach to scripture they find no clear answers from the biblical text.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, the advocates assert that due to the inconclusiveness of scripture, they are “left to look for other types of evidence.”<sup>55</sup> Wagner explains:

When the Bible gives us clear teaching on a certain issue, we then interpret human experience in light of revelation. But when the Bible is neutral on an issue, it is legitimate for us to learn and apply what we learn from human experience, so long as our conclusions don’t contradict Scripture.<sup>56</sup>

The advocates then use their personal experiences with the demonic to form their theology of the demonic. Dickason asserts that the clinical experiences of himself and others are “difficult to dismiss” and conclusive.<sup>57</sup> Unfortunately, clinical evidence is not enough on which to base any theological teaching. Arguments from the silence of scripture are dangerous and can lead to serious error.

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<sup>51</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, p. 139.

<sup>52</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, p. 139.

<sup>53</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, p. 139.

<sup>54</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, p. 127; Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry*, p. 194.

<sup>55</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, p. 127; Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry*, p. 194.

<sup>56</sup> Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry*, p. 194.

<sup>57</sup> Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, pp. 185, 213.

#### 4. Conclusion

From this analysis, we have seen how the term “demonization” has crept into the English language. While it is based upon the Greek verb *daimonizomai*, its original meaning has not been retained in its current usage. Consequently, it is a misleading term and should not be used in place of “demon possession.”

We have also identified the faulty anthropological view held by those who believe in the demon possession of Christians. A human is not composed of various independent parts, which can be inhabited separately by the Holy Spirit and demons, but is a unified and fully integrated whole. Any biblically based theology must recognize and build itself upon this.

Finally, we have examined the salvational implications of this view. We have seen how the theological presuppositions of the advocates have clouded their interpretation of the biblical text and led them to inappropriate conclusions about demon possession and Christians.

We should consider one final thought. If the demon possession of Christian is a reality, why is the New Testament silent on the subject? Why is there not one reference to the reality of this threat? Or, did the New Testament writers not see it as a threat? The only answer, which seems reasonable, is that the New Testament writers did not see the possibility in the first place!