

## **When the part takes over the whole – practical, psychological and spiritual aspects of the Ministry of Deliverance.**

Canon Beaumont Stevenson

Before I begin, I suppose it would be good to begin with a government health warning, namely of stating my prejudice, so you know what you can rely on and what to dismiss.

Firstly, I am a pastor, and my central interest is not so much the scientific, but what works pastorally. This informs my work as a psychotherapist, a priest and on the Ministry of Deliverance team on which I work in the Diocese of Oxford.

A former Bishop of Oxford asked if I would work on this team because of the requirement to have someone psychologically trained as well as a priest. 'It's easier to make an appointment with one person than with two', he suggested.

The more I work in this area the more I find that the principles of exorcism (as it appears in ordinary life) is not that much different than psychotherapy. So what I would like to present is my practice as an *ordinary* phenomenon, which you may have already found in your work.

Secondly, my belief is that scientific medicine is a priesthood. Yes, a proper priesthood. This came out of the conversation I had with a psychoanalyst from the states. As such I believe that part of medical training should also include the same training given to other recognised priests.

There is a similarity between the beliefs surrounding doctors of medicine and the priesthood. This was apparent one day when a medical doctor asked me what I did for a living. On telling her that I was an analytical psychotherapist, she asked, 'Are you a lay analyst?' I replied that I did not think it appropriate to refer to myself as a layman in that I was an ordained priest. She replied, somewhat exasperatedly, that what she meant by 'lay' was whether or not I was *medically* qualified. I said that I knew what she meant, but did she hear the belief implied in her statement that medical analysts were somehow 'ordained' and set apart (i.e. not lay) because of being doctors? Since she was an analyst herself, this led to a fruitful discussion, which resulted in the accompanying table (see below).

We both noted how psychoanalysts, particularly in America, who had no intention of practising medicine, nevertheless took an extensive medical training. This used up places, which might have been taken by people intending to use medical skills. Then, once 'qualified' they went on to train as analysts. As analysts, they not only did not use their medical training (it would have ruined the transference to physically shake hands with their patients, let alone give them a thorough medical examination or prescribe drugs for them) but also they might find it a hindrance in thinking analytically. Medicine essentially taught them how to think convergently, which they had to re-learn in order to think divergently as an analyst. The five-year medical training was therefore *entered* into so that they could be 'fully qualified' psychoanalysts, rather than 'lay' i.e. non-initiated therapists. Speaking to one psychoanalyst about whether or not he used his medical training, he said, 'Yes, I did use my medical training, but only once. I came down late from work and someone had had a heart attack in the lobby of my practice. I said to myself, 'that must be a heart attack' and I called an ambulance. That is the only time I have ever used my medical training'.'

## Comparison of the medical and Christian priesthood

Category	Medicine	Christian Church
<b>Title</b>	Doctor is one who knows 'doctrine' and therefore can teach orthodoxy. Orthodox medicine is contrasted to complementary/alternative medicine.	Doctor of the Church is highest category of especially learned saints who establish orthodox or catholic teaching
<b>Initiation</b>	Doctor is made by supposedly taking Hippocratic oath, which though not taken is referred to as basic guide to ethics Non-initiate called 'layman'	Priest is ordained after supposedly taking taking oath of doctrine of conformity and obedience Non-initiate called 'layman'
<b>Hierarchy</b>	Consultant is overseer to junior doctors, nursing staff	Bishop is episcopos/supervisor (literally over-see) to clergy who have delegated powers
<b>Powers</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can initiate, empower medicine-giving by prescription writing</li> <li>2. Powers to pronounce:dead/ can separate unclean from society (quarantine / mental health section)</li> <li>3. Attest passport pictures; shotgun licenses</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can consecrate sacraments</li> <li>2. Powers to pronounce: husband &amp; wife; name a baby officially</li> <li>3. Excommunicate evil from morally healthy</li> <li>4. Attest passport pictures;shotgun licenses</li> </ol>

<b>Delegated Powers</b>	Prescriptions once signed can produce medicine to be distributed later by nurses (Sisters)	Sacraments once consecrated can be distributed later by Deacons or nuns (Sisters)
<b>Privileges of Secrecy</b>	Medical confidentiality	Secrecy of the confessional
<b>Written Authority</b>	Doctors do not have to 'believe' evidence unless shown in statistics	Those of the doctrine do not have to 'believe' unless shown by written scriptural evidence
<b>Special language</b>	Latin and Greek used as in-language to separate out uninitiated. e.g. anamnesis important in analysis means remembering and re-living past painful material.	Similar Latin and Greek in-language. 'Do this in anamnesis (remembrance) of me' to re-live Christ's last supper. Similarly with Jewish Passover.
<b>Distinctive dress</b>	White coat (symbolising germ-free purity) with stethoscope around neck as symbol of authority	White vestments (symbolising purity) with stole around neck as symbol of authority
<b>Beliefs</b>	<p>Belief in science. Immortality in this life 'if you get to the doctor in Time'.</p> <p>Faith statement: Patient: 'I believe that someday medical science will be able to cure what is killing me'. (Belief in possibility of cure of each existing disease implying immortality in this life.)</p> <p>Symbol of belief: Caduceus, cross with snakes implying transformation of potential death into healing</p>	<p>Belief in God as author of existence. Immortality in next life. Spiritual medicine will make death temporary.</p> <p>Faith statement: Believer: 'I believe in life Everlasting'.</p> <p>Symbol of belief: cross, symbol of death transformed into life and healing.</p>

I was fortunate to be on a House of Bishops working party on 'A Time to Heal'. It was very educational for me personally to think through all aspects of healing, from disease, forgiveness, reconciliation - and on lots of different levels: personal, organisational and political.

### **Aim**

What I would like to do is to look at the underlying principles of healing and deliverance, then look at what different patterns we might expect to see when it takes place and to show that in presenting this I am actually addressing fellow-priests of the 'scientific' religion.

Let's look at some terms to use as building blocks.

**Disease:** is that specific thing, which is wrong or is not functioning.

**Illness (1):** is when the part takes over the whole (i.e. possession). (Robert Lambourne's definition.)

What is the difference? Stephen Hawking has a disease but I would maintain he is not ill. He still writes books and lectures, appears on television etc. His disease has not taken over his life. On the other hand, the 'worried well' have no discernable illness, yet the worry of having something wrong has done a coup and taken over their lives, limiting what they can do even more so than Stephen Hawking. So you can be ill without having a disease. You can have a disease without being ill.

**Illness (2):** is when a part of us takes over the whole and runs things like a dictator runs a country. In medical terms you can be 'the broken leg' in bed four; not Mary Jones with a broken leg.

People who are ill frequently tell me they feel possessed and in a sense that is correct; they are. We may not be able to do a disease-ectomy and by removing one thing put everything else back into balance, but in many cases that is what is desired and sometimes expected to happen.

**Idolatry:** is when a good does a coup and takes over and becomes the only thing you live for. Idolatry is when you are 'possessed by a lesser good so that you miss the greater good'. 'Doctor, Doctor, my family thought I ought to come see you because I like pancakes.' 'I see nothing wrong with that, I like pancakes myself'. 'Fine, come over to my house, I have twenty-seven trunks full'.

In the NHS, paperwork can take over so that you have no time to see any patients, let alone members of your own family.

Idolatry is the same as an illness. Cancer is when cell replacement goes amok and new cells are made which are not needed (too much of a good thing!)

**Therapeia (therapy)** means 'service, care and attention, and is also used in terms of a household'. In short, rather than doing a 'disease-ectomy', healing is where you take what is wrong, wrestle with it, tame it and make it a part of your own household. This is opposed to splitting it off and removing it altogether.

Reflecting on our own households, we may have someone who is ill or someone who is unusually gifted in some way. The art is making that person a part of our household without them taking over and having the household revolve about them.

Therapy is showing care and attention to all the parts, both negative and positive and making them a part of the whole.

**Wholeness:** is when everything is included in our household, has its due share of care and attention, and contributes what it can do best without taking over the whole or demanding all of the attention, and this might include disease or our greatest talent.

For instance, theology is a balanced whole. Theology expresses a whole, which is where opposites are kept in balance. On one hand we have *judgement* - balanced by forgiveness. We have *transcendence* - balanced by *immanence*.

Knowing that theology is a balanced whole, we listen (using the principle of Sherlock Holmes in the 'Hound of the Baskervilles' - listening for the dog which is *not* barking. You will remember in this story, the murderer was identified because the vicious dog guarding the house did *not* bark when he approached, and therefore Holmes correctly identified the killer as someone the dog was friendly with.) To see what has 'taken over' we can sometimes identify it by what is not said.

### **The dog which does not bark**

For instance, can you imagine Mother Theresa of Calcutta preaching a hellfire and damnation sermon? Or Ian Paisley preaching reconciliation and forgiveness with ones enemies? Yet, they both read from the same Bible.

We can therefore see what has taken over from what has been consistently left out of a balanced theology.

*So we listen to what is happening, or not happening within the whole, to pinpoint the location of the illness (possession).*

The temptation is to try to put everything that is wrong with us at one address, and say if we can just get rid of that, all our problems would be solved, such as what some world leaders are doing at the present.

That is why Jesus didn't waste time trying to get rid of the Romans. Another occupier would come in afterwards. Instead he worked on trying to incorporate everyone into the household with care and attention, recognising that one's attitude is everything.

In terms of defining what is me and what is not me, the art of wholeness is to go on the principle that what I dislike in them is also in me to deal with.

### **Let's Look At Our Internal Household**

Let's identify some of the members, first of all by age:

- Assign an age: how old are you emotionally
- How old in terms of mechanical ability (ability to fix a car, put up a shelf)
- How old financially
- How old in terms of wisdom?
- How old sexually?
- How old at what you do best?
- How old at what you find most difficult?
- What is the age and scope of your particular talent? Has it taken over, or generally been pushed aside?
- What is your main illness? Is it a *disease*, or a good, which everyone demands you to use? How do you manage that?
- In this household or Parliament, who is your Prime Minister? This is your organising part, that brings these different parts and members into a cohesive whole? How does this part treat the different members? Is it a bully? Too practical or too dreamy? Does it favour some parts or ignore others until they go on strike and spoil everything for everyone? *With What Tone Of Voice Do You*

*Talk To Yourself When You Are Alone?* Do you nag or whine, are you humorous?

- What is your vision or purpose in life; do all the parts help with this? Which parts revolt?
- If you were offered the possibility of a divorce from yourself would you accept?
- Do the parts of yourself develop and grow, or just fight for survival?
- How do you manage the broken part? What does the broken part contribute?

When Jesus was petitioned by Bartimaeus, who was blind, he asked 'What do you want me to do for you?' On the surface this sounds like a stupid question, the man is blind! But it is an important question. If Jesus heals the blind part, the man will have to rearrange his whole life and all the parts within himself. Rather than being a victim, he will have to decide what work he will do, how to make a useful contribution, what skill to learn? He can no longer count on others to provide things for him. Jesus says, in effect, 'think before you ask for a cure for your blindness'.

What I would like to do is 1) to give a few examples of some exorcisms I have been asked to do, and then 2) to identify some of the principles behind process.

### **Examples of Ministry of Deliverance.**

#### **The unforgiven**

Several years ago, while I was chaplain at one of the Oxford Colleges, I was asked to come as a matter of urgency to a house where a vase had suddenly broken, a telephone had been pulled away from a wall, and in which there seemed to be a malevolent spirit. When I was asked, I happened to be giving a dinner party. I said that while I would not ask my guests to leave, I would be glad to come after the last guest had decided to leave if that would be helpful. The last guest left shortly before midnight. I met the older couple who lived in the house together with the parish priest and his wife.

I was shown around the house and found signs of violence. A broken vase, a telephone, which had been on the wall pulled away, along with some plaster, which had been around it. The house had a cold and forbidding feel. As I walked around the house, asking questions and being shown the damage I noticed the man was becoming more impatient and irritable. At first I put this down to the late hour of my coming, and to the fact that they had to wait a long and indeterminate time for me to arrive. Finally the man said, 'hurry up; get on with it'. I asked what was wrong, and he said 'nothing' impatiently. Finally he said he was going next door, and to call him when I was finished. I said he wasn't, and against asked what was wrong. After some denial he glared at me and said. 'don't take it personally, but I hate priests'. I said, "I take it personally, I wouldn't be here if I weren't a priest", deliberately trying to surface the irritation. He finally exploded and shouted at me at the top of his lungs. "The reason I hate priests, is because I used to be a priest. I then had a period of mental illness and when I got better, the Church didn't want to know, and never re-instated me'.

I waited until he had finished his outburst and then said 'you are right, I the Church have done you a terrible wrong. I have caused you much suffering. For this I am very sorry. I cannot proceed any further until you give me absolution for my sin of having wronged you'. He stared at me in disbelief. 'You mean I have to forgive you', he said. 'That's right', I replied. 'Once a priest, always a priest. I have said I am sorry for what I have done wrong, and therefore you must pronounce absolution'.

With great difficulty, he pronounced absolution, then began to sob. The house grew warmer.

Afterwards, we discussed what might have happened. I said that just as anger can sometimes go inwards to form a depression or an ulcer, so sometimes it can go outwards and move furniture. What had happened was most probably not a ghost, but his unforgiven and unforgiving anger.

On a follow-up session, a couple of weeks later, he said, 'that was what it was. Funny thing though, it was somehow easier to live with a ghost than with the fact that I have now forgiven the Church'.

### **The possessed family**

One of the more interesting incidents that I encountered was a referral by a Community Psychiatric Nurse of a woman who had been in her care, who had been mentally ill, but who had now improved. What she complained of was that in her house three strange figures appeared in the bedroom. Mostly it was upstairs, and their pre-verbal child, whose cot was in the bedroom, would point at the figures and scream. The child refused to go to sleep at night in the room and would have to go to sleep downstairs and be carried up to her cot. They complained of the house being cold. I went with the CPN and another priest, and investigated the house. Not knowing particularly what to make of it, I celebrated Holy Communion for the repose of souls in the bedroom, as they had said that a former occupant of the house had been a woman who had died there.

Shortly after my visit, the CPN rang again and said things had got worse. A knife had flown off the kitchen table and had stuck in one of the cabinets. The Jack Russell dog, who was feisty, absolutely refused to stay in the house and would not come in from the garden. The figure seemed hostile.

I phoned the Bishop and explained the situation and asked for permission to treat the presence as malignant and hostile. Times were coordinated and an appointment was put in the Bishop's diary for his prayerful support during the time of my next visit. Additionally, two convents were also asked to pray at the same time I was there.

As I drove up with the other priest in his car, I said the neighbourhood had looked familiar, and asked him just to drive around the block. At the next corner was a house to which I had been called some five years previously by the County Council. Again there was a series of appearances by several people, who rattled cupboards and appeared not only inside the house, but 'going past the windows' on the outside. I had gone there with the parish priest several times but nothing much had seem to come of my visits. They had asked for re-settlement by the County Council, who saw their plight, but also felt sceptical in that they felt they might have been making it all up in order to get a house move.

The curious thing was that I knew the former occupant of the previous house. It had actually been someone who had come to me in the NHS for therapy. I remember that he had not engaged with therapy, and had a court appearance coming up which he was reluctant to talk about. His presenting problem in therapy was that he had exposed himself several times. During the therapy, I realised that he had been holding something back, but was never able to get to the bottom of it all. I suspected he was coming in order to tell the court that he was in therapy.

It wasn't until much later that his picture appeared in a paper. He had in fact been convicted of child abuse, and had been killed in prison. His wife had died of a heart attack. They had lived in the former house,

Getting out of the car I looked past the house and noted that the garden of the two houses (the house I had gone to before, and the one I was about to return to) adjoined back to back. Could it be that the ghostly presences had gone from the one

house to the other, or had they talked together over the back garden fence, and could it a problem of suggestion?

When we arrived at the house, I asked the couple who were waiting if they had any contact with the house across the back garden.

'Never before today', the woman said. 'We met and talked for the first time today, and I told the woman I had to go as a priest was coming to bless the house'.

'Hope your priest was better than the one who came to my house, some time past' she replied. 'He was a bloody waste of time'.

Armed with the information, I exorcised the house using my former patient's first name, ordering it to go out to the place appointed, with those with him, binding him not to visit any other place in the neighbourhood'.

On the follow-up, I was told that it seemed to work. The house was warm, the Jack Russell terrier was comfortably ensconced at home and the child happily was able to fall asleep in her own cot.

*Are there any principles running through this process of deliverance from possession, whether we call it illness or possession? I believe there are. Here are a few of them:*

### **The jigsaw piece**

When we do a jigsaw, some of the pieces don't fit in. One way of finding a place is to turn the same piece sideways or even upside down. For example, I once was considering buying a car and I asked for the AA to come out and inspect the car. The person they sent was perhaps one of the most obsessional persons I have ever encountered. It took him 20 minutes to lay out his tools on a mat next to the car in descending order. (I was paying him by the hour). I thought it must drive his family crazy waiting for him to line up his toothbrush and paste in bathroom. However, he is just the right man for the job of inspecting the car before I buy it.

Likewise, enlisting the aid of the former priest in absolving me is turning the problem on its head. If I had been thinking properly, I could have asked him to help me bless the house as well afterwards.

Jesus uses this reversing principle in the Beatitudes. 'Blessed (i.e. happy) are those who mourn (upside down) for you shall truly understand comfort. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth (No one is going to play 'king of the mountain' with the meek and try to knock them off their perch). Blessed are you when men persecute you'. (Like the prophets; if you are persecuted, you must be saying something right - or to re-coin Oscar Wilde's phrase, 'the only thing worse than being persecuted is *not* being persecuted, because then you are not saying anything important enough to take exception to'. Stop complaining; you are judged by the calibre of your enemies.

### **Forgiveness and healing**

Often found together in Jesus' ministry, that which takes over (illness) is often the injustice we have meted out to others. (Spanish saying: 'the offender never forgives'.)

### **Forgiveness vaccinating against self-righteousness**

Both Judas and Peter betrayed Jesus on Maundy Thursday; Jesus actually predicted that this would happen. Maybe in the design of things, it ensured that the Church would be led by a forgiven leader. Peter could never have felt self righteous if he realised that he, like Judas, also betrayed Jesus. Maybe the same principle applies to the training of therapists. Having been a patient, it is less likely for therapists to not be able to identify with their vulnerability. On the other hand, Papal Infallibility is a recipe for



ensuring self-righteousness The concept that 'I am always right when I speak morally', which was concocted in the 1870's, is a recipe for abolishing humility because it essentially identifies oneself with speaking as God.

### **Transformation**

Psychologically and spiritually, Christianity essentially works on a transformation principle, that opposites turned on their heads become transformative and healing.

### **Grit into pearls**

The principle might be contained in the statement that more people's lives were saved because the Titanic went down than were lost in the accident. After that accident, all ships were required to carry enough lifeboats for their passengers, thus saving many lives over the years.

Paradoxically, then if you take the major taboos and turn them on their head, essentially you have the most valuable parts of Christianity.

In scripture Jesus says 'The stones which the builders rejected, has become the cornerstone'. (Matthew 21:42)

### **Cannibalism**

Eating another's flesh, Christians are urged to participate in sacramental cannibalism by eating the body and blood of Christ as their main sacrament.

### **Incest**

God created mankind, He created the Virgin Mary and then had intercourse with her. Mary is both Jesus' mother and sister. This is the heart of the annunciation and Christmas.

### **Infanticide / Child Abuse**

God allows his own beloved son to be killed.

### **Death**

Rather than being seen as the end, death is seen as the entrance into a larger and more real existence.

Following the example of Jonathan's covenant with David, making him a member of the Royal family of Saul and giving him Jonathan's rights to the throne, Jesus (Son of David) adopts John, the disciple he loves, as his next of kin from the cross. He says 'Son, here is your Mother, Mother here is your son. In consequence, Mary goes to live with John as her new 'family', rather than to stay with her other children. In essence, this institutes gay marriage from the cross - a dramatic reversal of the norm.

The essence of Christianity is not being insured against illness and death by good behaviour but rather trusting that God will be able to bring good out of even the most terrible of occurrences. This reverses taboos and illness into blessing. In the Jungian sense, Christianity deals with our shadow side, by putting it front and centre of the religion.

### **Here And Now**

This is probably the central principle. When Moses meets God in the burning bush, he asks God what His name is so that he can tell Pharaoh who sent him. This is asking the infinite to define himself.

Nevertheless God replies. His name is '*I Am*' which is also a clue where He is to be found. '*I Am*' is essentially the verb '*to Be*' in the present tense. The more that

persons are enabled to live in the present tense, the more they are freed from past tyrannies and meet life in the only place where it can be met. That is why the therapeutic process is on the right spiritual task, of always bringing the patient back to the *here and now*. On this central principle both therapy and most all spiritual systems agree. In the present moment is where we become free from what possess us, and where we can encounter the divine within ourselves and others in the eternal present.

If exorcism and the ministry of deliverance is a form of post-death counselling, it can also be seen as urging the departed person to drop their attachment to the past and to live in their new 'here and now' life as a full member of their new household.

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