



1-1-1984

Confrontation and Rejection of an Evil Spirit in a Therapy Session

Wesley W. Craig Jr.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/irp>

Recommended Citation

Craig, Wesley W. Jr. (1984) "Confrontation and Rejection of an Evil Spirit in a Therapy Session," *Issues in Religion and Psychotherapy*. Vol. 10 : No. 1 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/irp/vol10/iss1/2>

This Article or Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Issues in Religion and Psychotherapy* by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

CONFRONTATION AND REJECTION OF AN EVIL SPIRIT IN A THERAPY SESSION

*Wesley W. Craig, Jr., M.S.W., Ph.D.

Presented at the AMCAP Convention

6 April 1984

Introduction

This article describes a professional case in which both the therapist and the client experienced the phenomenon of an "evil spirit" during a regular therapy session. Both the account of the therapist's perceptions and also of the client's are included. A commentary follows by the therapist.

Description of the Client

Paula (a pseudonym) is a 35-year-old, overweight, never-married female. She is a professional nurse and holds a responsible supervisory position in a major hospital. She is an active member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon).

The client is intelligent, responsible (in her personal life, employment, and Church-related activities), has an outgoing, pleasant personality, and is a youth leader in her ecclesiastical unit. As a client she has been conscientious and hard working. She has seen herself as being responsible for her own happiness and well-being and refuses to lay blame on others for her circumstances. At the outset she gave indications of being a "pleaser" in her social and business relationships to the extent that others would take advantage of her willing nature.

With regard to her spiritual status (which is relevant to this case), she has had a close pastoral relationship with her bishop. Several years ago she presented a full confession to her bishop for past sins. Since that time she has been free of any confessable sins and has exerted every effort to maintain a virtuous and highly moral Christian life. She has a deep faith in God, in Jesus Christ, and in the doctrines as set forth by the Church. She served a two-year, full-time mission for the Church.

She entered into therapy with several presenting problems. Major for her was the fact that she wanted to marry and have children. However, she had experienced, since adolescence, a strong aversion to physical contact with males. The other problem had to do with her being overweight and compulsive in her eating habits. She often experienced anxiety and feelings of guilt.

Therapeutic Approaches

Over a period of four months, the therapist utilized a variety of approaches, which included a cognitive-behavioral approach directed at increasing the assertiveness of the client. This resulted in significant behavioral changes in which the client began to deal

assertively and more effectively with fellow professionals and family members. A program of aerobic exercise consisting of regular walking was instituted. The client was inconsistent in following this regimen but made progress. She gradually worked up to about 50 minutes per day; but when discouraged, she would be irregular in pursuing it. In-depth therapy utilizing Gestalt and Transactional Analysis models was implemented. These seemed to have little impact on the compulsive eating or in the affective area relating to heterosexual relationships.

At the conclusion of the above work, the therapist proposed to the client that they change the approach and explore with a hypnotic model. The therapist had in mind the possibility that the internal resistance of the client might be related to multiple ego-state phenomenon as explicated by Watkins and Watkins (1979).

Four, two-hour sessions uncovered five distinct ego-states within Paula's personality. The most powerful at the outset was the *Defiant One* who had its beginning at the time Paula was 18 months old. Under hypnosis this ego-state revealed detailed data to which Paula was consciously oblivious. At that time and until she was about two years old, she had been sexually abused by her pediatrician while being examined in his office. (The doctor would not allow the mother or even his receptionist into his examination room when with the patient. The mother was apparently unaware of anything unusual happening.) This happened about six times. *Defiant's* function, upon her (all five ego-states were female) emergence in the personality, was to protect Paula from abuse by males. It was *Defiant* who was responsible for the anxiety regarding proximity to males and who would generate the emotions relating to it.

Another ego-state, the *Guilty One*, held Paula responsible for the abuse by the doctor, ("You should not have allowed it to happen; you should have fallen off the table," etc.), as well as for subsequent behaviors in Paula's life.

Without entering into detail regarding the procedures used, the therapist was able to assist the client in bringing about some change in the ego-states and their relationships to each other through the procedures described by the Watkins. The *Defiant One* began to moderate her position and began to experience a change in her nature and ability to exert control over Paula's emotions.

The *Guilty One*, however, proved to be more stubborn in terms of relinquishing any control of Paula for her supposed or early wrongs. All efforts to educate the *Guilty One* regarding the reality of the pediatrician's power, or the repentance process which Paula had experienced regarding later experiences in life, were all rebuffed by the *Guilty One*. Finally, the therapist confronted the *Guilty One* on its illogical, unfair, and 'unrighteous dominion' over Paula. With this confrontation the *Guilty One* experienced a

*Brother Craig is a professor of Clinical Social Work at Brigham Young University and is a licensed Certified Social Worker and Marriage and Family Therapist.

diminution of its power and energy during the session (as experienced by the client—as if it were “deflated.” However, by the next session, though somewhat more subdued, the *Guilty One* reasserted its intent to continue with its harassment and control of Paula.

What now follows are the case notes which the therapist wrote on 18 November 1983, describing the 15 November session.

At the outset of this session (before hypnosis), Paula described the preceding week since the last session. She mentioned fewer feelings of guilt during the week. However, she still did not maintain consistent control over her food intake. Her exercising went well—walking about 50 minutes to an hour each day. She mentioned continued irregularity of her menstrual cycle—overdue about five weeks and concern about “pain in her pelvic area.” Closer questioning on the latter disclosed that she had experienced this pain before as a teenager (when her menstrual cycle was so irregular).

As we initiated the process of hypnosis, I had in mind the previous session in which I had detected a degree of malevolent control in the *Guilty One*. The essence was that the G.O. was aware that she had continued to torment Paula about past guilty acts over which Paula had either repented fully, or which had happened early in Paula’s childhood; some of which she experienced as a victim. The G.O. recognized that Paula no longer had any legitimate behavior which could provide fuel for the G.O.’s activity and power. Nevertheless, the G.O. continued to operate as if there were such material. Confronted with this situation, and confronted with the unfairness, the inappropriateness, the “unrighteous dominion,” and the obstruction of principled behavior over Paula, the G.O. in the last session had experienced a deflation of her energy and power.

Under hypnosis I called forth the G.O. to see what she was experiencing and where she was with regard to the previous week. I found her more subdued but still intent on pursuing her objective of punishing Paula for behaviors which no longer merited punishment—according to Paula’s values and behavior. During the process of my interaction with the G.O., I sensed a subtle change in her in which she stated in a helpless-like tone (so uncharacteristic of her), that she was unable to stop her punishment of Paula (the pelvic pain, disturbed menstrual cycle, sleeplessness, compulsive eating, energy loss). This uncharacteristic response suggested to me a lack of energy or self-control in the G.O. and brought with it the suspicion that there might be another ego-state exercising control over the G.O..

I dismissed the G.O. and asked if there was someone there who was exercising control over the G.O. There was a long pause—possibly of 15 to 30 seconds. At the moment that I was about to move in a different direction, (concluding that no other ego-state was there, or at least willing to be acknowledged), another voice, different from the G.O., broke the silence. This voice (Paula told me after hypnosis that it was a male—the only male entity that had appeared in the therapy) told me that he had been watching everything that I was doing with and to the other ego-states, and that he was aware of and opposed to the changes that had been taking place in these ego-states as a consequence of the therapy. He further stated that I would not change him. This one’s demeanor was powerful and disdainful of me and what I had been doing. I asked by what name he should be called. He refused to give me a name at first—later in the process he told me I could call him the *Loserr*.

I recapitulated with the *Loserr* the unfairness and inappropriateness of G.O.’s continued misuse of guilt in punishing Paula. I then made several attempts to bring about a change in the *Loserr*. In the process he informed me that he hated Paula and all of her ego-states and that his purpose was to make sure that Paula lost

(in a totalistic sense). The next disclosure by the *Loserr* was that, “I am not a part of her (Paula)!” The nature of this disclosure jolted me. I realized then that I was not dealing with simply another ego-state within Paula’s personality, but with an alien, foreign entity. I confronted the *Loserr* on this basis to see if there was any possibility of bringing about change in the *Loserr* to help him become an ally of Paula. The response was emphatic and clear: absolutely not. Meanwhile the suspicion that I was dealing with an evil spirit grew in my mind. (Parenthetically, I must acknowledge that up to this time, in the entire course of Paula’s therapy, I had given no consideration to the possibility of evil spirits or external control of Paula. While, because of my belief in God and His power, I also recognize the existence of Lucifer and his power, I had never before directly confronted an “evil spirit.”) I asked the *Loserr* if he was Lucifer. He responded, “No, but I am close to him!” With this information, I confronted the *Loserr*, telling him that he was to terminate his control over Paula. His response, in a sneering, disdainful voice, was to the effect that, “How do you think you are going to accomplish that?”

At this moment (and not until then) I realized that this evil spirit (for such was its reality to me) must be dealt with on the basis of spiritual power. Extending my arm and pointing my finger to ward him, I commanded, “IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST AND BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD WHICH I HOLD, I COMMAND YOU TO GO!”

I felt something akin to an electrical charge coursing through my shoulders, up my neck, and down my arms and hands. Paula’s arms and hands shook. Her entire body stiffened and trembled.

Paula’s trembling soon ceased. Not knowing whether the *Loserr* was still there or not, I still pointed my finger at Paula. After a long silence, the next words were, “Wes, this is Paula.” She then conversed with me (still in hypnosis), asking in a subdued and somewhat fearful voice as to what was the meaning of the things which had just happened. I do not recall what I responded to her. However, I then proceeded to start her back out of the hypnotic state, giving her suggestions as to the importance of this event in freeing her from the restrictions which the *Loserr* had been imposing upon her.

After coming out of hypnosis, we talked briefly about the experience. She told me at this time that the *Loserr* had been a man, that she had felt overwhelmed by darkness when he was present, and that even before I commanded him to go, he had realized what I was going to do and by what power I would do it. She said that he and the darkness left instantaneously upon my uttering the command for him to leave. She also mentioned that he had said something (which had not been made known to me) that he would move on to another person.

After the session, Paula also told me of an earlier experience, prior to her mission, in which she had an experience which was like someone else entering her body (not sexually) and which caused her to be flung from the bed on which she had been lying.

From the Diary of Paula—Written 17 November

Last Tuesday, November 15, during a session with Wes it became very apparent that there was someone (or something) very evil within me. During our sessions Wes uses hypnosis to sort of “zero in” on the problem. He was talking with one of my ego-states whose name is Guilty. She has had an especially difficult time accepting the truth and allowing me to progress in several areas of my life (weight loss being only one). She told Wes she was responsible for my menstrual irregularities as a youth. I wasn’t overly shocked to hear that. But then she started all that again, and I didn’t seem to have much control over it. Last Tuesday Wes asked her why she continued to do things like that. She told him she knew she shouldn’t, but that she really couldn’t seem to stop. Wes asked if there was someone else who was responsible for that, and she said, “Well, who could make me do those kinds of things?”

Wes then asked her to go back and asked to speak to whomever was there who was responsible. At that point I became very aware of an evil force within me. Never have I felt such total commitment towards evil. I don't remember word-for-word what was said, but I will write what I recall. He told Wes that he would not allow Wes to manipulate him and change him like he (Wes) had done to the others. At first he refused to speak—but it was as if he could not keep silent—like Wes was stronger than he was. Wes asked him his name. He refused to answer. All I can think of was total blackness. Then he told Wes to call him "the loser." He told Wes he hated "all of them" meaning all of my ego-states and me. He told Wes to stop telling me that I was a winner, and I would stop believing it. When he said that, he knew it was a lie, but didn't care. Never have I felt those powerful evil emotions before—total blackness, total hatred, total commitment to destruction, total evil. Then he told Wes that he was not a part of me. At that point Wes asked him if his name was Lucifer. He said, "No, but I am very close to him." Wes told him that he could not destroy me. He said something like, "Says who?" and Wes said, "I do." Then there was silence, and he thought, "Well who are you to say that?" But before he could say it Wes said, "and you know by what power I speak." He said, "Yes." He couldn't lie about that. He knew Wes was speaking of the Priesthood although the word was not said at that time. Then Wes asked him if he would change (he asked him earlier also), and he said, "No." Wes then said, "Can you change?" He said, "I choose not to change." And then Wes said, "In the name of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Melchizedek Priesthood, I command you to depart from her." When Wes said those words I doubled up my fist so tight I cut into my palm with my nails. He especially agonized over the name of Christ—and by the time the statement was complete he was gone. One thing I forgot to write was the last thing the spirit said before he left my body. Wes said he would not allow him to stay within me and destroy me. He (the Loser) said, "It doesn't matter," and thought, "I'll just go to someone else."

When this evil spirit left me, I saw a glimpse of him—I feel I saw him with my spiritual eyes. He was a man. He had dark skin (not black) and short dark hair.

I sat there for a few seconds feeling this new sense of freedom I had never felt before. Then I told Wes I knew when he came into my life. It was before my mission. I was not living like I should and was trying to decide if I should go on my mission. One morning I was lying on my back in bed, semi-awake, and I felt something lay on top of my body, beginning at my feet and on up my body. When the feeling got to my head my whole body jumped literally up off of the bed. It was very frightening to me at the time, and I got out of bed and wrote about the experience in a diary I had. I felt it was an evil spirit, but I also felt I had rejected it from entering my body. Now I feel I didn't have the spiritual strength required to reject it, because of the commandments that I was not keeping and the low level of spirituality that I had attained.

I have been amazed at my own reaction to all of this. I have felt a new sense of freedom I have never known before. I have felt very much at peace. The inner turmoil is gone. The need to destroy the "winner" in me is gone. It also is amazing to me to realize what I have not felt. I have not felt guilty. I have not felt fearful. I have not felt ashamed. I have not felt "crazy" or out of control. I have not felt self-incrimination.

I also know that this evil spirit was one of the third of the hosts of heaven who was cast out with Satan. I don't know *how* I know that; I just *do*. He has never had a physical body of his own.

**EXCERPT FROM POST EVIL-SPIRIT SESSION—25
November 1983
(from an audio recording):**

- Therapist: What have you been experiencing since last time (session)?
- Client: I have sensed a sense of freedom that I have never sensed before. I don't have any inward battles about doing things that are bad for me, like overeating. I just haven't had all of the (inward) battles that I've had before. I have felt very much at peace, and I haven't felt threatened. It's been wonderful.
- Therapist: That's great! Anything else? How about your exercising?
- Client: I get an "A" plus! I've been walking in the snow! At least an hour a day, sometimes longer.
- Therapist: How about diet control?
- Client: I'm doing really good.
- Therapist: How about urges to eat or compulsiveness you felt before?
- Client: I've felt none of that . . . I'm just eating what I know is healthy for me. And if Iweenisfeen (ego-state) wants ice cream every couple of weeks or so, then, I'm going to do that, and I'm not going to feel guilty about it.
- Yesterday (Thanksgiving Day) I just ate normal. I've never had a Thanksgiving like that before. I didn't eat before meals, and I didn't eat between meals. I just ate Thanksgiving dinner (early afternoon) and then had a very light supper. It's great! And I didn't even feel guilty! It's just different than I've ever felt before.
- I've decided not to weigh. A number on a scale shouldn't tell me whether I'm happy or not, or whether I feel like I'm successful or not.
- Therapist: (Chuckle) You're going to make it tough on your therapist to know how you're doing on your weight.
- Client: (Laugh) Tough! I'm doing fine.
- Therapist: How about your period? (Five weeks overdue as of last session.)
- Client: It started!
- Therapist: When?
- Client: Tuesday was our last session. Wednesday I cramped terribly. Thursday everything was

fine (period started). See, you cured me. My gynecologist is going to be shocked.

Therapist: Was there much pain associated with the period?

Client: Just normal. But, I didn't bleed as heavily as I usually do.

Therapist: Have you seen your bishop since our last session?

Client: Yes. It was hard for me to explain it (the evil spirit) to him. But, he totally accepted it without question. He said he felt good about the rejection of the evil spirit. Then, I asked him for a blessing. I was concerned that it (the evil spirit) would happen again, or that I wouldn't be aware of it. He gave me a beautiful blessing, that I would have spiritual discernment to detect when evil was about me.

Therapist: Did you write down your experience of the last session?

Client: Yes, I started several days later, but didn't get it finished for a week. I also wrote it in my personal journal. (She gave me her copy.)

Commentary

As a professional therapist, I am concerned that the reader of this article might draw the conclusion that Multiple Ego-State Therapy is considered synonymously with the casting out of evil spirits. There is no indication in the literature available on Multiple Ego-State Therapy that any other therapists applying this modality have experienced the demonic outcome described in this article. There are ego-states, as described by the Watkins, which title themselves as "Lucifer," "The Evil One," etc. These, however, have never presented themselves as being other than ego-states, *within* the personality—not as totally separate from the personality as was stated by the Loser in this case. So far as I am aware, this is the first time that such an outcome has been experienced, following this modality. I might add that other cases in which I have utilized this form of therapy have not had the demonic outcome as described herein.

From this experience one of my conclusions is that when certain eternal principles (free agency, volition) are being violated in a client, that violation, when pursued by the therapist, can lead to the possibility of discovering the external control of the client by malignant, supernatural forces, where present.

A religious issue at question because of this case deals with the power of the adversary over repentant (i.e., "saved") persons.¹ From this experience with the client, I doubt that anyone is exempt from the possibility of demonic influence. If it could happen to Paula, then it might happen to anyone. This is at odds with a least one

Christian psychiatrist. Basil Jackson (1976, p. 261) has stated, "I have great difficulty in believing that such an individual, in whom the Holy Spirit is resident, can be demonized in the New Testament sense of the term."

Another caution which I would like to express deals with the potential danger of prematurely assuming that particular emotional illnesses are demon-related. I endorse the statement by Collins: (1976, p. 248)

Indeed, I agree with those who believe that exorcism should be used as a last resort and only when demon possession seems apparent. Because of the potentially harmful effects of suggesting demonic involvement, the counselor should attempt exorcism only after every conceivable medical, psychological, and spiritual counseling technique has failed.

Another issue particularly germane for L.D.S. therapists deals with the issue of ecclesiastical versus professional therapeutic domains. My inclination has been to keep these quite separate. At an earlier stage in the therapy, Paula asked me if I would give her a blessing. I demurred, suggesting that it would be more appropriate for her to seek it from her ecclesiastical leader, her bishop, which she did. Also, I found it advantageous to maintain contact between her bishop and myself. Prior to the demonic incident, with Paula's concurrence, I talked with him regarding the nature of the therapy that we were pursuing. Following the demonic incident we got in touch again and shared our perceptions of what had occurred and the implications for Paula (who was present at the time). I felt he was supportive throughout.

On the other hand, in my capacity as a spiritual leader in my own ecclesiastical stewardship, I sense a new appreciation for the power that I have to bless those persons who may be afflicted by demonic spirits. There is less reluctance on my part to include such statements in blessings as, "If there be a foreign power at work within you, then I... (whatever the Spirit dictates)" for those people who manifest unresolved internal spiritual struggles.

There is a personally challenging issue with which Christian therapists will have a struggle: The power of God is real, but am I an acceptable instrument through which that power can be effective in such a situation? That thought occurred to me even as I spoke the words to cast out the Loser. I am grateful, as is Paula, that despite my imperfections, God used me.

Finally, I am aware even as I write this that C. S. Lewis, concern applies:

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased with both errors. (Lewis, p. 9).

I earnestly hope that, as Christian, Mormon therapists, we can walk the fine line.

Concluded on page 23

Continued from page 9

References

- Collins, Gary R. Psychological observations on demonism. In John Warwick Montgomery (Ed.), *Demon Possession: A medical, historical, anthropological and theological symposium*. Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1976.
- Jackson, Basil. Reflections on the demonic: A psychiatric perspective. In *Ibid.*
- Lewis, C. S. *The screwtape letters*. London, 1942.
- Watkins, John G. and Helen H. Theory and practice of Ego-state therapy: A short-term therapeutic approach. In Henry Grayson (Ed.), *Short-term approaches to psychotherapy*. Human Sciences Press, 1979.

Endnotes

1. For an excellent summary of the LDS view on a personal Devil and struggle with evil spirits, see LaMar E. Garrard, "A Study of the Problem of a Personal Devil and its Relationship to Latter-day Saint Beliefs," a Master's Thesis, Division of Religion, Brigham Young University, May 1955.