

Healing Through Deliverance: A Biblical Check-Up

A Review of Peter Horrobin's Healing Through Deliverance: The Biblical Basis. (Chichester: Sovereign World, 1991)

There are many statements in this book with which it is difficult to find fault. “The Bible is the divinely inspired authority in matters of faith, doctrine and conduct and the basis for teaching.” [10].(1) Deliverance from demons was an important part of the ministry of Jesus (e.g. Acts 10:38) and as his followers it is also part of ours.

However, there is also much in this book that should be of great concern to Bible-believing Christians. Far from being a Biblical basis' Peter Horrobin's [Henceforth PH] book is really a polemic against those who oppose what I shall refer to as 'Ellel Grange Theology' [henceforth 'EGT'].

EGT has all the characteristics of a framework interpretation, that is a system of interpretation that takes as its foundation a selection of texts that appear to support the writer's presuppositions. From these scriptures a conceptual framework is constructed through which all other passages of Scripture are viewed. PH refers to this kind of interpretation [223], but fails to recognise that this is what he himself has produced.

Framework interpretations have their strengths and weaknesses. Their greatest strength is that they are difficult to refute, because their acceptance produces a complete interpretative system for the adherent. The survival of the framework systems of Arminianism and Calvinism over hundreds of years bear testimony to this. They do, however, have two fatal flaws. First, they are inherently unbiblical because they fail to deal fairly with the whole of Scripture. Secondly, they are only as strong as those scriptures on which the framework is based. Once these are targeted and examined the whole system collapses like a pack of cards.

For this reason there is no need for me to attempt to refute every claim made by PH - which would require a volume larger than the original. Instead I will simply look at the 'linch-pin' scriptures on which his framework is based. But before I do so, I should point out some of the claims made by PH about those who do not accept EGT.

- 1) Those who do not believe that Christians can be demonised (the central tenet of EGT) have never been involved in a deliverance ministry [194, 224, 226].
- 2) They have a distorted and unbalanced theology [224].
- 3) They are pharisaical [229].

4) They are themselves demonised and led to oppose the work of Ellel Ministries by the demonic [309].(2)

A Daughter of Abraham (Luke 13:10-17) / Children of Abraham (John 8:31-47)

One of the fundamental errors in this book is the assumption, both implicit [139] and explicit [194-196, 256-261] that because a man or woman is a Jew or called 'a son/daughter of Abraham' then he, she or they are therefore Believers. This assumption is unwarranted, for although there was a godly remnant in Israel, e.g. Zechariah & Elizabeth (Luke 1:5-25); Mary & Joseph (Matt.1:18:25); Simeon (Luke 2:25-35), and Anna (2:36-38), the majority were unsaved. Jesus' ministry was primarily to the 'Lost sheep' of Israel (Matt.15:24).

Paul uses the phrase 'Children of Abraham' in a distinctive and technical sense, referring to Believers Romans 4:16-17; Gal.3:6-7). Other New Testament (NT) writers use it in a non-technical sense, referring to the physical descendants of Abraham (e.g. Luke 19:9; Acts 13:26). PH imports the Pauline usage into the Gospels to support his thesis that Jesus only delivered Believers.(3) It is interesting to note that if he were consistent in doing this then the Rich man in the story of Lazarus must also have been a Believer (see Luke 16:24,30).

The account of the crippled woman healed on the Sabbath (Luke 13:10-17) is used by PH as proof positive that a Believer can be demonised [194] (though he later contradicts himself [299]). Evangelical commentators take a somewhat different view.

The healing is not referred to as an exorcism,(4) nor is demon-possession implied.

What is probably in view is not a case of possession itself, but one of affliction ultimately sourced in Satanic influence (as illness was often understood).(5)

Leon Morris argues that:

There is no indication that the woman believed in Jesus, or indeed that she knew him at all. Jesus himself took the initiative. He pronounced her cured and she was made straight. Jesus did not usually lay hands on people when performing exorcisms. Perhaps Luke means the spirit (v.11) was already cast out (v.12) and that Jesus now completed the cure by laying on of hands.(6)

PH also finds evidence for EGT in John 8:31-47 because John refers to the crowd as those 'who had believed' in Jesus (v.31). This crowd then refer to themselves as 'Abraham's children' (v.39). But, as Carson points out,(7) 'those who believed in him', refers to those of 'fickle faith' (cf. John 6:60-69) who do not abide in Jesus (John 15). Once it is accepted that 'Children of Abraham' does not refer to Believers, but to Jews, the teeth of PH's argument are drawn.

All Of Jesus' Exorcisms In the Gospels Are of Believers

It is very difficult to accept PH's argument that all of Jesus' exorcisms were performed on believers. By carefully reading his theology into the text, this is what PH attempts to do. There is

no evidence that the man in the synagogue in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-38; Luke 4:31-37) was a believer [139-141]. The fact that Jesus rebuked the fever in Matt. 8:14-17 does not imply that it was demonic [141-142].(8) Nor are we told that Peter's mother-in-law was a Believer. The same can be said of all the other examples that PH cites. The demoniac living in the tombs (Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39) [163-177] could have known nothing about Jesus.

Seven Spirits Worse Than The First. (Matt. 12:43-45; Luke 11:24-26) [244-256]

PH repeatedly claims that it is wrong to cast demons out of an unbeliever (214, 260, 310). The main evidence he presents for this is found in the above passage. Here Jesus is contrasting his exorcisms with those of the Jewish exorcists. Those carried out by the latter will result in failure because the person delivered is left empty. Jesus' exorcisms resulted in the 'filling' of the person involved because they came to know him as their Saviour - or at least they had that opportunity. As Evans points out "...only if the cure comes through the power of Jesus will it last, for the purpose of the cure is not the cure itself, but *the purpose is to bring the person into the Kingdom.*"(9) (emphasis mine). In this case, as in all others in the Gospels, the purpose of the exorcism is evangelistic, and therefore for unbelievers. It is *not* a warning not to deliver an unbeliever, nor evidence that a Christian can receive sevenfold demons [251-252], for by definition he is already filled. Jesus's point in telling this parable is that there is no such thing as neutrality.(10)

Binding The Strong Man (Matt. 12:29; Mark 3:27; Luke 11:21-22) [236-238]

This is a superb example of *eisogesis* - reading your theology into a text. We are told that the 'Strong Man' is the controlling demon in a person, and that the 'weapons' / 'possessions' are the smaller demons under his control [237].

Possessed or Demonised?

PH argues that Christians cannot be possessed, but they can be demonised, but his argument falls down when it becomes clear that all Biblical exorcisms are of unbelievers. The key to possession is the element of control, not ownership. The metaphor of the house being 'possessed' in the sense of ownership but not control makes no sense because a house is inanimate - and can never be controlled in the way that a living being can. This is a good example of trying to confuse the issue by careful selection of the wrong metaphor [301].

Much more could be written, but there is no real purpose. The essential elements of EGT have been exposed. Will this warning be heeded? To those who hold to EGT I have already demonstrated sufficient evidence of my 'demon possession' (see above). Although he claims to be an upholder of the authority of Scripture Peter Horrobin has instead, and quite blatantly, made

experience rather than Scripture the test of orthodoxy [299, 308].

I can do no better to end than to quote PH giving advice that he has, sadly, failed to follow:

...so watch out for Satan's attempts to blow you off course with Scriptures quoted out of context and without the anointing of the Spirit of God. [119]

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References

- (1) Numbers in squared brackets refer to page numbers in *Healing Through Deliverance*.
 - (2) I will leave it up to the reader to decide whether these claims are valid.
 - (3) See further: D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 45-48.
 - (4) I. Howard Marshall, "Commentary on Luke," *New International Greek Testament Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 557.
 - (5) Craig E. Evans, "Luke," *New International Biblical Commentary*. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1990), 207.
 - (6) Leon Morris, "Luke," *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*. (Leicester: IVP, 1989 reprint), 244.
 - (7) D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According To John*. (Leicester: IVP, 1991), 347-348.
 - (8) Marshall, 195.
 - (9) Evans, 186; D.A. Carson, "Matthew," *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 297-298.
 - (10) R.T. France, "Matthew," *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*. (Leicester: IVP, 1985), 214.
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