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## **Disease as an Act of Evil Spirit: Vision of John Wimber, the Founder of the Vineyard Fellowship**

Choroba jako działanie złego ducha.

Perspektywa założyciela Vineyard Fellowship Johna Wimbera

### **Abstract**

The theoretical proposition of John Wimber, the founder of the Vineyard Fellowship, in relation to the disease is a product of several factors. On the one hand, the changes that took place in evangelical theology in the second half of the 20th century under the influence of pentecostalism, and on the other, the socio-cultural transformations of American society, which did not remain indifferent to the functioning of religious communities. The denomination, led by Wimber, was created under the influence of the counterculture. Wimber himself combined his evangelical experiences with the theology of dynamically developing pentecostalism. An important part of it is demonology and the theology of healing. Wimber synthesized these two theological subdisciplines, showing the strong connections between demonological aspects and the etiology of the disease.

### **Abstrakt**

John Wimber był jednym z założycieli neocharyzmatycznej denominacji ewangelikalnej. Jako religijny przywódca zaproponował postrzeganie choroby, odwołujące się do fideistycznych podstaw teoretycznych. Nie odrzucał rozumienia biomedycznego, ale dostosował je do własnego rozumienia Biblii i

wiary. Jego konceptualizacja opiera się w szczególności na dwóch zasadach. Z jednej strony na założeniach hamartologicznych (związanych z ideą grzechu), z drugiej zaś na przesłankach demonologicznych, które w etiologii choroby upatrują działania złych duchów. Jego model jest supranaturalistyczny, dynamiczny i animistyczny, to znaczy odwołuje się do czynników nieweryfikowalnych i transcendentalnych, które mają charakter pozasomatyczny, nieorganiczny i pozamaterialistyczny.

**Keywords:** John Wimber, disease, religion, evangelical movements

**Słowa kluczowe:** John Wimber, choroba, religia, ruchy ewangelikalne

“**T**he Jesus People movement of the 1960s was a spiritual awakening within hippie culture in the United States, as thousands of young people found themselves on a desperate search to experience God. Not finding Him through drugs, sex, or rock’n’roll, the hippies were one of the subcultures powerfully impacted by ministries such as Calvary Chapel (Costa Mesa, CA) that arose during this move of God across America”<sup>1</sup>. This is how the Association of Vineyard Churches, an American neocharismatic evangelical denomination founded on the West Coast of the USA in the 1970s, describes its origins. Kenn Gulliksen (b. 1945) started the first church in West Los Angeles as a group who studied the Bible. They met at Larry Norman’s (1947–2008), a People! musician, and Chuck Girard’s (b. 1943), who are both regarded as the pioneers of Christian rock music. At that time Bob Dylan (b. 1941) experienced his conversion and Gulliksen became his first pastor. The fellowship soon began connecting actors, musicians, and artists. T-Bone Burnett (b. 1948), a musician, songwriter and record producer, or Keith Green (1953–1982), a Christian musician, may serve as examples<sup>2</sup>. Soon the fellowship included John Wimber (1934–1997), a keyboardist playing in Las Vegas and in a blue-eyed soul band called The Par-amours, as well as a co-founder of The Righteous Brothers<sup>3</sup>. In 1963 Wimber became a Christian in Evangelical Friends Church International, which was

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<sup>1</sup> *History & Legacy: Reaching This Generation with the Power of the Gospel*, <<https://vineyardusa.org/about/history/>> [16.08.2020].

<sup>2</sup> See B. Jackson, *A Short History of the Association of Vineyard Churches*, [in:] *Church, Identity, and Change: Theology and Denominational Structures in Unsettled Times*, ed. D.A. Roozen, J.R. Nieman, Grand Rapids-Cambridge 2005, p. 132–140.

<sup>3</sup> B. Medley, M. Marino, *The Time of My Life: A Righteous Brother’s Memoir*, foreword B. Joel, Boston 2014, p. 10–13.

a Quakerish denomination. It was where he became a pastor in 1970. Along with C. Peter Wagner (1930–2016), a theologian and missiologist from the Fuller Theological Seminary, he was the founder of the Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth at the Fuller Theological Seminary's Fuller School of World Missions, which is considered to be "probably the most influential seminar in America"<sup>4</sup>. It was where his theological opinions on healing and deliverance from demons were shaped.

As he wrote in his books, in 1977 he began to pray for the sick in his congregation. That activity was influenced by Carol, his wife, who was inspired by Pentecostal ideas and her own experience<sup>5</sup>. Initially he was skeptical of miracles and charismata (especially of healing) due to his theological principles. At the time Evangelicalism represented a cessationist position, i.e. it assumed that miracles and spiritual gifts ceased with the apostolic age or right after it. The matters of personal evil and demons also raise issues. American Quakerism speaks more of sin and sinful nature than personal evil; the former being structural injustice that causes "bad things", which reproduce further "bad things" (according to the "sin leads to another sin" principle). Liberal Quakers reject the existence of a personal devil<sup>6</sup>. Wimber had a conservative approach; therefore, the missionaries who had come across the belief in the real existence of demons outside the Euro-Atlantic area had a noticeable effect on his opinions. Eventually Wimber adopted Pentecostal-Charismatic demonology. One of the missionaries who influenced Wimber's opinions was Charles H. Kraft (b. 1932), an evangelical apologist, anthropologist, linguist, as well as a Brethren missionary in northern Nigeria<sup>7</sup>. Once Kraft approached African religiousness, he "rebuilt" his approach to evil spirits, from the initial individual acceptance of a Christian doctrine concerning demons to running a deliverance ministry. He argued that his academic background as a cultural anthropologist and theological preparation were insufficient after the "encounter" with Africans' experience. To be a successful missionary, he has to take a "complementary" approach, which

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<sup>4</sup> G.M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism*, Grand Rapids 1987, p. 292.

<sup>5</sup> See J. Wimber, K. Springer, *Power Healing*, introduction by R.J. Foster, San Francisco 1991 (1987<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>6</sup> See more *Good and Evil: Quaker Perspectives*, ed. J. Leach Scully, P. Dandelion, London-New York 2016.

<sup>7</sup> This is a denomination that derives from the Mennonites, which is called the Church of the United Brethren in Christ in the USA. It is distinct from the Churches of Brethren of the Czech and Moravian (Hussite) Reformation from the 15th c.

considers the local culture approach. In other words, he has to incorporate inculturation<sup>8</sup>. C. Peter Wagner, who served as a missionary in South America, was Wimber's personal friend, and was employed at the same seminar, took a similar path. Based on his own experience, he rebuilt his theology from strongly Dispensationalist, which represented the position of pessimistic Premillennialism<sup>9</sup>, i.e. Christians should withdraw from the social sphere, to Dominionist, which advocates the involvement in a social, even political, transformation<sup>10</sup>. The seminary they both worked for represented a position that may be called "activist". In other words, it advocated the confrontation of Christianity with the contemporary society, ergo a certain "dialectical" relationship. At that time the Fuller Theological Seminary did not accept the attitude of being a passive observer, who would sometimes address a specific issue, of social and cultural changes in progress. This may also be one of the reasons for the seminar success and influence<sup>11</sup>.

Wimber's approach to the model of healing and disease perception combines many social and cultural, historical and political, and personal factors. It should be remembered what conditions affect the creation of beliefs of a new religious movement, and therefore a new denomination, but also entire Evangelicalism at the time, and, more widely, American Protestantism. To grasp the changes to the awareness and mentality of Americans, the following events may be indicated: The Vietnam War (1962–1975), Cuban Missile Crisis (1962), the first fission weapon test by the People's Republic of China (1964), John F. Kennedy's (1963) and Martin Luther King's (1968) assassination, or the Six-Day War (1967) between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, which was interpreted as the beginning of Armageddon by some Protestant fundamentalist communities. As a result, a new broad counterculture movement was shaped that questions the social and political solutions suggested by the country. Indeed, it also questions the epistemic *status quo*. The Jesus Movement mentioned at the beginning of the article was associated with the counterculture. Its disci-

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<sup>8</sup> See Ch.H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, foreword by B. Ramm, Maryknoll 1995 (1979<sup>1</sup>); idem, *Defeating Dark Angels: Breaking Demonic Oppression in the Believer's Life*, Ventura 2014 (1992<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>9</sup> It is a theological belief that Jesus will physically return to the earth, which will fully initiate the kingdom of God.

<sup>10</sup> See C.P. Wagner, *Dominion!: How Kingdom Action Can Change the World*, Grand Rapids 2008.

<sup>11</sup> See G.M. Marsden, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

ples were called Jesus People. Apart from the so-called sexual revolution, which was introduced and advocated by the hippie movement, the Jesus Movement was a representative of many similar counterculture lines and ideological solutions, which were critical of the social, political, and economic problems at that time. Brotherly love and mutual respect were expressed by the spread of pacifism and emancipation ideas, which was common about the entire counterculture<sup>12</sup>. Both counterculture movements advocated the return to spirituality, but they varied in where the its roots were located. The Jesus Movement may be described as a “religious Christian ministry” for hippies<sup>13</sup>. It was a type of “subcultural” Christianity, which began to use an inclusive language and adapt the form and method of its message to the needs of an “alternative” receiver. The Vineyard Church, which the movement laid the foundation for, also “re-built” Evangelicalism at the time, as Pentecostalism did at the beginning of the 20th c. with American Protestantism. The Church introduced popular music (including rock, metal, electro) in the Pentecostal-Charismatic liturgy<sup>14</sup>, and then in the evangelical. It also introduced prayers for the sick as a fixed part of the church service from Pentecostalism. It was incorporated in the so-called “power evangelism” concept<sup>15</sup>, built on the theology of George Eldon Ladd (1911–1982), a Baptist minister and professor of New Testament exegesis. He had a major impact on conservative evangelical theologian communities<sup>16</sup>.

Ladd advocated the restoration of Kingdom theology in Evangelicalism. He understood it in a “processualistic” dimension – “already now and not yet”, which referred to *Kingdom theology* advocated at the beginning of the 20th

<sup>12</sup> See more *Kontrkultura. Co nam z tamtych lat?*, ed. W.J. Burszta, M. Czubaj, M. Rychlewski, Warszawa 2005 [book in Polish: *Counterculture: What Are We From That Time?*]; J. Heath, A. Potter, *Nation of Rebels: Why Counterculture Became Consumer Culture*, New York 2004; Th. Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition*, Berkeley 1969; S. Tokarski, *Orient i kontrkultura*, Warszawa 1984 [book in Polish: *Orient and Countercultures*].

<sup>13</sup> See more R. Bustraan, *The Jesus People Movement: A Story of Spiritual Revolution among the Hippies*, Eugene 2014; R.M. Enroth, E.E. Ericson, C. Breckenridge Peters, *Jesus People: Old Time Religion in the Age of Aquarius*, Grand Rapids 1972.

<sup>14</sup> Music already was an important part of a church service in these denominations; however, in this case it only involves popular music, which, to a large extent, replaced the previous canon of liturgical music involving *gospel* and *soul* music, as well as *spirituals*.

<sup>15</sup> See J. Wimber, *Signs and Wonders and Church Growth*, Placentia 1984; J. Wimber, K. Springer, *Power Evangelism*, San Francisco 1986.

<sup>16</sup> B. Jackson, *The Quest for the Radical Middle: A History of the Vineyard*, foreword by T. Hunter, Cape Town 1999, p. 53.

c. by Geerhardus Vos (1862–1949), a Calvinist theologian from Princeton. Salvation mattered in the latter theology, while the kingdom mattered in the former theology. Both theological concepts in the proposed approaches should be understood in two dimensions – “worldly” and “eschatological”. On one hand, they should already be present in a Christian (or on the earth); on the other hand, they would “complement” each other in the eschatological future. The existence of the kingdom (“already now”) was to be fulfilled in “manifestations of power of the kingdom”, including healing and demon exorcising, in Wimber’s extensions, which was supposed to refer to and be confirmed in the following evangelical passage: “And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.” (Matthew 10, 7 NKJV)<sup>17</sup>. The following implication was the result of Wimber’s approach — if the kingdom of heaven is already on the earth, miraculous events are possible, as in the case of the ministry of Jesus. Therefore, healing and casting out demons should be a fixed part of Christian ministry, and, therefore, of every Christian meeting (service). The “establishment” of the healing model in the context of Kingdom theology is also a safe approach. It shows that even though the kingdom (and salvation) is “already now”, there is still a “not yet” dimension. Thus, a belief that God “already now” heals people does not imply the situation where all people are “given” healing since there are some people who are not healed. This is how the “not yet” dimension is carried out. Wimber indicates that they are examples of people from the New Testament who were not to be healed by God (Epaphroditus, Paul, Trophimus, Timothy). Therefore, unlike Pentecostal healing preachers, the author indicates and preaches that if a Christian does not “experience” the healing of God from a given disease, such a situation does not result from lack of, or problems with faith, but it is a concealed dimension of “not yet” of the kingdom of God<sup>18</sup>.

In the Wimber’s model, prayer for the deliverance from demons is part/type of prayer for healing. Wimber has a complementary approach to the issue of disease, and places it in the hamartiological-demonological contexts. Thus, disease is supposed to be the result of sin inspired by Satan. Healing is a specific shift from this order — it is a shift from sin and “entering” a conflict with Satan.

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<sup>17</sup> See G.E. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*, Grand Rapids 1959; more *The Princeton Theology 1812–1921: Scripture, Science, and Theological Method from Archibald Alexander to Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield*, ed. M.A. Noll, Grand Rapids 2001, *passim*.

<sup>18</sup> J. Wimber, K. Springer, *Power Healing...*, p. 157.



The preacher argues that „health is frequently determined by individual righteousness or sin”<sup>19</sup>. He refers to the following biblical references: Mark 2:1-12; John 5:1-11; James 5:14-16. Thus, he believes that disease is a consequence of human actions and refers to human morality and the concept of sin. Further, it may be corporate in character. In other words, sin or disobedience are supposed to lead to disease or death and thus have social implications: “Western Christians live in an individualistic, fragmented society. Few people think sin committed by one person can affect the well-being, even the health, of an entire group. In this regard, private sin has corporate implications.”<sup>20</sup> More importantly, the author spots the change in the theological conceptualisation of collective responsibility in ancient Judaism; therefore, he indicates that sin is not the cause of every disease. However, Satan may be. Still, this idea is obscure in the literature of the Old Testament where the concept of “New Testament” Satan (devil) is not even adumbrated<sup>21</sup>. Furthermore, the last constatation does not seem to be conclusive for communities that engage in fundamentalist hermeneutics, i.e. literal. Wimber claims that Jesus explains the meaning of the *Book of Job* in his evangelical word (John 9:3) by showing no relationship or its “loosening” in terms of the idea of disobedience/sin and disease through the example of the blind person<sup>22</sup>. As can be seen, it is not an absolute relationship. Although the preacher’s approach does not seem to be consistent, it is in reality. The author adopts a certain principle from the Old Testament, but he does not render it complete in character, i.e. he determines its certain action boundaries and places them in the context of the conflict with Satan. In fact, a conclusion may be reached: every war involves victims, and the above-mentioned conflict is no exception<sup>23</sup>. However, the conclusions does not explain the scope of divine responsibility in a theodical sense. It indicates that all are subject to suffering (including disease), while the healing of God is a response to it<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 39.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> See K. Kościelniak, *Złe duchy w Biblii i Koranie. Wpływ demonologii biblijnej na koraniczne koncepcje szatana w kontekście oddziaływań religii starożytnych*, Kraków 1999 [book in Polish: *Evil Spirits in the Bible and the Quran: The Influence of Biblical Demonology on the Quranic Concepts of Satan in the Context of the Interaction of Ancient Religions*]; more on the changes in: J.B. Russell, *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity*, Ithaca–London 1977; idem, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition*, Ithaca–London 1987.

<sup>22</sup> J. Wimber, K. Springer, *Power Healing...*, p. 39.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>24</sup> More on the perception of suffering in Wimber’s books: G. Wiktorowski, *Uzdrowianie według założyciela Vineyard Fellowship Johna Wimbera*, [in:] *Medycyna i religia*, v. II, ed.

In his publications, Wimber represents the position of a person who regards the existence of Satan and demons as indisputable. He perceives them in the context of the so-called spiritual warfare. He places Jesus Christ, who is to be the conqueror of Satan, on the other side. In fact, his power over demons, disease, nature, and death may serve as a proof<sup>25</sup>. According to Wimber, Jesus was sent by God the Father to “destroy the kingdom of Satan” and “establish the kingdom of God”<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, he formulates four principles of his doctrine concerning the kingdom of God in the context of the doctrine concerning spiritual warfare: 1) God’s reign began on the earth in the person of Jesus (“intrusion” onto an enemy territory concept); 2) conversion and faith in Jesus Christ bring forth redemption from the world, flesh, and devil (“interception of captives” concept); 3) the kingdom of God destroys the kingdom of Satan (“destruction of enemy infrastructure” concept) and 4) the final destruction of Satan when Christ returns and fully establishes the kingdom of God (“new order” concept)<sup>27</sup>. The militaristic rhetoric indicates that there is a warfare conceptualisation of the extraterrestrial conflict, which refers to the Manichaeism-Gnosticism approaches representing a conflict between two (almost) equal adversaries. The two dualistic and antithetic “elements” — God who represents good, light and salvation and Satan who represents evil, darkness and damnation (destruction) — are not conceptualised as equal, especially in ontological terms, by Wimber. The Author makes a rather clear “diversification”, differentiation and leans towards the triumphalism of the ontologically good side, i.e. God. Thus, it does not essentially swerve from the classical (“traditional”) ideas of Christian theologies, which indicate lack of equity, or similarity, between God and Satan. This approach claims that God is the highest and absolute being who creates all that exist. On the other hand, Satan is to be a “creature” that was created and limited by, subservient to, as well as dependent upon God’s will. Satan is temporary, gains an advantage over human beings “for a while”, and is to be ultimately destroyed. These subjects are especially entered on in Pentecos-

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B. Płonka-Syroka, M. Dąsal, Warszawa–Bellerive-sur-Allier 2017, p. 287–323 [article in Polish with English abstract: *Healing According to John Wimber, Founder of Vineyard Fellowship*, in: *Medicine and Religion*, v. II].

<sup>25</sup> J. Wimber, K. Springer, *Power Evangelism...*, p. 161–180.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 100.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 100–101.



tal-Charismatic demonologies<sup>28</sup>. Wimber perceives Jesus as a “divine invader”, which still introduces an element of warfare: „Jesus came as a divine invader to destroy demons and release men and women to eternal life, which explains why the Lord’s presence caused demons to tremble and fear”<sup>29</sup>. Furthermore, he indicates that demons were and are afraid of the “presence” of Jesus, which is evocative of the images of a dualistic conflict in fairy tale stories and pieces of work by Clive S. Lewis (1898-1963) or John R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973)<sup>30</sup>. So, Jesus comes to the Earth to establish the kingdom through his public mission, which would be run by his followers afterwards. The mission is based on two elements: proclamation of good news (Gospel) and demonstration of power by casting out demons, healing the sick, and raising the dead. Therefore, Jesus enters into continual conflict with the current “wardens” of the area (the Earth), i.e. with Satan and demons. Wimber would say clearly: „Jesus’ ministry was marked by continual conflict with Satan and demons for the purpose of establishing God’s reign on earth”<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> See more N. Scotland, *The Charismatic Devil: Demonology in Charismatic Christianity*, [in:] *Angels and Demons: Perspectives and Practice in Diverse Religious Traditions*, ed. P.G. Riddell, B. Smith Riddell, Nottingham 2007, p. 84–105; G. Wiktorowski, *Demony jako epifanie zła egzystencjalnego. Demonologia religii niechrześcijańskich, kultury ludowej oraz jej nawiązania w psychoanalizie. Zarys ogólny problematyki*, [in:] *Socjologia i antropologia medycyny w działaniu*, ed. W. Piątkowski, B. Płonka-Syroka, Wrocław 2008, p. 243–291 [article in Polish: *Demons as Epiphanies of Existential Evil: Demonology of Non-Christian Religions and Folk Culture, and Its References in Psychoanalysis. A General Outline of Problems*, [in:] *Sociology and Anthropology of Medicine in Action*]; idem, *Egzorcyzm jako sakralna terapia antydemoniczna. Relacja lekarz-pacjent na przykładzie stosunku egzorcysty i opętanego w radykalnych nurtach pentekostalizmu „Trzeciej Fali”*, [in:] *Leczyć, uzdrawiać, pomagać*, ed. B. Płonka-Syroka (Studia z Dziejów Kultury Medycznej, v. XI), ed. B. Płonka-Syroka, A. Syroka, Wrocław 2007, p. 337–377 [article in Polish: *Exorcism as Sacred Anti-Demonic Therapy: The Doctor-Patient Relationship on the Example of the Relationship between Exorcist and Possessed in the Radical Streams of the “Third Wave” Pentecostalism*, [in:] *Cure, Heal, Help*, (Studia z Dziejów Kultury Medycznej, v. XI); idem, *„W imieniu moim demony wyganiać będą...” — egzorcyzm (uwolnienie) jako rodzaj „terapii behawioralnej” w pentekostalizmie „Trzeciej Fali” (Third Wave) w USA i Kanadzie*, [in:] *Medycyna i religia*, v. I, ed. B. Płonka-Syroka, M. Dąsal, Warszawa-Bellerive-sur-Allier 2017, p. 249–276 [article in Polish with English abstract: *“In My Name They Will Cast Out Demons...” — Exorcism (Deliverance) as a Kind of “Behavioral Therapy” in a “Third Wave” Pentecostalism in the USA and Canada*, in: *Medicine and Religion*, v. I].

<sup>29</sup> J. Wimber, K. Springer, *Power Healing...*, p. 101.

<sup>30</sup> On another note, it may be indicated that both writers based the plot of their novels on the Christian concept of a dualistic conflict (Protestant and Catholic).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*.

The above implies that the Earth is seen as a peculiar battlefield between unequal subjects, armies. However, unlike e.g. representatives of the Pentecostal Word of Faith movement, Wimber does not debase the completely different meaning of the “kingdom of Satan”, but approaches the problem seriously and does not underestimate the “enemy”: “(...) the kingdom of Satan is powerful, well organized, and it can affect men and women in many ways (...)”<sup>32</sup>. He believes that this activity is related to “chronic problems” experienced by many people, which cannot be solved via medicine, psychology or psychotherapy. The author is convinced that demons are the cause of these problems. Correct identification (diagnosis) of the cause is therefore essential for effective “therapy”. Wimber believes that there are diseases which should undoubtedly be classified as demonopathy, meaning that they have a “demonological basis”, that is directly caused by demons. They include dumbness and blindness, epilepsy, high fever or crippling<sup>33</sup>. However, he does not present any arguments, even of theological nature, supporting this claim. Instead, as is common for a scripturalist, he cites biblical references (Matthew 9:32; 12:22; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 4:38-39; 13:10-17), although he does not explain their contextual meaning. This kind of demonologization of diseases can lead to strong stigmatization of people with these diseases, particularly in the context of these religious groups. Demonopathy<sup>34</sup> is also said to cause problems of psychological nature, such as anxiety, fear, phobias, uneasiness, depression, and problems of psychosexual nature, such as homosexuality<sup>35</sup>, excessive sexual drive (hypersexuality) as well as various fetishes and “deviations” of a much wider range compared to the

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 106.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 108.

<sup>34</sup> Here as a technical term.

<sup>35</sup> Even though author’s publications come from the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the position of most (if not all) evangelical denominations, including Pentecostal-Charismatic, is against homosexuality, often referring to it as a “deviation” or “perversion”. The Association of Vineyard Churches does not assume a favourable position, but it emphasises respect towards homosexuals and expresses its attrition, grief, as well as renounces intolerance, hostility or persecutions, which occurred in relation to homosexuals in the history of the church. It also states that the Association is open to such people on the condition that they exercise abstinence or enter a heterosexual relationship. See more The Vineyard USA Executive Team, *Pastoring LGBT Persons: Position Paper*, 2014, <[https://pulpitandpen.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/PositionPaper-Pastoring\\_LGBT\\_Persons.pdf](https://pulpitandpen.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/PositionPaper-Pastoring_LGBT_Persons.pdf)> [16.08.2020].

approach of contemporary clinical sexology or sexual pathology (e.g. transvestism, the aforementioned homosexuality, bestiality<sup>36</sup>, or sodomy<sup>37</sup>)<sup>38</sup>.

Wimber notices extra-demonological causes of etiopathogenesis of diseases. Therefore, unlike e.g. “faith healers” from the early history of 20th century Pentecostalism, he does not reject the achievements and findings of contemporary medicine and psychiatry. At the same time, he performs a peculiar anachronization and cultural imputation<sup>39</sup> through indicating that the Holy Scripture differentiates between “natural” and demonic causes of diseases<sup>40</sup>. The preacher believes that the biblical text, when it describes occurrences of diseases, differentiates between people who are “demonized” and those who are simply “sick”. He refers to biblical texts to prove this statement (Matthew 4:24; 8:16; 10:1.8; Mark 1:32-34; 3:10-11; 6:13; 16:17-18; Luke 4:40-41; 6:18-19; 7:21;

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<sup>36</sup> The author uses this term as a synonym for the term zoophilia. Still, it may be differently understood. Polish translators rendered the term *bestiality* as “being cruel in a sexual act”, which would indicate BDSM-type sexuality. It is not the case here, however. Such sexuality is not accepted in evangelical and fundamentalist communities, including Pentecostal-Charismatic, either. See G. Wiktorowski, *Model rodziny i relacji małżeńskich w amerykańskim fundamentalizmie protestanckim*, [in:] *Problem kontroli urodzeń i antykoncepcji. Krytyczno-porównawcza analiza dyskursów*, ed. B. Płonka-Syroka, A. Szlagowska, Wrocław 2013 (Studia Humanistyczne Wydziału Farmaceutycznego Uniwersytetu Medycznego we Wrocławiu, v. VII.), p. 45–78 [article in Polish: *Model of Family and Marital Relations in American Protestant Fundamentalism*, in: *Birth Control and Contraception Problem: Critically-Comparative Analysis of Discourses*, “Humanities Studies of the Faculty of Pharmacy, Medical University of Wrocław”, v. VII].

<sup>37</sup> The author understands this term as all anal, including heterosexual, intercourses. He does not wrongly refer to it (although it is ingrained culturally and historically) as homosexuality or zoophilia. See J. Boswell, *Chrześcijaństwo, tolerancja społeczna i homoseksualność. Geje i lesbijki w Europie Zachodniej od początku ery chrześcijańskiej do XIV wieku*, transl. J. Krzyszpień, Kraków 2006, p. 96–101 [translation from English: *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century*, Chicago 1980].

<sup>38</sup> J. Wimber, K. Springer, *Power Healing...*, p. 108, 118; see G. Wiktorowski, *Egzorcyzm...*, *passim*; idem, *Model...*, *passim*.

<sup>39</sup> I take and understand this term as meaning transfer of a way of thinking characteristic for a given culture and historical period into a different cultural and historical context. See W. Wrzosek, *The Problem of Cultural Imputation in History: Relations Between Cultures Versus History*, [in:] *Historiography Between Modernism and Postmodernism: Contributions to the Methodology of the Historical Research*, (Poznań Studies in the Philosophy of Sciences and Humanities, v. XLI), ed. J. Topolski, Amsterdam-Atlanta 1994, p. 135–144.

<sup>40</sup> The author does not point only to the New Testament, but to the entire Holy Scripture, including the Old Testament, which in this interpretive context constitutes a double abuse.

8:2; 9:1; 13:32; Acts 5:16; 8:6-7; 19:11-12). Moreover, he writes about mental illnesses and their “natural” causes (understood as organic, biological), which is completely unfounded, as such understanding of aetiology of psychological disorders begins in the 18th-19th century. Wimber believes that Jesus and his disciples undertake different actions depending on identified (diagnosed) cause of a disease (demons or “natural” causes). In case of physical and mental diseases caused by demons, the latter were supposedly “cast out”. On the other hand, in cases where diseases had a physical basis, “casting out” of evil spirits was not performed<sup>41</sup>.

The preacher points out that the Greek terms used in the New Testament to describe people who “had demons” are rather imprecise. Due to that the English translations of the Bible are supposedly misleading by describing people who “had a demon” as “demon-possessed”. This latter term is said to introduce semantic confusion by suggesting that demons are able to completely possess and take over a human being, with which the author disagrees. He writes the following on that topic: “But I do not believe that demons may own people absolutely while they still live on earth; even when demons gain a high degree of control, people are able to exercise a degree of free will that may lead to deliverance and salvation.”<sup>42</sup> He then points out that the Greek work *daimonizomai* (δαιμονίζομαι<sup>43</sup>) which means “having a demon” could be more literally rendered as “demonized”, which would mean “to be influenced”, “to be afflicted” or “to be tormented”<sup>44</sup>. Wimber therefore “shifts” from a classic (also among the so-called traditional, tribal societies) understanding of “possession” as “embodiment of evil spirit” to a wider understanding of influence. Through that, the author differentiates between “being under demonic influence” or “having a demon” and being possessed. It would seem that the aspect of a possibility of a demon completely taking over control of a human being is essential, and that is something that Wimber is reluctant to agree with. He also distinguishes, like many other Pentecostal-Charismatic demonologists, several degrees of “demonic influence”, which are characterized elsewhere. For our deliberations, this distinction holds no particular importance, also due to its lack of precision, clarity and definite separation of each phase/stage. This does not mean, however, that Wimber completely rejects the possibility of possession in the

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<sup>41</sup> J. Wimber, K. Springer, *Power Healing...*, p. 108.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 109.

<sup>43</sup> All additions in Greek by the author.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*.

classic sense. However, this is supposed to be an extremely rare occurrence and constitutes the final distinct phase/stage<sup>45</sup>. Such approach translates to “ease” of “therapeutic” procedure. Immediate release (and therefore recovery) occurs in cases of being “demonized”. This is also when a mental illness is supposed to “subside” immediately. Further, the author writes: “Those whose mental illness is other in origin must go through a long and costly process of psychological healing.”<sup>46</sup> From this statement, it can be inferred that there is a whole spectrum of “mild” psychological disorders caused by demons. There are also disorders more “difficult” and requiring a longer period of a more professional “psychological healing”.

The preacher also proposes a list of mental illnesses whose occurrence often takes the form of psychosomatic disorders. They are said to be often caused, induced by demons. According to him they include:

1) schizophrenic disorders (ICD-10: F20)<sup>47</sup>, including language and communication disorders, delusions, hallucinations or loss of contact with the outside world;

2) paranoid disorders (ICD-10: F20.0; F22.0; F60.0), including persecutory delusions or “extreme and unjustified jealousy” (sic!);

3) affective disorders, including mood disorders (ICD-10: F30-39) such as depression (ICD-10: F32; F33) or mania (ICD-10: F30);

4) anxiety disorders (ICD-10: F40-42), including phobias (ICD-10: F40) and obsessive-compulsive disorders (ICD-10: F42);

5) somatic symptom disorders (ICD-10: F45) of unknown aetiology (“somatoform disorders”)<sup>48</sup>, which are supposed to include any disorders with an unknown cause which cause loss of motor function, paralysis, blindness, severe pain (persistent somatoform pain disorder; ICD-10: 45.4);

6) dissociative disorders (ICD-10: F44), including amnesia (ICD-10: F44.0), fugue state (ICD-10: F44.1) or multiple personality disorder (ICD-10: F44.81).

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<sup>45</sup> More G. Wiktorowski, *W imieniu moim...*, p. 281–284.

<sup>46</sup> J. Wimber, K. Springer, *Power Healing...*, p. 112.

<sup>47</sup> For the purpose of maintaining order I added the equivalent from the International Classification of Diseases ICD-10. See World Health Organization, *The ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders: Diagnostic Criteria for Research*, Geneva 2003.

<sup>48</sup> Persons with these disorders feel like they have a somatic disorder even though there is no organic basis for this disorder.

To create the above list<sup>49</sup>, Wimber used works related to clinical psychiatry<sup>50</sup>. It is clear that he did not neglect academic science; however, he was selective about it and adapted its conclusions to a “space” strongly characterized by fideism, supernaturalism and dynamism.

John Wimber was a preacher, a pastor and a religious leader who clearly represented a fideistic position. However, in his model of healing and definition of disease he coupled etiopathogenetic factors well-recognized by academic science (organic, chemical, psychological, emotional) with unverifiable factors related to religion, such as demons or spiritual factors associated with sin. He therefore proposed a complementary, holistic model based on two principal theoretical foundations — scientific, insofar as it did not directly conflict with religious faith or literary exegesis of the Bible, and fideistic, which rooted its conceptualization of aetiology of diseases particularly in demonological and hamartiological aspects. The care which Wimber provided to his faithful patients was of a pastoral nature; he always tried to make them feel comfortable, safe and cared for<sup>51</sup>. This may have led to positive effects in patients who sought them, especially in cases of disorders of psychological and emotional nature. Wimber also proposed a cohesive vision of the world, wherein triumphalistic elements oriented towards success, hope and ultimate victory have been emphasized. This was integrally related to the American approach, which could be classified as dominionistic and which began to take shape particularly during the 1970s and 1980s, when the United States was a major world power with even greater perspectives (the pinnacle of this approach was seen during the 1990s). This amalgamation of religion, “medicine” and politics is quite visible in Wimber’s theology of the Kingdom of God, which is supposed to already be present here on Earth. Therefore the “powers and manifestations of the Kingdom”, referred to by Wimber specifically as “signs and wonders”, should be revealed not only within the sphere of the Christian’s inner experience, as was the case in many American Protestant movements (particularly Wesleyan-Holiness or Pentecostal-Charismatic), but also on a somatic (related to body,

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<sup>49</sup> J. Wimber, K. Springer, *Power Healing...*, p. 135.

<sup>50</sup> See J.C. Coleman, J.N. Butcher, R.C. Carson, *Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life*, 7th ed., Glenview 1984, p. 231; G.C. Davison, J.M. Neale, *Abnormal Psychology: An Experimental Clinical Approach*, 3rd ed., New York 1982, p. 70–72.

<sup>51</sup> J. Wimber, K. Springer, *Power Healing...*, p. 169–235.



health, well-being, orientation towards success) as well as political level; as for the latter, Christian Right began to implement it in practice during the 1980s<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> See more S.D. Johnson, J.B. Tamney, *The Christian Right and the 1984 Presidential Election*, "Review of Religious Research" 1985, v. XXVII, no. 2, p. 124–133; W. Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America*, New York, N.Y. 1996; *The New Christian Right: Mobilization and Legitimation*, Ed. R.C. Liebman, R. Wuthnow, New York, N.Y. 1983; G. Wiktorowski, *Przewyciężyć „świat”. Elementy transgresyjne w amerykańskim protestantyzmie fundamentalistycznym*, [in:] *Perspektywy poznawcze w kulturze europejskiej. Studium porównawcze*, ed. B. Płonka-Syroka, E.I. Rudolf, (Orbis Exterior — Orbis Interior, v. V), Wrocław 2012, p. 105–155 [article in Polish: *Overcome the "World". Transgressive Elements in American Fundamentalist Protestantism*, in: *Epistemic Perspectives in European Culture. Comparative Study*, (Orbis Exterior — Orbis Interior, v. V).

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