

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

SUPERNATURAL EVIL AS EVIDENCE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

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ABSTRACT

This study challenges widely held beliefs about the supernatural realm. Those who believe the supernatural realm exists tend to accept there is a personable higher power at work in our world. The naturalistic worldview denies the existence of anything or anyone beyond our physical universe. This paper will first inform the reader of a history of beliefs in the supernatural. Next, an innovative approach will be taken to provide evidence for the supernatural world. Finally, the evidence will be examined to determine its reliability and identify common themes found throughout the research. The information provided is not intended to be a proponent of a specific religion. However, the evidence presented does demand a verdict. The verdict will draw one of the following three conclusions. First, the reader may walk away unconvinced of the existence of the supernatural realm. Secondly, the reader, having already possessed a belief in the supernatural, may take his/her belief more seriously and be challenged to act on its implications. Lastly, a reader who did not previously possess a belief in the supernatural world will have their beliefs altered or at least find themselves motivated to learn more about the subject. The demonstration of supernatural events has traditionally been argued for using cases of attractive miraculous occurrences. C.S. Lewis, Craig Keener, and Gary Habermas are just a few of the highly credentialed authors who have written on the substantial evidence for the miraculous. The cliché, benevolent miracle is certainly evidence of an unseen realm. Similarly, an event thought to have been carried out by evil spirits (demons, Satan, or other spirits) would support the case for the supernatural realm just as well. There is a vast body of evidence to support the existence of a supernatural realm. This evidence points to the work of demons, Satan, and other unseen spiritual forces at work in a very real, tangible way.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION & A HISTORY OF BELIEFS IN THE SUPERNATURAL

Worldview shapes civilization. It is the bedrock of society. The beliefs an individual holds regarding the universe he lives in will determine how he goes about living his life. The theist is likely to spend his days living in such a way that he believes pleases God. The atheist is likely to live his life doing what is best according to his own judgements. The agnostic may be stuck somewhere in the middle of living for self while also keeping an eye out for a higher power. Such a wide variety of worldviews prevail today because of a fundamental disagreement regarding truth. Regardless of how one perceives truth, everybody must take a position on the matter. Even the increasingly popular position that claims ‘all truth is relative’ and ‘truth does not exist’ is in and of itself a truth claim! Some people base their worldview on feelings, thoughts, or emotions that provide a sense of comfort and acceptance in this strange universe we inhabit. Others spend years searching for the answers to life’s biggest questions. Where did life find its origin? Is there a purpose for my life? Is there life after death? Is someone or something in control of our universe?

A 2019 study shows that the number of self-proclaimed atheists in the US has doubled since 2009¹. At this rate, approximately half of the American population would be atheist by 2060. Atheism in Europe is far more popular than latest trends in the US. About a quarter of people in the Czech-Republic identify as atheist while other major European countries such as Italy, Spain, and Germany range anywhere between six and fifteen percent². Twenty-four percent of those in

¹ Michael Lipka, “*10 Facts about Atheists.*” Pew Research Center. December 6, 2019. Accessed June 24, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/12/06/10-facts-about-atheists/>.

² Ibid.

the UK consider themselves atheist or having no religion³. However, the statistics on atheism can be misleading. It seems there is a social stigma around the term atheist. More than double the number of Americans who identify as atheist admit they do not believe in God or a supernatural higher power⁴. Similarly, more than half of the populations of the Czech-Republic, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Sweden do not believe in God or a higher power⁵.

This study offers an innovative approach to answering questions about the existence of the supernatural. It will examine a body of evidence unfamiliar to most in order to demonstrate the best case for the existence of the supernatural realm. The reader will learn of some of the most compelling evidence of an unseen realm. They must decide for themselves if the prevailing data is merely the creation of man or if it reveals the fingerprints of something much greater than us. A belief in the supernatural will drastically alter how the individual spends his/her days.

This work is limited in scope as its conclusions simply comment on the possibility of a supernatural realm. Further research would be required to determine which religion or belief system provides the best explanation of the evidence. However, the information provided here will reveal the closest thing to proof of the supernatural so the audience may decide for themselves if the matter demands further investigation. For the purposes of this study, ‘supernatural’ will be defined as “of or relating to an order of existence beyond the visible observable universe; especially of or relating to God or a god, demigod, spirit, or devil.”⁶ A

³ Paola Serafino. “*Exploring Religion in England and Wales: February 2020.*” Exploring Religion in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics. Office for National Statistics, February 26, 2020.

⁴Michael Lipka, “*10 Facts about Atheists.*” Pew Research Center. December 6, 2019.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ “Supernatural Definition & Meaning.” Merriam-Webster, Accessed October 3, 2021. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/supernatural>.

belief in the supernatural is not synonymous with subscribing to a specific religious belief. Religion will be defined as “an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and rules used to worship a god or a group of gods”.⁷

This study will be divided into four chapters. The first chapter gives a selective overview of what various cultures have believed about the supernatural throughout history. An understanding of what mankind has believed about the universe in the past may contribute to the conversation concerning what should be considered rational today. Most major world religions not only acknowledge evil forces at work but also the accompanying forces of good. Millions who subscribe to a belief in higher powers acknowledge both good and evil powers at work. The evidence for evil forces at work in our world would strongly suggest the existence of an opposite benevolent force typically referred to as God. Chapter two will provide evidence for the supernatural. This section will be divided into the following categories: parapsychical phenomena, demonic activity, satanic activity, and finally the practices of vodou and witchcraft. The third chapter will analyze the information provided in chapter three. The analysis portion will judge the quality of the data based on various factors discussed in the methodology portion of this study. Differing types of evidence will be presented to offer a variety of research material for the reader to consider. Evidence may come in a variety of forms, but each piece hopes to offer an objective presentation of allegedly supernatural events. Each piece of evidence has been selected according to the reliability of that type of data (testimonies versus medical reports) and the quality of that given piece of evidence. The fourth and final chapter will draw conclusions and discuss areas for further research in this subject matter.

⁷ “Religion Definition & Meaning.” Merriam-Webster, Accessed October 3, 2021. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/supernatural>.

This study offers a compilation of convincing, well documented evidence for cases of supernatural evil and paranormal activity. While some studies attempt to persuade their readers of a specific worldview, this piece simply hopes to introduce the reader to various forms of evidence that suggest the existence of a supernatural realm. The author has designed his research to be as objective as possible. The personal religious beliefs of the author and any references in this paper will not play a role in the research process. The analysis portion of this work will assess the evidence in an academic manner that considers all possibilities. Any appeals to religious texts as authoritative are not relevant to this study. However, religious texts may be utilized for two reasons. First, religious texts may be used to reflect historical beliefs (chapter one) of the supernatural. Secondly, religious texts may be used to guide what one might expect to see in a confrontation with a supernatural occurrence (chapter four). Great caution will be used to avoid confirmation bias when examining evidence that arises in a religious context. The theistic teachings of spiritual (unseen) warfare will be compared to the evidence at hand of paranormal activity. Stark differences between the two may prove inconclusive. Similarities would suggest this is positive evidence for what the theists teach. At the very least, this study is designed to spark an interest in the reader to learn more for themselves. This will allow the reader to determine for themselves if there is more to our universe than what the eye can see.

Methodology

This study will employ research tactics similar to that of Christian apologists Craig Keener and Lee Strobel. Both Strobel and Keener have authored books that act as a compilation of evidence for the miraculous. The framework for this study's methodology comes from Craig

Keener's book "Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts"⁸. While the contents of this study are not concerned with miracles (as miracles are typically perceived), the evidence in this work will be collected and shared in a similar fashion.

Keener makes a few important distinctions in the introduction of his book on miracles. First, he asks that his audience seriously take into consideration the weight that eye-witness accounts carry. He asks that they put aside personal assumptions and assess each personal testimony as would be done today. Eye-witness accounts of antiquity are no more or less meaningful than eye-witness accounts today simply because of their content or age. This research is designed to assess the quality of and coherency between various forms of evidence for the supernatural realm. Keener is asking his audience to not set aside testimonies that are over two-thousand years old simply based on their age. Testimonies in this study range from just a few centuries old to those that were produced in the past decade. Keener goes on to say, "Although I can understand some demurring on the matter of supernatural causation, as I once did... I hope that scholars in my discipline will accept supernatural theism (a historic Jewish, Christian, and Islamic approach) as at least one academically acceptable explanatory option rather than presupposing its exclusion."⁹ Rather than reject the possibility of a supernatural explanation from the beginning, why not simply follow the evidence where it leads? This line of thinking is what fuels the research in this pursuit of the best explanation of reality.

Higher learning in the twenty-first century is dominated by anti-supernaturalism. University level teaching is only concerned with natural explanations for supernatural claims

⁸ Keener, Craig S. *Miracles. The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2011.

⁹Ibid., 72.

throughout history. Millennia of first-hand testimonies concerning supernatural events are considered rubbish. They are presumed to be works of fiction that are only to be studied as means of entertainment or artistic expression. While some religions are based on fictional or metaphorical stories, others have their roots in historical-narrative style literature. The latter demands that its claims be tested and assessed for legitimacy based on the available evidence. The champion of truth is willing to invest the time it takes to assess the claims of allegedly historical events. The imperious academics of modern-day discourse do not allow for the possibility that these supernatural claims of old may be true.

The methodology in this study is primarily concerned with two lines of evidence. First, statistics will provide an overview of widely held experiences and perspectives. Like the work of Keener, one of the goals of this study is “that supernatural explanations, while not suitable in every case, should be welcome on the scholarly table along with other explanations often discussed”¹⁰. Statistics bring to light the widespread nature of supernatural encounters. A high frequency of reports of any phenomenon do not necessarily make it true, but it certainly does demand the attention and investigation of those seeking the truth. No statistic can prove with one hundred percent certainty that the supernatural realm exists. What it can do is bring in to focus the gravity of these claims made by so many around the world.

Secondly, this study will employ the use of eye-witness testimonies. These testimonies will be assessed for internal consistency as to rule out fabricated stories that may be self-contradicting. These first-hand accounts will also be assessed for coherency with similar reports of supernatural events. Coherency amongst any given subject matter, such as reports of demonic

¹⁰ Keener, Craig S. *Miracles. The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2011. 66

encounters, would imply there is some truthfulness to the report. It is possible that other factors are at play which would contribute to similar descriptions of supernatural encounters, but to presuppose these factors is to exclude the most obvious explanation of the coherency. For example, suppose people in various parts of the world were to describe demon possession in a similar fashion. Similarities may include the age of the person possessed, the symptoms they express while possessed, and things the individual might say while possessed. Reason would suggest coherency among reports from various parts of the world is due to the witnesses describing the same phenomenon. While it is possible that these reports may be influenced by other factors such as popular media, it is intellectually dishonest to rule out the first explanation all together. Eye-witness accounts will be assessed for internal consistency, coherency with similar reports, and finally, the number of witnesses.

Multiple witnesses to a given event is helpful for determining its truthfulness. Across much of the US and in many places around the globe, the testimony of two witnesses is enough to convict someone of murder. Why is it that widespread reports of the supernatural are not treated with the same gravity? To reiterate a previous, and central aim of this study, a great wealth of evidence cannot prove anything with one hundred percent certainty. Together, the testimonies of multiple witnesses do serve as a mighty piece of evidence for a report of a supernatural occurrence.

Perhaps the most daunting, time-consuming task behind this study is sorting through reports that, while still possibly true, do not provide tangible evidence to something paranormal. For example, thousands of reports exist that allege the healing of a sick person through the power of prayer. Most of these testimonies describe a situation in which the ill individual was never assessed by a medical professional. The claim of supernatural healing is difficult to prove with

any certainty if there is no documentation of what conditions were present prior to the alleged healing. On the other hand, some of these testimonies (as in Strobel and Keener's books) are accompanied with reports and testimonies from a doctor who can attest to the severity of the conditions prior to the healing. In these cases, the testimony makes a much stronger, more tangible, case for the supernatural as opposed to a similar allegation without proper documentation. The two claims are fundamentally the same, but only one is supported by further evidence used to support its claim. This line of reasoning is applied throughout this study to introduce the reader to the vast ocean of testimonies and their accompanying evidence for the supernatural.

A History of Beliefs in the Supernatural

A proper understanding of the history of belief in the supernatural will reveal why such a multitude of views exist today. Historical conversations on the matter will underscore man's greatest developments and biggest roadblocks in the search for the best explanation of reality. Have men always assumed the existence of a higher power? Were there other points in history when atheism was as prevalent as it is today? What kinds of historical events may have contributed to belief (or lack thereof) in supernatural things. Chapter one will answer these questions.

An Early History of Religion

Perhaps the best place to start when learning of ancient beliefs is with the oldest of all the major world religions. Hinduism is widely accepted as the oldest of the religions that can still be observed to this day. In his "Historical Atlas of South Asia" Schwartzberg notes that the earliest traces of Hindu tradition can be found as early as the stone age in what he classifies a

“prehistory”¹¹. Most all of what we know about these ancient civilizations comes from archaeology. Artifacts found in the Harappan civilization led archaeologists to believe a very primitive form of Hinduism was practiced as early as 2500 B.C. Other scholars speculate that similar beliefs were held in the ancient city of Mehrgarh (in modern day Pakistan) which has been dated back to 8,000 B.C.¹² The remains of a burial ceremony from the Mehrgarh people date as early as 8000 B.C. and suggest there was a belief in both the afterlife and a higher power. Later periods in the ancient city of Mehrgarh seem to indicate a belief in life after death.

Another ancient example of belief in the supernatural is the great Egyptian pyramids. The Egyptian pyramids continue to amaze us to this day by their size and the quality of their build. These were not simply designed to please the eye but served a functional purpose as places of burial. The ancient Egyptians believed that the manner in which someone was buried would play a role in that individual’s experience in the afterlife. One author says, “Death was as socially driven as the realm of the living. Vast amounts were invested in royal and elite monuments... Preservation of the body was essential for conventional conceptions of an afterlife.”¹³ The authors date the earliest of these burial practices to have taken place in the predynastic period between 4800 and 2950 B.C.¹⁴ The wealthiest and most powerful members of their society were given luxurious tombs and ensured their bodies would be preserved as best as the current technology allowed. A lifetime of wealth could be invested in a tomb in hopes of a better life

¹¹ Joseph E. Schwartzberg, *A Historical Atlas of South Asia*. Chicago, IL: University, 1978.

¹² Singh Upinder, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century*. Noida, India: Pearson, 2019.

¹³ John Baines, and Peter Lacovara, “*Burial and the Dead in Ancient Egyptian Society: Respect, Formalism, Neglect.*” *Journal of Social Archaeology* 2, no. 1, February 2002. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469605302002001595>.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

after death. The belief in any form of afterlife is almost always associated with the belief in a higher power and/or spiritual entities. Even the exceptions to this rule, such as Buddhism, teaches in the existence an immaterial force that governs the universe.

Contrary to these extinct practices of ancient Egypt, Christian teaching has spread over the face of the planet for the past two-thousand years. Christian doctrine is essential to understanding how the world views the supernatural realm as Christianity is the world's most popular religion today. Christianity is a monotheistic religion which teaches of an afterlife for all people. While Christianity has multiple distinguishing factors from other world religions, it shares many of the fundamental beliefs about the supernatural. One author comments on the similar roots Christianity has with other belief systems when he says, "Christianity was a vision of how the supernatural operates in human lives. Both polytheists and Jews lived in a world that shared a wide range of basic attitudes to the supernatural. These shared beliefs were the foundation for a new movement that could appeal to both."¹⁵ As previously mentioned, this study does not seek to promote one religious belief over another. Rather, it simply attempts to show the commonality of a belief in the supernatural held by so many throughout history.

A more recent example of persistent belief in the supernatural can be found in the thirteenth century. New medical research was teaching mankind what happens to the body when it physically dies. One author comments on the shifting social landscape as medical developments came about when she says, "The privileging of medical knowledge did much to shift the definition of death toward a more definitive pole, as a decisive and irremediable break with this world...Such thinkers rejected tales of the returned dead... More and more learned leaders began

¹⁵ Robert C. Knapp, *The Dawn of Christianity: People and Gods in a Time of Magic and Miracles*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017. 11.

to argue against the belief that the dead might return to this world, interpreting such figures as, rather, demons in disguise.”¹⁶ As science evolves, so do our beliefs. These thirteenth century researchers learned about the finality of death. They were forced to reexamine their beliefs of the afterlife. They concluded that supernatural spirits people had been known to come into contact with may have been demons rather than the spirits of the deceased. One thing they never questioned: the existence of life after death and the supernatural.

History is filled with examples of people groups who have their own interpretation of what they believe the afterlife will be like. In ancient Athens, Greece they believed in an underworld with many parallels to the Christian version of Hell¹⁷. Studying the inside of Roman tombs revealed some Romans believed the afterlife was for reuniting with family and other loved ones¹⁸. Discussions of the afterlife persist throughout the ages. One-hundred years before the birth of Jesus, the Roman historian Virgil was fine tuning what the Romans thought about the afterlife. Approximately four centuries later, thinkers all over Europe such as Maurus Servius were discussing the same questions regarding the nature of the afterlife. The subject has fascinated the world’s greatest thinkers since the beginning of time.

Regardless of the specifics of what each of these people groups believed about the afterlife, what did they all have in common? Each of these cultures mentioned (and far more throughout the millennia) have a shared belief in the supernatural. Different people in various parts of the world at different points in history all lived out their lives believing that there was someone or something beyond what was seen. This higher power would determine where their souls went

¹⁶ Nancy Caciola, *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages*. London; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016.

¹⁷ Juliette Harrison, *Imagining the Afterlife in the Ancient World*. London: Routledge, 2018. 15.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.

after death. Countless examples of various beliefs in the afterlife could be provided. For the sake of time, this study will now proceed to discuss more recent developments in the history of belief in the supernatural.

The Rise of Darwinism

Charles Dawin’s theory of evolution found in “On the Origin of Species” has had a greater impact on the public’s view of the supernatural than any other development in the past few centuries. It has primarily taught learners that living organisms that may appear to have been intricately designed are nothing more than results of random chance and natural selection. It is not unreasonable to assume that there have always been those who identify themselves as atheist or naturalists despite religion’s influence on much of human history. A 2015 study shows that sixty-five percent of American adults believe humans and other living things evolve over time¹⁹. Public education seems to have a role to play in the equation. Just twenty-five percent of those polled between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine stated a belief that humans existed in their present form since the beginning of time while thirty-seven percent of those over the age of sixty-five shared the same position.²⁰ Before the time of Darwin, naturalists did not have much grounding for their case in academic circles. Historically, the naturalistic school of thought may have been seen as foolish and laughable. However, recent developments have shown that many of the world’s most highly respected scientists hold naturalistic beliefs. Darwin’s theory of evolution has led millions to believe that life as we know it may have come about from accidental, random events.

¹⁹ “Evolution and Perceptions of Scientific Consensus.” *Pew Research Center Science & Society*. Pew Research Center, August 20, 2020. Last modified August 20, 2020. Accessed September 23, 2021.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Surprisingly Charles Darwin himself was once a theist. In his autobiography he shares the following story of his time in university when he says, “I did not then in the least doubt the strict and literal truth of every word in the Bible, I soon persuaded myself that our Creed must be fully accepted.”²¹ He spent time studying Christian books such as Paley’s “Evidences of Christianity” and “Moral Philosophy”. He recalls studying these books when he shares “The logic of this book and as I may add of his (Paley’s) Natural Theology gave me as much delight.”²² Darwin’s father even encouraged his son to study the Bible and become a clergyman, but Darwin soon lost interest in the matter.

It was not until later in life that Darwin began to publish books. “On the Origin of Species” did not gain much traction until a few decades after Darwin had passed. This writing was rather popular among academics at the time, but it did not gain widespread popularity for years to come. Darwin opens up about how his work was received when he says, “Some of my critics have said, ‘Oh, he is a good observer, but has no power of reasoning.’ I do not think that this can be true, for the Origin of Species is one long argument from the beginning to the end, and it has convinced not a few able men.”²³ He seems confident in his reasoning skills and questions those who question him. He goes on to comment on the motivation for his work when he says, “What is far more important, my love of natural science has been steady and ardent. This pure love has, however, been much aided by the ambition to be esteemed by my fellow

²¹ Charles Darwin, *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin*, New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2020.
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²² *Ibid.*, 31.

²³ *Ibid.*, 67.

naturalists.”²⁴ While Darwin considered himself a champion of the truth, he does seem to have had other motivating factors behind his work.

Unbeknownst to most, Darwin never claimed to be an atheist. In fact, he reveals his position on the relationship between his theory of evolution and a belief in the supernatural in the following excerpt from chapter five of his most famous work:

He who believes that each equine species was independently created, will, I presume, assert that each species has been created with a tendency to vary, both under nature and under domestication, in this particular manner, so as often to become striped like other species of the genus; and that each has been created with a strong tendency, when crossed with species inhabiting distant quarters of the world, to produce hybrids resembling in their stripes, not their own parents, but other species of the genus. To admit this view is, as it seems to me, to reject a real for an unreal, or at least for an unknown, cause. It makes the works of God a mere mockery and deception; I would almost as soon believe with the old and ignorant cosmogonists, that fossil shells had never lived, but had been created in stone so as to mock the shells now living on the sea-shore. Our ignorance of the laws of variation is profound. Not in one case out of a hundred can we pretend to assign any reason why this or that part differs, more or less, from the same part in the parents.²⁵

There are a few notable points in this paragraph. First, Darwin does not give up any ground on his theory that species descended from other species. He rejects the idea that each species of animal was created independently. Today’s readers can be confident that Darwin was not willing to compromise on any of his theories in order to appease those who had an underlying assumption that God had a hand in every aspect of creation. Next, we see Darwin seem to defend “the words of God”! This may come as a shock to many. Darwin was far from a champion of atheism. Having admitted he did not fully understand the Bible in his youth, Darwin continued to acknowledge the likelihood that a divine being had some role to play in creation. He ends this

²⁴Charles Darwin, *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin*, New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2020. 68.

²⁵ Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster., 2018. 167.

passage from chapter five noting the uncertainty that still haunt scientists with regard to the laws of variation. However, he seems to make the case that his theory of evolution adds to the glory of God rather than detracts from it. He implies that the idea that God must have created each species separately limits His ability as Creator. Darwin believed the true workings of God were intelligent enough to set in motion all that has come about through his proposed theory of natural evolution.

Charles Darwin's legacy seems to be one that promotes atheism. Millions today cite the work of Darwin as a contributing factor in their lack of belief in a divine creator. Darwin certainly seems to have believed that his theory of evolution did not subtract from the need for a Creator as his theory only speaks into the talent of the One who set creation in motion in the first place.

Current Statistics on Belief in the Supernatural

What does the average person today think about the supernatural realm and the existence of paranormal activity? This can be a tough question to answer. A few specific questions must be asked of the general population in order to gain a full understanding of where people stand on the matter pertaining to this study. First, as previously discussed, millions of Americans and others around the world identify as atheist. However, titles can be misleading. About twice the number of Americans who identify as atheist do not believe in the existence of God or a supernatural higher power.²⁶ Over half of the populations of the Czech Republic, Sweden, Belgium, and the Netherlands share the same lack of belief in the unseen realm²⁷. A lack of belief in God or a

²⁶ Michael Lipka. "10 Facts about Atheists." Pew Research Center. December 6, 2019.

²⁷ Ibid.

higher power would imply the individual rejects the existence of the spiritual realm (ghosts, demons, spirits of the deceased) as well.

A study of more than 2,500 censuses, surveys, and other population registers found that about half of the global population is either Christian or Muslim²⁸. Fifteen percent of the world is Hindu and fourteen percent identify with other religions. This leaves about sixteen percent of the world's population in the unaffiliated category. A proper understanding of the mysterious unaffiliated category will shed light on the challenges that exist with applying labels to this portion of the global population. The study notes that, "The religiously unaffiliated include atheists, agnostics and people who do not identify with any particular religion in surveys. However, many of the religiously unaffiliated have some religious beliefs."²⁹ It goes on to point out that over a quarter of the "unaffiliated" adults in the US attend a church service at least once a year³⁰. Furthermore, almost half of the "unaffiliated" Chinese population have worshiped at a tomb in the last year³¹. Similar troubles arise in other studies when trying to categorize those who do not subscribe to a mainstream religious belief.

As it relates to the paranormal, a recent study shows that eighteen percent of Americans claim to have "seen or been in the presence of a ghost".³² In 2015 when this study was produced,

²⁸ "The Global Religious Landscape." *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*. Last modified August 27, 2020. Accessed September 17, 2021. <https://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/>.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Michael Lipka, "18% Of Americans Say They've Seen a Ghost." *Pew Research Center*. Pew Research Center, May 30, 2020. Last modified May 30, 2020. Accessed August 29, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/10/30/18-of-americans-say-theyve-seen-a-ghost/>.

the United States had a population of three-hundred and twenty million people. Eighteen percent of three-hundred and twenty million is upwards of fifty-seven million people. A similar poll from the early 2000's found that, "31% of American adults say they believe in ghosts, and 22% say they believe in witches. In 1978, just 11% of the public said they believed in ghosts and the same percentage said they believed in witches."³³ International studies addressing similar lines of questioning are quite scarce and offer scattered results. These figures will be addressed further in chapter three. It appears there are a wide variety of views and experiences held within the US population. A relatively small number (less than five percent) of Americans identify as atheist. About twice that number of people claim they do not believe in God or a higher power. On the other hand, about one in five of their fellow countrymen claim to have seen a ghost. Approximately one third of Americans claim to believe in ghosts. The discrepancy between these seemingly opposed groups is in the details.

Brian Levack is an American historian who received his Ph.D. from Yale. In his book studying possession and exorcism, he tracks the change in the number of demon possession and witchcraft reports. In chapter nine of his book, he describes how the number of reports changed in the Age of Reason. He points out that Germany saw a rise in skepticism concerning demon possession around 1650.³⁴ Furthermore, England saw a decline in reports of witchcraft and demon possession in the 1620s.³⁵ Levack implies that as skepticism and science were on the rise, we would expect to see a decline in the number of reported cases of supernatural encounters.

³³ Darren K. Carlson, "One Third of Americans Believe in Ghosts." *Gallup.com*. Gallup, April 11, 2021. Last modified April 11, 2021. Accessed September 2, 2021. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/2380/one-third-americans-believe-ghosts.aspx>.

³⁴ Brian P. Levack, *The Devil within: Possession and Exorcism in the Christian West*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013. 215

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 215.

However, the number of those who defended the existence of the supernatural world increased in the 1800s. Such defenders of the spiritual realm “focused on incidents that could be observed. These included both divine and demonic possessions...miraculous occurrences...and the claims of spiritualists that they could commune with the spirits of the dead. All these efforts were made in order to find empirical evidence that spirits not only existed but could influence the course of events in the natural world.”³⁶ Not all beliefs in the spiritual realm are ill-founded. An informed, scientific belief in the supernatural realm is a position that has been held by men for centuries.

Summary

This brief overview of the history of beliefs in the supernatural has examined three fundamental developments. First, ancient beliefs were examined. The ancient ruins of the city of Mehrgarh, Egyptian tombs, the rise of Christianity, and religious beliefs in the thirteenth century show a consistent belief in a higher power and the afterlife throughout the millennia. The rise of Darwinism shed light on the origins of the belief that so many naturalists hold today. The study of Darwin’s personal life revealed Christian beliefs influenced him in his youth and a healthy skepticism arose in his older age. Darwin did not teach atheism. Finally, a look into modern beliefs concerning supernatural things produced mixed results. About sixteen percent of the world’s population considers themselves unaffiliated with religion. However, millions of these people either attend church services (on occasion) or worship the spirits of the deceased. Internationally, it appears only a small portion of this sixteen percent are true naturalists. Approximately six billion out of the seven billion people in our world today believe in a religion and, therefore, presumably believe in the supernatural.

³⁶ Brian P. Levack, *The Devil within: Possession and Exorcism in the Christian West*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013. 216.

CHAPTER 2 EVIDENCE OF SUPERNATURAL EVIL

This chapter is limited in scope as it cannot provide a comprehensive presentation of all satanic, demonic and paranormal activity. At best, this chapter will provide a brief overview of parapsychology and other forms of evidence for a spiritual realm. This introduction to the topic will accomplish two goals. First, a summary of the leading evidence for the supernatural will serve as a basis for an innovative approach to arguing for God's existence. The evidence included in this study appeals to the objective researcher. Atheist, Agnostic, and Theist alike should each be able to appreciate eye-witness testimonies, public opinion polling, and other documentation of reportedly supernatural events. Secondly, the reader will be inspired to independently study the matter further. A desire to know more about parapsychology and satanic activity will lead the reader to develop a more informed worldview.

This chapter will be divided into four sections. First, the study of extrasensory perceptions (ESP) will enlighten the reader to evidence of people using non-physical senses. ESP strongly suggests the existence of a supernatural realm that can be consciously accessed by individuals with this skillset. Proof of telepathy and precognition (both categorized as ESP) would strongly suggest individuals have found a way to contact this unseen realm. Secondly, an overview of demonic activity will be presented. Reports of demonic possession typically exhibit sudden physical illness, possession of animals, divination, extreme strength, or other supernatural abilities. Proof of just one case of demon possession should be enough to convince the reader that an entire spiritual realm is at play. Evidence in the following chapters point to many cases of possession in recent times. Next, similar occurrences will be explored in the context of satanic activity. Satanic activity will refer to events surrounding satanic worship, offerings, or other ritual. References to Satan or the devil refer to the evil character described in

monotheistic faiths like Christianity and Judaism. The work of Satan and his demons are often thought of as one in the same. This study will differentiate between the two as demonic activity typically occurs where demons are not welcome. Reports of satanic activity are usually provoked by an attempt to interact with this spiritual realm. Finally, the malicious spiritual practices of other belief systems (the beliefs may not be essentially evil themselves) such as Shamanism and tribal Vodou will be explored.

Extrasensory Perceptions in Parapsychology

The field of parapsychology is one of the best resources to provide records of these allegedly supernatural occurrences. This area of research is not necessarily tied to satanic or demonic activity. However, some people claim their extrasensory powers come from Satan or a demon. Regardless of the source of these abilities, the information is pertinent to this study as it will introduce the idea of an unseen realm. Considerable research has been conducted in past centuries in the field of parapsychology. Parapsychology is the study of paranormal phenomena. It is typically divided into two specified fields of research: extrasensory perception and the paraphysical.³⁷ The paraphysical branch explores the movement of objects without any physical force or energy having been applied.³⁸ Extrasensory perception studies explore the paracognitive which includes clairvoyance, telekinesis, and precognition. The portion of parapsychology that studies paraphysical events will not be included in this study. While proof of paraphysical events would be fascinating, it would not necessarily lead one to believe in a supernatural realm. Many paraphysical events have been credited to the existence of a physical force that current

³⁷ “Mysteries and the Unexplained: Parapsychology.” *FIU Libraries*. Florida International University. Accessed September 22, 2021. <https://library.fiu.edu/mysteries/parapsychology>.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

technology simply cannot detect. Parapsychology is often studied with the assumption that supernatural forces exist. Information gathered from this field of study will contain evidence of the supernatural as opposed to research which assesses information that is presumed to be supernatural.

Duke University opened one of the first Parapsychology departments in upper education in 1930. It conducted research for over three decades until it moved to the Rhine Research Center where similar work continues today. The thirty-five years of research conducted at the parapsychology laboratory was groundbreaking as it established research methods and definitions for studying intangible phenomena. Many of the findings from this critical time in parapsychology history are found in Stacy Horn's "Unbelievable: Investigations into Ghosts, Poltergeists, Telepathy, and Other Unseen Phenomena, from the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory"³⁹ She opens her work with a preface that notes, "The men and women of the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory were scientists." She intentionally points out that these people were scientists. They were not a fringe minority of superstitious people. Onlookers of all backgrounds and worldviews should appreciate that the work done in this lab was no at-home experiment. It was science in the context of higher education. Much of Horn's findings surround the initial work of Dr. Joseph Rhine, the founder of this laboratory at Duke. She points out that Rhine personally conducted ten-thousand extrasensory perception (ESP) trials among sixty-three students over the course of one year.⁴⁰

³⁹ Stacy Horn. *Unbelievable: Investigations into Ghosts, Poltergeists, Telepathy, and Other Unseen Phenomena from the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory*. New York: Ecco, 2010.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 34.

One student, Hubert Pearce stood out as having exceptional ESP results. Hubert was initially afraid to explore this telepathic ability as he was studying to be a minister and did not wish to be associated with the questionable reputation of parapsychology. However, after some convincing, Hubert agreed to explore his unique ability. They realized “they had to repeat what they had done under strict and careful controls”.⁴¹ Many of the tests implemented the use of Zener cards. Zener cards consist of five cards, each with a different image on them. The images are a circle, a cross, three lines, a square, and a star. The odds of guessing which Zener card is selected at random is one in five or twenty percent. Records from the Duke Parapsychology lab record Hubert making twenty-five consecutive correct guesses in one study.⁴² Twenty-five consecutive guesses, given one in five odds each guess, comes out to a one in 317,057,700,000,000,000 chance. Rhiner was aware of the staggering abilities Hubert possessed. He was intentional about recreating the tests he had performed on Hubert in the laboratory where other practitioners could cross examine his tests.

Only one of the following explanations is possible. First, the entire Duke Parapsychology laboratory may have been fraudulent. Over three decades of research may have been conducted by dishonest staff looking for fame. Secondly, the researchers may have been honestly seeking the truth, but they failed to see flaws in their testing. Hubert, amongst other test subjects who produced sensational results, must have found a way to cheat the tests. The final possibility, one which is best reflected in the records of history, shows Hubert was just one of many people tested who repeatedly demonstrated proof of extrasensory perceptions. Horn concludes her study with this closing remark: “the scientists at Duke University repeatedly demonstrated the

⁴¹ Ibid., 36.

⁴² Ibid., 125.

existence of a group of anomalies that they chose to call extrasensory perception. Since then, the scientific community has failed to either convincingly disprove them or come up with a plausible alternative explanation.”⁴³ Another author speaks into the mystery of ESP in his book “Why Are We Conscious? A Scientist's Take on Consciousness and Extrasensory Perception”. He says, “I even speculate that we may hold excess information in non-material form, in the unknown world ‘outside the diving bell’. This may seem outrageous to readers who automatically assume (as I once did) that everything we know is held in the brain in material form, somewhere in that storage capacity.”⁴⁴ Similar studies have been conducted in other universities across the globe. There are far too many individual case studies to assess each one in such a limited timeframe. The author trusts that this specific example reflects similarly shocking findings in other studies. Extrasensory perceptions alone certainly do not prove the existence of God or any one belief system. However, it serves as an introduction to further research which reveals more startling evidence of supernatural activity in our world. At the very least, academic studies of ESPs strongly suggest the presence of an immaterial force beyond what is detectable by physical instrumentation.

Demonic Activity

Demonology is a difficult field of study for multiple reasons. Demons are presumed to be quite dangerous. Cases of possessions report supernatural strength, self-harm, and a variety of physical ailments such as seizures, vomiting, and uncontrollable convulsions in the possessed

⁴³ Stacy Horn, *Unbelievable: Investigations into Ghosts, Poltergeists, Telepathy, and Other Unseen Phenomena from the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory*. New York: Ecco, 2010. 239.

⁴⁴ David E. Jones, *Why Are We Conscious? A Scientist's Take on Consciousness and Extrasensory Perception*. Singapore: Pan Stanford Publishing, 2017.

individual. Western thinkers tend to categorize demon possession as a belief of the past that is now only useful for fictional horror movies. Contrary to widespread belief in the west, demonic activity is widely reported all around the world. Proof of demonic activity would not only prove the existence of a supernatural realm, but it would strongly suggest the existence of God. Many of the major world religions include doctrine describing a battle between good and evil. The existence of evil forces at work (demons) would substantiate the beliefs about this spiritual warfare that are held by millions around the world. This section will provide an overview of evidence for demonic activity.

A 2013 poll reported fifty-one percent of Americans believe someone can be possessed by the devil or an evil spirit.⁴⁵ That means over 158 million Americans have reason to believe some form of demon possession is possible. A similar survey conducted in 2007 reported that forty-six percent of Americans absolutely believe in demons while an additional twenty-two percent think their existence is probable.⁴⁶ In this poll, the discrepancy between the party of “probable” belief and the party of “absolute” belief in demon possession is reflective of millions of people. This goes to show that Americans do not necessarily accept each doctrine that their religion teaches. The twenty-two percent of Americans who believe demon possession is probable must not simply be evangelicals claiming to believe whatever their church tells them. This group is reflective of millions of people who may not be certain, but they have reason to believe that demon possession is beyond possible. Statistics may differ amongst different

⁴⁵ “Beliefs about the Devil and Possession.” *YouGov*. Last modified 2013. Accessed November 2, 2021. <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2013/09/27/18-brits-believe-possession-devil-and-half-america>.

⁴⁶ “Baylor Religion Survey.” *Baylor Religion Survey | Baylor University*. Baylor University, n.d. Accessed August 3, 2021. <https://www.baylor.edu/baylorreligionsurvey>.

countries and cultures, but the fact remains that the existence of demons is still a widely held belief to this day.

One of the most comprehensive records of demonic activity comes from John Nevius's work in China from the late 1800's. This book also includes reports from India, Germany and Japan. The introductory note to his book points out, "Antecedently to any knowledge of the New Testament, the people of North China believed fully in the possession of the minds and bodies of men by evil spirits."⁴⁷ The people of China experienced demon possession for generations before western missionaries arrived. Nevius spends approximately 250 pages recording experiences with demons. Nevius effectively describes the people groups and their locations for context, but he reports their stories as they were originally told. These accounts of demon possessions are recorded in large block quotes from the original observers themselves. Some stories come from fellow missionaries, but an overwhelming majority of the accounts in this book come from the local Chinese people. The reports come from people of varying religious beliefs. Some proclaim to be Christian, some practice traditional Chinese animism, and some did not possess any specific beliefs. It is worth noting, as the author points out, "Belief in the reality of possessions by invisible spirits is not necessarily connected with a superstitious habit of mind. Chinese Christians generally are gradually disenthralled from their old heathenish superstitions such as "fung-shui," the worship of the dragon, of the kitchen god, and the earth god, and their almost innumerable deities of the Buddhist and Taoist religions; but as a rule, they remain unshaken in their belief in the reality of demon possessions."⁴⁸

⁴⁷ John L. Nevius, *Demon Possession and Allied Themes*. Edited by Henry W Rankin and Robert C Newman. Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1897.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

Chapters one, two, and three report experiences from various parts of China. Nevius arrived in China the city of Ningpo in the Che-Kiang providence. He then moved to the Shantung providence. Here he collected most of his testimonies for chapters two and three. These locations are over five-hundred miles apart. Technological limitations in the nineteenth century did not allow for much communication between places separated by hundreds of miles of Chinese wilderness. He says, “There could be no collusion between these witnesses. They belong to sections of country widely separated, which have little or no communication with each other, and in which different dialects are spoken.”⁴⁹ Despite the distance between such locations, reports of possessions displayed striking similarities. Multiple cases just in these first three chapters report demons wreaking havoc on the individuals they possess for lengthy periods of time without saying a word. Once the missionaries attempt exorcisms, the Chinese observe the demons speaking through the possessed individual, often for the first time.⁵⁰ Chinese families reported the presence of demons for years at a time. In one instance, a demon is reported to have spoken through the possessed individual. The demon allegedly spoke through this thirty-two-year-old woman in Chinese saying, “Tien-fu Yia-su puh kwan an, Wo tsai che-li tsih pa nian, Ni iao nien wo, nan shang nan, Pi iao keh wo pa-shin ngan.”⁵¹ which translates to, “God and Christ will not interfere. I have been here seven or eight years; and I claim this as my resting-place. You

⁴⁹ John L. Nevius, *Demon Possession and Allied Themes*. Edited by Henry W Rankin and Robert C. Newman. Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1897. 68.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 18, 20.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

cannot get rid of me.”⁵² The demons reported in Nevius work throughout China seem to possess physical bodies as resting places.

Chapter eight discusses demonic activity in India and Japan. One contributor from this chapter says, “I hold that—as far as sense can be trusted, and history relied upon—several peyadis, or devil-dancers, could be produced tomorrow in Southern India, who, as far as can be ascertained, are as truly possessed of evil agencies as was the man who was forced by the fiends within him to howl that he was not himself, but that his name was Legion.”⁵³ The reference made here refers to a famous passage of the Bible in which Jesus confronts a demon possessed man. While there is much to be said about the reliability of the Bible, it does serve as a framework for what millions of people around the world think of when they imagine demonic possession. This passage in Mark 5 describes a man who is possessed by a group of demons who call themselves Legion. The possession causes the man to harm himself. Seemingly fearful of being exorcised from the man, Legion makes this request to Jesus: “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.”⁵⁴ The most widely circulated book of all time, the Bible, teaches that demons can speak through the person they are possessing. It also seems to teach that demons would rather possess animals than nobody at all. Nevius’ findings reflect remarkably similar patterns in more modern accounts of demon possession. The accounts in Nevius’ book reflect self-harm and years of torment much like the biblical accounts. Furthermore, a report from Germany in this same book

⁵² John L. Nevius, *Demon Possession and Allied Themes*. Edited by Henry W Rankin and Robert C Newman. Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1897. 20.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁵⁴ Mark 5:12 ESV Study Bible. 2008. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

cites a case of demons who are 1,067 in number⁵⁵, much like Legion in the Bible who reported being many in number.

There are far too many individual accounts in Nevius' work to be done any justice in this brief overview. Much like evidence provided in previous sections, only one of three perspectives can be taken on Nevius' work. First, someone may conclude that all of his recordings are fictitious; merely the creation of one man's imagination, and thus, worthless. Secondly, someone might conclude that the recollection of each story is legitimate, but that the events can be explained by natural means. Lastly, the reader may accept Nevius' work as legitimate research. This third position has extraordinary implications. John Nevius records eyewitness testimonies from China, India, Japan, Germany, and other countries. Each testimony contributes to the greater body of evidence that demons were actively possessing people across the globe in the late 1800's. This study has not found any reports that suggest Nevius recorded what he did with ulterior motives. Despite intentional searching for a challenge to Nevius' credibility, the author of this study was unable to find any accusations that Nevius' reporting was anything less than genuine eye-witness testimony. If the reporting on Nevius' part is accurate, the evidence for demonic possession found in these eighteen chapters is astounding. Furthermore, the similarities among the reports demonstrate remarkable consistency in these alleged possessions. Another author makes this very same point in his study of the history of demon possession from 1500 to 1700. He points out in his chapter titled "Forensic Demonology" that, "The manifestations of demonic possession differed little across the range of ages and across gender. Thus, male demoniacs showed the same behaviour as female, and older demoniacs had the same repertoire

⁵⁵ John L. Nevius, *Demon Possession and Allied Themes*. Edited by Henry W Rankin and Robert C Newman. Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1897. 57.

as younger ones... Moreover, over the period from 1500 to 1700, there were no discernible shifts in the nature of possessions.”⁵⁶

Dr. Don Dent is the Baker James Cauthen professor of world missions at Gateway Seminary. He has over thirty years of cross-cultural experience in Asia. Dr. Dent graciously contributed to this study with an account of his firsthand experiences from a short trip to India in 2019. In just three days’ time, he records three distinct reports of demonic activity⁵⁷. He made it a point to indicate, “I did not seek out these experiences, but they happened in 3 days as we were out sharing the gospel and encouraging new believers.”⁵⁸ One family he visited described two years of oppression by spirits that would visit their daughters and inflict physical ailments on them. He personally witnessed a young girl from this family go into an altered state of consciousness as his coworker began to pray for her. Another family recounted ten years of spiritual visitations in a particular house in their village. After removing idols from the house, the visitations stopped. The third account from Dr. Dent’s three days in India involves a young wife who reported multiple demonic encounters over the course of a year. Dr. Dent’s testimony is just one of many amongst international workers in ministry. Thousands of American missionaries from various religions are sent out internationally every year. Regardless of the personal agendas of these missionaries, they repeatedly observe demonic oppression in many different parts of the world upon arrival.

Dr. Craig Isaacs is a clinical psychologist with his Ph.D in professional psychology. His book entitled “Revelations and Possession: Distinguishing Spiritual From Psychological

⁵⁶ Philip C. Almond, *The Devil: A New Biography* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014. 151.

⁵⁷ Don Dent, *Spiritual Conflict in Missions – 3-day window (June 24-6, 2019)*, e-mail message to author, August 4, 2021

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Experiences”⁵⁹ explores how modern philosophical presuppositions have limited atheistic psychologists from sufficiently addressing the problem of demon possession. In a peer reviewed article, he states “Though belief in possession has been rejected as superstition, the phenomenon of demonic possession is a psychic fact and necessarily should be approached as such.”⁶⁰ Dr. Isaacs challenges psychologists who are unable to properly treat demon possession. He argues that a traditional approach to cases of alleged demon possession are often more effective than purely psychoanalytical treatment plans. He goes on to say in the same article “The way to distinguish these mental illnesses from demonic activity will be by viewing the whole spectrum of symptoms exhibited. What we have found is that demonic possession is a unique syndrome comprised of signs and symptoms that are different from the signs and symptoms that constitute any of the psychotic syndromes.”⁶¹ Dr. Isaacs stresses the importance of differentiating between cases of mental illness and demon possession.

Dr. Richard Gallagher is a psychiatrist at Columbia University in the Center for Psychoanalytic Training and Research. He is a licensed medical doctor with a degree from Princeton University. Furthermore, he serves as a professor of clinical psychiatry at New York Medical College. He is author of “Demonic Foes: My Twenty-Five Years as a Psychiatrist Investigating Possessions, Diabolic Attacks, and the Paranormal.” As the title implies, his book describes numerous encounters with patients who claim to be experiencing demonic possession. Those who subscribe to naturalistic worldviews tend to assert that legitimate researchers (such as scientists and medical doctors) always side with naturalistic worldviews. Dr. Gallagher is a

⁵⁹ Craig T. Isaacs. *Revelations & Possession: Distinguishing Spiritual from Psychological Experiences*. Kearney, NE: Morris Publishing, 2009.

⁶⁰ Isaacs, T. Craig. 2018. “Demon Possession: Symbolic Language and the Psychic Fact.” *Journal of Mind & Behavior* 39 (4): 382.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 373.

distinguished author, professor, psychiatrist, and medical doctor who has studied traumatized patients for over twenty-five years. When asked about hesitancy to write his book, Gallagher shared in an interview that, “It involves a controversial subject and I’m an academic psychiatrist, so I wasn’t sure that it was a great idea, professionally speaking, to publicize a belief that is unacceptable to a lot of people in my field.”⁶² In a cultural climate dominated by skepticism and atheistic thought, he was hesitant to share his findings on the topic. However, he decided to share his findings despite the backlash he might receive. Part one of his book is entitled “From Skeptic to Observer”⁶³. He begins with some of his personal background so that the reader understands any potential prejudices. He shares that he was raised to be skeptical of all matters concerning the devil and demonic activity. Only after a series of experiences with witchcraft and apparent possessions was his interest piqued, which caused him to pursue the matter further. The remainder of his book discusses specific cases of demon possession while making note of what differentiates them from standard mental illness. He highlights this distinction in an interview saying

In modern times, especially in the developed world, many people think the possessed are just mentally ill. There’s a real difference. As I often say to people, mentally ill people can’t all of the sudden speak foreign languages. They don’t exhibit levitation. They don’t have superhuman strength, and as Julia exhibited on many occasions, they don’t have psychic abilities enabling them to reveal information called hidden knowledge. All of these symptoms are a good indication that there’s a separate creature involved.⁶⁴

The cases discussed in his book are the rare outliers in a society full of people with mental illness. ^[64] As a medical professional and certified psychiatrist, he is qualified as can be when it

⁶²Adrienne Westenfeld and Richard Gallagher. “Dr. Richard Gallagher, Demonic Possession Expert, Isn’t Trying to Convince You.” *Esquire*, Hearst Magazine Media, 2 Nov. 2021.

⁶³Richard Gallagher. *Demonic Foes: My Twenty-Five Years as a Psychiatrist Investigating Possessions, Diabolic Attacks, and the Paranormal*. HarperOne, 2020.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

comes to identifying mental illness. Despite an acute ability to do just that, Dr. Gallagher asserts that other cases, although rare, clearly exhibit evidence that there is a demon at work. Those reading this study are encouraged to read Dr. Gallagher's findings for themselves to develop a more precise understanding of what is recorded in each individual case.

As another noteworthy point of contention, Dr. Gallagher has shared that he fears “plenty of spiritually-oriented psychiatrists, who truly accept the possibility of possession by spirits, sometimes with different ideological frameworks... are reluctant to speak out. They may think, ‘This is a little out of the mainstream for the mental health field, so maybe I ought to keep this to myself.’”⁶⁵ Perhaps the lack of an academic defense of demonic possession is due to pressure to conform to mainstream academia. Dr. Gallagher would argue that many more licensed clinicians would make similar arguments for the prevalence of demon possession if it were not for fear of backlash from the academic mainstream school of thought. The resources described in this chapter are just a brief glimpse of the testimonies of demonic activity from around the world.

Dr. Chris Gnanakan is a professor of Global Studies at Liberty University. He received his Ph.D. in theology and religious studies from University of Leeds in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, his education includes a D.Min in pastoral theology and a M.Th from South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies, a D.D. in mission theology and church leadership from Trinity Baptist College, a M.Div in practical theology from Asia Graduate School of Theology, a BA in Bible and Christian ministries from Tennessee Temple University, and a diploma in Biblical studies from Word of Life Bible Institute. Dr. Gnanakan agreed to be interviewed to share some of his experience with what he believes to be demonic encounters⁶⁶. He was born in

⁶⁵ Adrienne Westenfeld and Richard Gallagher. “Dr. Richard Gallagher, Demonic Possession Expert, Isn't Trying to Convince You.” *Esquire*, Hearst Magazine Media, 2 Nov. 2021.

⁶⁶Shane Geisler and Chris Gnanakan. Experience with Demonic Activity. Personal, August 11, 2022.

India and has traveled back to various Southeast Asia for years. Most of the encounters described in the interview took place overseas in this area of the world. Dr. Gnanakan identified several instances of clear demonic possession. Some common threads among the possessed individuals were self-harm, restlessness, verbal cursing, and being repulsive to any kind of spiritual treatment that has to do with Bibles, prayer, or exorcism. He recalls one case of a possessed woman particularly turned off to any kind of spiritual intervention. When physically confronted with a Bible she had a type of “epilepsy fit” and fell down. In another case, he described a woman speaking in a distinctly male voice. Possessed individuals would occasionally give credit to a specific demon mentioned by name. Dr. Gnanakan pointed out that Hindus were quick to identify these situations as the workings of “evil spirits”. Some locals who were present identified possessions as the Hindu goddess Kali. She is frequently associated with evil spirit possessions as she is believed to be the goddess of death and doomsday. She is often depicted in a crazed state with her tongue hanging out which may lead Hindus to believe this specific goddess is at work when they see the individual exhibiting a similar appearance. He went on to note that in the non-western world, demon possession is not extremely rare as westerners might believe. Spirit possession is even utilized in some parts of the world as supernatural powers are used for business. Dr. Gnanakan witnessed a possessed woman use her powers to locate a lost piece of jewelry. This woman made a living using the prophetic powers that the spirit had afforded to her. In the later portion of the interview, Dr. Gnanakan was asked if these occurrences could be attributed to mental health disorders. He stated that while it was technically possible, that should not be the conclusion drawn from these events. Considering the supernatural nature of the possessed individuals’ abilities, mental health concerns did not seem to

be a reasonable explanation. Dr. Gnanakan's experience is just one of many academically accredited people who attest to the very real nature of demon possession.

Satanic Activity

Satanic activity will describe reports of supernatural evil that are thought to have been caused by the worship of the devil, offers presented to the devil, or other rituals and traditions carried about by those in the satanic church. Differentiating between the (alleged) work of Satan and work carried out by his demons can be challenging. For the purposes of this study, satanic and demonic activity produce the same evidence for the existence of a supernatural realm which, in turn, suggests the existence of God. The focus on satanic activity will demonstrate reports of supernatural evil in a context where the presence of the devil is intentionally requested and expected. An objection to reports of demonic activity claims that demons are being used to explain something that is naturally occurring. The skeptic argues natural occurrences that science has yet to explain should not simply be blamed on the superstition of demons. Skeptics often object that in a case of alleged demonic activity theists are making an argument from ignorance which is a problematic way of thinking. This objection is much harder to make in the context of satanic activity. The worship of Satan is an intentional attempt to reach the supernatural realm. Therefore, allegedly supernatural occurrences would come across as quite legitimate evidence considering they immediately followed intentional satanic worship, offering, or other ritual. One author highlights the bias many modern academics employ against this line of evidence when he says, "Unfortunately, many scholars in Religious Studies have had a certain aversion to the

positivistic use of evidence, borne of post-modern critiques of scientific verifiability and a general relativism toward truth-claims.”⁶⁷

The Judeo-Christian devil is referred to as Satan, Lucifer, or simply the devil. Jewish and Christian versions of the devil are what is most widely known and recognized by the public. However, various belief systems have differing names for the ruler of evil forces. In “The Devil: A New Biography”, Philip Almond says, “there was a variety of names for the chief of the evil spirits – Shemihazah, Asael and Mastema. And, as we will see, the chief of the demons will also be known as Beelzebul, Lucifer and Belial. But it was the name Satan or its Greek form διάβολος and Latin form diabolos, rendered in English as ‘Devil’ (French as Diable, German as Teufel) that came to predominate.”⁶⁸ For the purposes of this study, references of ‘the devil’ or ‘satan’ will refer to one of these characters. Time constraints do not allow for a detailed explanation of differences among each of these evil persons. However, any evidence of an evil supernatural being at work will contribute to this study, nonetheless.

Perhaps the best-known practice thought to summon the powers of Satan is found in Ouija board rituals. A wide range of perspectives are held regarding Ouija boards. Some believe it is nothing more than a party game. If this is the case, then the board is nothing more a game. Any messages produced by the board would have to be a product of human subconscious activity. On the other hand, some believe Ouija boards are legitimate tools used to access the supernatural realm. Theists tend to share a belief that these boards are dangerous as they attempt to exorcise the devil or his demons. Bill Ellis notes in his study of Satanism, “enough personal experience stories circulate that seem to validate the fears of adults: some teens do admit that evil

⁶⁷ David Frankfurter. "The Satanic Ritual Abuse Panic as Religious-Studies Data." *Numen* 50, no. 1 (2003). 111.

⁶⁸ Philip C. Almond, *The Devil: A New Biography* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014. 15.

spirits and even Satan himself take over the board. In fact, according to some such descriptions, adolescents deliberately invite demons to communicate through the Ouija board.”⁶⁹ Skeptics theorize that Ouija boards get their power from psychological phenomena. In short, participants have their hands guided by their own subconscious. The first few letters may be entirely random, but then participants subconsciously complete words on their own power. For example, if users ask the spirit’s name, the first letter or two may be entirely random. However, if the first letter is L, participants may expect the letters U-C-I-F-E-R to follow, and thus, they fill in the blanks. However, Ellis goes on to explain that this naturalistic explanation on the phenomenon cannot account for messages received when players cannot see the board. He says, “Often, the ways in which the words are spelled out suggest powers beyond those that the participants display in their everyday life. For instance, research done early in the century by Sir William F. Barrett showed that the Ouija board couple spell out meaningful messages even when those who held the indicator were blindfolded and the letters were rearranged on the board in a random fashion.”⁷⁰ Ellis goes on to point out another study in which Dr. Horace Westwood found a participant was able to produce a message with the same limitations of a blindfold and a randomize alphabet order.⁷¹ Here we find another instance of supernatural phenomena if the research proves true. Is it possible that each personal testimony and the studies mentioned are corrupt? It is possible. However, there is no evidence to suggest there was tampering with these studies. It takes a considerable amount of prejudice, bias, and faith to disregard eyewitness

⁶⁹ Bill Ellis, *Raising the Devil Satanism, New Religions, and the Media*. Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 2015. 65.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

testimony and academic research simply because it contradicts one's presupposed naturalistic worldview.

In his book "Evidence of Satan in the Modern World", Leon Cristiani provides a detailed account of specific instances of satanic activity and exorcisms. Cristiani includes numerous records of conversations between exorcists and evil spirits speaking through possessed persons. The author is careful to note all the reasons why these cases of alleged possession are not simply psychological phenomena. He emphasizes evidence in each testimony that suggests there are supernatural powers at work. For example, chapter four discusses the possession of a rather ordinary man from France, referred to as Antoine Gay. He attended school, became a carpenter, and completed military service in Lyons. After being possessed, he was examined by multiple church officials over the course of three sessions, each lasting one to two hours. These men shared their findings saying, "We consider it very probable that this man is possessed by a devil. Our opinion is based on the following grounds: (1) he has disclosed several secret things which he had no means of knowing".⁷² Amongst other reasons, they also point out, "it is undeniable that Gay does not know Latin...we questioned him several times in Latin and since the replies were made in French... this seems to indicate a knowledge of Latin on the part of that higher intelligence."⁷³ To further document the case, Gay was brought to a medical doctor for assessment. After four months of consistent examination, the doctor found him to be in great physical health. However, the doctor concluded his medical report saying, "we remain convinced that his extraordinary state can only be attributed to possession. This conviction is reinforced by the fact that during our first interview with M. Gay, that extraordinary thing which speaks

⁷² Cristiani Léon. Evidence of Satan in the Modern World. New York, NY: Avon, 1975. 155.

⁷³ Ibid.

through his mouth revealed the inmost secrets of our heart, told us the story of our life from the age of twelve onwards, giving details that are known only to God, our confessor, and ourselves.”⁷⁴ This is just one case of many in Cristiani’s compilation of well documented cases of satanic encounters. Certain instances of possession record the spirit openly calling itself Satan or Lucifer as opposed to the name of a specific demon. Once again, is it possible that each of these stories were independently crafted hoaxes? Is it possible that there is nothing more than the power of the human imagination at play? It is possible, but that is not where the evidence points. Only a stubborn prejudice against the possibility of the supernatural would suggest that these reports are fraudulent. Hundreds of other explanations would be needed simply to explain away the supernatural testimonies described in this one book. Yet, many people put faith in a naturalistic worldview that predetermines that these accounts cannot be true. Cristiani provides his readers with this disclaimer at the beginning of the third chapter: “this purpose might be seen as the intention of proving the existence of the supernatural in a world increasingly given to doubt and incredulity. In other words, the answer to the often quoted saying of Baudelaire: 'The Devil's deepest wile is to persuade us that he does not exist.' The trick could lead us into mortal danger. The Devil desires nothing better than to be free to act without being recognized”.⁷⁵

Dr. Richard Gallagher (mentioned above regarding demonic activity) documents instances of demon possession specifically associated with Satanic cults. One example described in his book documents the case of a woman referred to as (pseudonym) Julia. Gallagher and his wife were awakened one night by their cats violently attacking each other; something very out of character for them. The following day was the first encounter with Julia. She disclosed to Dr.

⁷⁴ Cristiani Léon. Evidence of Satan in the Modern World. New York, NY: Avon, 1975. 158

⁷⁵ Ibid., 149.

Gallagher how she had caused his cats to fight the previous night. Dr. Gallagher and his wife were the only ones in the house that night. He records his initial reaction to this information when he writes “My thoughts came fast and furious. ‘What the hell am I saying? Could she really have had anything to do with the cats?’”⁷⁶ Shortly after, he learned that Julia was a high priestess of a Satanic cult, but she was seeking help to escape the group. In the following weeks, Julia exhibited other signs of possessing uncontrollable supernatural powers. On one occasion, she told Dr. Gallagher that she could see a vision of exactly where the gentleman whom they had recently consulted for an exorcism was. She described him walking on a beach in a blue windbreaker and khaki pants. Gallagher immediately called the man to question his whereabouts. The man shared that he was indeed walking on a beach wearing khaki pants a blue windbreaker.⁷⁷ When an exorcism was attempted on Julia, those present all witnessed Julia levitate about a foot out of her chair for half an hour⁷⁸. Julia explained to Dr. Gallagher how she had gotten into these circumstances. She admitted she had willingly joined a Satanic church for a few reasons. Among these reasons included sexual abuse in the Catholic church, romantic relations with a Satanic church member, and her attraction to the supernatural powers the Satan worshipers wielded. She repeatedly shared with Gallagher that it would be difficult to remove the demonic forces at work because she had willingly signed over her services to Satan in exchange for his supernatural powers. She was required to participate in orgies and repulsive rituals involving unborn fetuses. In exchange, she received some of the supernatural powers described above. Julia’s experience describes a hierarchy among Satan worshipers where

⁷⁶ Richard Gallagher. *Demonic Foes: My Twenty-Five Years as a Psychiatrist Investigating Possessions, Diabolic Attacks, and the Paranormal*. HarperOne, 2020. 54.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 302.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 79.

members must make personal sacrifices in order to receive supernatural powers in return. Gallagher comments on similar cases he has come across when he says, “I generally doubted their veracity, though a few such stories seemed credible to me from their details, in addition to Julia’s.” Julia is just one individual’s case described in Gallagher’s work on clear instances of supernatural occurrences.

Vodou and Witchcraft

Vodou and witchcraft are some of the most recognizable practices that attempt to reach the supernatural realm. Defining these spiritual practices can be challenging. Just as there are many denominations within one religious belief system, so there are different interpretations of what defines vodou and witchcraft. Previous sections of this study have each contributed to the greater body of evidence that suggest the existence of a supernatural realm. Similarly, each of the practices mentioned in this section act as further evidence for the supernatural. Any given piece of evidence on its own may not be enough to convince someone of its supernatural claims. Together, the vast collection of testimonies which lay claim to supernatural powers are nearly impossible for truth seekers to ignore.

Cambridge defines vodou as, “a type of religion involving magic and the worship of spirits, especially common in Haiti.”⁷⁹ Thus, the best place to study Vodou is Haiti. Vodou is a spiritual practice that has often been misrepresented in the media. One author speaks to the gross misrepresentation of vodou when he says, “Vodou is frequently invoked as a cause of Haiti’s continued impoverishment. While scholarly arguments have been advanced for why this is untrue, Vodou is persistently plagued by a poor reputation. This is buttressed, in part, by the

⁷⁹ “Voodoo.” Voodoo - Definition in the Cambridge English Dictionary. Accessed October 19, 2022. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/voodoo>.

frequent appearance in popular culture of the imagined religion of ‘voodoo.’”⁸⁰ This study is concerned with the Vodou practice of contacting the supernatural realm. Sometimes this is intentional on the part of the Vodou practitioner who is attempting to reach a spirit. One author says in her article on spirit possession in Haiti, “Within Haitian Voodoo circles, possession and trance acquired great importance and were rarely regarded as a cause for shame or even anxiety, as they were thought to be a mark of divine favor.”⁸¹ In other instances, possession is unwanted and often thought to manifest itself in seizures. Studies have been conducted to learn about the relationship between Vodou and seizures. These studies generally confer that these seizures have natural causes (as opposed to being a result of spirit possession) that can be cured with modern medicine.⁸² However, these studies admit they are in no place to completely dispel the possibility of spirit possession at work. One of these studies comments on the strange nature of these episodes when it says, “The trance is typically followed by a period of sleep or confusion, and the possessed remembers nothing of what was said or done. The intensity of the crisis varies according to the character of the spirit seeking incarnation.”⁸³ Later on, the same study asserts that alleged cases of out of body experiences, depersonalization, double consciousness, celestial voices, and celestial visions can all be explained away with temporal lobe partial seizures.⁸⁴ Naturalistic presuppositions may be at play in the research. Medical professions have every right

⁸⁰Adam M. McGee, “Haitian Vodou and Voodoo: Imagined Religion and Popular Culture.” *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 41, no. 2 (June 2012): 231.

⁸¹ A.E. Cavanna, S. Cavanna, A. Cavanna, *Epileptic seizures and spirit possession in Haitian culture: Report of four cases and review of the literature.* *Epilepsy & Behavior*, Volume 19, Issue 1, 2010, 89-91.

⁸² Carrazana, E., DeToledo, J., Tatum, W., Rivas-Vasquez, R., Rey, G. and Wheeler, S. (1999), *Epilepsy and Religious Experiences: Voodoo Possession.* *Epilepsia*, 40: 239-241.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

to provide their professional opinion concerning strange experiences. However, they claim with certainty that so many reports of supernatural experiences can be explained away by a simple brain malfunction. Nobody can say with absolute certainty if allegedly supernatural experiences in Vodou are legitimate. What can be said with certainty is that hundreds of thousands of people who practice forms of Vodou believe they have means of contacting a spiritual realm the naked eye cannot see. Another study looked into Haitian burn victims who claimed possession had a role to play. Much like other studies, the researchers in this work seem to have a naturalistic bias. It is worth noting a famous story of demon possession from Mark 9 in the Bible. The Christian Bible teaches that Jesus encountered a boy who was possessed by a demon. The father of the boy notes that “it (the demon) has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him.”⁸⁵ This modern-day study notes four cases of Haitians who received serious burns after suffering from “epilepsy”. Again, we see that one piece of evidence can have more than one interpretation. The authors even go as far as to say that the most serious burns can be blamed on nocturnal seizures that did not allow for bystanders to help remove the individual from the fire as they were sleeping. While this hypothesis is possible, it seems to really stretch the facts of the situation to fit a naturalistic narrative. Rather than draw parallels and connect the dots between these four similar accounts, the researchers look for an alternative explanation. The naturalistic interpretation suggests the burn victims experienced nocturnal seizures while just so happening to be within a body’s length of a fire. Rather than consider the local people’s proposition that demon possession was at play, the naturalistic researcher must devise an alternative explanation that involves epilepsy repeatedly affecting individuals at a specific location (around a fire). Assuming the seizures are purely of natural origins, why would we expect to see an individual near a fire while all of

⁸⁵ Mark 9:22 ESV Study Bible. 2008. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

his/her family and friends are asleep? Assuming the seizures are tied to the Vodou practices of the culture, it seems fitting that the spirit would lead the individual to harm themselves. The likelihood of someone being epileptic is rather low to begin with. The likelihood of someone with epilepsy having a seizure while being within a body's length of a fire is even lower. The probability of this happening to four different people within a limited timeframe in a relatively small country seems quite unlikely.

Vodou practices have a rich history, and they exist in a wide range of forms today. Just one example of supernatural abilities in connection with Vodou comes from Chesi Gert's book "Voodoo, Africa's Secret Power". He cites a report from a voodoo priest. This priest claims to treat supernatural diseases while also acknowledging physical ailments that need the assistance of a medical doctor.⁸⁶ He shares some of his Vodou experience when he says, "In our temple we have a spirit called Leglesou, who is invulnerable. One of our dancers may transform into Leglesou, then she jumps into a heap of broken glass or sings her arms with fire. She never gets hurt, for it is not her mortal body that does these things but Leglesou himself. We don't use dolls, but I know some people in port-au-prince who killed other people with voodoo dolls."⁸⁷ Vodou practices range from exorcisms, contacting deceased relatives, voodoo doll rituals, and many other traditions that may seem strange to westerners. While some of these experiences may be fictitious stories rooted in religious bias, it is difficult to discount all the claims of supernatural experiences when they are so straightforward. Other religions may point to supernatural events in the context of healings, favorable weather, acquired wealth, etc. Vodou, on the other hand,

⁸⁶ Gert Chesi, *Voodoo: Africa's Secret Power*. Austria: Smithmark Publishers, 1981. 221.

⁸⁷Ibid.

makes bold claims dealing with violent possessions, unexplainable results of vodou doll manipulation, and miraculous powers thought to be the result of a spirit's manifestation.

Witchcraft is a broad term that refers to the use of spells or magic. Unlike Vodou, it does not refer to a specific culture or part of the world. People have tried to tie witchcraft to a specific belief system. As recently as 1979 a Californian wrote "The Spiral Dance" in which she described a new spiritual practice that she chose to name witchcraft.⁸⁸ Witchcraft is not simply a practice of antiquity. It is alive and well today. In her book "Witchcraft: The Basics", Marion Gibson writes, "The same modernity of witchcraft is evident elsewhere. In Nepal, for example, witchcraft accusation has become a matter of concern for human rights activists...women suspected of witchcraft can be subjected to torture, abuse and killing by beating or burning to death. Women have also been driven from their homes and lands because they are suspected of witchcraft."⁸⁹ It is easy to look far back in history and look down on those who held ancient, ill-informed beliefs. The gravity of witchcraft settles in when one realizes that the practice is still a matter of life and death today.

Wicca is just one example of a branch of witchcraft that claims to possess knowledge about the spiritual realm. Today, most people acknowledge Wicca as a branch of witchcraft which, in turn, makes practitioners (both male and female) identify as witches.⁹⁰ The question remains: do Wiccan witches genuinely believe that have magic powers? Ethan White says in his book on modern pagan witchcraft, "At the very heart of Wicca is a belief that magic is not misguided superstition but that it has an objective reality and that — if performed correctly —

⁸⁸ Marion Gibson, *Witchcraft*. Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Ethan White, *Wicca: History, Belief, and Community in Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. Chicago: Sussex Academic Press, 2016. 77.

magical spells really work”⁹¹ Many Wiccan spells are directed toward rather trivial problems. However, some cases of Wiccan spells have been directed toward serious issues such as medical concerns. For example, White cites a case in his book of an anthropologist by the name of Loretta Orion who encountered an individual who believed that she was cured of cancer by Wiccan magic.⁹² Such reports of wiccan magic need to be validated case by case. While there may be some illegitimate witches who simply subscribe to Wicca for the community, there are many alleged cases of magic that any researcher should take seriously. The title “witch” may have a negative connotation, but these people really believe they can tap into supernatural power.

Other branches of witchcraft are alive and well today. Due to length limitations, this study cannot investigate the claims of each practice. The academic nature of this study did away with claims and testimonies of certain spiritual practices. For example, Shamanism is an ancient belief system that is still practiced around the world today. Shamans make bold claims about their ability to contact the spiritual realm. Unfortunately, the Shamans’ extensive use of psychoactive plants and fungi calls their personal accounts into question. Not all claims of supernatural experiences are equal. This study has introduced the reader to just a few cases of supernatural occurrences. These cases are just the tip of the iceberg in a world full of people who claim to have had an experience impossible to explain by natural means.

⁹¹ Ethan White, *Wicca: History, Belief, and Community in Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. Chicago: Sussex Academic Press, 2016. 7.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 107.

CHAPTER 3 ANALYSIS OF THE EVIDENCE

Chapter three sets out to accomplish two goals. First, an overview of allegedly supernatural occurrences suggested the existence of a supernatural realm. The existence of a supernatural realm, one typically thought to contain spirits and other conscious beings, would point to the existence of God. Secondly, this introductory presentation of the evidence is designed to encourage the reader to conduct further research for themselves. Only after the individual has assessed all the information for himself can he form a truly informed worldview. To reiterate an earlier point, this study used Keener's work on miracles to devise a similar mission. The evidence is not a guarantor of the position that there is an unseen supernatural realm. The resources cited in this work aim to open serious discussion about the supernatural realm. It is best if individuals formulate their own worldviews for themselves. However, it is unfair and intellectually dishonest to remove the supernatural realm from academic conversation all together. As the information from chapter two is analyzed, consider whether it is remotely possible that there may be unseen forces at work. If so, the research speaks for itself and has served its purpose. If, perhaps, none of the evidence discussed has any hint of supernatural origin, then the reader is more than capable of retaining a naturalistic worldview. The information has simply been procured to highlight all possible explanations of reality.

Chapter two began with a dive into the field of parapsychology. Both extrasensory perceptions and parapsychical phenomena in parapsychology are studied in academic contexts. There is no need to tie religious superstition to the matter. This study chose to focus on extrasensory phenomena as it is more consistently demonstrable in a laboratory setting. Tangible evidence from the Duke paranormal psychology lab displayed scientific evidence for people's ability to collect information beyond our physical senses. This warrants consideration of where

this nonphysical sensory input is coming from. Studies from this lab proved remarkable. Multiple test subjects were able to produce seemingly impossible results, the most notable of which was Hubert Pearce. Pearce was able to make twenty-five consecutive correct guesses of Zener cards. The odds of an individual achieving this feat by mere chance are one in 317,057,700,000,000,000. Keep in mind, the Duke parapsychology lab was designed to be entirely academic in nature. In the methodology section of this study, a specific emphasis was placed on examining data that arose without religious bias. What better place to examine the possibility of supernatural forces than in a university laboratory? The significance of these findings is multi-faceted. First, we are introduced to evidence of unexplainable phenomena in an academic setting. Just because something is unexplainable by modern day science does not necessarily mean it is supernatural. The argument from ignorance claims that it must be the work of God since science cannot explain the data. It would be intellectually dishonest to consider such information as proof of the divine. However, it is very possible (even somewhat likely in today's culture) to find ourselves at the opposite extreme. Naturalists may assert that science will come up with an explanation in due time. In the same way that theists can make an argument from ignorance, naturalists can take a leap of faith by putting their trust in science. To rule out the possibility that these abilities have a supernatural origin is to come to a conclusion before reviewing all the evidence. The study of parapsychology is not conclusive in proving the supernatural realm. It does, however, invite the possibility of man's ability to access an unknown, unseen realm. Higher education needs to avoid overlooking claims of supernatural powers and abilities.

Demonic activity must be studied apart from the social dogma which places it in the category of fiction. Approximately 158 million Americans believe some form of demon

possession is possible.⁹³ Forty-six percent of Americans believe in demons with certainty.⁹⁴ These statistics alone demonstrate just how widely this belief is held. While it does not speak to specific data, it would lead one to believe that millions of Americans have some grounds for this belief. John Nevius' work is just one example of documented experience with demons. His interactions with people from India, Germany, Japan, and China show the diverse populations who each claim to experience similar encounters with demons. He even noted that the Chinese people group he was studying tended to move away from supernatural beliefs. Yet, their acknowledgment of demonic forces persisted. He points out that some of the people he interviewed (Northern China) held a belief in demonic possession long before they were influenced by western missionaries. Yet, their stories present strikingly similar accounts to those recorded in various book of the Bible. Demonic activity has been reported for millennia. Nevius' study from various parts of the world reflects the consistency and coherency of reports of demons possessing people and places. Possible alternative explanations for these strikingly similar reports include an unidentified psychological phenomenon (one which mysteriously persists all over the world) or that the reports are the product of conspiracy. The first option works in theory, but the coherency of the testimonies and claims of supernatural abilities in the possessed individual remains unexplained. The second option, conspiracy, is an irrational perspective in this situation. These accounts meet the criteria discussed in this study's methodology. These are first-hand, eye-witness accounts. While the accounts are anecdotal, they display a coherency amongst testimonies from various parts of the world. This is just the kind of

⁹³ "Beliefs about the Devil and Possession." *YouGov*. Last modified 2013. Accessed November 2, 2021. <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2013/09/27/18-brits-believe-possession-devil-and-half-america>.

⁹⁴ "Baylor Religion Survey." *Baylor Religion Survey Baylor University*. Baylor University, n.d. Accessed August 3, 2021. <https://www.baylor.edu/baylorreligionsurvey>.

evidence that demands the consideration of a supernatural cause. Is it possible that there is a naturalistic interpretation of these findings? It certainly is possible. Although, when considering multiple eye-witness testimonies, it may be best to consider the truthfulness of the statements before immediately searching for alternative explanations. When presented with multiple accounts recording virtually the same demonic occurrences, perhaps modern academics should avoid jumping to complex theories of how these experiences came to be. Is it possible that these people aren't crazy? Is it possible that these villagers from China, India, and various other parts of the world are just reporting what they honestly witnessed? This seems to be the most reasonable interpretation of the data. When we consider the lack of evidence to support alternative explanations, it seems the most reasonable approach to the data is that these testimonies are true. Maybe it is just as simple as that! Rather than looking elsewhere and devising complex theories as to why so many people experience the same terrifying encounters, might we just believe the testimonies to be true? In our age of skepticism, this approach can seem old-fashioned. Nevius even noted the Chinese have a history of moving away from superstitious beliefs, but this is not the case when it comes to demon possession. The recurring theme in this study remains the same: Nevius' work alone cannot prove the existence of the supernatural realm and, ultimately, a God. Nevius' work does, however, illustrate multiple documented accounts of demonic activity. These individual reports of demon possession share consistencies with other reports that are shared by people from different parts of the world who speak, look, and act differently. Is it possible that each of these stories was fabricated or at least exaggerated to fit a narrative? It is possible. Does an open-minded approach to the evidence suggest there is foul play at work? It does not. Another historian makes the same case when he

notes the consistency in the nature of demon possession reports from 1500 to 1700⁹⁵. In this case, the researcher is not able to tamper with the evidence. History remains the same. This historian simply points out that reports are consistent throughout the centuries.

Dr. Craig Isaacs is a Ph.D. psychologist. He is well acquainted with mental illness and proper treatment plans. Despite his impressive background in psychology, he implores his readers to consider the shortcomings of modern psychology. Why would a man who is aware of just how powerful the mind can be argue that naturalistic psychology fails patients who claim to be demon possessed? It is possible that his religious beliefs have led him to this conclusion. On the other hand, Dr. Isaacs cites cases of alleged demon possession in which there are symptoms of supernatural phenomena at work. Modern thought encourages practicing psychologists to answer every problem with naturalistic means. While medication and counseling provide relief to many patients suffering from mental illness or trauma, Isaacs argues that it disregards cases of spiritual oppression and demon possession. Dr. Isaacs is an expert in his field. To dismiss his experiences entirely is to turn a blind eye to a true expert's side of the story. Dr. Isaacs, despite being aware of the causes and manifestations of mental illness, is convinced that cases of demon possession still occur today. His writings simply add to the mountain of evidence that demon possession is a very real thing. As a medical professional, his opinion is just one of many that refutes the idea that demon possession is nothing more than a mental illness.

Richard Gallagher's work makes a similarly strong case for the existence of demons. Gallagher is a medical professional who is well attested to among his peers. He himself claims to be skeptical of the religions he was exposed to as a child. Only after being a distant skeptic did he begin to study demonic occurrences. He is extremely well versed in the study of mental

⁹⁵ Philip C. Almond, *The Devil: A New Biography* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014. 151.

illnesses, yet he insists that there is unmistakable evidence in some cases for demonic possession. The objective reader must draw one of two conclusions about Gallagher's work. The first option is that it is completely fictional and that the testimonies have been designed to fool his readers. Cases of levitation, individuals speaking languages they have never studied, supernatural strengthen, and a variety of other symptoms are simply the product of Gallagher's creative yet deceptive mind. This would require deceptive conspiracy among Gallagher, some of his peers, and the mentally ill patients mentioned in the studies. On the other hand, the reader may take Dr. Richard Gallagher at his word. Those who believe him cite his background in clinical psychiatry and his good standing with multiple prestigious institutions as valid credentials to make the claims he repeatedly addresses in his work. There is no middle ground or third alternative. Cases of levitation would seem to draw a definitive line in the sand. Either the stories are works of fiction or they are true in which case they carry remarkable ramifications. He even goes as far as to specify in one interview that possessions do not only happen to religious people who may see what they want (or expect) to see. He shares that he has witnessed possessions in people of various religions, regardless of whether they believe in a god at all.⁹⁶ For an objective researcher, this is critical information. This rules out the possibility of confirmation bias in which a highly religious individual may expect demonic possession and therefore consciously or subconsciously create the experience in their own mind. Furthermore, Gallagher comments about other religious psychiatrists who fear speaking out about similar findings. The atheistic academic patriarchy seems to have created a culture of fear in which religious researchers are hesitant to share what they have learned in their respective fields. Dr. Gallagher may quite literally be the best credentialed individual in the world to be able to testify to demonic possessions. Experts like Dr.

⁹⁶ Adrienne Westenfeld and Richard Gallagher. "Dr. Richard Gallagher, Demonic Possession Expert, Isn't Trying to Convince You." *Esquire*, Hearst Magazine Media, 2 Nov. 2021.

Gallagher provide some of the best documented evidence to support the view that demonic possessions still occur relatively frequently in our world today.

Dr. Chris Gnanakan offered some key insights regarding the nature of demon possession. He described demonic encounters that share some of the same details that Dr. Gallagher and Dr. Isaacs reported in their findings. The consistency in the symptoms of the possessed individuals cannot be ignored. Regardless of the geographical location or the major religion of specific region, symptoms of possession seem to always include restlessness, verbal cursing, self-harm, the manifestation of voices that do not belong to the individual, and a rejection of any attempt at spiritual healing. Dr. Gnanakan reports possessed individuals using their supernatural powers to make money. Similarly, we learned that Dr. Gallagher's patient, Julia, had joined a Satanic church because of all the powers she believed Satan could afford her. Dr. Gnanakan witnessed demons reference names, much like those recorded in the gospel of Mark in the Bible. The parallels among each of these accounts suggests the same forces are at work in each instance. Dr. Gnanakan has studies in the United States, the United Kingdom, and in Southeast Asia. Despite his awareness of skeptic's attempts to dismiss the existence of demon possession, he remains convinced that demon possession is real and that it is not as rare as westerners tend to believe.

Satanic activity makes the same case for the likely existence of a supernatural realm. Ouija boards are familiar devices to most. They are believed to be a means of communication with the spiritual realm. Specifically, they are used to contact demons, Satan, and other evil spirits. At some point in Ouija board history the boards have become nothing more than party games in the eyes of their owners. The research shows that there are multiple accounts of Ouija boards conveying substantial messages to users despite the users being blindfolded. Are Ouija boards absolute proof of the spiritual realm? No. Are they devices that have a history of

producing unexplainable phenomena? Yes. It cannot be overstated: the evidence suggests that there is an unseen force at play in these accounts. Academics may persist as they presume each and every report of startling encounters with Ouija boards have a psychological explanation. Is this the fairest approach? Is it reasonable to consider that at least some, if only a small percentage of these reports, are tied to a connection with supernatural evil? Readers must decide for themselves.

Reports of devil possession are an equally frightening reality as demon possession. Reports of devil possession show the individual is able to demonstrate remarkable powers. For example, some possessed individuals can understand languages they have never learned. Furthermore, the possessed can reveal detailed accounts of strangers' childhoods along with their personal secrets. Devil possession, much like demon possession, may be an elaborate hoax. However, it would require many people to willingly conspire to produce these historical accounts. What do these people have to gain from creating fictional accounts of the devil at work? Those involved include carpenters, medical doctors, and other working-class people. Dr. Gallagher's report of Julia, a Satanic priestess, confirms that such allegations of supernatural powers result from an intentional involvement with Satanic practices. While mental illness may lead someone to seek out services from a Satanic church, there are instances of healthy people joining these groups in order to gain supernatural abilities. Regardless of the categorization of demon possession versus devil possession, the symptoms speak for themselves.

Vodou is a religious practice specifically tied to Haitian culture. Vodou allegedly has the power to produce seizures, contact the spirit world, possess individuals with divine spirits, and inflict pain on others using voodoo dolls. Each case needs to be individually evaluated. It does seem that there is a striking correlation between Vodou spirit/demon possession and self-harm in

the possessed individuals. Other cases of Vodou rituals report individuals with supernatural strength after being intentionally possessed by a spiritual entity. It seems that hundreds, if not thousands of cases of voodoo doll manipulation have produced real world effects on the target. While many “effects” of Vodou can be explained away by the psychology of superstition, it is arrogant to rule out every case of the tangible effects of Vodou practice. These cases must also be assessed individually. Is it possible that every case of possession, malicious voodoo doll manipulation, and supernatural powers are nothing more than the creation of the mind? It is possible. Vodou is practiced in Haiti, Africa, and other parts of the world. To disregard each testimony of Vodou experience is to turn a blind eye to historical accounts rather than to follow wherever the evidence leads.

Witchcraft is practiced in various forms all over the world and all throughout history. Today, people are exiled from their communities and even put to death on the suspicion of taking part in witchcraft. Wicca is just one example that this study investigated due to length limitation of this work. Wiccan witches use spells to solve everyday problems. Like the study of ESP in parapsychology, most Wiccans subscribe to the belief that there is an unseen, immaterial world that science has yet to discover. Modern day Wiccans claim to use their powers for good. Individuals report having been cured of diseases by Wiccan witches. It has been said of Wiccans, “practitioners do not typically view their belief in magic as being in conflict with scientific inquiry; for example, the Farrars praised Enlightenment rationalism but opined that in dismissing magic and psychic phenomenon as mere superstition it ‘has thrown out some important babies with the bathwater’.”⁹⁷ To ignore numerous reports of first-hand experience with the supernatural power of witchcraft is to ignore science.

⁹⁷ Ethan White, *Wicca: History, Belief, and Community in Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. Chicago: Sussex Academic Press, 2016. 110.

The evidence from these four fields of study has a great deal to contribute to the conversation regarding the existence of a supernatural realm. Study after study after study would have to be completely ignored in order to maintain the position that our world consists of purely natural events. The field of parapsychology uses an academic lens to demonstrate mankind's ability to use non-physical senses. If these senses are not our ordinary physical senses, then what are they? Considering our current understanding of the body's physical capabilities, the impartial observer must classify them as nothing short of supernatural. Science may eventually find an explanation for these abnormal senses, but for the time being these findings contradict what we have known about our physical senses. It takes a great leap of faith to hope science will eventually produce answers. Demonic possession is well documented throughout history and even today. Possession manifests itself in a variety of ways, but this study has highlighted some of the consistent symptoms of demon possession experienced around the world. Dr. Richard Gallagher is just one example of a highly credentialed expert in the field and practicing medical doctor who believes in demons. He recognizes beyond a shadow of a doubt that people today exhibit signs of a separate being influencing their body. These testimonies make an extremely compelling case for the existence of demons. One might add that the existence of demons would imply the existence of Satan and therefore the existence of God. Regardless of which religious lens one might imagine when defining demons, Satan, and God, the evidence for the matter remains unchanged. Satanic activity is a piece of evidence that strongly correlates human experience with supernatural responses. Ouija boards are just one example among many of people intentionally reaching out to the supernatural realm and receiving a response. As in the case of Dr. Gallagher's patients, many individuals are suffering from mental illness or an

extreme form of confirmation bias. However, the overwhelming amount of testimonies that lay claim to supernatural power associated with satanic rituals is convincing proof that some instances are quite real. Finally, Vodou and various forms of witchcraft serve a second area of evidence in which individuals intentionally interact with the supernatural realm. They often receive responses in the form of divination or the power to curse other individuals. There are bound to be some frauds amongst money-hungry business owners who offer service among the likes of fortune telling. However, the genuine practices of spell casting, cursing, and various forms of Vodou are still alive and well today.

The evidence for these four phenomena is widespread. The analysis of the evidence can never prove something with absolute certainty. However, the author trusts that this relatively brief introduction to the subject will encourage the reader to do further investigations of their own. The information contained in this study was designed to shed light on just how many reliable testimonies are in circulation that clearly point to the existence of a supernatural realm, and therefore, God.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Volumes upon volumes of works could be written about each category of evidence presented in chapter three. The author trusts that the data provided speaks to the lack of attention the academic community has given to such information. Many academics presume supernatural claims should not be pursued with scientific inquiry. They assume the claim is false because their prejudiced worldview does not allow for supernatural activity. To put one's faith in science requires that individual to hold the philosophical position that science trumps everything else. Not all worldviews are equal. Individuals have every right to believe what they choose. To assert that all worldviews are equally true is the product of intellectual dishonesty. Science is a valuable tool that can lead us to the best explanation of reality. However, science cannot be conducted without a series of other immaterial values. The champion of truth must adopt ethics and a trust in the rationality of our minds before he can conduct scientific experiments. Furthermore, the best scientists are brave enough to follow the evidence where it leads. Rather than presupposing a naturalistic cause, the champion of truth will study data for what it is, and then draw a conclusion. The previous chapter laid out the need for supernatural explanations of the data. Billions of people subscribe to a faith in the supernatural realm. This alone might lead one to believe there must be some substantiation for these beliefs. To assume otherwise is to value one's own reasoning ability above billions of others' rational thinking.

This brief study of paranormal phenomena, demonic activity, satanic activity, Vodou and witchcraft has served its purpose. It would require people all over the world, many of whom are uneducated, to collude in an attempt to fuel this timeless fear of the demonic. However, recall the purpose of this study. Instead of arguing for any specific worldview, let us simply assess the evidence for what it is. There is scientific evidence for parapsychical phenomena. As it pertains to

reports of the demonic, a supernatural explanation is that which is most in touch with reality. Similarly, Satanic activity is alive and well in the world if the reader is willing to assess the evidence for what it is. Vodou and witchcraft continue to be practiced around the world due, in part, to its power to influence our physical world. Are all those involved with dark arts possessor evil powers? This is likely not so. Do many people have legitimate experience with power attributed to Satan and his demons? That is what the evidence suggests. Each of the four categories of supernatural phenomenon discussed contributes to the grand body of evidence that demands a verdict. Can each of these types of evidence and the millions of testimonies they represent each be attributed to naturalistic explanations? The author concludes that an impartial reader must recognize the ocean of evidence that asserts the reality of a supernatural realm. At the very least, the evidence presented in this study demands further investigation. A complete dismissal of the matter reveals that one's heart has been turned off to truth; something that is increasingly common in our 'post-truth' age.

Areas for further research are vast. International studies concerning statistics on beliefs in the supernatural are scarce. A more comprehensive picture of international beliefs in the supernatural would speak into the legitimacy of supernatural beliefs. Research could be conducted to explore correlations between a given belief and claims of miraculous events. This study presented evidence of the supernatural realm. Belief in the supernatural realm is rather insignificant unless the question is pursued further as to discover which worldview, if any, best describes reality. For example, a comprehensive study of claims of miracles in Islamic tradition would shed light on the legitimacy of their beliefs in a higher power. If miracles associated with a specific deity were frequent and validated by impartial third parties, the given belief system would have a compelling case to make for its truth claims. Video evidence for the supernatural is

virtually impossible to discuss in an academic setting. The internet is filled with thousands of videos of allegedly supernatural events. Individuals must pursue the truth for themselves. With today's technology, it is difficult to say with any certainty whether or not an image is real. This study reviewed numerous accounts of online testimonies that were accompanied by pictures and videos. The studies of parapsychology, possession, vodou, and witchcraft can each be enhanced with the addition of visual evidence. However, visual evidence of supernatural activity can be fabricated in its entirety by one individual. Therefore, this study does not include reference to such content.

It is estimated that about six of the seven billion people alive today identify with a religion. Most religions teach the existence of a higher power and an unseen realm that is beyond the reaches of physical science. The recent rise of atheism only accounts for an extremely small percentage of the world population. This study has consistently circled back to an overarching guiding principle. Evidence is not proof. One piece of evidence is rarely enough to settle a case. A body of evidence is often required to reach a verdict beyond the shadow of a doubt. This work is just an introductory study of the evidence for all the ways the supernatural realm may be revealing itself. The research presented does not claim to be absolute proof of the divine. It simply provides evidence for an explanation of reality. It is fitting to conclude with a quote from Vince Vitale (Ph.D., Philosophy – Oxford).

Consider with me big picture explanations of the universe... There are only three options; option number one: God made it. And as a Christian, I'm happy to put my hand up and say that is an absolutely extraordinary option. But let's look at the alternatives. Alternative number two: The universe popped into existence from nothing for no reason whatsoever. Now that is also a very out of the ordinary alternative. The physical stuff in our everyday lives doesn't generally just pop in and out of existence. If it doesn't now, why should we think it did in the beginning? How about a third alternative? The universe has always existed, extending infinitely back in time but again without any explanation as

to why that's the case...Every single one of them is absolutely extraordinary. I call it 'the normalcy of the supernatural'.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Vince Vitale, "Was the Resurrection a Hoax?" RZIM HQ. West Jackson Baptist Church, 2020.

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