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Family Pathology and the Creation of Madness: A Case Study of Mind Control

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This article describes the evolution of madness in a vulnerable young woman through the progressive manipulation of her religiosity and other beliefs. Evidence acquired during the forensic psychological investigation of a murder led to an ultimately finding of Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity. This case offers insight into the impact of two seriously impaired families systems as well as the profound pathology in a young man who unwittingly induced profound mental illness in his very vulnerable step-sister and the mother of his baby. Therapeutic Intervention over several years and then follow up over eight years showed no evidence of any ongoing or concurrent mental illness after her discharge from detention.

INTRODUCTION

“Ruth”[all names are pseudonyms], age 22 years at the time, was arrested and charged with first-degree murder two hours after repetitively throwing her much loved 10-month-old son down onto the marble floor in her parent’s home. This paper describes Ruth’s progressive evolution into madness and illustrates the interaction between complex family dynamics and a bizarre set of religious beliefs derived from childhood which left Ruth vulnerable to religious manipulation by and submission to a mentally aberrant and much older young man who ultimately sought to control her every thought in a Svengali-like manner. This vulnerability was exacerbated through the experience of high stress, chronic sleep disruption, and the impact of a progressively evolving [defacto] shared delusional disorder, then the emergence of hypnogogic phenomena, and ultimately the impact of the repetitive suggestion that God would begin to communicate with her led Ruth to begin

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to experience auditory hallucinations. Operating under the influence of the delusion connected with this psychosis, Ruth killed her baby believing that God was testing her by demanding her consummate loyalty to his demands upon her.

Ruth's attorney hired this forensic examiner some 48 hours after the incident and within 24 hours thereafter the examiner had his first emergency consultation with the client. Based on the findings from that first interview, with the concurrence of Ruth's attorney, the following day the examiner undertook a five-hour video recorded examination of the client. Thereafter many additional video-recorded sessions were conducted over the next two years [up until the time Ruth was adjudicated "insane" and transferred to a State Forensic Hospital]. Collateral examinations included a nurse in the jail infirmary and a detention supervisor [both of whom regularly interacted with Ruth], members of Ruth's family, and Greg and members of his family were conducted to take perspective on both Ruth and Greg and the development of her mental illness. Finally, I visited Ruth at the State Hospital every month or so. And after she was discharged I continued to either see her in person or maintain contact with her to monitor how she was doing up until last year.

THE CONCEPT OF MIND CONTROL AND THE INDUCTION OF MENTAL ILLNESS

Quoting the French philosopher Voltaire "Madness is to have erroneous perceptions and to reason correctly from them." The concept of mind control ["brainwashing"] stands in stark contrast to the common values of autonomy and freedom when one acts morally in society. Mind control involves processes by which individual or collective freedom of choice and action is compromised by others who act to modify or distort a person's perception, motivation, affect, cognition, and/or the behavioral outcomes in which a person otherwise might engage. Notorious examples of mind control are all around us.

At a macro level, the twentieth century offers numerous examples of the power of the state to engage in mind control by employing propaganda, and physical intimidation to dominate and distort individual's beliefs and values in ways that can be profound. For example, in Stalin's Russia, Hitler's Germany, and China's Thought Reform Process we see a systematic altering in the thinking of millions of people and even a transformation of their sense of morality. And today we see the impact of tragically impaired beliefs provoked in part by extremist religious and political differences and fuelled by the mind control provoked by terror based organizations. The existence of Al-Qaeda is but one such organization (Morgan, 2001).

At a micro level, individuals and groups experiencing the consequences of mind control abound. A famous individual example that led ultimately to a Presidential Pardon occurred following the kidnapping by the so-called Symbionese Liberation Army of the student heiress, Patty Hearst, in Berkeley, California in 1974. After several months of being blindfolded, suffering confinement in a small space, experiencing both physical and sexual abuse, and being subjected to a crude version of classical Maoist thought control, eventually Ms. Hearst joined the cause of her captors, assumed the nom de guerre "Tania," and even participated in a bank robbery. At the time of her arrest, Ms. Hearst listed her occupation as "Urban Guerilla" [Boulton, 1975].

A recent and very public example of the effects of mind control involves a young woman named Jaycee Lee Dugard who was abducted in 1991 at age 11 by a couple who imprisoned her at their residence for 18 years. In August 2009, the male abductor, Phillip Garrido, a convicted sex offender who was still on probation at the time, brought Nancy and Jaycee along with two girls that Garrido had fathered with Jaycee to be questioned by Garrido's parole officer after suspicious behavior by Mr. Garrido was reported. Ms. Dugard did not reveal her identity when she was initially questioned alone. Instead, she told investigators she was a battered wife from Minnesota who was hiding from her abusive husband. She further described Mr. Garrido as a "great person" who was "good with her kids." Once she was away from the influence of her captor, Ms. Dugard eventually admitted to forming an emotional bond with Garrido, with both great guilt and regret, yet she said she felt powerless not to surrender to the emergence of that bond.

Both of the above cases also illustrate the emergence of what has been referred to as the Stockholm Syndrome. This is a paradoxical psychological phenomenon wherein a hostage or hostages sometimes develop positive feelings toward their captors [De Fabrique, Romano, Vecchi, & Van Hasselt, 2007].

There are also many examples of groups that have perpetrated either mass suicide or suffered mass murder facilitated by mind controlling processes. Many these cases have involving a distorted religiously linked shared delusion induced by a messianic leader. In 1978 in Jamestown Guyana 913 members of the People's Temple [including 276 children] responded to the demands of their leader, Reverend Jim Jones, and took and gave to their children lethal cyanide punch. A small number of this group had been murdered when they resisted. (Layton, 1999). In 1993, David Koresh and many of his Branch Davidian followers died rather than leave their compound during what became a fiery standoff with authorities in Waco, Texas (Report to the Deputy Attorney General on the Events at Waco, Texas, 1993). In 1994, 15 inner circle members of the Order of the Solar Temple were induced to mass suicide by poison in two villages in France and in Quebec, Canada, and a further 38 died in Switzerland, either from bullet wounds or self-induced

suffocation (Palmer, 1996). In 1997 at Rancho Santa Fe California, 39 members of the Heaven's Gate cult ingested a lethal combination of vodka and barbiturates. These people suffered a shared delusion that led them to the belief that the earth was about to be wiped clean and that the only chance to survive was to leave it immediately. They further believed that by exiting their human vessels their souls could go on a journey aboard a spaceship that was travelling in the wake of the Hale-Bopp comet. It is commonly the case that in these tragedies the most pathological participant is the often messianic leader whereas his followers are highly emotionally vulnerable victims (Galanter, 1989; Balch, 1995; Lalich, 2004).

The psychologist Philip Zimbardo (2002) described the processes involved in mind control in the following terms:

The process is neither magical or mystical, but a process that involves a set of basic social psychological principles . . . conformity, compliance, persuasion, dissonance, reactance, guilt, fear arousal, modeling and identification are some of the staple social influence ingredients well studied in psychological experiments and field studies. In some combinations these create a powerful crucible of extreme mental and behavioral manipulation when synthesized with several other real-world factors, such as charismatic and authoritarian leaders, dominant ideologies, social isolation, physical debilitation, induced phobias, and extreme threats or promised rewards that are typically orchestrated over an extended time period in settings where they are applied intensively . . . It seems to me that at the heart of the controversy over the existence of mind control is a bias toward believing in the power of people to resist the power of the situational forces, a belief in individual will power and faith to overcome all evil adversity. It is Jesus modeling resistance against the temptations of Satan, and not the vulnerability of Adam and Eve to deception. More recently, examples abound that challenge this person-power misattribution (p. 131).

SHARED DELUSIONAL DISORDER AND MIND CONTROL

While public processes of mind control such as the above are, relatively speaking, uncommon, there are nevertheless significant examples in the literature of many truly pathological mind influencing processes existent at the private lives of individuals and families. One such example involves the induction of shared delusional processes. Nineteenth century French psychiatry first conceptualized the phenomena as *Folie à deux* and then *Folie à trois*, *Folie à quatre*, and finally, *Folie à famille* [involving all family members]. Such phenomena occur in individuals closely linked with one another and at least one of whom has already established the delusion. Mental health professionals most commonly identify single individuals who

have been induced by recurrent indoctrination into a delusional state by a single person or several people.

In the psychological and psychiatric arena the concepts of both an induced and a shared delusional disorder [or shared psychosis] is well recognized. A delusion is a belief that is either mistaken or not substantiated and is held with strong conviction and commonly expressed forcefully. A delusion is a pathological belief [held as part of an illness process] that exists despite evidence to the contrary. As a pathological condition, it is distinct from a belief based on false or incomplete information, dogma, foolishness, poor memory, illusion, or other effects of distorted perception. Moreover, a delusion that is part of a psychotic process is one that involves a loss of certain contact with reality; and depending on its severity, this process may be accompanied by unusual or bizarre behavior and the emergence of hallucinations which are perceptions in a wakeful state that exist in the absence of external aberrant stimuli. Hallucinations have qualities of real perceptions in that they are substantial and located in external objective space.

In the case of the subject of this paper, Ruth Peterson, she was not a member of a cult, but rather the victim of her profoundly mentally disturbed and manipulative boyfriend and de facto husband, whose charismatic control over her began from the time she was 14 years old and progressively induced in her a “de facto” Shared Delusional Disorder (“de facto” because her inducer manipulated his victim to believe in constructs which he did not believe in, but claimed to believe, to ensure the success of his manipulations). Eventually, these manipulations led to the emergence of a full-blown psychosis and ultimately a legal insanity.

RUTH'S BACKGROUND

Ruth was born in a small town in rural New England as the second child of Jane and William Peterson. Jane was the only child of a very controlling mother who participated in an extremist Pentecostal Church. Jane's father died when she was three years old and her mother never remarried. Jane's mother had a profound influence over her and the child grew up believing in the legitimacy of the phenomenon of speaking in tongues and of God's ability to directly control the lives and destinies of us all. At age 18 years old and in church Jane met Bill Peterson, a 22-year-old gas station employee who suffered from depression, was under-employed, and consumed with religion to the point that he believed that God communicated directly with him.

Jane worked as a librarian for the first eight years of her marriage with Bill and she gave him four children [Bethany, Ruth, John, and Tabitha]. After Tabitha was born Jane took a job as the personal assistant to a wealthy man named Peter Freemont. Meanwhile Bill did nothing beyond odd jobs and as

the children came along he mostly stayed at home and cared for them. Bill reported that as time passed all the children lost a sense of closeness with him, except for Ruth. Of Ruth Bill noted: "We have always shared a special bond in Jesus". Meanwhile, as the other children grew they came to view their father as weird and embarrassing. Bill suffered a Schizotypal Personality Disorder.

As for Ruth, she was a quiet, sweet, and shy child. She felt very close to both her parents and her siblings but otherwise she did not have many friends. She loved attending church and as she grew she came to believe in the extreme teachings of her little Pentecostal church. Ruth did well in her junior school years but she remained so shy that her closest friends were her siblings and cousins. By age 12 however her life and that of her entire family changed. It was then that an affair that had existed for several years between her mother and Peter Freemont became public. Eventually Peter and Jane divorced their spouses and moved, together with Jane's children, to Florida.

Within a few months of the move Ruth began to physically blossom and all of a sudden she became attractive and she began to like boys. Nevertheless, she was still a reserved and very naïve young girl who was both very religious and very idealistic. Ruth was just thirteen when Peter's 21-year-old son, Gregory, who Ruth had never previously met, came to visit the family.

GREGORY'S BACKGROUND

Peter Freemont grew up as an only child in an upper middle class family. He completed college, enlisted in the Air Force, and became an officer. While in the military Peter met Victoria Rollins, who was the youngest daughter of an extremely rich and alcoholic father and a recurrently depressed mother. After dating for nine months the couple married and two years later Peter left the military to work in his father-in-law's business. Over the next four years Victoria gave Peter two children (Peter Jr. "Pete" and Melanie). Three years later their last child, Gregory, was born. By this time, however, Peter and Victoria's relationship was becoming strained and the two were growing apart.

Peter had always shown a particular love for little Pete whereas Victoria was primarily focused on Melanie. When Greg came along Victoria showered him with attention while Peter progressively disconnected from both his wife and his new son. The more this proved true, the more Victoria coddled the boy. Thus, throughout his rearing Greg received very little discipline and became an obnoxious and manipulative child. Greg's sister, Melanie, reported that by the time Greg was eleven years old he sought to control every encounter; by age twelve he was becoming violently angry; by age thirteen he was burning his hands and arms with lighters; and by fourteen

Greg had become very secretive and was drinking regularly to extreme intoxication. Greg's brother, Pete, painted the view that Greg was "always much darker" than their parents ever comprehended. Pete noted that by his early twenties Greg's drinking had become so extreme that Pete thought Greg should have been hospitalized. Melanie spoke of Greg sitting in silence plotting to get back at anyone who had upset him and that he could be quite frightening.

At the time Greg met Ruth he had spent seven years in and out of college but he never graduated. He had a multi-million-dollar trust fund and was completely vocationally unmotivated. He was seriously yet secretly alcohol abusing. He had no close friends. By his early twenties Greg was narcissistic, intellectually arrogant, and employed intellectualization in an effort to manipulate others. Greg eventually reported to me that before Ruth he had some half a dozen relationships with young women, but all these ended because none of the girls he had dated was willing to tolerate his desire to control them.

RUTH AND GREGORY: THE FIRST TWO YEARS

Ruth met Greg when she was 13 and he was 21. She perceived him to be "cool, sophisticated, and very intelligent." It was not long before Greg introduced Ruth to beer and wine and from there his manipulation and pressure led to sexual intercourse. This relationship remained an intense secret for more than a year during which time Greg made four trips to his father's home as progressively he became entirely consuming to young Ruth. Eventually Jane learned of what really was happening after Bethany found her sister and Greg in bed. Jane was extremely disapproving of what was occurring but she found herself being pushed back by an instantly rebellious Ruth, a vitriolic Greg, and also her new husband, Peter. While Peter had long ignored much of what Greg did, in this case he sought to protect his son from potential legal consequence.

The next summer, despite Jane's vehement objections, Greg took Ruth to his family home to meet his mother. Initially Victoria too was very concerned about the illegality of her son's relationship with a 14-year-old girl. She even consulted her lawyers about it. Yet as Victoria had done so many times before, she ultimately surrendered to Greg's wishes. Otherwise, Victoria liked what she saw in the very conservative and religiously raised Ruth and soon she became convinced by Greg and Ruth that "this was a truly wondrous love." Meanwhile, Jane continued to object to the relationship but she otherwise did nothing about it. By the end of this summer trip, and with his mother's blessing, Greg moved Ruth into the guest house on his mother's estate and with a set of falsified documents that ostensibly granted temporary

guardianship of Ruth to Victoria, Ruth was enrolled in a local private girl's school. Greg was presented as Ruth's older cousin to anybody who asked.

Greg now began the planning of how to take progressively more control over Ruth. His first task was to ensure that their relationship continued in safety. Thus, either he or one of his mother's staff drove Ruth to and from school every day. Ruth was never permitted to be with any of her school peers outside school. She was also not permitted to speak to anyone about any aspect of her new life in order to ensure the continuation of "their perfect love." It was not long thereafter that Greg's agenda to control Ruth began to firm and took on an even more sinister flavor. Through vast hours of dialogue and debate, Greg began to influence Ruth to agree with him on virtually every matter they discussed.

As Greg sought to evolve his thinking about mind control he drew on various themes within religion which he then distorted. Greg's intent here was to build within Ruth a guilt-linked sense of duty that he could control and use across numerous situations. Ruth came to believe that as "Greg's wife in the eyes of God" she should entirely surrender to his sexual needs and she should actively desire him to engage in various sexual acts that were initially foreign, unappealing, or even repugnant to her. Over many hours and days of debate and dialogue, Ruth came to believe that Greg's exploration of sodomy and the use of dildos and various other devices would enrich their sexual life and so their love. Another distortion that Greg early injected within Ruth involved her attitudes to her mother. Greg was furious about Jane's ongoing objections to the relationship and so he influenced Ruth to hate her mother and to become entirely alienated from her. Under his influence Ruth wrote to her mother and told Jane never to speak to her or write to her again. The loathing that Greg sought to inculcate within Ruth was such that they even played a game that involved inventing the twenty best ways to kill Jane.

As for Ruth's father, Bill was brought into none of this until Ruth was 16 years old. At this time, Greg decided to take Ruth to meet Bill for the first of what would become numerous visits. These visits occurred because Greg came to believe that by connecting to Ruth's dad and by understanding his religious beliefs he would be able to use Bill and his beliefs as tools to further ensure the protection of his relationship with Ruth. Greg came away from his first meeting with Bill convinced that Ruth's father was just the ally he needed. Bill was passive and ineffective and his intense religious beliefs were just what Greg needed. But most importantly, Greg realized that Bill would support anything that sought to imbue Ruth ever stronger with the word of God.

By this time Greg was even further isolating his love object from anyone he considered to be any threat to their relationship. Ruth's relationship with her oldest sister, Bethany, for example, had always been very close. Bethany reported that after Ruth moved to live with Greg that she began to act like

and even speak like Greg, in an officious, sarcastic, and condescending manner. Bethany told both of her parents that Ruth was not making her own decisions and that Greg was “brainwashing” Ruth.

It would soon prove to be true that every family member who expressed any negative view about Greg would experience the wrath of Greg and Ruth and thereafter be removed from access to her. Ruth’s brother John, for example, was cut off because he had given a male acquaintance of Ruth’s in Florida Ruth’s phone number at Victoria’s home. Over the course of less than a year, the only family members with whom Ruth would communicate were her father and Greg’s mother. Greg’s father had not been excommunicated, yet because his acceptance of the relationship was only tentative he was given no standing.

INCREASING PATHOLOGICAL CONTROL AND THE USE OF RELIGION

When finally the examiner was able to speak to Greg he came to understand that he had sought to control all his relationships out of fear of abandonment. It was his underlying sense of inadequacy that advanced his arrogance and his manipulation of others. Moreover, Greg had long believed that the manipulation of a religious person’s religiosity could lead to the control of that person. He reported that because of Ruth’s age, her desire to please, and the extreme religious focus of her rearing, he had soon concluded that she would be the perfect partner for him for she would never leave him. Thus, he decided to experiment with Ruth to explore how best to gain complete control over her.

Gregory was and is atheistic. Greg’s brother Pete reported that Greg had always been quite disdainful of people who took religion seriously but he also noted that when Greg was in his latter teens he had studied the Bible and had familiarized himself with a number of quotes from the scriptures so that he could appear knowledgeable regarding religion. Victoria reported that Greg had never been religious but that when Ruth was about sixteen she got him involved in their local church.

Greg put his thinking about religion as follows:

The Bible is a work of genius but not the literal word of God. The Old Testament is where the power lies. The New Testament is nothing but a marketing tool. I gave it a try and it seems too improbable yet I saw the power it can have over people. I believe that there is a large psychic element in religion and I came to see its components. The relationship between the religious leaders and the people is symbiotic. The leader takes from people while giving them the sense that their lives will be better. I have examined Christianity and figured out how it works. I have

evolved a new level of comprehension. It was a laugh that I was able to be so successful. It was amazing, the advantages were infinite. Prophecy was the key. I used prophecy to control as if I were God.

Greg first took Ruth to visit her father on her sixteenth birthday. Having listened to Bill's exhaustive diatribe on religion, Greg decided that it was time for him to begin to advance the testing of his theory of manipulation through religion. He began this process by requiring Ruth to spend at least one hour daily studying and discussing the Bible with him. Ruth reported: "It was my joy to bring Greg into the light of my love of God." The reason that Greg imposed this obligation was that he wished to employ paradox to build up Ruth's sense of authority and have her believe that she was bringing him to God so that he could more effectively control her. Thus, every day, Ruth would lovingly read the Bible and set assignments for Greg and then they would discuss and debate matters of religion. By this time too, Greg was also honing his thinking about how to further progress in his control over his love object.

By age seventeen and in her final year at her private girl's school Ruth had been with Greg for just on four years and she had lived with him in the secrecy of his mother's vast estate for three years. By this time, virtually every significant opinion that Ruth held [even though at times she and Greg would have initial disagreements] ultimately became an outgrowth of her interactions with him. Greg was so aberrant that often he would take up initial positions that he knew were not credible in order that he could build up both Ruth's capacity to reason and her self-confidence in that reasoning [by permitting her to convert his intentionally non-credible opinions to that of her own]. In fact, it became routine for Greg to use paradox to further build his control over Ruth. Thus, by age seventeen Ruth believed: [1] that Greg had taught her to become a highly analytical and critical thinker; [2] that theirs was the most perfect love and she could never live without him; [3] that though not legally married they were married in the eyes of God; [4] that it was her joy to surrender her body completely to her husband and to embrace whatever sexual behavior he wished in order to show her consummate trust in him; and [5] it was her duty to bring Greg fully into God's light. By doing so she was serving God and also perfecting their relationship.

RELIGIOUS DISTORTION AND THE LOSS OF CRITICAL THINKING

Ruth's thinking by this time was inextricably linked to her service to God and her "husband" Greg. The latter was yet far from satisfied with his efforts however, and his next move profoundly upped the ante by introducing an amazing subterfuge. Greg had long had a serious alcohol problem and

he was upset that Ruth had identified and become very concerned by his drinking. Often he would attempt to hide or understate his drinking by drinking late at night when Ruth was asleep or he would minimize the nature of his drinking. But Ruth doubted Greg's stories that he was consuming only moderate quantities of alcohol but otherwise was either sick or tired. This doubting had to be "corrected" and so Greg introduced the idea that God was sometimes taking over his mind and that when this happened he felt in a trance and not within his own power. God would even use alcohol to cause him to go into that trance. Amazingly, Ruth soon unconditionally accepted these inane assertions and she was thrilled that all her efforts to bring God and Greg together had been so miraculously successful. Likewise, Greg was thrilled and amazed by the ease and success of this entire strategy.

In other respects however, Greg was becoming worried about the future security of their relationship for he wondered how he would be able to adequately control Ruth once she began attending college. It was through several further meetings with Ruth's father that Greg found his answers and with these answers Greg set about to build his ultimate plan. It was Bill's belief that God sends him messages and in doing so God ultimately was in full control of his life. It was Bill's concept of Prophecy that gave Greg his new strategy to ensure his permanent control over Ruth.

Half way through Ruth's seventeenth year Greg decided to tell Ruth of several experiences that had actually happened to him, and that he believed he could fit into her concepts of demonic possession. Why? Because Greg was convinced that paradox was the ultimate vehicle of control and he needed to convince Ruth that the Devil had touched him. Through this mechanism Greg believed that he could then manipulate Ruth to believe she could save him. Such a manipulation, he reasoned, would further advance both her sense of connection to God and her role in ensuring Greg's salvation. Thus, Greg told Ruth that one night soon before they met he was in bed almost asleep and he began feeling "an evil presence" and seeing a "black shape" at the end of his bed. He believed, he said, that this shape then jumped through his feet into his body and it gave him a rush and he felt like he was going to stop breathing. The second "supernatural" experience Greg told Ruth about involved the claim that a servant of God came to him. On a further occasion Ruth had just returned from Church and Greg told her that he had experienced a "weird dream" the night before. He described having a dream in which a very good force, that he believed was God, and a really evil force, that he believed was the Devil, had both come to him. Ruth responded to this news with great joy. She opined that God was beginning to come to her beloved. On another occasion, Greg had been drinking all afternoon and he was feeling ill when Ruth came home from school. Suddenly, Greg got up and ran to the bathroom and threw up violently. When he came back to the bed he told Ruth that he thought the Devil had again come to him to make him sick with alcohol. Ruth said that within several

minutes of this incident she felt a strong heat come over her (no doubt autonomic arousal in response to the news) and it was so very powerful it made her cry. She said:

It was then I realized that the Holy Spirit had touched me. I was so happy about this experience. Then Greg began breathing very heavily. I knew I needed to pray for him and when I touched him his entire body jerked. I thought that what Greg was experiencing was Demonic and so I prayed for him and asked God to get the Demon out of him. It seemed like he was getting worse for he rolled off the bed and began twitching and shaking. I was really scared. Then all of a sudden Greg got up and he told me that he was feeling better and that a great weight had been lifted off his shoulders. [Except of the nausea, this entire experience, Greg reported, has been faked].

Greg sought to convince Ruth that he was not responsible for his use of alcohol for the Devil was acting upon him. Greg said that he employed Demonic Possession to build Ruth to be a stronger Christian so that he could better control her. Using Demonic Possession he could both expand Ruth's Christianity while getting drunk and he could use "special effects" to ensure that she would not blame him. This process worked so well that when Ruth saw him intoxicated she began to accept his word that God had made him drunk to punish his wrongdoings. When much later the examiner spoke to Ruth about this ambiguity, she reported that she assumed that God must have somehow changed the chemistry of Greg's blood. The following quote offers Greg's perspective on demeaning himself to build up Ruth's faith while at the same time invoking the power of Demonic Possession and Prophecy to further control her.

All I had to do was to apply Demonic Possession and Prophecy in special ways. I used prophesy to control everything. Whereas in the past I had put myself up, now I began to put myself down and put Ruth up. I came to understand the creation of the ultimate Christian. It took a lot of work but it was easy and it evolved. I knew I would never have to visit my kids on the weekend [meaning they would never divorce]. I would return home drunk and play serious mind games and she believed everything I told her. I thought I had complete control over her consciousness.

It was near the end of her seventeenth year that Ruth and Greg began to meditate in an effort to explore getting even closer to God. During some of these meditations, Greg told Ruth that God began to speak to him and gave him the gift of prophecy [Imagine the power such a gift afforded Greg in Ruth's eyes]. Meanwhile, Ruth did well in high school and as she began her all women's college she also did very well. She was not permitted to become socially involved with peers and this isolation was facilitated by her

residence with Greg in a secluded house in the countryside ten miles from her college. Ruth rationalized her lack of peer social involvement in college just as she had in high-school. She was simply too devoted to her special love and to her God. But in fact, there was almost nothing normal in the relationship between Greg and Ruth.

Nothing exemplifies this assertion of abnormality better than the mind control that Greg sought to impose on Ruth regarding the matters of polygamy and incest. Greg developed his arguments regarding both these matters by employing “evidence” that he drew from sources that ranged from the Old Testament, to the animal kingdom, to Prophecy. Like so many of Greg’s other manipulations, these matters were discussed literally dozens of times over and over again. On the issue of infidelity, Greg even told Ruth that it was because he was “chosen” that it was possible for him to be “exempted” from the normal religious restrictions against infidelity. Initially Ruth said that she had a sense of revulsion at much of what Greg was proposing. Yet as with almost all of their thousands of debates, Ruth eventually acknowledged Greg’s perspective and came to agree that perhaps it was right to “educate and protect” their daughters in such a way. Given that Ruth believed that Greg’s perspective was truly prophetic, to fail to obey the Prophecy could lead to serious harm to their future girl children.

Of all Greg’s numerous manipulations, the only one that Ruth could not reconcile was his unwillingness to marry her in their church. This really upset her. Ruth described her feelings back then as follows: “I wanted to be married and not be abnormal. I had been living a double life all the way through high school and half way through college and I wanted to be normal. Even on those occasions when Greg would come to Church with me I always insisted that we sit towards the rear and leave first for I did not want to be embarrassed”. It appears that this was the only lasting matter of significant dissatisfaction that Ruth had with her beloved. On this topic Ruth could not be influenced to reframe the situation so that it fit within the model of thought that Greg was seeking to impose. Not only were Greg’s explanations justifying his unwillingness to marry her inconsistent with every other aspect of her religious framework, but they were inconsistent with many statements that Greg himself had previously made. Ruth just never accepted his assertions of not marrying because of “estate reasons.”

SIGNS OF THE EMERGENCE OF MENTAL ILLNESS

It has been asserted that madness is to have erroneous perceptions and then to reason correctly from them. According to Discontinuity Theory, when people perceive a violation in some domain vital to their sense of self they search for ways to explain or even rationalize their experience. In so doing, if they happen to reason with insufficient or incorrect data or if they rigidly

defend an inaccurate theory, they may suffer a discontinuity in their sense of self. In such a context an individual may begin to exhibit symptoms of mental illness. If the distortion is extreme enough that person may be considered to be briefly mad. And if the distortion persists for an extended time, so too may the madness (Zimbardo, 1999).

The author has conducted a significant amount of work dealing with the thinking of cult participants, the victims of extreme religiosity, spiritual abuse, and even severe parental alienation. Discontinuity Theory does an excellent job in framing the explanation for much of the evolution into profound distortion that can occur in such cases and even the madness that can result there from. As will become obvious, Discontinuity Theory also accounts well for the stress induced madness which developed within Ruth.

It is clear that from early on in the relationship between Ruth and Greg the dynamic within this couple was always very detrimental to the highly vulnerable Ruth. It is equally clear that over time Greg proved extremely successful in manipulating the religious and other beliefs and values of his much younger victim. Not only did he require her to live a lie but he isolated her from almost all those who loved her. Then progressively he created within her a twisting of her attitudes and beliefs such that progressively she became literally delusional. That is, she came to hold beliefs that were false and fanciful and derived from deception which nevertheless she held with total conviction. Ruth's delusions also became incorruptible, meaning that they were not changeable by counterargument or proof to the contrary, and they are implausible, bizarre, and patently untrue.

It was in February of 2003 that Greg told Ruth that God had told him that he [God] was soon going to begin to communicate directly with her. This move by Greg was planned to again increase his authority over Ruth and the escalation was to be achieved by convincing Ruth that Greg was God's emissary to her own elevation to be a prophet, that is, to become able to receive the direct word from her beloved God. [It is significant that various concepts of prophesy are to be found throughout almost all the world's religions and equally within various cults.] Much latter Ruth reported that she had no idea why God would have chosen to begin communicating with her, though both Greg and her father had told her on many occasions that she had been "chosen" and that God may well deem her worthy of receiving his direct word. In any regard, Ruth was thrilled that she too would receive God's direct communication.

It was very soon after this revelation that one evening Ruth had an amazing experience that she interpreted as God's first direct contact with her. As she lay on her bed, all of a sudden a bright white light came towards her together with other lights with blue rings around them. Ruth said that even though she shut her eyes, she could still see these lights and she could feel their warmth on her face. Within a few minutes of seeing these lights Ruth reports that she experienced another but much more powerful

event and this one was frightening. This time she saw “a tiny bright red ball that appeared very evil” coming straight at her but then it veered off and disappeared. Ruth said that she had attempted to get up from her bed to call Greg and tell him of her experience but before she could do so a second, and this time a much larger red ball, came at her and then disappeared. It was Ruth’s opinion that this second red ball was a further message from God. She perceived that God must have been angry with her for attempting to get up before he had finished communicating with her. It is the author’s opinion that these various lights that Ruth reported seeing were in fact not objectively real but were fleeting stress induced visual hallucinations and prodromal signs of what would become a serious psychotic process.

It is interesting that there were numerous instances during which Ruth viewed her God as angry with her over something she thought she may have done to offend. It also became common thereafter that Ruth expected to be punished and as she experienced the above visual phenomena she interpreted these stimuli mostly as frightening and likely punishing. This was Ruth’s earliest experience of what she interpreted as God being directly controlling, wrathful, and punishing of her. Tragically, this incident and others that soon would follow came to define for Ruth the duality of her concept of God as being both loving and wrathful. Not surprisingly, Greg too showed this same duality. Interestingly, there were times, even after Ruth had been in detention for ten months, that she would occasionally still see the blue ringed lights “if I waited long enough.” Often too, in her first year of detention, Ruth reported that “a shooting white light” was continuing to go across her eyes.

From that day on until Ruth had been in detention for almost a year [that is, for a period of just on three years] she believed that the white and blue lights that she had seen was God coming to her. Ruth made this interpretation of the lights because Greg had told her that God was going to start communicating with her. She chose to interpret these lights, as she did so many other things, as evidence of God’s intervention in her life. Ruth also reported that from time to time she experienced a slight numbing around her right eye and she assumed that this too was evidence of God communicating with her. What was happening of course was that she was beginning to experience some fleeting stress related hallucinatory and dissociative phenomena that were compromising her sense of self and she began to explain these experiences as evidence of God making contact with her. Based on the power of the suggestion to which she had been exposed, together with her background learning and vulnerability, Ruth began to reason with insufficient or incorrect data and as she did so she then found it necessary to commit to this inaccurate perception, in order to avoid a discontinuity in her sense of self.

Ruth next reported that she had begun to experience strange tactile and somatic sensations involving “a surging within my body” or “a force as if

someone was grabbing me and binding me and making it hard to move.” On other occasions Ruth described this force as “pulling at me like a magnet.” Ruth reported the sensations to have been quite strong. They appeared mostly in the early morning and initially she would experience them about once every two weeks, but slowly their frequency of onset became more and more until it was daily.

Eventually Greg spoke of the many methods he used to influence Ruth’s thinking and he showed his own extreme pathology. He told this examiner:

You can break down your own omniscient status and the power you get in return is tenfold. I broke down my power by showing Ruth that I could be thinking in a particular way, but then I would pray and make myself wrong. So I would appear fallible. It was great for I could make mistakes and yet then I was able to be a conduit through which God spoke. I could make prophesy and then change it later if I did not like how things were going. You have to keep it general and simple but you can gain a tremendous amount more authority. In order to accomplish complete religious control you have to put people in a world of illusion. I told her that the outside world would not understand and that gave us the isolated duality: my control on the one hand, and her supernatural stuff on the other. It was safe for I could even take it into the open. It was all a balancing act and I could advance my credibility even further by using paradox to win control. Ruth had been conditioned to be a follower. It got to the point where she believed that God was constantly acting in her life. Bill also helped it work for he believed that his daughter was blessed.

PREGNANCY AND THE RAMPING UP OF RUTH’S RELIGIOSITY

Ten weeks after Ruth experienced the red dot flying into her stomach she found out that she was pregnant. Ruth was overjoyed both because she was pregnant and because she concluded that the red dot may have been God making her pregnant. These tactile and somatic hallucinations within Ruth’s body continued unabated throughout her pregnancy, and eventually were appearing between 5 and 8 times a day. Neither Ruth nor her gynecologist had any idea what was causing these sensations but like almost everything else that Ruth could not readily reconcile, she interpreted them as further communications from God.

Greg decided that Ruth should take a break from college [she was in her third year] until after the baby was born and Ruth was quite pleased to take time off from her studies. So she applied her perfectionist tendencies to preparing for the baby. While Ruth reported that during this period she and Greg were broadly very happy, she also described events that clearly she was not happy about. For example, again she wanted to get married and again Greg told her that his lawyers said that they should not get married

“because of offshore (tax) reasons.” During the pregnancy too Greg was so distrusting of her at times that he was “not thinking like a good Christian.” Meanwhile, he was also telling Ruth that God had chosen their yet-to-be-born baby to be a Pastor, and Greg was required to “ramp up” their contact with God. Thus, Ruth began filling even more of her time with religious study. As well as daily reading of the Bible, Ruth bought and read multiple books including titles like “Wanted: Extreme Christians” and “Do you dare to follow God completely?” Ruth said she read her books so many times that she had almost memorized them. Throughout this period Ruth’s obsessive and perfectionist bent was actively supporting her conviction that she had to work extremely hard to become the consummate Christian. By this time too, she was not only becoming fully responsible for enhancing Greg’s faith, but she was soon to become the perfect Christian mother to a baby that she thought may have been immaculately conceived. It got to the point that by the time the baby was born Ruth believed that every thought that she had was placed there by God. Ruth’s thinking had become a cycle: the more she became convinced that she was chosen, the more she thought about what God wanted her to do, and so she tried to be ever more perfect in God’s eyes.

As for Greg, much later he would tell this examiner that: “Life was good for me. It was Utopia. I had achieved complete control over everything except my drinking. And Ruth was now almost twenty and I no longer perceived myself to be at legal risk and so I began to endorse Ruth’s father’s opinion that she should reconnect with the rest of her family.” Up until the time of her pregnancy, Ruth says that she had nothing to do with her mother but during the pregnancy and based on Greg’s wishes some communication between Ruth and her mother was permitted. Ruth put it this way: “I still hated my mother but every now and then I would call her and chat briefly.”

Ruth gave birth to a healthy son, Gideon, yet Greg refused to sign the birth certificate acknowledging paternity of the baby and this terribly upset Ruth. When finally Greg spoke about this matter, he said that that he objected to the government’s “social engineering” and it insulted him. “I did not mind taking care of the baby I minded an agency telling me that I had to sign their form.” Meanwhile, the powerful and bizarre somatic and tactile sensations that Ruth had been feeling in her torso continued while she was in the hospital after the birth and upon her discharge.

THE PROGRESSION TOWARD INSANITY

It is clear that Ruth was totally devoted to the baby and from all the evidence available it appears that she was doing an exceptional job and found the experience of motherhood a blessed event even if she was chronically sleep deprived. Though Greg appeared very happy about the baby, several months

after the birth he very much upset Ruth by insisting that a DNA test be done. Greg reported that he was 95% sure that Gideon was his but he wanted to be certain and the DNA testing put an end to his doubts. Greg had even manipulated this situation for he used the justification of a possible immaculate conception to hide his own paranoia.

Meanwhile, when Ruth was not attending to the baby she was studying her religious material and striving to be an ever stronger Christian. Greg, on the other hand, took little responsibility for the care of Gideon. He was coming home drunk many nights and always with his cover story to account for his impairment. Moreover, he now more consistently prophesied that God was going to begin communicating with Ruth very soon and he further advanced the use of paradox by telling Ruth that God wanted her to take over the role of being the head of the family for she was the better Christian. Thus, Ruth's conviction that she was very special in God's eyes became more intense and she became convinced that she had to even further prove her love and obedience to God. Little did Ruth know the price that ultimately they all would pay for her efforts to prove this love and obedience!

Within the first several months of Gideon's birth, Ruth's duties of motherhood, her commitment to meet all of Greg's needs, and further her commitment to build her Christian strength and become the head of the family was by any measure extreme. Greg also told Ruth that God was telling him that she now had become the spiritual head of the family (though running the family seemed counterintuitive to her). With these additional demands Ruth would later report that: "I got so wrapped up in my duty to care for Greg. God wanted me not to allow him to drink, I was to take his keys, I was not to leave him alone, there was just so much more I had to do. I became paranoid that God would become angry with me if I left Greg alone, for even a short while."

The net effect of all these demands was that Ruth began to experience an escalation of her various internal symptoms and she began having upsetting dream like events that were both visual and tactile. She was also seeing more "intense white and blue lights" that caused her to feel like she was spinning and a red blob that she found frightening. She had dream like dissociative experiences that she interpreted as "God picking me up out of my body." She had dream-like events during which God took her to visit hell and "I was so afraid I began praying over and over until it stopped." In another experience she recalled God walking with her in a garden. By this time too Ruth believed that Greg's prophecy about God beginning to communicate with her was coming true for God was now interacting directly with her. Moreover, Greg ramped up the stress on Ruth by telling her that still she was failing to be the perfect wife and Christian (after he came home very drunk yet one more evening).

It was Ruth's sense of confusion, ambiguity, and fear about God's potential punishment of her and her family that created the full-blown paranoia

that she thereafter reported experiencing. It was also a paranoia that caused her to believe that God might punish her by hurting the baby for Greg had further manipulated her fear by telling her that he had seen “something evil go into the baby’s room.” This news caused Ruth to rush into Gideon’s room and scream: “In the name of Jesus of Nazareth get you evil spirit out of here.” This incident, she believed was God’s “first punishment” of her and it terrified her that God was acting against her baby to punish her. By the time Gideon was ten months old Ruth had become profoundly delusional and she was also concurrently experiencing an array of low-grade visual and tactile hallucinations as well as the paranoia that brought with it anticipatory anxiety about God’s potential further punishment of her through his harming of Gideon. All of these symptoms and the delusions linked to them had been created through the repetitive hideous cognitive manipulations (mind control) that Gregory had imposed on his love object.

THE ESCALATION OF STRESS AND THE ONSET OF INSANITY

Two weeks after the ‘first punishment’ [the evil force going into the baby’s room] Greg and Ruth made their first (and as it proved their only) trip to Florida to stay with Peter and Jane. The goal of the trip was to begin the normalizing of the familial relationships. At this time Ruth was further panicked about the pressure she was experiencing with her new responsibilities as the head of her family. Moreover, in the early evening of their second day in Florida, Gideon began gagging and throwing up. Peter and Ruth rushed the baby to the local emergency room where it was found that he had a ten cent coin stuck in his throat. Tragically, Ruth interpreted this event too as God’s further intervention and her “second punishment” for not doing all she was supposed to do.

The next week passed uneventfully except that Greg made the determination that Ruth was not to let her mother attend to the baby at all and Ruth continued to experience extreme sleep disruption. In other respects however Ruth and her mother were doing better and her sister Tabitha also came to visit and she and Ruth began to rekindle their previously excellent relationship.

Two weeks into the trip however Jane and Peter had a wedding to attend that took them out of town over the weekend. Peter and Jane left on the Friday morning and while the day generally proved uneventful that evening again Greg began “acting weird”. He told Ruth he had been “drinking mouthwash” and he was boasting that God had made him “miraculously strong.” Greg also told Ruth that he was supposed to be a great spiritual leader but he recognized that he was not a good enough Christian and so he was going to see to it that she became that great leader in his place. That same night he also told Ruth that God had given him a further prophesy;

God was going to begin speaking to her! Though tired and stressed, Ruth was also overjoyed by this pronouncement that she decided to force herself to stay up in the hope that God would begin talking to her. Ruth also shared this revelation with her sister.

COMMAND HALLUCINATIONS AND THE DEATH OF GIDEON

The next day was Sunday. Greg reported that he had been drinking very heavily all day and having some “weird experiences” and he decided to feign suffering “Demonic Possession” to hide his drunkenness. Greg recalled going into the baby’s room in the early evening and waking Ruth. He recalled acting as if he was possessed (by shaking and falling onto the floor) and he recalled Ruth praying and laying hands on him in an effort to exorcise the Devil. Tabitha recalled the incident as totally chaotic. She had entered the baby’s room in response to Ruth screaming and she recalled Ruth telling her that there was a Demon in Greg and that “we need to get it out.” According to Tabitha, Ruth was totally panicked and irrational and insisted that “I had to prove my faith by helping her get the Devil out of Greg.” Meanwhile, Ruth was screaming in prayer and telling Tabitha that they had to pray louder for the way they were praying “showed a dwindling of faith.” Tabitha noted that while Ruth was saying these things she kept on picking up the baby and putting him back down again in his crib. None of this made any sense to Tabitha.

According to Ruth, during this time she was being driven in every act she did by “the voice” that she interpreted as God giving her instructions that were at first gentle but later “the voice began to change and it would give me so many commands and they were so intense that I could not keep up with them”. Ruth had now decompensated to the point of experiencing command hallucinations. Tabitha said that Greg was laying on the bed moaning and he looked so strange that she too thought that he really was possessed. Meanwhile, Ruth was screaming something about “Jesus of Nazareth” and she was holding the baby who was also now frightened and crying and again she was putting the baby down and picking him up.

The next thing that all agree happened was that Greg got up and walked outside and onto an adjoining golf course. By this time it was night, and Greg began to walk and run in circles as he continued to feign possession and Ruth came out almost pushing Tabitha and screaming that she [Tabitha] must go out and find Greg and protect him. But Tabitha could not find Greg in the dark and so then Ruth began yelling to Tabitha that “God says go to the front of the house.” In fact, Tabitha found Greg and she tried to coax him to come back inside, which eventually he did. But then he began running around the furniture continuing to “act possessed.” Tabitha became so stressed by what was happening that she too began to pray that God would stop Greg from

being possessed. Then again Greg escalated and again ran out of the house. Tabitha said: "Greg looked like a zombie and he spoke in a low deep voice and he was looking very evil and he made sounds like he was possessed. Then he came back into the house and when I went towards him he threw me into the wall and then he began wrestling me to the ground and then he ran to somewhere else in the house and then he came back." It was then that Tabitha recalled Ruth saying that if Tabitha's faith did not improve she was going to have to hurt the baby.

So again Tabitha chased Greg within the house and this time he shoved her into a wall and then onto a couch and again he ran out of the house and she chased him but could not catch him. She could not get the Devil out of him! Tabitha reported that she was scared and hysterical and she went back into the house and into her parent's bedroom and washed her face. Tabitha then heard a noise that she could not identify and she went to the landing on the second floor and saw Ruth throwing Gideon to the marble floor below from more than half way up the stairs. Terrified at the hideousness of what she was seeing, Tabitha reported that she ran down the stairs past Ruth to the baby. Meanwhile, Ruth told Tabitha that "Gideon is dead and to save the baby we have to save Greg and then we will raise Gideon from the dead." Tabitha said that Ruth then took off her blouse and bra, picked up the baby, and held him to her breast. But then she started up the stairs again as if in a trance to once again throw the baby down. As Ruth did this, Tabitha reported that Ruth spoke about doing this to "strengthen all of our faiths and that Gideon would rise from the dead as did Lazarus." Terrified at what was happening, Tabitha stopped Ruth and forced the baby from her arms.

Within several minutes Greg returned to the house and saw Tabitha holding Gideon. In what seemed a rage he violently forced Gideon from Tabitha's arms and as he did he realized that something was terribly wrong with the baby. All of a sudden Greg seemed like he was no longer possessed and he became rational and said that he had to call the paramedics, which he did. Yet Tabitha reported: "Ruth was convinced that the police were not coming and even as she saw their flashing lights in the driveway she was saying that this was not supposed to be happening and that it was a huge insult to God to get the police involved."

DECONSTRUCTION OF THE INSANITY

Over the first days of Ruth's incarceration she was convinced that God would not allow her son to die; that Gideon would be born again. By the middle of the third week she began the earliest vague comprehension of what had transpired and that Gideon would never return. It would take Ruth some ten months in detention (and away from Gregory and receiving court approved private psychotherapy) before she came slowly to rationally reframe and

understand more fully the hideousness and abnormality of her relationship with Greg and just how he had used the extreme religiosity of her rearing to create within her a delusion about his “universe of two”; and thereafter, how he cruelly imposed further distortions and manipulations though endless debate and argument, which given her commitment to perfection, led ultimately to such extreme emotional pressures on her that a full-blown psychotic process emerged within her and she experienced visual, tactile, and ultimately auditory hallucinations in which God commanded that she must prove her devotion to him by “throwing the baby down on the stone.” Ruth said that initially in response to God’s commandments she only placed Gideon back in his crib and then on the ground for she could not bring herself to throw him down. But then God mocked her for her lack of faith (that she could not love him enough or she would do as she was commanded) and so progressively over some six or seven actions with Gideon in her arms she used increasing force to throw the baby down harder and harder and finally she did so from near the second floor.

Ruth continued to experience vague psychotic like sensations (she could hear breathing and feel something touching and pulling on her torso) that she believed for most of the first year in detention was God coming to her in the early mornings. Progressively as she further transformed her thinking about religion, as a result of the therapy she was receiving, these sensations remitted and by her eighteenth month in incarceration she was no longer experiencing any psychotic symptoms or other psychological distortions whatsoever (and she was taking no psychotropic medication).

Just short of two years after Ruth was incarcerated the examiner gave testimony on her state of mind at the time of the crime. The State’s expert also agreed that Ruth had been insane at the time of Gideon’s death. Hence, the court found Ruth “Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity” and she was transferred to a State Psychiatric Hospital where she spent the next three years before she was released. During those three years Ruth was showing no evidence of any mental illness, just great sadness for all that had happened, and so eventually the hospital authorities made a recommendation to the court for her ultimate release.

Upon her release, Ruth completed her undergraduate degree and obtained employment as a case worker for the elderly within a State of Florida welfare agency. She also brought a civil suit against Gregory and achieved an out of court settlement that was very significant. Today she is happily married with two children and the delusions and hallucinations of the past are all far behind her. While she still counts herself a Christian, Ruth recognizes just how bizarre the religious teachings of her childhood really were and she has long ago rejected the vast number of these beliefs together with those that Greg had sought so successfully to impose within her. Today she views her time with Gregory as a “hideous nightmare” with a man who she now identifies as seriously alcoholic and psychopathic. Meanwhile, Gregory

has changed his focus from religion and is now soliciting relationships with young Russian women.

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