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A Major Revision of the Discipline on Exorcism:
A Comparative Study of the Liturgical Laws
in the 1614 and 1998 Rites of Exorcism

By
Jeffrey S. GROB

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Abstract

Exorcism has been a ministerial component of Christianity from its inception, following the example of Jesus Christ who cast out demons from possessed persons. In the Roman Catholic Church, this ministry is principally carried out by means of the Rite of Exorcism, which is an official liturgical rite celebrated by a priest on behalf of a person who is thought to be possessed by the devil. The rite evolved through the centuries until it was standardized for the first time in 1614. For nearly four hundred years thereafter, it remained virtually unaltered until a process of revision was set in motion in the 1990s. Why was the revision undertaken? Would the liturgical laws contained in the 1614 rite be altered? In response to these queries and others, the author contextualizes the rite of exorcism within a larger historical framework by tracing its development from ancient times to the present. With this context established, the revised rite of 1998 is studied and compared with its predecessor of 1614.

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To each and every one of you – I am deeply grateful.

Abbreviations

1614Exor	1614 Rite of Exorcism
1998Exor	1998 Rite of Exorcism
<i>AAS</i>	<i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i> , Rome, 1909 –
<i>AG</i>	Second Vatican Council, decree <i>Ad gentes</i>
c.	canon
cc.	canons
<i>CCC</i>	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>
CCM	Catholic Charismatic Movement
CCR	Catholic Charismatic Renewal
CDF	Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
CDWDS	Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments
<i>CIC</i>	<i>Codex Iuris Canonici auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus</i>
<i>CIC/17</i>	<i>Codex Iuris Canonici Pii X Pontificis Maximi iussu digestus</i>

CLD	<i>Canon Law Digest</i>
DH	Second Vatican Council, decree <i>Dignitatis humanae</i>
FLANNERY 1	FLANNERY, A. (gen. ed.), <i>Vatican Council II</i> , vol. 1
GS	Second Vatican Council, pastoral constitution <i>Gaudium et spes</i>
LG	Second Vatican Council, dogmatic constitution <i>Lumen gentium</i>
PG	<i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus</i> , MIGNE, J. (ed.), Patrologia Graeca
PL	<i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus</i> , MIGNE, J. (ed.), Patrologia Latina
RR1614	Roman Ritual of 1614
SC	Second Vatican Council, constitution, <i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i>
S. Th.	AQUINAS, T., <i>Summa Theologiae</i> , Blackfriars series

Introduction

Ab insidiis diaboli, libera nos, Domine.

The mere mention of the word “exorcism” evokes a broad range of responses from those who hear it. For some who saw the film, *The Exorcist*, images flood their minds of a young girl named Regan, uttering curses and convulsing grotesquely on her bed. As an exorcist in the United States observed, Hollywood is largely responsible for defining the popular understanding of exorcism and has given it a public face since 1973. For others, a sense of embarrassment wells up within them, and they wish that an obscure practice like exorcism was not a part of their Church’s tradition. Perceiving themselves to be modern thinkers, they do not desire to be associated with something that gives the impression of medieval magic. Still others find in the word a source of hope. They believe that the rite of exorcism will bring an end to their affliction. As a result, they turn to the Church, which was entrusted by Christ with the power to drive out demons.

At the heart of all three of these reactions rests the same sacramental of the Church, the rite of exorcism. The practice of exorcism has been a ministerial component of Christianity from its inception. It has evolved over the centuries, with the rite being standardized for the first time in 1614. For nearly four hundred years thereafter, the rite remained virtually unaltered. During the 1990s, a process of revision was set in motion,

and, in 1998, the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments promulgated an updated version of the rite. The principal purpose of this thesis is to examine the 1998 Rite of Exorcism and analyze the new legislation contained in it. To fulfill this purpose, it will be necessary to contextualize the rite of exorcism within a larger historical framework by tracing its development from ancient times to the present. With this context established, the revised rite itself will be studied and compared with its predecessor of 1614.

The thesis is arranged in four chapters, with a guiding question in each chapter to shape its direction. The first chapter will explore the origins of the rite of exorcism and address the question: Why were exorcism and exorcists necessary in the early Church? The chapter will begin with a brief look at the history and understanding of exorcism prior to the time of Jesus Christ. A review of Christ's exorcistic ministry and the passing on of that ministry to the disciples will follow. A summary of the writings of the Church Fathers on exorcism, the sources of exorcistic law from the early Church, and the historical development of the order of exorcist will complete the chapter.

Chapter two will consider specifically the historical evolution of the rite of exorcism by responding to the guiding question: How did the Church come to develop a formal ritual of exorcism? By examining liturgical books and other testimony bridging the first and second millennia of Christianity, a foundation will be established for understanding the formulation of the 1614 Rite of Exorcism. The balance of the chapter will explore the factors, which led to a uniform rite, the actual contents of the rite, and its promulgation.

The latter part of the twentieth century is the setting for the third chapter, which will address the question: What were the factors that brought about the revision of the 1614 Rite of Exorcism? The chapter will highlight the canons on exorcism in the Pio-Benedictine Code, the interaction between mental health professionals and exorcists, the call to revise the code and the rite of exorcism, and the results of this revision with particular focus on c. 1172 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law and the 1998 Rite of Exorcism. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the contemporary phenomenon of unauthorized or private exorcisms, with particular focus on the charismatic movement, and the response of the Holy See to such exorcisms.

The final chapter will present a comparative analysis of the ancient and revised rites in order to respond to the question: What do the revisions mean for the practice of exorcism? A presentation of issues facing exorcistic practice in the United States will follow. A brief list of projects that remain to be completed concludes the chapter.

Before turning to chapter one, it will be necessary to provide several definitions to establish a common understanding of terminology. This study presumes the existence of the devil as taught by the Magisterium of the Church, and reaffirmed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The devil is believed to be an active force in the world and, when permitted by God, can cause both spiritual and indirect physical injuries. Exorcists and theologians to explain the devil's activity in individuals' lives use a variety of terms. Sometimes the terms are used interchangeably, which causes confusion. For the sake of clarity in this study, the numerous terms are divided into four basic categories. Demonic assault, attack, molestation, interference, and influence are all terms used to refer to the basic level of demonic activity in a person's life. They connote harassment by the devil.

The second category is demonic obsession or oppression. These terms are used interchangeably to describe an external, physical attack by the Evil One, a deep spiritual crisis instigated by the devil, or frequently, a combination of the two. Demonic possession or inhabitation constitutes the third and most rarely occurring of the categories. In this case, the devil takes possession of the body of the individual in order to act through him/her. A final category is demonic infestation, which refers to demonic activity associated with places and things, like the haunting of a house.

The major focus of this study is the Church's response to demonic possession, the third category above. That response is primarily its ministry to the possessed by means of the rite of exorcism, an official liturgical rite recognized in Catholic theology and canon law as a sacramental. The definition of exorcism in the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* well captures the purpose of the rite: "In the strict sense, exorcism is an adjuration addressed to the devil in order to force him to vacate a place, to abandon a situation, or to release a person whom he holds more or less in his power. The adjuration is made either in the form of a command given directly to the devil, but in the name of God or Jesus Christ, or in the form of a supplicatory invocation, addressed to God and to our Lord, entreating them to order the devil to depart or to ensure that the order is executed."¹

¹ L'exorcisme est donc, à proprement parler, une adjuration au démon pour l'obliger à évacuer un lieu, à abandonner une situation, à rendre à la liberté une personne qu'il détient plus ou moins en son pouvoir. L'adjuration se fait soit sous forme d'ordre intimé directement au démon, mais au nom de Dieu ou de Jésus-Christ, soit sous forme d'invocation, de supplication adressée à Dieu et à Notre-Seigneur, en vue d'obtenir qu'ils donnent l'ordre d'expulsion ou qu'ils en assurent l'exécution; from J. FORGET, art. "Exorcisme," in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, vol. 5, Paris, Letouzey et Ané, 1903-1950, col. 1763, English translation in L. SUENENS, *Renewal and the Powers of Darkness*, O. PRENDERGAST (trans.), Ann Arbor, MI, Servant Books, 1983, p. 69.

An exorcism is considered “public” when an authorized person using an approved rite does it in the name of the Church. A “private” exorcism is not bound by the same constraints and may be celebrated by any of the faithful. Public exorcisms are subdivided into two groups. A “simple” public exorcism is a component of a larger rite, in particular the exorcism that takes place within the context of the catechumenate and infant baptism. “Solemn” or “major” exorcism is the public rite used to drive out an inhabiting demon. It is this latter form that is the object of this study.

CHAPTER 1

THE ORIGINS OF THE RITE OF EXORCISM

Introduction

From the time human beings became conscious of the world around them, they have tried to understand their place in it. People came to realize that they could have an effect on what happened to them. They also quickly realized that they were not entirely in control. It is within this context that the guiding question of chapter one is set. Why were exorcism and exorcists necessary in the early Church?

For the peoples of the Near East in pre-Christian times, the question will be addressed by generating a thumbnail, historical sketch from antiquity of the cultures that had influence in shaping the thought of the people of Israel. The area of concentration will be their belief in demons and the attempts to overcome the effects of perceived demonic possession. The Hebrew Scriptures and intertestamental literature will be utilized to gauge the extent of the influence.

A look at the milieu of Palestine in the first century C.E. will give a context for the second section of the chapter. Jesus himself, his life and ministrations, will expand the notion of exorcistic practice by revealing his unique purpose in human history. In turn, the work of his disciples will further elucidate the chapter's guiding question.

By exploring the writings of the Apostolic Fathers and Fathers of the Church, a sense of what was in the mind of the early Church will become accessible. Removed by a generation and more from Jesus and his disciples, the third section will glean from early writers an understanding of the exorcistic practices of the day, who could perform them, and what they looked like.

Lastly, with a nod to the gradual systematizing of exorcism and its practitioner, a brief review of papal letters and synodal and conciliar renderings of the time will complete the chapter.

1.1 – The Hebrew Bible and Intertestamental Literature

The greatest challenge confronting the discussion of any historical development is that of context. To be able to grasp the setting in which a particular way of thinking evolved or a certain religious practice came into existence requires a basic understanding of the dominant forces at work. With broad strokes, the following subsections are meant to form the foundation that gave rise to the Christian practice of exorcism by highlighting pre-Christian perceptions of evil, how these forces were viewed as active in the world, primitive exorcistic practices, and the extant records of such awareness.

1.1.1 – Early History

Lawrence Boadt approximates that the beginning of Old Testament history lies in the later part of the Bronze Age, i.e., circa 1550 B.C.E.¹ This is significant when realizing

¹ L. BOADT, *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction*, New York, NY, Paulist Press, 1984, p. 30.

that Semitic peoples had already populated the ancient Near East for millennia. By the time the people of Israel appeared on the scene, humankind had largely evolved from disjointed, nomadic groups to a rather cohesive agrarian people, while respecting tribal lines.²

The period of human evolution that predates the birth of the people of Israel saw the rise of fundamental cultural styles and patterns of thought. Early peoples like the Sumerians, Babylonians, and Assyrians grappled with the world around them in an attempt to understand its workings and their place in it.³ Without the assistance of science to inform them, the early inhabitants of the ancient Near East embraced their existence at a very primitive level. The daily machinations of nature, the beginning and cessation of human life, and the causes that lie behind these events fed a desire to find an explanation for the happenings of earthly life.

One of the ways the primitive mind arrived at an explanation was by embracing a worldview in which spirits directed or on some level affected the lives of human beings. This animism, as it would be later termed by students of religion, gave shape to a whole realm of non-corporeal beings that filled the universe.⁴ In the beginning, these spirits and their functions were not clearly defined. The fortunes and ills of human existence were simply associated with them. But as centuries passed and primitive religions matured, different cultures placed greater emphasis on creating categories within this influential,

² Ibid., p. 32.

³ E. LANGTON, *Essentials of Demonology: A Study of Jewish and Christian Doctrine, Its Origins and Development*, London, The Epworth Press, 1949, p. 11.

⁴ Ibid., p. 1.

spiritual world. Thus, the spirits that were favorably disposed to human beings were considered good and in some instances called angels. The spirits that acted in a hostile manner were evil and became known as demons.

As this dichotomous approach to the spiritual realm unfolded and out of deference for their kind interventions in human existence, angelic beings received a certain measure of attention, often taking the form of gratitude and quasi-devotion. However, far more energy was spent on coming to terms with the demons that instilled fear into people's lives. The seeming prevalence of the dark forces required a more immediate response. As a result, belief in the reality and activity of malevolent spirits found its way into many religions of the ancient world.⁵ Based on this primitive approach to the world, rather extensive demonologies gradually developed.

Since madness, disease, and all the other ills that afflict humankind were often ascribed to the activity of the malevolent spirits, remedies were proposed to rout this demonic foe. A proliferation of exorcistic practices evolved among the various ancient peoples as a means of driving away demons and countering their influence. The inhabitants of Mesopotamia, for instance, utilized special formulae to defend themselves against madness and various ailments of the body. The ancient Egyptians relied on "magical incantations to ward off disease and misfortune"⁶ that they believed were inflicted by evil spirits. These extant formulae, incantations, and associated remedies,

⁵ A. FINLAY, *Demons! The Devil, Possession & Exorcism*, London, Blandford, 1999, p. 11.

⁶ D. REESE, art. "Demons: New Testament," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 2, New York, NY, Doubleday, 1992, p. 140.

preserved in cuneiform and hieroglyphic papyri, attest to the prominent role exorcism played in the lives of the inhabitants of the ancient Near East.⁷

Ancient Israel had little choice but to be influenced by the world that received it. Belief systems of neighboring peoples colored their history and melded with their understanding of reality. At various stages of Israel's development, different external influences contributed to their religious worldview. Even though they ultimately embraced monotheism, the people of Israel initially held many of the same beliefs as other early Semites, including a general animistic approach to the world and, in particular, a belief in evil spirits.⁸ They similarly sought relief from the latter through some form of exorcism.

Early in the history of the people of Israel, the Canaanite civilization exerted great influence in the formation of their religious thought.⁹ During their settlement in Canaan, Israel moved from an unsystematic approach to animism to a more structured concept of a single supreme being, while maintaining a role for lesser spirits. Yahweh-worship gradually replaced the homage given to other deities. But it must not be assumed that belief in evil spirits simply disappeared from the horizon. Canaanite culture perpetuated the role such spirits would continue to play.¹⁰ Consequently, religious practitioners

⁷ T. OESTERREICH, *Possession and Exorcism among Primitive Races in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and Modern Times*, reprint of 1922 original text, D. IBBERTSON (trans.), New York, NY, Causeway Books, 1974, pp. 147-148.

⁸ J. MORGENSTERN, art. "Demons," in *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, New York, NY, Universal Jewish Encyclopedia Co., 1948, p. 529.

⁹ FINLAY, *Demons! The Devil, Possession & Exorcism*, p. 14.

¹⁰ MORGENSTERN, art. "Demons," pp. 530-531.

continued to experiment with ways to alleviate the ills that originated from malevolent interference.

By the ninth century B.C.E. another force began to exert its influence in the religious thinking of the people of Israel. The Assyrian-Babylonian Empire was primarily a political power to which its neighbors were subjected.¹¹ For the Israelites, however, the culture and religious beliefs that accompanied the dominant peoples that comprised this empire also shaded Israel's view of reality. The Babylonian religion especially left its mark by individualizing the various evil spirits. Their functions and powers were defined. The evil spirits were given names and these eventually were Hebraized. As a result, evil spirits became "concrete personal workers of mischief and misfortune."¹²

With the rise to power of Cyrus of Persia in 550 B.C.E. and the ending of the Babylonian Captivity some eleven years later, the people of Israel soon added another layer to their emerging cosmology. Zoroastrianism, the religion of Persia, not only reinforced but also furthered the influences of religious thought already encountered by the Israelites. Persian religion confirmed Israel's belief in a single supreme being and in a system of good and evil spirits.¹³ It also ascribed names to certain demonic figures like Azazel, Satan, and Belial, names that have been immortalized in numerous demonologies.¹⁴ However, the real innovation added by the religious thought of Zoroaster was that good spirits now were pitted against evil ones in an ongoing, cosmic

¹¹ BOADT, *Reading the Old Testament*, pp. 309-311.

¹² MORGENSTERN, art. "Demons," p. 531.

¹³ BOADT, *Reading the Old Testament*, p. 50.

¹⁴ MORGENSTERN, art. "Demons," p. 532.

struggle for domination.¹⁵ This development heightened the desire to determine an effective remedy for the instances when human beings were caught in their crossfire.

For more than two centuries Persian thought held sway over the people of Israel. However, there was relative peace and stability in the land, unlike the centuries that preceded them. This would all change abruptly through conquest by Alexander the Great in 333 B.C.E. The influences of Greek culture, religion, and language added one more layer of foreign indoctrination onto the Hebrew people.¹⁶

There existed in the Greek worldview different notions about demons, notions that were both fluid and not completely consistent. By this point in history, demons were widely recognized as intermediary beings. They were believed to occupy the region between earth and heaven. Strangely enough, the demons could be good or bad, but were inclined to the latter. Either way, there was a pervasive belief that demons were able to take possession of a person, causing madness or other irrational behavior. When confronted with demons, in general, and situations of alleged possession, in particular, magical rites and exorcistic formulae were employed to attain relief or deliverance.¹⁷ This particular worldview held sway over the people of Israel until the time of the Maccabean Revolt (circa 166 B.C.E.).

In the time that remained before the advent of Jesus Christ, the people of Israel enjoyed periods of religious and political freedom. The various cultures that had exerted

¹⁵ REESE, art. "Demons," p. 140.

¹⁶ BOADT, *Reading the Old Testament*, p. 51.

¹⁷ E. FERGUSON, *Demonology of the Early Christian World*, symposium series, vol. 12, New York, NY, Edwin Mellen Press, 1984, pp. 57-59.

their influences over the Jewish people continued to resurface as they grappled with the reality of evil in their daily lives. It would not be long, however, before the power of Roman rule was felt (63 B.C.E.), and with it, the opposition to prophecies of the coming of a Messiah. A new set of forces would again be at work as would a new way to deal with evil.

1.1.2 – Written Record

One of the ways to understand how a certain people thought at a particular period of time or in what they believed is to explore the written record they left behind. This is no less the case when examining the Hebrew Scriptures and the literature that followed it. What quickly becomes evident, however, is the manner in which the latter intertestamental literature expanded upon and, in some ways, departed from the former when addressing matters of evil, possession, and exorcism.

While the Hebrew Scriptures represent a collection of religious books written over a period of more than one thousand years, it is surprising to find in them only a few references to the notion of evil spirits. We learn even less of their influence in daily life or how demons were routed. Traugott Oesterreich explains this away by espousing the view, popular among some scholars, that the people of Israel employed a “national separatism”¹⁸ from dominant cultures, which protected them from undue influence. Joanne Kuemmerlin-McLean furthers this line of thought by proposing that the notion and role of demons in the Hebrew Scriptures “is complicated by terminology, historical

¹⁸ OESTERREICH, *Possession and Exorcism*, p. 169.

developments, and theoretical issues.”¹⁹ Therefore, it is difficult to gain a coherent presentation of the demonic in the pre-Christian Jewish tradition.

Scholars like Edward Langton, however, hold a contrary view of the historical development of the belief in demons. Rather than interpreting the scant references to evil forces and exorcism in the Hebrew canon as proof that the people of Israel were unaffected by other cultures (or at best indifferent to them), Langton presents a convincing argument for a widespread belief in demons. According to his understanding of the data, there was a later systematic suppression of references to the demonic in the written record of this people.²⁰

Whichever approach is chosen, certain facts remain. Firstly, there is present in the Hebrew Scriptures “some references to ‘demons’ in general as well as to particular ‘demons’.”²¹ Secondly, although ‘Satan’ is mentioned on only three occasions in the entire Hebrew canon,²² one can trace from there the “beginnings of that stream of Hebrew thought concerning a supernatural enemy of God and man which was destined to exercise a predominating influence upon the whole body of Jewish and Christian teaching.”²³ Finally, 1 Samuel 16 and Psalm 91 reflect the belief that man was able to

¹⁹ J. KUEMMERLIN-MCLEAN, art. “Demons: Old Testament,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 2, New York, NY, Doubleday, 1992, p. 138.

²⁰ LANGTON, *Essentials of Demonology*, p. 10.

²¹ G. TWELFTREE, *Christ Triumphant: Exorcism Then and Now*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1985, p. 22. The author cites passages from the following books of the Hebrew Scriptures: Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, 2 Kings, Isaiah, Psalms, and 2 Chronicles.

²² Zechariah 3:1; Job 1 and 2; and 1 Chronicles 21:1. In this paper, all quotations from the Bible are from the New Revised Standard Version as found in *The Complete Parallel Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments with the Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical Books*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993.

²³ LANGTON, *Essentials of Demonology*, pp. 52-53.

control demons. Of note here is that while there are Egyptian exorcistic incantations that predate the 1 Samuel passage, verses 14-23 of this text provide the oldest extant story of an exorcism.²⁴ Although there may not be an abundance of proofs demonstrating a deep-seated belief in demons and widespread practice of exorcism in the written record of the people of Israel, the evidence speaks plainly of an evolving mindset brought about by the influence of external forces.

The literature of the intertestamental period, which spanned the window of time from when writings were no longer added to the Hebrew canon (circa 400 B.C.E.) to the appearance of the Christian scriptures (mid-first century C.E.), quickly picks up where the biblical writers left off. Several centuries after the return from the Babylonian exile, a significant shift occurred in Jewish thought whereby a more elaborate demonology began to emerge. Delbert Hillers writes: "In this period the religion, while safeguarding its monotheistic character in various ways, nevertheless took on many traits of a dualistic system in which God and the forces of good and truth were opposed in heaven and on earth by powerful forces of evil and deceit."²⁵ No longer was there the obscure mention of "Satan," but demons were now being associated with their function, i.e. as tempters and destroyers. The role of the demonic in popular belief was becoming increasingly complex and progressively personalized.²⁶

²⁴ TWELFTREE, *Christ Triumphant*, pp. 23-24.

²⁵ D. HILLERS, art. "Demons, Demonology," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 5, Jerusalem, The Macmillan Company, 1971-1972, p. 1525.

²⁶ W. CARR, *Angels and Principalities: The Background Meaning and Development of the Pauline Phrase hai archai kai hai exousiai*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 42.

Since the intertestamental literature is pivotal, not only in lending insight into the culture that gave rise to Christianity but also to the development of later exorcistic practices, several texts from this period are highlighted. The texts referenced here are by no means exhaustive of the extant material. The ones chosen do, however, move beyond the basic belief in demonic forces to the practice of exorcism and the role of the exorcist, including various techniques employed by the practitioner.

I Enoch (or **Ethiopic Enoch**, as it is called because its most complete form survives in Ethiopic) is one of the more important writings of Jewish pseudepigrapha from this period. The work is a composite compiled over a long period of time.²⁷ I Enoch is a valuable source of information due to its author's insights into the origins of evil, demons, and the eventual destruction of evil. The author, for example, recounts that evil spirits or demons are the spirits of 'giants' who were the offspring from the intercourse of angels with women. These evil spirits were said to tempt, afflict, and oppress people, accuse the fallen, work destruction on the earth, and punish the condemned.²⁸ In response to so many assaults, certain individuals, knowledgeable in the ways of evil spirits, instructed people how to cut and use roots for the purpose of healing and gaining relief from their influence.²⁹ Graham Twelftree also points out that I Enoch contains the earliest mention of evil spirits pleading for mercy and the only example where there is no

²⁷ Art. "Enoch, Books of," in F. CROSS and E. LIVINGSTONE (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, third edition revised, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 550.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 547-548.

²⁹ TWELFTREE, *Christ Triumphant*, p. 26.

leniency.³⁰ The relevance of this text is not that it recounts an actual case of exorcism, but it provides elements that figure into the development of the practice of exorcism.

A significant work of Jewish apocrypha, the book of **Tobit**, was written in the second century B.C.E. The text serves as a source of information about Jewish demonology and exorcism. Of particular interest here, the main character, Tobias, is instructed by the angel Raphael to use incense (mixed with fish entrails) to expel from Sarah the demon Asmodeus who caused her to kill several of her husbands. The demon not only departs but also is captured and bound.³¹ It is not clear from the account if this was understood as a full-blown exorcism, but the demon was clearly thought to have been removed from the situation. The episode has bearing on the present discussion because the success of the 'exorcism' is thought to be based on what was said and done.³²

The book of **Jubilees** is another work of Jewish apocrypha, originally written in Hebrew. The author is believed to have been a Jew living in Palestine and writing in the middle of the second century B.C.E. The work introduces a vast array of angels and demons that exist between God and humankind, thus compounding the long history of speculation about who these beings are and their influence on people.³³ According to Jubilees, angels taught Noah about the seductions of demons, especially their ability to

³⁰ Ibid., p. 28.

³¹ G. GRAFF, *Can a Christian Have an Unclean Spirit?* vol. 2, El Cajon, CA, Christian Services Network, 1999, p. 156.

³² TWELFTREE, *Christ Triumphant*, pp. 29-30.

³³ O.S. WINTERMUTE, art. "Jubilees," in J. CHARLESWORTH (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Expansions of the "Old Testament" and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works*, vol. 2, Garden City, NY, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1985, p. 47.

lead people astray, and gave him remedies for the illnesses they caused. Although not formally exorcistic, these remedies demonstrate that it is, in fact, possible through the use of certain materials to experience relief from demonic influence. One of the distinctive features of the demonology found in this particular work pertains to God's binding of the evil spirits at Noah's prayerful request. Prayer here is considered a means to control the demons.³⁴ The story continues with the chief of the evil spirits, Mastema, seeking leniency from God. God relents and allows one-tenth of the evil spirits to remain on earth.³⁵ The "leniency" recounted here stands in striking contrast to the lack of it seen in I Enoch above. Twelftree offers a succinct summary of elements found in the book of Jubilees that contributes to the expanding notion of exorcism: pleas for mercy and leniency were entertained; prayer and medicines controlled demons; and there were protective measures to insure that the evil spirits do not return.³⁶ In the final analysis of the text, one fact is clear – God is seen as the supreme power – even the evil spirits are His subjects and may be bound at His will.

Further Jewish exorcistic methods are enumerated in the **Qumran Scrolls**, also known as the **Dead Sea Scrolls**. The scrolls are a collection of ancient documents discovered at Qumran and dating from between 130 B.C.E. and 50 C.E. The collection includes a commentary on the book of Genesis known as the **Genesis Apocryphon**, which contains an account of an exorcism. The work details how a plague was sent upon the house of pharaoh because pharaoh had taken Abraham's wife, Sarah, as his own. The

³⁴ TWELFTREE, *Christ Triumphant*, p. 31.

³⁵ FERGUSON, *Demonology*, pp. 74-75.

³⁶ TWELFTREE, *Christ Triumphant*, p. 31.

plague was caused by the scourges of an evil spirit. For two years physicians and magicians alike could effect no cure. In the end, Abraham was called upon to bring relief from the suffering. He prayed over pharaoh, laid his hands upon him, and the evil spirit departed from pharaoh and his household.³⁷ The account is more of a case of obsession than possession – the evil spirit did not physically possess anyone, but it did afflict people in unspecified ways. Of note is that the departure of the evil spirit was brought about because of Abraham and his prayer. It is also significant that he laid hands upon pharaoh as part of the exorcism.

One final contribution to the discussion of intertestamental literature comes from someone who bridges the gap between the intertestamental period and nascent Christianity. The historian Flavius Josephus (circa 37-100 C.E.) was a native of Palestine and a Pharisee. Without actually disclosing his personal belief about the origins of demons, he clearly understands that people can be possessed by demons, as exemplified by the popular story he recounts about Eleazar, a Jewish exorcist, who demonstrated his ability in the presence of the Roman emperor Vespasian:

And this was the manner of the cure: he [Eleazar] put to the nose of the possessed man a ring which had under its seal one of the roots prescribed by Solomon, and then, as the man smelled it, drew out the demon through his nostrils, and, when the man at once fell down, adjured the demon never to come back into him, speaking Solomon's name and reciting the incantations which he had composed. Then, wishing to convince the bystanders and prove to them that he had this power, Eleazar placed a cup or foot-basin full of water a little way off and commanded the demon, as it went out of the man, to overturn it and make known to the spectators that he had left the man. And when this was done, the understanding and wisdom of Solomon were clearly

³⁷ GRAFF, *Can a Christian Have an Unclean Spirit?* p. 157.

revealed, on account of which we have been induced to speak of these things.³⁸

The story assists in the further understanding of the nature of exorcisms and the role of the exorcist in the period between the two testaments. First, it is clear that the practice of exorcism was not foreign to the Jewish people. If Eleazar is a Jew and an exorcist, then it follows that Judaism had adopted the practice. Secondly, the ring mentioned in the above story indicates that some type of physical aid was utilized during the exorcism. Thirdly, an adjuration is addressed to the demon whereby it is bound and not allowed to return. Fourthly, in addition to some special object (the ring), a name of power, in this case, Solomon, is invoked along with an incantation composed by the individual. Finally, the exorcist proves the success of his work by forcing the departing demon to perform some action.³⁹

The intertestamental material presented in the preceding pages may give the inaccurate impression that everyone living in Palestine at the beginning of the first Christian millennium accepted without reservation the possibility of demon possession and acknowledged exorcism as the required corrective. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, if the opposition was to have a patron saint, the pagan writer Lucian of Samosata would be a worthy candidate. Although born in the second century C.E., this satirist of scathing wit reflected the sentiments of a representative group of people living a century before him.⁴⁰ While not residing in Palestine, Lucian made it his business to

³⁸ *Jewish Antiquities VIII.2.5*; *Josephus*, H. THACKERAY and R. MARCUS (trans.), vol. 5, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1988, pp. 595-597.

³⁹ TWELFTREE, *Christ Triumphant*, pp. 34-35.

⁴⁰ FERGUSON, *Demonology*, p.56.

take jabs at those who believed in the invisible supernatural realm. To him belief in demons that torment and in rituals that deliver from demonic bondage were matters better relegated to the world of magic.

While only a sample of extant materials has been presented, it is possible to draw some concrete conclusions about how people of pre-Christian Palestine viewed the spiritual realm and approached matters like demonic possession and exorcism. The sources clearly portray the continuing evolution of a worldview in which demons were believed to be active and affected the lives of people. This belief system was not “confined to the uneducated masses, but was also held in intellectual and orthodox circles.”⁴¹ Demons wreaked havoc, sought to cause people ill, and, on occasion, took bodily possession of them. Because these beliefs were sanctioned in key circles, they carried over into the Christian era.

In shifting from one source to another in this section, it is possible to see a development in the practice of exorcism, moving from a broader usage and meaning of the term to a more refined sense. Each account exhibited its own combination of exorcistic practices from the use of incense and the proper incantation to uttering a name of power and requiring a proof of departure on the part of the demon. However, when various practices are compiled, a very distinct portrait of the exorcist begins to emerge. The following elements appear with varying degrees of regularity and become for many practitioners of the time a standard of operation or technique: 1) some type of physical device is employed (e.g. a ring, incense, etc.); 2) certain words are used or an incantation

⁴¹ F. GOKEY, *The Terminology for the Devil and Evil Spirits in the Apostolic Fathers*, Patristic Studies, no. 93, Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America, 1961, p. 175.

is chanted, often citing a great figure of the past (e.g. Solomon); 3) the words or incantations, when recited, are often accompanied by a prayer or formula shaped as a prayer (Noah, in the example from Jubilees, Abraham in the Genesis Apocryphon); and 4) there is frequently a demand for proof of the success of the exorcism (e.g. overturning the water basin). But it will not be long before these elements are reconfigured by the advent of the Messiah.

One last component of the intertestamental literature deserves comment before closing the section. Throughout the material seen thus far, there was a very narrow eschatological focus. It appears that there was only concern about the here and now, specifically, how an individual being demonized may obtain relief. The work of the pre-Christian exorcist and his/her success rate are in no way viewed as an indication of something greater or as the in-breaking of something new. The work of the pre-Christian exorcist was an end in itself.

1.2 – Jesus Christ and the New Testament

The milieu of first century C.E. Palestine had little choice but to bear the influence of the dominant cultures to which it was exposed. The Jewish world of the time did not present, any more than its neighbors, a complete and consistent understanding of demons. The nature of demons was seen as spiritual, yet they possessed certain human characteristics inconsistent with a non-bodily nature. They were considered to be numerous and especially active at certain times and places. Demons were powerful but were thought to be manipulated by human desires and weaknesses. They were a cause of evil, yet sometimes came into existence or became evil because of sin. Demons were

viewed periodically as servants of God but could contradictorily function as God's enemies. Successful antidotes against demonic activity were the word of God, observance of the commandments, and prayer. To a lesser degree than other cultures, Jews also believed demons had the ability to possess people and sought relief through exorcism.⁴² It was in this environment that the people of the New Testament – and Jesus himself – were immersed.

With a basic understanding of his milieu in mind, it is now possible to focus on Jesus himself.⁴³ Little is known about Jesus during his so-called “private years”: what he did, how he earned a living, where he spent his time. But the New Testament record leaves no room for doubt that once he entered his public ministry, Jesus devoted himself entirely to a specific mission. The Synoptic Gospels are unanimous in presenting him as a teacher, a healer, and an exorcist.⁴⁴ Imbued in the milieu in which he found himself, Jesus' ministrations witnessed to the fact that he embraced a worldview in which demons did exist, people could be possessed, and hence, the exorcist was a regular component of society.

A reminder about the material seen thus far is inserted here so that there is no confusion. Jesus was not the only exorcist at work in the first century C.E. The extant material is very clear about this fact. Howard Kee writes that there is a basic image of

⁴² FERGUSON, *Demonology*, pp. 94-95.

⁴³ Two works by Graham Twelftree stand out, especially when discussing Jesus' ministry as exorcist. I single them out here because of their significance to this present study, namely *Christ Triumphant: Exorcism Then and Now* and *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus*.

⁴⁴ G. VERMES, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels*, New York, NY, Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1973, p. 22.

Jesus to bear in mind, namely, “as one among other charismatic healers and exorcists of the time.”⁴⁵ Kee’s statement, though, begs the question: Are there any differences between Jesus’ exorcisms and those performed by his contemporaries? The short answer is that Jesus did, in fact, differ in his role as exorcist and in the method he used, as will soon become evident. A “technique” was outlined at the end of the section on intertestamental literature which is representative of exorcistic practices by others than Jesus. This technique will be used by way of comparison when examining Jesus’ exorcisms. The following questions will also guide the ensuing discussion in determining the differences: What shape did Jesus’ exorcisms take? How did Jesus manifest his technique? Was there a difference in the eschatological understanding of his exorcisms vis à vis those previously discussed and the ones coming from the hands of Jesus’ contemporaries?

1.2.1 – New Testament Evidence

Similar to the process utilized in the study of the intertestamental literature, an exploration of specific texts, in this case, from the Synoptic Gospels, will elucidate Jesus’ exorcisms. The various texts will create a portrait of Jesus as exorcist and provide the necessary material to compile an exorcistic technique unique to him. Primary focus is given to the Gospel of Mark. In choosing Mark’s rendering of the life of Jesus, the two-

⁴⁵ H. KEE, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times*, Society for New Testament Studies, vol. 55, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 76.

source theory of gospel evolution is presumed.⁴⁶ We are thereby attempting to recover the oldest accounts of Jesus as exorcist.

As an aside, the fourth gospel has been intentionally omitted from this discussion inasmuch as it contains no explicit accounts of exorcism. Whether Jesus exercised his exorcistic abilities at all in the Gospel of John continues to be an area of debate.⁴⁷

Before delving into the actual texts at hand it is necessary to add one more comment. In his ministry Jesus made a clear distinction between people who needed physical healing and those who needed exorcism. He did not try to exorcise everyone, nor did he perceive this as necessary. Only those who demonstrated that they were in the grip of the demonic were recipients of Jesus' exorcistic ministry. As a matter of fact, Jesus healed more people than he exorcised (based on the Synoptic accounts).⁴⁸ Twelftree adds further credence to this view by pointing out that there are several distinctive symptoms of demonic possession not found in those who are only in need of healing: 1) the possessed exhibit extraordinary strength and a disregard for pain (Mk 5:3, 5); 2) the demons know who Jesus is (Mk 1:24); 3) the demons are disturbed by Jesus' presence

⁴⁶ G. STYLER, art. "Synoptic Problem," in B. METZGER and M. COOGAN (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 724. In short, the theory proposes that Mark's was the first gospel and one of two sources (the other being "Q" or Quelle) used in the writing of both the gospels of Matthew and Luke. See also I. HAVENER, *Q: The Sayings of Jesus*, Good News Studies, no. 19, Wilmington, DE, Michael Glazier, Inc., 1987.

⁴⁷ See E. BROADHEAD, "Echoes of an Exorcism in the Fourth Gospel?," in *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 86 (1995), pp. 111-119 and E. PLUMER, "The Absence of Exorcisms in the Fourth Gospel," in *Biblica*, 78 (1997), pp. 350-368.

⁴⁸ GRAFF, *Can a Christian Have an Unclean Spirit?* p. 161. Graff offers a useful chart listing the healings and exorcisms of Jesus.

(Mk 1:24; 5:7; and 9:14); and 4) the demons themselves are said to speak (Mk 1:24ff and 5:8ff).⁴⁹

It is now possible to focus attention on specific texts. For the sake of this study, the four longer exorcism stories of Jesus in the Gospels are to be considered representative of exorcisms in New Testament literature and will be treated first: the demoniac in the synagogue (Mk 1:21-28/Lk 4:31-37), the Gerasene demoniac (Mk 5:1-20/Mt 8:28-34/Lk 8:26-39), the Syrophoenician woman's daughter (Mk 7:24-30/Mt 15:21-28), and the epileptic boy (Mk 9:14-29/Mt 7:14-21/Lk 9:37-43a). These will be followed by some exorcism sayings, collectively known as the Beelzebul Controversy (Mk 3:22-27/Mt 9:32-34; 12:22-30/Lk 11:14-15; 17-23). Finally, several additional pericopes will receive shorter comments.

The first four pericopes will undergo the following pattern of study: the pericope will first be compared with the "technique" formulated under the study of the intertestamental literature. Then additional material that is pertinent to the understanding of the text will be supplied. The remaining pericopes will only be commented on.

The Demoniac in the Synagogue (Mark 1:21-28)⁵⁰

(23) Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, (24) and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." (25) But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" (26) And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.

⁴⁹ TWELFTREE, *Christ Triumphant*, p. 71.

⁵⁰ Due to the pertinence of the biblical texts for this section of the study, they are being presented in the body of the work. However, only the essential verses of the given exorcism story will be reproduced.

This exorcism story has none of the same elements as the technique seen previously. Jesus does not use any sort of physical device to elicit the demon's departure. Nor does he employ specific words or an incantation with its reference to some greater power or authority. Jesus' words are not formulated as a prayer, and he does not require some proof of the demon's departure.

Then what can be said about this pericope? Firstly, as Kee states, "The first specific act of Jesus reported by Mark is the healing of the demoniac in the synagogue."⁵¹ Jesus' ministry, in Mark's Gospel, begins with an exorcism. Mark appears very deliberate in his action here. He wants his readers to know that Jesus clearly exhibits his authority through his exorcistic works. Secondly, the presence of the possessed in the synagogue is a curious matter. What brought the demoniac to the synagogue? Was he already there or did Jesus' presence draw him there? Certainly, he was disturbed by Jesus' presence, and that caused him to utter a cry of extreme consternation.⁵² The demon's outburst and adjuration of Jesus further display his recognition of Jesus as someone who possesses more than ordinary power. Thirdly, the manner in which Jesus addresses the demoniac is significant. The pericope reads that Jesus "rebuked him." Here the Greek word *ἐπετίμησεν* is used. It is a word that appears with some frequency in exorcism stories and other stories where hostile powers are being brought under control. Kee explains that this word occurs for the first time in Mark's Gospel in this particular pericope, and as a result

⁵¹ H. KEE, "The Terminology of Mark's Exorcism Stories," in *New Testament Studies*, 14 (1967), p. 242.

⁵² G. TWELFTREE, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus*, Peabody, MA, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1993, p. 60.

apparently receives normative usage in the synoptic tradition.⁵³ Fourthly, not only the manner in which Jesus addresses the demoniac but also the words he uses are important. Jesus first binds the demon to silence and then directs him to depart the possessed. Essentially a binding followed by a direction constitutes Jesus' exorcistic words and works in the pericope. There is no display of leniency whatsoever on Jesus' part. The demon must leave. Finally, in several exorcism stories, the demon departs only after some kind of convulsion. At most this could be considered an indication that the demon is finally gone. But no specific request for proof of the success of the exorcism is sought. By way of conclusion, the most striking feature of this exorcism is the fact that it is so simple: Jesus commands and the demon withdraws.

The Gerasene Demoniac (Mark 5:1-20)

(2) And when he had stepped out of the boat, immediately a man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit met him. (3) He lived among the tombs; and no one could restrain him any more, even with a chain: (4) for he had often been restrained with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the shackles he broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him. (5) Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always howling and bruising himself with stones. (6) When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and bowed down before him; (7) and he shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." (8) For he had said to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" (9) Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion; for we are many." (10) He begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. (11) Now there on the hillside a great herd of swine was feeding; (12) and the unclean spirits begged him, "Send us into the swine; let us enter them." (13) So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and were drowned in the sea.

It appears that after only two texts, a pattern is already beginning to develop.

Once again when the pre-messianic technique is applied, there is virtually no

⁵³ KEE, "The Terminology of Mark's Exorcism Stories," p. 241.

correspondence. No physical device is utilized and no incantation or prayer is uttered. Interestingly enough, it is the possessed who invokes a name of power when he adjures Jesus “by God” to cease to torment him. Centuries later when exorcism will be ritualized by the Church, it will be the exorcist who will adjure the demon to depart. Jesus remains consistent in his response and does not call on any power or authority. He simply utters a command for the unclean spirit to leave the demoniac.

The reason for the reference to virtually no correspondence with the previous technique is the occasional hypothesis implying that the demon being allowed to enter the herd of swine is a proof of the success of the exorcism. This harkens back to the discussion of the exorcism performed by Eleazar who required the demon, when departing, to overturn the container of water. The requirement of the demon to perform some action was used to indicate the success of the exorcism. Such is not the case here since it is the demon who pleads to be sent “out of the country” or to enter the herd of swine. Add to this that, as Langton puts it, “the possibility of the transference of demons from a person to some other object was fully recognized by the Jews at the time of Christ.”⁵⁴

This same episode in the text is also used to make a case for Jesus’ leniency with the demon, since it is the only such occurrence in Jesus’ exorcisms. In I Enoch and Jubilees we encountered situations where leniency was not granted and others where it was granted. In verses 10 and 12 of the Markan text, any inclination on the part of Jesus

⁵⁴ LANGTON, *Essentials of Demonology*, p. 158.

toward leniency reflects the fact that this exorcism was not associated with the final punishment or destruction of the demons.⁵⁵

Some additional comments conclude the discussion of this text. Firstly, as seen in Mark 1: 21ff, the actions of the possessed bear notice. While apparently disturbed by Jesus' presence, the individual seeks Jesus out and does him homage – a seeming proof of Jesus' power. In addition, the possessed displays superhuman strength (vs. 3) and has complete disregard for pain (vs. 5). Over the centuries these will become some of the prime indicators of demonic possession. Secondly, the words of the demon to Jesus are violent and fierce. What is even more intriguing is the demon's knowledge of Jesus' name. This knowledge only continues to attest to the power that Jesus possesses and the purpose of his ministry, as witnessed to by the demons. Finally, in verse 9, Jesus asks the demon to identify itself. With that information, Jesus acquires "ascendancy over the demon."⁵⁶ It was believed that by surrendering one's name, the individual surrendered him/herself.⁵⁷

The Syrophoenician Woman's Daughter (Mark 7:24-30)

(24) From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, (25) but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. (26) Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophoenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. (27) He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." (28) But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the

⁵⁵ TWELFTREE, *Jesus the Exorcist*, p. 86.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 84.

⁵⁷ H. VAN DER LOOS, *The Miracles of Jesus*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1965, p. 388.

children's crumbs." (29) Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go – the demon has left your daughter." (30) So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Due to the nature of this exorcism story, it is not feasible to follow the practice established up to this point of applying the technique seen earlier. In this pericope, Jesus exorcises the young girl from a distance. He has no direct contact with her, utters no special words, and does not require proof of the unclean spirit's departure. It should be noted, however, that this is not a unique feature of Jesus. Twelftree comments that, "Jesus, like other exorcists of his period, was known as an exorcist able to heal from a distance."⁵⁸

In addition, the pericope witnesses to the fact that Jesus extends his ministry beyond the reaches of his own Jewish world to those outside, the Gentiles. Clearly, Jesus' power knows no boundary. Another interesting note is that in this pericope and in the following one, someone other than the possessed individual seeks relief on his/her behalf. This practice will become normative in subsequent centuries.

The Epileptic Boy (Mark 9:14-29)

(17) Someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought you my son; he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak; (18) and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so." (19) He answered them, "You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me." (20) And they brought the boy to him. When the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. . . . (23) Jesus said to him, "If you are able! – All things can be done for the one who believes." (24) Immediately the father of the child cried out, "I believe; help my unbelief!" (25) When Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing, I command you, come

⁵⁸ TWELFTREE, *Jesus the Exorcist*, p. 146.

out of him, and never enter him again!” (26) After crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, “He is dead.” (27) But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he was able to stand. (28) When he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” (29) He said to them, “This kind can come out only through prayer.”

Once again, a comparison with the technique of the other exorcists of Jesus’ milieu is fruitless. No corollaries can be found. As usual, the unclean spirit possessing the boy causes him to react adversely when brought into Jesus’ presence. And a now familiar, violent departure on the part of the same spirit is present as well. Jesus offers it no leniency. Even the familiar “rebuke” is seen here, describing the manner in which Jesus demands the spirit’s departure. It is interesting to note that while for many New Testament scholars “rebuke” is considered an adequate translation of the Greek term ἐπιτιμᾶν, Kee finds it “wholly inadequate.”⁵⁹ He believes that it is an insufficient means of delivering the command that follows it.

Although Jesus’ exorcistic words do not follow a formula or exhibit a set pattern, they are distinct and concise. This is reflected in the pericope at hand. Jesus begins by addressing the unclean spirit according to its particular manifestation in the boy. He then follows by binding the spirit (“I command you”). The striking feature here is Jesus’ use of the first person singular. There is no doubt that Jesus is performing this work on his own authority. Finally, Jesus gives the unclean spirit a dual directive: to depart and never to enter again. The last requirement is significant. While other exorcists would have exhorted the unclean spirit similarly with a restriction from returning, they would also

⁵⁹ KEE, “The Terminology of Mark’s Exorcism Stories,” p. 244.

have had to supply some type of amulet or talisman to guarantee their work.⁶⁰ Jesus needs no such adjunct. His directive suffices.

Finally, a comment about the dialogue between Jesus and the disciples once they arrive at the house concludes the discussion of this pericope. What quickly becomes evident during the question and answer period at the close of Mark 9:14-29 is that while Jesus does not have to pray in conjunction with the performing of an exorcism, the disciples do. Again, Jesus demonstrates his power by mighty works. The disciples must rely on God's assistance and their deep faith in Him.

The Beelzebul Controversy (Mark 3:22-27)

(22) And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons." (23) And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? (24) If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. (25) And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. (26) And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. (27) But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered."

While the texts from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, which correspond to the Markan pericope above, will receive minimal attention in this work, it is important to note that they are preceded by essentially the same brief exorcism story (Mt 9:32-33; 12:22-23; Lk 11:14) whereas the Markan text is not. It thus appears that both Matthew and Luke used the "Q" tradition as the source for the story. Twelftree credits the brevity of the story to the fact that it was meant primarily as an introduction to the material that

⁶⁰ GRAFF, *Can a Christian Have an Unclean Spirit?* p. 158.

follows it – material that appears, more or less, in all three Synoptic Gospels.⁶¹ Only mention of the existence of the story is made here since what is essential is the material that follows it.

In general, the material which comprises Mark 3:22-27 is a collection of exorcism sayings of Jesus where the latter evidently refers to his own work as exorcist. The sayings seem to derive from one or more situations where Jesus' exorcisms have stirred up controversy. Their value is reflected in that they offer insight into Jesus' own understanding of his ministry and his role as exorcist.⁶² From these sayings come several points of interest for this study. Firstly, in the pericope above, Jesus uses the names Beelzebul and Satan interchangeably, whereas the name Beelzebul does not occur in Jewish literature as a name for Satan.⁶³ Therefore, Jesus appears to confuse his detractors in their attempt to brand him a magician and his work as that of the devil.⁶⁴ Secondly, the imagery used in the binding of the "strong man" and the plundering of his house is significant. The "strong man" is obviously understood to be Satan, while the word "house" is commonly used in the East to refer by way of comparison to a possessed person.⁶⁵ Hence, in the end, the pericope could be considered a parable of an exorcism. Lastly, this study would not be complete without a few words on the "Spirit/finger of God" saying (Mt 12:28/Lk 11:20), even though it is not found in Mark. Like the brief

⁶¹ TWELFTREE, *Jesus the Exorcist*, p. 103.

⁶² J. DUNN and G. TWELFTREE, "Demon-Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament," in *Churchman*, 94 (1980), p. 214.

⁶³ VAN DER LOOS, *The Miracles of Jesus*, p. 409.

⁶⁴ VERMES, *Jesus the Jew*, p. 24.

⁶⁵ TWELFTREE, *Jesus the Exorcist*, p. 111.

exorcism story mentioned previously under this heading, both Matthew and Luke again used the “Q” tradition as the source of the saying.⁶⁶ Jesus evidently saw his exorcisms as brought about by the power of the Spirit of God. The saying, “But if it is by the Spirit (or finger) of God that I cast out demons,” was Jesus’ own quite specific claim. It was not simply a claim meaning that he spoke and something happened. Rather, Jesus was definitively attesting to the power of God at work within and through him.

At the beginning of this section mention was made that several additional texts would receive brief comment. These texts fall into two categories: pericopes that are not exorcisms in the strict sense of the word but still utilize the term “rebuke” (ἐπετίμησεν), and pericopes where reference is made to exorcisms already performed. In the first category, there were two instances (Mk 1:21-28 and Mk 9:14-29) where the term ‘rebuke’ is used to describe the manner by which Jesus commands the unclean spirit to depart the possessed individual. These accounts are clearly of an exorcistic nature. What meaning can be inferred when the same term appears in the accounts of 1) Jesus healing Peter’s mother-in-law of a fever (Lk 4:38-39), 2) Jesus stilling the storm (Mk 4:35-41/Mt 8:23-27/Lk 8:22-25), and 3) Peter rebuking Jesus and vice versa (Mk 8:31-33/Mt 16:21-23)? In all three instances, the term is used to indicate the power made manifest through the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is not only overcoming the evil power at work in demonic possession. He is overcoming the evil powers evident in sickness, making his

⁶⁶ HAVENER, *Q: The Sayings of Jesus*, pp. 70-71, 133.

authority known over nature itself, and challenging anyone who stands in the way of the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God.⁶⁷

The second category is simply a collection of segments (Mk 1:32-34, 39, 3:11/Mt 8:16-17/Lk 4:40-41, 7:21, 13:32) that serve as summary references to Jesus' exorcistic ministry. These references, along with all of the material provided thus far, confirm Jesus' reputation as a successful exorcist.

It is possible to summarize the material of this section in one general statement, namely, that Jesus' exorcistic technique was a radical departure from the exorcisms performed by his predecessors and contemporaries. Any attempt to find a direct correlation between the exorcistic technique originating in the period of the intertestamental literature and that of Jesus' exorcisms is futile. Although physical devices of one kind or another held a prominent place in the exorcisms of the ancient world and in Jesus' own time, he himself had no use for them. Nor does he appear to call on any source of power or authority. He does not invoke the name of a great person of the past, and does not utter special words or incantations. Even prayer, so important in numerous traditions of exorcism including Judaism, is noticeably absent from the exorcisms of Jesus. Neither does Jesus' exorcistic technique involve seeking proof of success. In fact, Jesus does not even necessarily come into physical contact with the possessed by the laying on of hands, as is seen elsewhere in his healing miracles.

Having determined what was absent from Jesus' technique, it is now possible to identify the shape his exorcistic ministry did take and how it was manifested. Obviously,

⁶⁷ KEE, "The Terminology of Mark's Exorcism Stories," pp. 243-244.

exorcism held a prominent place in the ministry of Jesus Christ. It was something that Jesus performed with relative frequency as evidenced in the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus differentiates himself from his predecessors and contemporaries by the power he exhibits while performing his exorcisms. Jesus does not offer the demon any leniency – the demon is bound and must depart the possessed.

Frequently there is an initial dramatic confrontation in which the possessed is drawn to Jesus, in spite of the fact that the demon is disturbed by Jesus' presence and displays its revulsion. In some cases, the demon speaks. In doing so it either identifies Jesus' divine nature or asks not to be tormented, even going so far as to request to be removed to a certain place. Jesus counters with exorcistic words that are simple and direct. These words do not follow any specific pattern. The most frequently used words by Jesus during his exorcisms are: "Come out" (Mk 1:25, 5:8, 9:25). There is even an instance of Jesus responding in the first person singular: "I command you" (Mk 9:25). The encounters usually conclude with a violent departure. All in all, Jesus accomplishes his exorcistic work by the mere uttering of words. Nothing more appears to be required.

The ultimate distinction, though, between Jesus the exorcist and both pre-Christian and contemporary practitioners is the eschatological dimension of the exorcisms performed. At the conclusion of the preceding section, it was noted that the typical exorcisms of Jesus' milieu were primarily ends in themselves. Individuals, who were variously afflicted by demons, sought out exorcists to obtain relief. They did not consider the given event indicative of something greater or proof of a new age dawning. Their eschatological focus was very narrow, if present at all.

The primary purpose of Jesus' exorcisms was quite the opposite. Although they might have had special meaning in and of themselves, have brought relief to the possessed, and even have given Jesus a certain degree of notoriety, his exorcisms were first and foremost performed to manifest the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God. The exorcisms of Jesus bore witness to "nothing less than the cosmic plan of God by which he was regaining control over an estranged and hostile creation, which was under subjection to the powers of Satan."⁶⁸ The Spirit/finger of God saying, introduced earlier, best typifies what is meant here. In a few words, Jesus is claiming that the exorcisms he performs are themselves manifestations of the Kingdom of God already present among us. And Jesus' own ministry shows forth the presence of God's reign.

1.2.2 – Jesus' Early Followers

Keeping in mind this view of Jesus as a powerful exorcist who radically departed from the techniques of his predecessors and primarily his own milieu, we can now focus on the people who followed him in his lifetime, i.e. his disciples. As the New Testament reveals, Jesus commissioned his disciples to carry on the work of spreading the good news of salvation,⁶⁹ and with that his ministry of exorcism. But how was this accomplished? In order to respond to the query, it will be necessary to explore the accounts of the disciples' exorcistic activity from the time when it was handed on to them

⁶⁸ KEE, "The Terminology of Mark's Exorcism Stories," p. 246.

⁶⁹ The Great Commission, as it is commonly referred to, is most clearly found in Mt 28:19-20 and Mk 16:15-16.

to their own experiences as exorcists. The brevity of this section is due to the paucity of scriptural texts, and the few that we have are brief.⁷⁰

All three of the Synoptic Gospels present Jesus as conferring upon his disciples the power and duty to perform exorcisms. Mark's Gospel, in its account of the appointment of the twelve, states, "And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons" (3:14-15). Later, Mark also writes, "He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits" (6:7). A corollary is seen in both Matthew 10:1 and Luke 9:1. The Matthean and Lukan texts make a clear and important distinction between the healing of sickness and the casting out of demons. This same distinction appears later in the Markan text where it says, "They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them" (6:13).⁷¹

From the Lukan account of the mission of the seventy disciples we can surmise that the disciples regarded their success in the casting out of demons as one of the most notable features of their mission.⁷² The text states, "The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!'" (10:17)

⁷⁰ Bearing this in mind, the section will not be formatted like the ones that preceded it, but the texts will be presented within the paragraphs describing them. In addition, the texts will not be drawn solely from the Gospel of Mark.

⁷¹ See also Mt 10:8 and Mk 16:17-18.

⁷² LANGTON, *Essentials of Demonology*, p. 163.

Corresponding to the distinction made earlier between demonic possession and forms of sickness, there always appears to have been a differentiating mode of treatment adopted, depending upon the circumstance. As has been noted, there is no record of a case when Jesus would have laid his hands upon, or in any way come in direct contact with, the body of a person possessed by a demon, whereas in cases of sickness, Jesus almost always healed through direct physical contact. Now, in this respect, it would seem that the disciples appear to have followed Jesus' example. For instance, Mark's Gospel states: "They will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover" (16:18).⁷³ Here they lay on hands when healing, but there is no mention in the preceding verse of the same action when performing exorcisms.

In the process of casting out demons, the disciples appear to have relied almost entirely upon the power of the name of Jesus. One telling source for this is Mark 16:17, which reads: "And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues."⁷⁴ There are even accounts of other exorcists than the disciples using Jesus' name to cast out demons. Mark's Gospel recounts, "John said to him, 'Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us'" (9:38).⁷⁵ Jesus' disciples here are concerned about two things, namely, that this person was not a follower of Jesus, and that he nonetheless made use of the power of Jesus' name. In the following verse (9:39),

⁷³ See also Mk 6:13.

⁷⁴ See also Mt 7:22.

⁷⁵ See also Lk 9:49.

Jesus openly condones the action of the unknown exorcist. One may surmise, then, that in making use of his name, the disciples – and others – believed they were availing themselves of Jesus’ power. Additionally, Jesus offers us an insight into his own understanding of his exorcistic work when he speaks about a “deed of power” done in his name.⁷⁶ Jesus recognizes his mission as the means by which the Kingdom of God was dawning upon the world and, as a result, Satan’s grip on this world was inevitably relaxing.

Although the scriptural evidence is slight, it is nevertheless evident that Jesus involved the disciples in his own mission. Through their commissioning and their recounting to Jesus of what they had accomplished, the disciples attested to the fact that they were rooted in and were continuing the exorcistic work begun by Jesus himself. It was not a work they did in their own names but in the name of the One who had bestowed it upon them. By doing so, they participated in the same eschatological framework as the One who had given them the authority to cast out demons. Consequently, it is safe to conclude that Jesus intended his disciples to continue the work of exorcism until the final culmination of the Kingdom.⁷⁷

1.3 – The Fathers of the Church

The work of exorcism continued in the ministry of the disciples, but the fledgling Church had a wide range of issues with which to grapple and structures to understand and

⁷⁶ W. WINK, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament*, Philadelphia, PA, Fortress Press, 1984, p.22.

⁷⁷ TWELFTREE, *Christ Triumphant*, p. 85.

fashion; doing battle with demons was not the only challenge facing the early Christian community. Basic concerns of how to live a Christian life and what to do when confronted with persecution were higher priorities for the moment. If anywhere, the role demons played in the first century of Christianity was found in dealing with internal problems like schism, heresy, and the moral behavior of Christians.⁷⁸

The Apostolic Fathers, who wrote in the period immediately following that of the New Testament scriptures, largely borrowed their ideas about the nature and workings of the demonic from the generation that had immediately preceded theirs.⁷⁹ Individuals like Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp, and Hermas were primarily moralists who focused their concern on strengthening the faith of recent converts.⁸⁰ At this particular moment in time, little to no attention was given to the possibility that a demon could possess someone or the way in which such a situation might be resolved. This is not to say that such realities did not exist.

The picture changes, however, in the second century. Not only does the Christian literature focus more intently on the influence of demons in the lives of Jesus' followers, but it also reflects the ways in which various writers wrestled with the notion of eliminating demonic forces that were thought to have physically invaded believers. The following is a sampling of pertinent thought on the subject by several of the more prominent authors from that period, cited as witnesses for the early evolution of the rite itself.

⁷⁸ GOKEY, *The Terminology for the Devil and Evil Spirits in the Apostolic Fathers*, p. 175.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.176.

Justin Martyr, born circa 100 C.E., was an early Christian apologist, who wrote in the face of Roman persecution.⁸¹ His works aptly reveal the challenges facing the life of the Christian. Of particular importance to this study, however, is that whereas other Christian writers around him were focusing generally on spiritual realities, Justin became very precise in his presentation of the dark forces at work in people's lives. He was keenly interested in the activity of demons, whom he believed were present everywhere in the world. In his second *Apology*, addressed to the Roman Senate, Justin expressed this belief along with the conviction that Christian exorcists, through their work, were helping foster belief in Jesus Christ.⁸²

Although Justin spent time elaborating on the influence of demons, he made it clear that their activity was not beyond control. In at least three different places,⁸³ Justin, in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, testifies to the importance of the contemporary practice of exorcism within the Christian community.⁸⁴ Christians evidently exercised command over demons simply by invoking Jesus' name and, with increasing frequency, making the sign of the cross over afflicted individuals.

⁸⁰ See art. "Apostolic Fathers," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 91.

⁸¹ Art. "Justin Martyr, St.," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 920.

⁸² 2 *Apology* 6.5-6; *St. Justin Martyr: The First and Second Apologies*, L. BARNARD (trans.), Ancient Christian Writers, no. 56, Mahwah, NJ, Paulist Press, 1997, pp. 76-78; PG 6, 451-456.

⁸³ *Dialogue with Trypho* 30.3; 76.6; 85.2; *Saint Justin Martyr*, T. FALLS (trans.), The Fathers of the Church, vol. 6, Washington, DC, Catholic University of America Press, 1948, pp. 192, 269, 283; PG 6, 539-540, 653-654, 675-676.

⁸⁴ R. BARRETT-LENNARD, *Christian Healing After the New Testament: Some Approaches to Illness in the Second, Third and Fourth Centuries*, Lanham, MD, University Press of America, Inc., 1994, p. 157.

A somewhat later contemporary of Justin, Irenaeus, was born in Asia and later became bishop of Lugdunum in Gaul.⁸⁵ Interestingly, he makes only one explicit reference to exorcism and this in the second book of his work *Against Heresies*.⁸⁶ What makes the reference significant, though, is that Irenaeus confirms Justin's views and treats the Christian practice of exorcism as a matter of common knowledge. Here again the use of the name of Jesus is what brings about the desired effect of freeing the person possessed. As Selby McCasland points out, what is distinctive about early Christian exorcism is "the simple fact that all the ancient techniques for the purpose are discarded for a new one."⁸⁷

Scattered throughout the works of the African Church Father Tertullian (circa 160 – circa 225) is a wide range of references to the work of demons and to the employment of exorcism. Probably the most frequently quoted text bearing on this subject comes from chapter twenty-three of his *Apologetics*.⁸⁸ Therein Tertullian challenges his pagan audience by stating that **any** Christian can drive out a demon.⁸⁹ The practice of exorcism is not reserved to any one person or group, lay or clergy. It is a special gift or charism

⁸⁵ R. WOOLLEY, *Exorcism and the Healing of the Sick*, London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1932, p. 14.

⁸⁶ *Against Heresies II.32.4; Irenaeus*, A ROBERTS AND J. DONALDSON (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, Buffalo, NY, The Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885, p. 409; PG 7-1, 828-830.

⁸⁷ S. MCCASLAND, *By the Finger of God: Demon Possession and Exorcism in Early Christianity in the Light of Modern Views of Mental Illness*, New York, NY, Macmillan Co., 1951, p. 109.

⁸⁸ *Apologetics 23.4; Tertullian: Apologetical Works and Minucius Felix: Octavius*, R. ARBESMANN, E. DALY, and E. QUAIN (trans.), *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 10, New York, NY, Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1950, p. 72; PL 1, 413-414.

⁸⁹ In the following section, a discussion of the evolution of the "order" of exorcist will be presented. But at this point in time, there was a like-minded understanding of exorcism among the patristic writers.

given to all Christians.⁹⁰ Irenaeus already alluded to this in his writings.⁹¹ Tertullian, Minucius Felix, and others clearly are in the same line of thought.⁹²

Up to this point, the Christian form of exorcism consisted in the invocation of Jesus' name. In some instances, the sign of the cross was added but, all in all, the 'rite' remained very simple. Tertullian, in the same chapter of *Apologetics* adds another element to the evolving ritual, namely the act of breathing upon the person who is possessed or afflicted.⁹³ The gradual use of "exsufflation" by Christian exorcists, according to Graff, is rooted in Jesus' own breathing on the disciples in the upper room on Easter.⁹⁴

Considered one of the most original thinkers of his day⁹⁵ and certainly one of the main contributors to early Christian demonology, Origen represents the culture of Alexandria.⁹⁶ He builds on the writings of Tertullian when it comes to the origin of demons and the malevolence they bring about. Origen understood that demons had been created good by God, but had willingly chosen to reject God. The exercise of their free

⁹⁰ "Il était d'un usage courant et public, pendant les premiers siècles, alors que tous les chrétiens, clercs ou laïques, réussissaient à chasser les demons." J. FORGET, art. "Exorcisme," in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, vol. 5, Paris, Letouzey et Ané, 1903-1950, col. 1770. See also F. BOUUAERT, art. "Exorciste," in *Dictionnaire de droit canonique*, vol. 5, Paris, Letouzey et Ané, 1953, col. 671.

⁹¹ BARRETT-LENNARD, *Christian Healing After the New Testament*, pp. 156-157.

⁹² J. FORGET, art. "Exorciste," in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, vol. 5, Letouzey et Ané, 1903-1950, col. 1780.

⁹³ *Apologetics* 23.16; *Tertullian: Apologetical Works and Minucius Felix: Octavius*, p. 74; PL 1, 415.

⁹⁴ GRAFF, *Can a Christian Have an Unclean Spirit?* p. 175. See John 20:22.

⁹⁵ FINLAY, *Demons! The Devil, Possession & Exorcism*, p. 56.

⁹⁶ W. ALEXANDER, *Demonic Possession in the New Testament: Its Relations: Historical, Medical and Theological*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1902, p. 226.

will had turned these rational beings into demons. Origen believed that demons, malevolent by choice, were the cause of sin.⁹⁷ Because of this predicament and their tendency to possess individuals, Origen saw exorcism as “a normal feature of Christianity.”⁹⁸

It is in his apologetical work, *Against Celsus*, that Origen speaks most abundantly of demons and the means to exorcise them. The pagan philosopher Celsus had launched a powerful literary attack on Christianity in the second century.⁹⁹ Among other things, he claimed that Christian exorcisms were accomplished through magical incantations. Origen countered by stating that it is not by means of elaborate incantations or other magical tricks that a Christian exorcises, but by Jesus’ name. Interestingly enough, a few lines later, Origen claims that the name of Jesus is so powerful that even a person of ill will could use it with success.¹⁰⁰ Later in the same work, Origen makes a point of reiterating how powerful an instrument is Jesus’ name when overcoming evil. Even the simplest person can accomplish the work through prayer and the use of simple formulas and adjurations.¹⁰¹ For the first time, those formulas and adjurations made use of scripture. That, in fact, is Origen’s contribution to the on-going evolution of the ritual of exorcism.

⁹⁷ FINLAY, *Demons! The Devil, Possession & Exorcism*, pp. 56-57.

⁹⁸ WOOLLEY, *Exorcism and the Healing of the Sick*, p. 21.

⁹⁹ Art. “Celsus,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 314.

¹⁰⁰ *Against Celsus*, 1.6; *Origen: Contra Celsum*, H. CHADWICK (trans.), Cambridge, University Press, 1953, pp. 9-10; PG 11, 665-668.

¹⁰¹ *Against Celsus*, 7.4, 67; *Origen: Contra Celsum*, pp. 397-398, 450; PG 11, 1425-1426, 1515-1516.

Cyprian (d. 258), bishop of Carthage, brings a different dimension to the discussion of the demonic. Drawing on his own experience as well as on the writings of Tertullian and Minucius Felix, Cyprian suggests that the actual words of exorcism inflict pain and torment on the demons.¹⁰² While Cyprian's hypothesis may not have had any direct bearing on the development of the ritual of exorcism in particular, it certainly reinforced the general importance of language and its usage in ritual action. In addition, Cyprian drew on Tertullian's conviction that every Christian inherited the power to cast out demons. For him this power was received at baptism.¹⁰³

Found among the writings of the Fathers are several literary works that claim to be authored by Clement of Rome. While the claim is not true, the Pseudo-Clementine literature, which originated in the third century,¹⁰⁴ underscores the understanding of exorcism within the Christian community as it had evolved to that point. Not only is the exorcist (any Christian) reminded to use simple formulas (from scripture) and the sign of the cross, but he/she is to pray and fast.¹⁰⁵ Again, the exorcistic ritual grows by another increment as the individual who is performing the exorcism is instructed to fast.

The long life of Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, ended in the year 373.

Athanasius spent various parts of his life in exile and, during those periods, he wrote

¹⁰² H. KELLY, *The Devil, Demonology and Witchcraft: The Development of Christian Beliefs in Evil Spirits*, Garden City, NY, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968, pp. 74-75.

¹⁰³ A. RODEWYK, *Possessed by Satan: The Church's Teaching on the Devil, Possession, and Exorcism*, M. EBON (trans.), Garden City, NY, Doubleday, 1975, p. 41.

¹⁰⁴ WOOLLEY, *Exorcism and the Healing of the Sick*, p. 24.

¹⁰⁵ GRAFF, *Can a Christian Have an Unclean Spirit?* pp. 178-179. See *Two Epistles Concerning Virginity*, A. ROBERTS AND J. DONALDSON (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 8, Buffalo, NY, The Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886, pp. 58-60; see also PG 1, 399-414.

prolifically.¹⁰⁶ Three passages from his writings pertain to this subject. Firstly, in his *Letter to Marcellinus*, Athanasius recounts how those who used lengthy, cumbersome incantations while performing exorcisms were mocked by the same demons whom they sought to drive out.¹⁰⁷ Secondly, Athanasius, in his most famous work, *On the Incarnation*, reminds his readers of the immense power of the sign of the cross, which he believes sufficient to drive away demons.¹⁰⁸ Thirdly, by writing the *Life of St. Anthony*, Athanasius presents Anthony as an exemplary model of Christian virtue and a powerful exorcist, and, as such, a necessary member of every Christian community.¹⁰⁹ Overall, Athanasius represents the need for simplicity in the early Christian practice of exorcism.

A brief reference to the writing of Epiphanius (circa 315-403) will close this sampling of patristic literature. A native of Palestine and later bishop of Salamis, Epiphanius is best remembered for his *Refutation of all the Heresies (Panarion)* in which he attacks every heresy from the beginning of Christianity to his own time.¹¹⁰ In his confrontation with the heretical sect, the Ebionites, Epiphanius succinctly describes the basic elements of an exorcism of his day. They are the blessing of water, the sprinkling of

¹⁰⁶ BARRETT-LENNARD, *Christian Healing After the New Testament*, pp. 167-168.

¹⁰⁷ *Letter to Marcellinus*, 33; *Athanasius: The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, R. GREGG (trans.), New York, NY, Paulist Press, 1980, pp. 128-129; PG 27, 43-46.

¹⁰⁸ *On the Incarnation*, 47; *Athanasius: Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, R. THOMSON (trans.), Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 253; PG 25, 177-180.

¹⁰⁹ BARRETT-LENNARD, *Christian Healing After the New Testament*, p. 202.

¹¹⁰ Art. "Epiphanius, St.," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, pp. 556-557.

the possessed with it, and the invocation of Jesus' name. After which the demon is forced to depart.¹¹¹

Other patristic sources could be cited, although the references to actual exorcistic activity and technique found in other sources are not as numerous with the sources being more concerned with demons in general. What was presented in the preceding paragraphs, however, portrays vividly the basic picture of the evolving practice of exorcism in the early centuries of Christianity. This should help us to better understand how the Church has progressively arrived at a formal ritual of exorcism.

1.4 – Sources of Law on Exorcism in the Ancient Church

The word “law” as used in this section should not be misunderstood. In the early centuries of the first Christian millennium, there existed as yet no neatly compiled code of law by which the Church could govern itself. Decrees from early councils, directives from synodal gatherings, and the pronouncements of popes were the seedbeds from which later legislation was to spring. This section of the chapter highlights those sources that treated exorcism, uncovering some of the difficulties Christian exorcistic practice underwent.

Initially, it is necessary to make a distinction between the exorcism of catechumens and that of the possessed (energumens). At an early date the practice began

¹¹¹ *Ebionites 30.10.4-7; The Panarion of St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis*, P. AMIDON (trans.), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 99-100; PG 41, 421-424.

in the Church of exorcising those who desired to become Christian (catechumens).¹¹² Pre-baptismal exorcism, however, was (and continues to be) fundamentally different in focus from the form of exorcism under scrutiny in this thesis. Simply stated, the exorcism that originally preceded baptism, and that was later incorporated into the actual baptismal rite, is one of renunciation. The catechumen is considered to be under the general dominion of the devil because of sin.¹¹³ In preparation for the reception of baptism, the catechumen is asked to renounce the devil through a series of exorcisms.¹¹⁴ On the other hand, in these early days, the individuals who were believed to be possessed by a demon required the assistance of an exorcist to rid themselves of the malevolent presence that was tormenting them or that was thought to have invaded their body.

Henry Kelly argues that the practice of exorcism was originally designed for catechumens and only later applied to those disturbed or possessed by demons.¹¹⁵ A careful examination of extant sources and documents suggests a different scenario. Two distinct categories existed – exorcism of the possessed (energumen) and exorcism of the

¹¹² A number of articles and books thoroughly trace the historical development of pre-baptismal exorcism. See E. LEEPER, "From Alexandria to Rome: The Valentinian Connection to the Incorporation of Exorcism as a Prebaptismal Rite," *Vigiliae Christianae*, 44 (1990), pp. 6-24; see H. KELLY, *The Devil at Baptism: Ritual, Theology, and Drama*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1985.

¹¹³ J. RUSSELL, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1981, pp. 100-101.

¹¹⁴ Exorcisms can still be found today in the Rite of Baptism of Children and in the scrutinies of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

¹¹⁵ KELLY, *The Devil at Baptism*, pp. 239-240.

non-baptized (catechumen)¹¹⁶ – with convincing evidence that the former predates the latter.¹¹⁷

Early sources of law reveal that an order or office of exorcist was known in both Eastern and Western Christianity. However, there is an inconsistency in practice between the Church of the West and that of the East with a formal order of exorcists developing in the West while, in the East, this function was more informally attributed to a spiritual charism. This is seen, in the West, at the Fourth Council of Carthage held in 398 with some 215 bishops in attendance, including Augustine of Hippo. Among the 104 canons published as a result, eight dealt with ordination, out of which one addressed the ordination of an exorcist (c. 7).¹¹⁸ The canon reads:

When the exorcist is ordained, he receives from the hand of the bishop a small book in which are written the exorcisms. The bishop says to him: Receive and commit to memory, and have the power to lay hands upon the energumens, either baptized or catechumen.¹¹⁹

While scholarship supports the authenticity of the content of the above-mentioned canon, the source for it is not to be found in the fourth century, but in the *Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua* from the second half of the fifth century.¹²⁰ Gratian attributes it to the Fourth

¹¹⁶ “L’étude des documents liturgiques donnerait volontiers à croire que, pendant très longtemps, une distinction fut maintenue néanmoins entre ces catégories très différentes d’exorcisables: les possédés et les non-baptisés.” H. LECLERCQ, art. “Exorcisme, Exorciste,” in *Dictionnaire d’archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, vol. 5, Paris, Letouzey et Ané, 1922, col. 970.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., col. 974.

¹¹⁸ E. LONDON, *A Manual of Councils of the Holy Catholic Church*, rev. ed., vol. 1, Edinburgh, J. Grant, 1909, p. 122.

¹¹⁹ C. HEFELE, *A History of the Councils of the Church: From the Original Documents*, H. OXENHAM (trans.), vol. 2, Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1896, p. 411; *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, J. MANSI (ed.), vol. 3, Paris, H. Welter, 1901-1927, col. 951.

¹²⁰ Art. “Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 1549.

Council of Carthage.¹²¹ The importance of the canon, regardless of its source, is that it constitutes the earliest extant prescription for the rite of ordination of an exorcist. In addition, the reference to a book of exorcisms that it contains is significant, and all the more that there are no such books extant from that early date.

In the Eastern Church, the role of charism was an important factor in the administration of exorcism. The function of exorcist was regarded as charismatic and he was not ordained, as is explicitly stated in the *Apostolic Constitutions*:

26. An exorcist is not ordained. For it is a trial of voluntary goodness, and of the grace of God through Christ by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For he who has received the gift of healing is declared by revelation from God, the grace which is in him being manifest to all
 . . .¹²²

Kelly concludes from this that “if there was a custom of ordaining exorcists anywhere in the East, it eventually died out.”¹²³

The practice of ordaining the exorcist became normative in the West. However, there is evidence that the earlier practice of allowing any Christian to exorcise continued also in the West. “The residual assumption remained that all Christians, women included,

¹²¹ “Ce canon a été repris par Gratien, dans son *Decretum*, où il est attribué au IV concile de Carthage, tenu en 398.” BOUUAERT, “Exorciste,” col. 673; see D. 23, c. 17.

¹²² *Apostolic Constitutions* 26; *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, A. ROBERTS and J. DONALDSON (eds.), The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 7, Buffalo, NY, The Christian Literature Company, 1886, p. 493; *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, F. FUNK (ed.), vol. 1, Paderborn, Schoeningh, 1905, pp. 528-529.

¹²³ KELLY, *The Devil, Demonology and Witchcraft*, p. 80.

were able to drive out devils.”¹²⁴ Exorcisms continued to be performed by both laity and clergy.

Excerpts from several papal letters and the acts or canons of synods and councils reflect the further evolution of the practice of exorcism leading to the Middle Ages.¹²⁵ Pope Cornelius (251-252) mentions in a letter to a certain Fabius that there were at the time in the Church of Rome fifty-two exorcists, readers, and doorkeepers¹²⁶ along with other ordained ministers. The letter details the institution of these orders together with the organization of their functions and suggests that this structuring was the work of Cornelius’ predecessor, Fabian (236-251).¹²⁷ As seen earlier, exorcism was frequently referred to by the Fathers of the second and third centuries, but this is the earliest distinct reference to an exorcist by a pope.

A letter from Pope Innocent I (402-417) to Decentius, Bishop of Gubbio and dated to the year 416 is frequently quoted as proof that the legislation regulating the order of exorcist was highly developed by that early date.¹²⁸ Indeed, the letter does speak, in part, of exorcisms being performed by priests and deacons with the authorization of the

¹²⁴ RODEWYK, *Possessed by Satan*, p. 41.

¹²⁵ The popes, councils, and synods presented here are sources commonly cited in the secondary literature. The sources further establish a link to what was taking place within evolving exorcistic practices.

¹²⁶ *Ecclesiastical History* 1.6.43; *Eusebius: Ecclesiastical History*, J. OULTON (trans.), vol. 2, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1980, pp. 118-119; PG 20, 621-622.

¹²⁷ J. KELLY, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 16-18.

¹²⁸ C. BALDUCCI, *The Devil: Alive and Active in Our World*, J. AUMANN (trans.), Staten Island, NY, Alba House, 1990, pp. 169-170.

bishop.¹²⁹ However, scholarly studies have long since demonstrated that the letter did not originate in the fifth century but is actually part of the *False Decretals* of the mid-ninth century.¹³⁰ The letter does nonetheless offer valuable insight into the restrictions being placed on the exorcistic practices of the day.

Scholars continue to debate on the actual date of the convening of the Council of Laodicea. But it is safe to say that sometime in the middle of the fourth century, thirty-two bishops gathered in Phrygia and adopted sixty canons.¹³¹ Of interest is canon 26, which prohibits individuals not appointed by the bishop from performing exorcisms.¹³² This means that, although the letter of Innocent I cited above is a forgery from a later date, its contents reflect changes that had started to occur in the fourth and fifth centuries.

More than thirty synods were held in Antioch in the early days of the Church, with some more significant than others. The synod held in 341 is important for a number of reasons, not counting that at least thirty-six of the ninety-seven bishops present were Arians.¹³³ Canon 10 (of twenty-five) speaks of the role of the chorbishop: he may appoint exorcists as well as readers and subdeacons, but he may not ordain deacons and priests without the presence of the local bishop.¹³⁴ It would thus appear that both the practice of

¹²⁹ See *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, vol. 3, col. 1030; see also PL 20, 557-558.

¹³⁰ Art. "False Decretals," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 601.

¹³¹ LANDON, *A Manual of Councils of the Holy Catholic Church*, vol. 1, pp. 317-318.

¹³² HEFELE, *A History of the Councils of the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 314-315; *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, vol. 2, cols. 567-568.

¹³³ LANDON, *A Manual of Councils of the Holy Catholic Church*, vol. 1, pp. 31-35.

¹³⁴ HEFELE, *A History of the Councils of the Church*, vol. 2, p. 69; *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, vol. 2, cols. 1311-1312.

ordaining exorcists and that of simply appointing them remained well into the fourth century.

Finally, several councils and a synod share a common theme. The Council of Elvira (305), the First Council of Orange (441), the Eleventh Council of Toledo (657),¹³⁵ and the Synod of Constantinople (692; also known as the Trullan Synod)¹³⁶ all issued guidelines to correct abuses and to provide for real-life situations in such ways that would later contribute to the formulation of criteria for the diagnosing of diabolical possession. Regarding abuse, the Trullan Synod, in particular, dealt with individuals who, for whatever reason, fraudulently passed themselves off as energumens. The synod dealt with such charlatans by imposing on them a penance of excessive fasting.¹³⁷ Overall, a common concern for the pastoral care of energumens is evident among the bishops who took part in these various meetings. Clearly, the practice of exorcism and the order of exorcist were taking shape as the Middle Ages began to unfold.

1.5 – The Order of Exorcist

As already reflected in the testimony of Tertullian and others, there was no distinction among Christians as to who had the authority to exorcise. All Christians potentially possessed the special charism needed to expel demons by virtue of their

¹³⁵ HEFELE, *A History of the Councils of the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 148-152; vol. 3, p. 162; vol. 4, p. 489; *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, vol. 2, cols. 10-12; vol. 6, cols. 438-439; vol. 11, col. 145; see also J. RUSSELL, *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1977, p. 115.

¹³⁶ HEFELE, *A History of the Councils of the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 221-242.

¹³⁷ HEFELE, *A History of the Councils of the Church*, vol. 5, p. 231; *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, vol. 11, cols. 969-970.

baptism. This, at any rate, was the case until the third and fourth centuries when an order of exorcists began to emerge in some parts of the Church.¹³⁸ Whereas before the work of the exorcist was seen as a universal gift granted to all believers by God, now it was becoming an appointment by the Church. What was once a function rapidly became a title and an office. What brought about that change?

There are three responses to this question given by the authors. The first response simply posits that a loss of the charism occurred. Graff, as a proponent of this school of thought, claims that there was “a change in the availability of spiritual power.”¹³⁹ According to the argument, it appears that the special charism given to the baptized in the early centuries of Christianity was gradually withdrawn. In its place the Church constituted an office, or order, the holder of which would exorcise both the energumens and catechumens. The hypothesis is weak because it fails to address the question of why God would withdraw a charism He had first given to all the baptized. Moreover, it bears noting that the Church in the East never lost the notion of charism and, hence, did not establish a formal order of exorcists.¹⁴⁰

Another response suggests that the advent of the order of exorcist can be found in the process of systematizing undertaken by the Church. As the fledgling Christian community grew and expanded, it had to create new structures for itself and standardize practices. Both Kelly and Woolley believe that as pre-baptismal exorcism developed, a

¹³⁸ BARRETT-LENNARD, *Christian Healing After the New Testament*, p. 202.

¹³⁹ GRAFF, *Can a Christian Have an Unclean Spirit?* p. 182.

¹⁴⁰ See WOOLLEY, *Exorcism and the Healing of the Sick*, p. 45; see RODEWYK, *Possessed by Satan*, p. 41.

need arose to have a class of regularly appointed officials¹⁴¹ who assisted in the preparation of the non-baptized. These exorcists relied on their office rather than the charism given at baptism. Like the first response, this argument is also unconvincing. The proofs adduced do not present a conclusive picture. If this had been the actual development, then what attention was given to the energumens? Were they grouped with the catechumens or did those who still relied on their special charism care for them?

A third possible reason for the development of the order of exorcist, and the one espoused in this thesis, is that it was needed to counter abuses. Rodewyk refers to a Syriac writer by the name of Isaac of Antioch who wrote a poem in the third century describing "just how dangerous exorcism could become when practiced outside the guardianship of the Church."¹⁴² Woolley further states that the unregulated practice of exorcism was "already showing certain unhealthy and objectionable features, tending to abuse and grave superstition."¹⁴³ It seems that not only inappropriate advances were being made by the exorcists, especially when men were exorcising women, but the possessed were sometimes even being charged for the services of the exorcist.¹⁴⁴

Regardless of which hypothesis actually answers the query about how the order of exorcist came into existence, or even if this came about as a consequence of a combination of all three factors, the result saw the limiting of the practice of exorcism by

¹⁴¹ KELLY, *The Devil, Demonology and Witchcraft*, pp.77-78; see WOOLLEY, *Exorcism and the Healing of the Sick*, p. 27.

¹⁴² RODEWYK, *Possessed by Satan*, p. 46.

¹⁴³ WOOLLEY, *Exorcism and the Healing of the Sick*, p. 23.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

the Church. The free use of the charism of exorcism rooted in baptism would be curtailed and only the order of exorcists would remain, something that was expanded and further regulated as the centuries passed.

Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed a rather large expanse of history. To appreciate fully the complexity of the present rite of exorcism, it is essential to understand the history that went into its formation, of which the early Church played a seminal role.

The people of Israel were formed in a world already embracing, at least at some level, a cosmology where dark forces were believed to exert actual influence in people's lives. While they had to struggle against the dominance of alien cultures, the Israelites succeeded in becoming a strictly monotheistic people. However, a residue of foreign beliefs became assimilated into their own faith and practices. The condition for the possibility had been raised that exorcism may actually counter perceived malevolent forces. This is reflected, if sometimes only marginally, in their Hebrew scriptures.

After the closing of the Old Testament canon, an expanse of intertestamental literature burgeoned with an array of references to the activity of demonic beings and their machinations. In this context, the practice of exorcism developed significantly as did the role of the practitioner. The resulting climate paved the way for the advent of the form of messianic exorcism practiced by Jesus Christ.

In many respects Jesus was a man of his time, embracing the culture that gave him birth, but as an exorcist, his technique departed radically from his predecessors and

contemporaries. As shown in the New Testament, Jesus' exorcisms were utterly simple, merely commanding the demons to depart. No physical device, no incantation, no proof of departure was required. These were all taken as indications that the Kingdom of God was at hand.

The ministry of exorcism was passed on to those who had followed Jesus later through the faith communities that they had established. However, the exorcisms were now done by using Jesus' name and the power it conveyed. It is worthy of special note that, in the ancient Church, every Christian could exercise this ministry.

Early Christian writers and thinkers manifest developments in the structure and form of Christian exorcism. In addition to the use of Jesus' name, other elements that contributed to shape an early ritual were the sign of the cross, exsufflation, simple adjurations containing scripture, prayer, and fasting.

Through a need to institutionalize the practice of exorcism and out of concern brought on by the abuses of exorcists and unbelievers, the future of exorcism was restricted to an office held either by ordination or appointment. This was not accomplished immediately or absolutely but through a gradual development over several centuries.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RITE OF EXORCISM

Introduction

As seen in the preceding chapter, historical evidence indicates the presence, among the earliest Near Eastern civilizations, of a belief system in which dark forces were believed to be at work and interfere in the lives of human beings. Various means had been devised to combat the perceived assaults and inhabitations by demons, and these constituted a primitive form of exorcism. Each culture developed its own practices to counter malevolent activity in accordance with their particular perception of evil. With the advent of Jesus, a unique Christian form of exorcism was created, reflecting His mission and the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God. It is within this framework that the guiding question of chapter two is cast. How did the Church come to develop a formal ritual of exorcism?

Conscious of the developments that occurred during the first five centuries of the Christian practice of exorcism, we will begin with an exploration of how the ancient Church preserved and passed on its exorcistic ministry. What was the medium employed to transmit the exorcist's practice to subsequent generations, especially during the period known as the Early Middle Ages? This will be attempted by examining the principal

liturgical books that remained extant, from the second half of the first Christian millennium and the early second millennium.

With the historical shift from the so-called Early Middle Ages to the High Middle Ages, a new era of thinking dawned and scholastic thought and methods asserted themselves. In this vein, notable figures such as Peter Lombard, Gratian, Thomas Aquinas, and others worked to elucidate the state of exorcism of their day. What was their understanding of the role of the exorcism in the daily life of the Church? Witches, witchcraft, and witch-hunters challenged the credibility of both the exorcist and his practice from the fourteenth through the seventeenth centuries. As a result, individuals connected to the Church and to the emerging field of medicine felt that they had to rise up to the challenge. How did their responses and debates further the development of an official rite of exorcism? In what ways did the insights of exorcists, theologians, and early medical experts contribute to clarify exorcistic practice?

In the context of a culture that had become engrossed in superstition and magical thinking, chapter two next traces the thought that went into creating the criteria to be used to evaluate the true state of those allegedly possessed by demons. What criteria were finally chosen to aid the exorcist in determining genuine cases of demonic possession? Which criteria were rejected, and on what grounds?

In tandem with the delineation of criteria, guidelines were also being formulated that shaped the practice of exorcism and addressed the circumstances often encountered by the exorcist. How did these guidelines affect the emerging rite? As the rite of exorcism eventually became standardized, who were the individuals that contributed to defining its

final form? A study of the people and circumstances surrounding the promulgation of an official ritual and the formation of the actual rite of exorcism in the early modern period will help to address these questions.

2.1 – From the Ancient Church to the Middle Ages

The first five to six centuries of Christianity attest to a form of exorcism that slowly moved away from the exceedingly simple form given it by Jesus. Individuals who either practiced exorcism themselves or had some connection to exorcists added elements. Although still primitive in its form, Christian exorcism had an effect on the lives of the demonized, and its practitioners exerted a non-negligible influence on the culture as a whole.

A shift, however, occurred starting in the late sixth century which became more pronounced in the seventh. During that period one notes a noticeable decline in the number of written references to the order of exorcist and exorcistic practice.¹ Kelly offers one possible explanation: “Whatever function ordained exorcists might have had in attempting the cure of demoniacs in the Western Church, this task . . . was eventually assumed by clerics of higher orders.”² The Eastern Churches experienced a similar decline in the office of exorcist in the seventh and eighth centuries, while, at the same time, continuing to respect the presence of a charism.³ Fundamentally, there is little

¹ J. RUSSELL, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1984, p. 124.

² KELLY, *The Devil, Demonology and Witchcraft*, p. 83.

³ K. BIHLMAYER, *Church History*, V. MILLS (trans.), H. TÜCHLE (ed.), Westminster, MD, The Newman Press, 1958, p. 301.

extant data with which to pinpoint the exact cause of this in a period generally marked by a decline in all dimensions of human life.

2.1.1 – Liturgical Books

With the virtual disappearance of references to the order of exorcist, it becomes more difficult to trace the evolution of the rite from the seventh century onward.

Fortunately, a few key liturgical books from that period have survived and give us the sole means we have of grasping what took place from the last half of the first Christian millennium until about the twelfth century.

A brief historical overview of these liturgical books is presented here so that we may better understand the importance of what was preserved through this medium. Like the practice of exorcism itself, the liturgical books evolved. For the early Christian Church, before the progressive codification of texts occurred, improvisation was the rule.⁴ In fact, the content and quality of a presider's improvised prayers were one means of determining his orthodoxy. It was not long however before the more noteworthy texts were collected and disseminated locally.⁵

The next stage in the process of evolution of liturgical books is the *libellus*. Consisting of a few pages, the *libellus* is best described as a booklet or pamphlet,⁶ and it

⁴ C. HANSON, "The Liberty of the Bishop to Improvise Prayer in the Eucharist," in *Vigiliae Christianae*, 15 (1961), p. 174.

⁵ E. PALAZZO, *A History of Liturgical Books: From the Beginning to the Thirteenth Century*, M. BEAUMONT (trans.), Collegeville, MN, The Liturgical Press, 1998, p. 36.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

bridges the era of improvised prayers with that of proper liturgical books.⁷ The *libellus* typically contained a selection of liturgical prayers or needed texts for a specific action. As diverse liturgical practices of the fifth and sixth centuries started to become standardized, *libelli* were gradually compiled to create the primary liturgical books of Christianity.⁸ But liturgical uniformity was far from being normative, as different ritual expressions from different eras sometimes coexisted in the same liturgical books.⁹

Referring back briefly to the first chapter, mention was made of the rite of the ordination of exorcists included in the *Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua*. As part of that rite, the exorcist received a book of exorcisms that was to be used in the practice of freeing energumens from demonic influence or inhabitation. This book, in all probability, took the form of a *libellus*.

Eventually, the *libelli* gave way to one of the most important types of liturgical books – the sacramentary or missal. Initially, the sacramentary only contained the prayers said at Mass by the bishop or priest, but over time, the full *Ordo Missae* and other readings were added.¹⁰

The *Gelasian Sacramentary* is the oldest genuine sacramentary that has been preserved. Mistakenly ascribed to Pope Gelasius (492-496), it was compiled at the

⁷ C. VOGEL, *Medieval Liturgy: An Introduction to the Sources*, W. STOREY and N. RASMUSSEN (trans.), Washington, DC, The Pastoral Press, 1986, p. 38.

⁸ PALAZZO, *A History of Liturgical Books*, p. 38.

⁹ VOGEL, *Medieval Liturgy*, p. 62.

¹⁰ L. EISENHOFER and J. LECHNER, *The Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, A. PEELER and E. PEELER (trans.), H. WINSTONE (ed.), New York, NY, Herder and Herder, 1961, p. 20.

beginning of the eighth century in Chelles (near Paris) using primitive sources.¹¹ For liturgiologists like Eric Palazzo, the *Gelasian* is a liturgical book in the full sense of the term.¹² In other words, it contains all of the prayers, readings, etc. that a priest in charge of a parish church may need.

Of particular import for the present study is a supplement to the sacramentary discovered at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. In it is found a series of exorcistic texts to be used when praying over energumens (*Exorcismus contra energumenos*).¹³ The prayers are significant because they treat the matter of demonic obsession and possession in energumens. The focus is not on catechumens.

Considered by the majority of students of liturgy as the most important of the sacramentaries, the *Gregorian Sacramentary* had its origin in Rome, probably under the pontificate of Honorius I (625-638).¹⁴ The sacramentary is historically significant because by the end of the seventh century it had evolved into three different types of sacramentary.¹⁵ While distinct from the *Gelasian Sacramentary*, the *Gregorian* contains many of the same exorcistic prayers. Of even greater significance is the fact that the

¹¹ VOGEL, *Medieval Liturgy*, p. 64-65.

¹² PALAZZO, *A History of Liturgical Books*, p. 45.

¹³ E. LOWE, "The Vatican MS of the Gelasian Sacramentary and its Supplement at Paris," in *The Journal for Theological Studies*, 27 (1925-26), p. 360. Lowe provides a useful transcription of the entire supplement, beginning with the prayers of exorcism.

¹⁴ VOGEL, *Medieval Liturgy*, p. 79.

¹⁵ PALAZZO, *A History of Liturgical Books*, p. 51.

prayers were no longer relegated to a supplement or to an appendix but were located in the sacramentary proper.¹⁶

Vogel makes a point of stressing how important to the history of liturgy was the coexistence of various kinds and versions of liturgical books.¹⁷ As mentioned earlier, centuries were to pass before there was any significant uniformity in liturgical practice or in liturgical books. Sacramentaries and missals often reflected the practices and prayers of the Church current in a given locality or among a particular people. For that respect, few regions were as prolific as Gaul.¹⁸ The *Gallican Missal* is held as representative of the texts used in this vast area at the end of the seventh century.¹⁹ Unlike the two sacramentaries mentioned previously, it does not contain exorcistic prayers to be used with energumens, but only those used for the exorcizing of catechumens. For this reason, the *Gallican Missal* is a particular favorite of Henry Kelly who prefers to cite its pre-baptismal prayers as indicative of the normative practice of the Church, not that of the exorcism of energumens.²⁰

It is only with the eleventh century that exorcism rituals come into existence as a specific type of liturgical book. An overview of ritual books will be provided in the next section when we turn our attention to the Roman Ritual of 1614. For the moment, it is

¹⁶ *Gregorian Sacramentary: Under Charles the Great*, H. WILSON (ed.), Henry Bradshaw Society, vol. 49, London, Harrison and Sons, 1915, pp. 229-332.

¹⁷ VOGEL, *Medieval Liturgy*, p. 63.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁹ EISENHOFER and LECHNER, *The Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 23.

²⁰ KELLY, *The Devil, Demonology and Witchcraft*, pp. 82-83; *idem*, *The Devil at Baptism*, pp. 238-239.

necessary to rely on the testimony of sacramentaries as evidence of the practice of exorcism in the Early Middle Ages. Although there is only scant material for some five centuries, what we have is not without value. Prayers for the exorcism of energumens were maintained in the primary liturgical books of the period, as shown by the preceding discussion. What remain noticeably absent, however, are other basic components of the ritual of exorcism, such as guidelines for the exorcist to follow when preparing for or engaging in exorcism and the criteria to be used in determining if an individual is actually tormented by a demon and genuinely obsessed or possessed. A few more centuries would have to pass before such guidelines and criteria might appear.

2.1.2 – Testimony of the Early Second Christian Millennium

In the second millennium of Christianity, the revival of any substantial thought about the existence of demons or the pastoral care of the demonized was slow in coming, but when it finally arrived, it was characterized by an unprecedented vigor. Scholasticism represents a peak in that movement and it was to carry the Church through virtually to the eve of the modern period and the publication of Roman Ritual of 1614. However, before getting too far ahead, there are several individuals of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries whose names surface consistently among the authors who discuss the state of exorcism during this period.

One of the most influential theological thinkers of the twelfth century is Peter Lombard (circa 1100-1160). Although sometimes strongly criticized after his death, his

chief work, *Sentences*, remains a lasting legacy of scholarship.²¹ In the second book, Lombard, quoting Gennadius of Marseilles and Bede the Venerable, briefly discusses the possibility of a person being possessed by a demon.²² Later, in book four, he presents three paragraphs pertaining to the exorcist. The material is taken, in part, from the *False Decretals*, the ordination rite of the exorcist as found in the *Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua*, in addition to including several quotations from the Synoptic Gospels.²³

Within the context of his presentation on the catechizing and exorcizing of the neophyte (*De catechismo et exorcismo*),²⁴ Lombard makes a distinction between a sacrament and a sacramental,²⁵ thus becoming the first to use this latter word as well as the first to deal with the much-vexed theological question of the difference between the two. With time, the rite of exorcism would be categorized as a sacramental.

Gratian (d. circa 1160), in true scholastic fashion, supplies a wide range of references to exorcism and exorcists from the first Christian millennium. Unfortunately, there are a number of discrepancies between some of the sources Gratian cites and their actual origin. All in all, however, the *Decretum Gratiani* remains an invaluable resource when it comes to trace the historical development of exorcistic practices, the role of the practitioner, and the understanding of the state in which the energumen finds him/herself.

²¹ Art. "Peter Lombard," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 1275.

²² *Sententiae II, d. 8, c. 4*; P. LOMBARD, *Sententiae in IV Libris Distinctae*, (third ed.), vol. 1, Rome, Collegii S. Bonaventurae Ad Claras Aquas, 1971, pp. 369-370.

²³ *Sententiae IV, d. 24, c. 7*; LOMBARD, *Sententiae in IV Libris Distinctae*, vol. 2, p. 398.

²⁴ *Sententiae IV, d. 6, c. 7*; LOMBARD, *Sententiae in IV Libris Distinctae*, vol. 2, p. 276.

²⁵ EISENHOFER and LECHNER, *The Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 337; see also J. HUELS, "A Juridical Notion of Sacramentals," in *Studia Canonica*, 38 (2004), p. 346.

Surprisingly, the great Spanish canonist, Raymond of Peñafort (circa 1180-1275) offers little on the topic under discussion. He only includes the exorcist among the minor orders.²⁶ Sometimes the absence of comment on a particular subject is more informative than an extensive study. This lack of further explanation on the subject reflects both a certain degree of stasis characteristic of the whole period and the standardizing that had already occurred in the practice of exorcism in the preceding centuries.

The “seraphic doctor,” Bonaventure (circa 1217-1274), takes up an extensive discussion about the interplay between the devil and humankind in his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*. In the course of six questions, Bonaventure, in book two, debates with numerous authors in the customary scholastic fashion. He methodically addresses such issues as whether it is possible for the devil to inhabit a person and what effect the devil can have on the human conscience.²⁷ Elsewhere, he essentially limits himself to reproducing the contents of three paragraphs from book four of Lombard’s *Sentences* discussed above.²⁸ Bonaventure offers no additional comment.

A discussion of the thirteenth century would not be complete without some elaboration on the contribution of Thomas Aquinas (circa 1225-1274). Aquinas addresses a wide range of topics in the context of a highly developed demonology, covering a variety of issues, from the fall of the angels and creation of the Devil to the eternal

²⁶ *Summa II*, t. 30; R. DE PENNAFORTE, *Summa de Iure Canonico*, X. OCHOA and A. DIEZ (eds.), Rome, Commentarium pro Religiosis, 1975, col. 159.

²⁷ *Sententiarum II*, d. 8, p. 2, qq. 1-6; S. BONAVENTURAE, *Opera Omnia*, A. PELTIER (ed.), vol. 2, Paris, Ludovicus Vivès, 1864, pp. 446-457.

²⁸ *Sententiarum IV*, d. 24, p. 2, intro.; BONAVENTURAE, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 6, 1866, p. 162.

opposition of good and evil. The only missing piece in that demonology is a formal treatment of demonic possession.

Several points are worth noting here. 1) Aquinas posits that it is permissible to adjure devils. This, however, is not to be done in the fashion of those who wish to obtain secret knowledge, to foretell future events, or to merely satisfy their curiosity. Instead, by using the divine name, the exorcist only seeks to rid individuals of demonic interference and molestation.²⁹ 2) Aquinas draws a distinction between energumens and the non-baptized (catechumens) in the context of the reception of Communion. Citing John Cassian, the First Council of Orange, and the *Decretum Gratiani*, he confirms that a baptized person who is tormented or possessed by a demon is not to be refused Communion.³⁰ 3) Speaking of pre-baptismal exorcism, its timing and effect, Aquinas also categorizes the rite of exorcism as a sacramental.³¹ Coming only a century after Lombard, Aquinas appears quite at ease with the distinction between sacrament and sacramental. 4) Aquinas wants to confine the work of exorcism to the office of exorcist, one of the minor orders, and not to the priest.³²

Considering his overwhelming contribution to theological thought, it would seem natural for the “angelic doctor” to contribute a more detailed structure to assist the work

²⁹ *S. Th. IIa-IIae, q. 90, a. 2*; T. AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, K. O’ROURKE (trans.), Blackfriars series, vol. 39, London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964, pp. 238-241.

³⁰ *S. Th. IIIa, q. 80, a. 9*; T. AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, T. GILBY (trans.), Blackfriars series, vol. 59, London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1975, pp. 70-73.

³¹ *S. Th. IIIa, q. 71, a. 2 & 3*; T. AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, J. CUNNINGHAM (trans.), Blackfriars series, vol. 57, London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1975, pp. 174-181; see also *S. Th. IIIa, q. 65, a. 1*.

³² *S. Th. IIIa, q. 71, a. 4*; AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 57, pp. 182-185.

of the exorcist. Yet seemingly key elements and insights, like the criteria for what constitutes possession and guidelines for a ritual, remain undeveloped. Aquinas does, nevertheless, lay down solid foundations for later discussion about the need for discretion by the exorcist when engaging the demonic foe, and the manner in which the exorcist is to conduct himself. Within two centuries, widespread skepticism will envelop the practice of exorcism as abuse once again will manifest itself. The dawning of the medical sciences will then bring its own share of doubt to the discussion.

A presumption was made at the beginning of this work regarding the Church's teaching on the existence of the devil and that he remains an active force at work in the twenty-first century. However, no indication has been given up to this point as to how the Church arrived at this understanding. Before moving into a more concentrated study of the people and events that led to the promulgation of the 1614 Rite of Exorcism, let us consider the statements of two councils. These councils are representative of the Church's teaching on how the devil came into existence and the influence he is still allowed to exert over humankind.

The town of Braga (now in Portugal) was the site of a gathering of bishops in 561 who had met to address mainly the errors of a dualist heretic by the name of Priscillian, whose heterodox teachings had spread through the Iberian Peninsula, France, and northern Italy. In an attempt to finally squelch his erroneous thinking, both Manes (Mani) and Priscillian were condemned by name.³³ Among the list of condemnations one can read:

³³ LONDON, *A Manual of Councils of the Holy Catholic Church*, vol. 1, pp. 106-107.

If anyone says that the devil was not first a good angel made by God, or that his nature was not the work of God, but claims that the devil sprang from the darkness and had no creator at all, rather that he is himself the beginning and substance of evil, as Manes and Priscillian have said: let him be anathema.³⁴

More than six centuries later, over four hundred bishops responded to the invitation of Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) to gather for the Church's twelfth ecumenical council. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) was to respond to what Innocent saw as the great evils into which the Church had fallen and counter the heretical tendencies of the day characterized precisely by a resurgence of Manichaeism.³⁵

In the very first paragraph of the first constitution of the Council, which deals with the Catholic faith, one reads: "The devil and other demons were created by God naturally good, but they became evil by their own doing. Man, however, sinned at the prompting of the devil."³⁶ Albeit through brief statements, the Church had consistently taught that the devil existed and that his handiwork was traceable throughout human history. But at no time would these teachings be more emphasized or would the practice of exorcism become more distorted than with the twilight of the Middle Ages and the advent of the Renaissance. It was in this context that the Church finally came to formulate its first official ritual of exorcism.

³⁴ *The Church Teaches: Documents of the Church in English Translation*, J. CLARKSON, J. EDWARDS, W. KELLY, and J. WELCH (trans.), St. Louis, MO, B. Herder Book Co., 1955, p. 144.

³⁵ LANDON, *A Manual of Councils of the Holy Catholic Church*, vol. 1, pp. 328-329.

³⁶ *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, N. TANNER (ed.), vol. 1, London, Sheed & Ward and Washington, DC, Georgetown University Press, 1990, p. 230.

2.2 – The Roman Ritual and the 1614 Rite of Exorcism

In a study of this limited scope, but dealing with a topic of such magnitude, a concise selection of sources has to be made. The ritual of exorcism did not develop in isolation but was the product of many influences and diverse circumstances. For the sake of precision, only the essential outlines of that development will be presented here.

2.2.1 – The Prevailing Climate, Mania, and Medicine

Already by the eleventh century, there is evidence that some exorcists were expanding the components of their exorcistic practices. The basic elements of the developing rite of exorcism of the first Christian millennium were simple gestures such as the sign of the cross and exsufflation, complemented by the reading of brief passages from scripture and prayer. Now practitioners began to add to the items found in their exorcist's bag, so as to include drugs that they administered to the energumens and other paraphernalia.³⁷ Abuses were becoming more and more widespread, and an increasing level of superstition encompassed the practice of exorcism.

The eleventh century also showed a dramatic rise in the number of exorcisms, a rise that continued unabated to the thirteenth century when that trend reached its peak.³⁸ In those days, veritable epidemics of individuals who thought themselves possessed were not uncommon and the outbreaks caused widespread frenzy in the localities where they occurred. With an increased number of possessions and resulting exorcisms came a

³⁷ A. GODDU, art. "The Failure of Exorcism in the Middle Ages," in *Possession and Exorcism*, B. LEVACK (ed.), vol. 9, New York, NY, Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992, p. 11.

³⁸ Ibid.

heightened sense that demonic activity was drastically on the rise and that daily life, in general, was wrought with demons. Fanatics soon abounded in the ebb and flow of what might be termed a “satanic panic.”

The Church made efforts to quell the extremists and rein in the exorcists. But it was more difficult to calm down hysterical masses. The best the Church could do was to regulate more closely the use of exorcism and keep a closer watch over those who practiced it. Eventually, only exorcistic formulas that had long been in use were allowed, and more complex requirements and conditions were placed on the exorcist himself.³⁹

The climate created by the growing paranoia of seeing the devil lurking behind every bush only fostered the emergence of a belief in witchcraft. Beginning with the fourteenth century and continuing for some three hundred years thereafter, a methodical process was first developed and eventually became institutionalized for dealing with individuals seemingly associated with witchcraft. The resulting plan was quite straightforward and ruthless: discover them, put them on trial, and punish them (which frequently meant death).⁴⁰ Among the most problematic of the repercussions resulting from this tumultuous era of witchcraft with its hunts and trials for the practice of exorcism was the frequent confusion of witches with energumens by the authorities. Witches were regularly exorcised without the desired healing seen in the genuinely

³⁹ A. FRANZ, *Die kirchlichen Benediktionen im Mittelalter*, vol. 2, Graz, Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt, 1960, pp. 567-572, 642-643. This reprint of the original 1909 work deals primarily with exorcistic formulas while offering extensive insight into medieval demonology.

⁴⁰ For an exhaustive study of the development of witchcraft and its repercussions in early modern Europe, see S. CLARK, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997; see also J. RUSSELL, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1972.

obsessed or possessed. The result did not dissuade those in positions of authority from discontinuing the practice. They rather interpreted the lack of success to mean that exorcism was ineffectual on witches. The long-term result was a devaluing of exorcism as a credible means of supplanting the devil.

Few voices of reason made themselves heard in the early days of the assault on witchcraft. One was that of a Dominican theologian by the name of Johannes Nider (1380-1438). Nider (also Nyder or Neider) not only tried to distinguish witches from *energumens*, but also *energumens* from individuals suffering with mental illness – a radical development for the fifteenth century.⁴¹ His principal work, in five volumes, *Formicarius*, was fundamentally a treatise on the theological, philosophical and social questions of his day.⁴² In volume five, Nider included a lengthy section on demonic activity in which he dealt with several cases of possession, some of which he personally witnessed. With a discerning judgment ahead of his time, Nider differentiated the cases of possession from those he perceived to be the result of mental illness. He concluded his study by stating: “Such people often have more need for a physician to cure their body than one for their soul.”⁴³

Some fifty years after the appearance of *Formicarius*, the critical work started by Nider was thwarted for a time by what has been described as the most infamous book of

⁴¹ GRAFF, *Can a Christian Have an Unclean Spirit?* p. 200.

⁴² See J. NYDER, *Formicarius*, H. BIEDERMANN (ed.), Graz, Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt, 1971.

⁴³ RODEWYK, *Possessed by Satan*, p. 44.

the persecution mania that swept all of Christian Europe in the late sixteenth century.⁴⁴ In 1486, two Dominican inquisitors, Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, claiming authority to prosecute witches, published the *Malleus Maleficarum* (the *Hammer of Witches*).⁴⁵ Their claim was grounded in the Bull *Summis desiderantes* of Pope Innocent VIII.⁴⁶ Issued on December 5, 1484, the papal bull quickly became the battle cry of a war against witchcraft, and Kramer and Sprenger were its heralds. Even though the *Malleus* was condemned as illegal and unethical by the faculty of the University of Cologne for its license to maltreat alleged witches, the work nonetheless caught the fascination of the public. The Church herself eventually banned the book, but that did not prevent it from being widely read and frequently republished. Through their work, Kramer and Sprenger reinforced the belief that exorcism may still be effective when confronting demons, but it was useless when battling witches.⁴⁷ As a result, exorcism was banned in some places.

Another fifty years would pass before a different voice of reason came along. This time it was in the person of a Dutch physician by the name of Johann Weyer (1515-1588). A pioneer in the fields of medicine and psychiatry, Weyer (or Wier) battled bravely against the ignorance and superstition prevalent in his day.⁴⁸ Weyer believed in the existence of the devil and demons and the possibility that someone could be

⁴⁴ FINLAY, *Demons! The Devil, Possession & Exorcism*, p. 67.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ *Codicis iuris canonici fontes*, P. GASPARRI (ed.), vol. 1, Rome, Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, 1926, pp. 87-89.

⁴⁷ GODDU, art. "The Failure of Exorcism in the Middle Ages," p. 15.

⁴⁸ L. COULANGE, *The Life of the Devil*, S. GUEST (trans.), London, Alfred A. Knopf, 1929, pp. 277-278, 283.

possessed. As far as witchcraft was concerned, however, there was no room for it in Weyer's understanding of reality.⁴⁹ Weyer possessed the unique ability to successfully synthesize the developing body of psychiatric knowledge with that of exorcistic praxis.

Weyer's lasting contribution, *De praestigiis daemonum et incantationibus ac venificiis* (*On the Illusions of Demons and on Spells and Poisons*),⁵⁰ was published in 1563. It was one of the first pleas in print against the persecution of witches. The work was essentially a point-by-point rebuttal of the *Malleus Maleficarum*.⁵¹ While *De praestigiis* favorably impressed the more learned and enlightened, the *Malleus* kept a strong foothold among the common people who functioned out of fear of the devil and blind obedience to those in authority. The persecution of individuals accused of witchery continued for at least another one hundred years, and thus both in Catholic and Protestant countries.

Undoubtedly, the most publicized case of demonic possession to occur in the sixteenth century involved a young woman by the name of Marthe Brossier.⁵² The Brossier story best illustrates the climate in which the Church would eventually

⁴⁹ D. WALKER, *Unclean Spirits: Possession and Exorcism in France and England in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries*, London, Scolar Press, 1981, p. 2.

⁵⁰ J. WEYER, *De praestigiis daemonum* (*Witches, Devils, and Doctors in the Renaissance*), J. SHEA (trans.), G. MORA (ed.), Tempe, AZ, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1998. Mora and Shea have succeeded in creating the definitive presentation of this important work by Johann Weyer. Other attempts at translation and editing have appeared in the past without the success of the present work.

⁵¹ FINLAY, *Demons! The Devil, Possession & Exorcism*, pp. 67-68, 133-134.

⁵² A great deal of ink has been spilled over Marthe Brossier and her intriguing life. The facts presented here were taken from the following sources: WALKER, *Unclean Spirits*, pp. 33-42; S. FERBER, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France*, New York, NY, Routledge, 2004, pp. 40-59; A. WALKER and E. DICKERMAN, "'A Woman under the Influence:' A Case of Alleged Possession in Sixteenth-Century France," in *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 22 (1991), pp. 535-554.

promulgate its first official rite of exorcism. All aspects – theological, medical, and political – of the case contribute to making Brossier an iconic figure.

In 1598, the twenty-five year old Brossier, from the French village of Romorantin, accused a neighbor, Anne Chevreau, of causing her demonic possession by means of witchcraft. As a result, Anne was arrested, charged with witchcraft, and jailed for more than a year. Brossier, on the other hand, embarked on what can best be described as the sideshow career of an itinerant energumen, with her father dragging her from town to town where she would take part in public exorcisms. This *tournée de Brossier* served multiple purposes: Marthe could escape her small town life, her father was able to better provide for his four daughters by tapping the pocketbooks of sympathetic onlookers, and Catholic priests attempted to reconvert the Huguenots by demonstrating the power of the Church over the devil.

Brossier's travels continued until she arrived in Paris in March 1599, causing all sorts of havoc as a result of the large crowds that would gather to see her writhe and spout blasphemies as well as the anti-Huguenot flavor the exorcisms had quickly taken. Finally, Henri IV himself became involved, ordering a panel of theologians and distinguished physicians to convene on March 30 of that year and address the substantive issue of whether or not Brossier was indeed possessed. The medical profession, represented by the physician Michel Marescot, determined that Brossier was not possessed and it was stated for the record: "Nothing from the devil, much counterfeited, a little from disease."⁵³ In fact, Marescot and his colleagues, by royal command, went on to

⁵³ WALKER, *Unclean Spirits*, pp. 35.

publish their findings in 1599, in a French-language work entitled *Discours véritable sur le fait de Marthe Brossier de Romorantin prétendue démoniaque*.⁵⁴ The book was immediately translated into English and published the same year.⁵⁵

At the conclusion of the report, Marescot quotes from the acts of the 1583 Synod of Rheims:

Before the priest enterprises to exorcize, let him diligently inquire of the life of the possessed, of his condition, of his fame, of his health, and of other circumstances; and let him communicate the same with some wise, prudent, and well-advised persons. For oftentimes such as are too light of belief, are deceived: and oftentimes those that are melancholic, lunatic, and bewitched by magical arts, do beguile the exorcist, when they say that they are possessed and vexed by the Devil, whereas for all that, they have more need of the physician's remedy, than of the exorcist's ministry.⁵⁶

The insight of Marescot, unfortunately, was obscured a few days later when another panel of theologians and some not so skeptical doctors was summoned. This time Marthe was declared genuinely possessed. The Brossier matter continued in a similar vein until 1604 when the dear woman finally disappears from all records, but not before making a trip to Rome.

Anita Walker and Edmund Dickerman summarize well the sad story of Marthe Brossier: "Scrutinized, prodded, and pricked, Marthe herself became more and more depersonalized and objectified, even by her supporters."⁵⁷ The sixteenth century debate between witchcraft and possession, compounded by the manipulation of interested parties

⁵⁴ Paris, Mamert Patisson, 1599.

⁵⁵ *A True Discourse, Upon the Matter of Martha Brossier of Romorantin, Pretended to be Possessed by a Devil*, A. HARTWELL (trans.), London, John Wolfe, 1599.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 38.

⁵⁷ WALKER and DICKERMAN, "'A Woman under the Influence,'" p. 551.

on all sides (family, Church, State), turned a simple woman into a sideshow attraction. The Brossier case demonstrates clearly how far afield the practice of exorcism had gone. Sensationalism and incredulity frame the story. The only true wisdom to be gleaned from the whole affair comes from Marescot's use of the conciliar acts from Rheims. That move was indicative of a gradual but promising and eventually decisive shift in exorcistic practice and understanding of the whole demonic phenomenon.

2.2.2 – Guidelines and Criteria

By the late Middle Ages, the lack of specificity in detailing how to prepare for and conduct an exorcism and what signs of possession to look for in an energumen had further complicated the deepening crisis and parlous state of the practice of exorcism. Reference to the basic criteria found in the Synoptic Gospels⁵⁸ was not any longer seen as sufficient, especially in a world where witchcraft was running rampant and charlatans posed as both exorcists and the possessed. Elements of exorcistic practice suggested by the Church Fathers and simple adjurations no longer seemed to suffice to fulfill the needs of people living in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Expanded directives were required not only to restore credibility to exorcism but also to protect both the exorcist and the energumen.

Specific guidelines and criteria began to emerge in the early fifteenth century. The Dominican Johannes Nider, mentioned earlier, briefly explored what might be the causes of possession and alluded to the possibility of formulating criteria of possession. Henry of

⁵⁸ These were seen earlier in Chapter One: extraordinary strength and disregard for pain (Mk 5:3ff), demons disturbed by Jesus' presence (Mk 1:24ff), demons able to speak (Mk 1:24ff), and demons' knowledge of who Jesus is (Mk 1:24ff).

Gorkum (d. 1431), a fellow Dominican and contemporary of Nider, achieved a high profile due to a considerable career at the University of Cologne. Credited with being an early commentator on Aquinas' *Summa*, he also prepared some basic instructions on how to drive out demons.⁵⁹

Finally, in the sixteenth century, as the learned were becoming more and more aware of the past failures of exorcism and better informed of advancing medical opinions, truly useful publications began to appear with an aim to save the ministry of the exorcist. Those writings reflected a greater discernment being given to the process of exorcism. Their authors were responding critically to a sideshow mentality and archaic practices. Among the people who were writing in this field, two in particular helped to shape the practice of exorcism for the next three centuries and were instrumental in the formation of the 1614 Rite of Exorcism.

Girolamo Menghi (1529-1609) was born in Viadana, Italy and entered the Franciscan order in Bologna at twenty years of age. He was a true Renaissance scholar, meticulously gathering data on demonology and exorcism from manuscript sources.⁶⁰ Because of his skill as a writer and his success as an exorcist, Menghi was granted the title of "father of the exorcist's art," and that led him to be considered the greatest exorcist of the sixteenth century.⁶¹

⁵⁹ RODEWYK, *Possessed by Satan*, p. 48.

⁶⁰ D. LEDERER, *Madness, Religion and the State in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 6.

⁶¹ G. MENGHI, *The Devil's Scourge: Exorcism during the Italian Renaissance*, G. PAXIA (trans. and ed.), York Beach, ME, Weiser Books, 2002, p. 16.

Menghi's writings are a veritable treasure trove of knowledge and insight into the advances that were then occurring in the practice of exorcism, specifically the development of guidelines or instructions. His works include the *Flagellum daemonum* (1576), the *Compendio dell'arte essorcistica* (1576), the *Remedia probatissima in malignos spiritus expellendos* (1579) and the *Fustis daemonum* (1584). Only the *Flagellum daemonum* will be discussed here, since it is the most representative of Menghi's entire body of work and contributions to the field.

The *Flagellum* or *Scourge of the Devil* essentially contains the accounts of seven exorcisms.⁶² While the bulk of the text is comprised of prayers of exorcism, much of the rest is dedicated to the exploration of means of assisting the exorcist by practical suggestions on how to apply his trade and advice on how to discern spirits. Throughout, Menghi has an almost paternal concern for those who minister as exorcists. He outlines the steps necessary to care for their spiritual well-being and warns them not to be easily deceived.⁶³

Gaetano Paxia, in translating the *Flagellum* into Italian and in commenting on it, drew a concise list of guidelines or instructions for the exorcist to follow. The guidelines, based on those found in chapter eleven of Menghi's work, are reproduced here in their entirety:

1. Exorcists must have great faith in their mission; they must be moved by a desire to glorify God. It is God who is operating here.

⁶² The full title of the work is *Flagellum daemonum, seu exorcismi terribiles, potentissimi, et efficaces in malignos spiritus effugandos de obsessis corporibus, cum sui benedictionibus, et omnibus requisitis ad eorum expulsionem*. The work was published in Venice.

⁶³ MENGHI, *The Devil's Scourge*, pp. 31-32.

2. Exorcists must prepare for the prayers of exorcism by fasting and abstinence, which refine the spirit and keep concupiscence at bay.

3. Exorcisms must be celebrated following the rites and customs of the Catholic Church. Menghi incessantly exalts the role of the community in the rites.

4. Before taking up the concrete action of exorcism, ministers must be sure they are facing a case of true diabolic possession, not one requiring the intervention of doctors, astrologers, or theologians.

5. Exorcists must constantly illustrate and clarify the exorcistic activity: a purely spiritual work, highly worthy in the eyes of God. In no way must there be cause for scandal or evil (*ruina*) toward those present.⁶⁴

Elsewhere Menghi offers practical details on, among other things, the importance of performing exorcisms in sacred places like a church and the need not to restrict the time of day when an exorcism may be performed. He is clear about the importance of maintaining discretion; while an exorcist should never be left alone with the possessed, neither should there be a multitude in attendance. This sixteenth century expert even cautions against questioning the energumen unnecessarily for the sake of curiosity.⁶⁵ Ultimately, Menghi establishes a standard for guidelines which, integrated in the work of Charles Borromeo (to be discussed in the next section), will determine the course of the development of the Church's ritual of exorcism.

If Menghi was a primary source for the formulation of guidelines on when and how to conduct an exorcism, it is Peter Thyraeus (1546-1601) who contributed the most to shaping the criteria that would later be used for determining whether an individual was in fact being molested or inhabited by a demon. Thyraeus, a German Jesuit, was born in

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 34.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 33, 36-37.

Neuss, educated in Mainz and Trier, and later came to teach at the new university of Würzburg.⁶⁶

Thyraeus' seminal work, *Daemoniaci, hoc est: de obsessis a spiritibus daemoniorum hominibus*,⁶⁷ radically shaped the exorcist's process of discernment in cases of possession. Lists of criteria or signs indicating possession had been appearing for several centuries, but they generally lacked consistency and a coherent rationale. Thyraeus was to produce the first systematic presentation on modern exorcism. His research, in part, was based on the experiences of Peter Canisius, a close colleague of Thyraeus' brother Herman, also a Jesuit.⁶⁸

In a *via negativa* fashion, Thyraeus, in chapter twenty-two of *Daemoniaci*, rejects twelve of the signs of possession generally accepted by his contemporaries. He considered this dozen alleged criteria as unreliable, thus running counter to popular opinion. The rejected signs, in summary form, are characteristic of: 1) those who think they are possessed, 2) those who lead shameful lives, 3) those who are barbarous in nature, 4) those who suffer incurable illnesses, 5) those who have bad habits, 6) those who willingly abandon God and dedicate themselves to the devil, 7) those who are tested by grave temptation, 8) those who attempt and/or commit suicide, 9) those who invoke demons, 10) those who are mad/crazy, 11) those who are oblivious to things known, and

⁶⁶ "Thyraeus (Pedro)," in *Biografía eclesiástica completa*, vol. 28, Madrid, Eusebio Aguado, 1867, pp. 1011-1012.

⁶⁷ Published in Cologne in 1598, an extant copy of the work is in the collection of the Newberry Library in Chicago.

⁶⁸ LEDERER, *Madness, Religion and the State in Early Modern Europe*, p. 13.

12) those who use divination.⁶⁹ Thyraeus admonishes the exorcist to look to the Gospels for signs,⁷⁰ a position categorically rejected by most exorcists of the sixteenth century.

Only after presenting the rejected signs does Thyraeus propose the true signs of demonic possession. He lists them briefly at the beginning of chapter twenty-three, and then uses the balance of the chapter as well as chapter twenty-four to present his rationale for this. In brief, Thyraeus divides the signs into signs attributable to the intellect and signs attributable to the body. The signs of the former category are the knowledge of occult things and the knowledge of languages the individual has never learned. Among the signs of the latter category are a great (abnormal) strength and a great suffering resulting from contact with sacred things.⁷¹ Throughout his work, Thyraeus rejects presumptions and appearances because they tend to deceive. He seeks proofs of such a nature that they challenge all natural explanations. Because someone dabbles in sorcery, witchery, or heresy does not prove that he/she is possessed by the devil. So respected was Thyraeus' scholarship that Prospero Lambertini (Pope Benedict XIV: 1740-1758) quoted him at length in his own magnum opus on canonization and the supernatural, *De servorum Dei beatificatione et beatorum canonizatione*.

Needless to say, authors other than Menghi and Thyraeus were concurrently at work producing their own tomes on the subject, and the titles of their books appear in

⁶⁹ P. THYRAEUS, *Daemoniaci, hoc est: de obsessis a spiritibus daemoniorum hominibus*, Cologne, Agrippina, 1598, pp. 95-98. One can well imagine how many people would be considered possessed if these criteria still applied.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 98.

⁷¹ Ibid.

historical studies on exorcism.⁷² However, the works of Menghi and Thyraeus stand out among those of their contemporaries for the quality of their presentation style, scope, and scholarship. Some of the other works even ended up being officially condemned by the Church. Menghi and Thyraeus represent the practitioner and the pragmatist, respectively, and they have left an indelible mark on the formalized rite of exorcism.

2.2.3 – The Development of the Roman Ritual

In the field of liturgiology, it is unclear what constitutes a *ritual*. Eric Palazzo bemoans the fact that even in good dictionaries of liturgical books one would be hard put to find a concise definition.⁷³ For the sake of the present study, Cyrille Vogel's definition will suffice:

As a specific liturgical book, the Ritual contains forms for the administration of all those sacraments and sacramentals which are not reserved exclusively to bishops; it is a book for priests having between its covers everything he needs for non-eucharistic, non-office worship.⁷⁴

With Vogel's definition in mind, it is possible to look at the historical development of the ritual.

As mentioned already in the section on early medieval liturgical books, the ritual, as a free-standing type of liturgical book first appeared in the eleventh century. Like the sacramentaries, rituals began as separate *libelli* that were gradually compiled together. However, unlike sacramentaries, rituals had a much more complicated and uncertain

⁷² See WALKER, *Unclean Spirits*, pp. 90; see CLARK, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 414-417.

⁷³ PALAZZO, *A History of Liturgical Books*, p. 187.

⁷⁴ VOGEL, *Medieval Liturgy*, p. 257.

history.⁷⁵ While the vast array of historical intricacies will be dispensed with here, it is important to note that greater insights into liturgical practices at the parish level are gained from studying rituals than from the other liturgical books. In no case is this more accurate than when exploring the history of the rite of exorcism. The rituals end up being one of the most authentic sources of medieval practice and piety.⁷⁶

Although some historians indicate that the parish as an administrative and ecclesiastical entity had begun to appear as early as the ninth century,⁷⁷ the rituals in the twelfth century still retained a certain monastic flavor, a fact probably due to the circumstance that monasteries were the only places that had scriptoria, and monks were regularly involved in some aspect of parish ministry.⁷⁸ Finally, in the fourteenth century, in consequence of synodal legislation in the preceding century that had called for pastors to own some kind of manual, the rituals took on a more parish-oriented tone.⁷⁹ What had become the priest's handbook reflected the mobile nature of medieval liturgy, as these works contained appropriate documents in a portable and inexpensive format.⁸⁰ A major disadvantage was the lack of supervision of those compiling and copying the rituals that led to many superstitious insertions and additions.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 270.

⁷⁷ PALAZZO, *A History of Liturgical Books*, p. 188.

⁷⁸ VOGEL, *Medieval Liturgy*, p. 263.

⁷⁹ EISENHOFER and LECHNER, *The Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 38.

⁸⁰ PALAZZO, *A History of Liturgical Books*, p. 190.

⁸¹ EISENHOFER and LECHNER, *The Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 38.

The rituals of the day typically contained the rubrics and the readings and prayers for the rite of penance, the anointing of the sick, and the funeral rite. Eventually, the rite of marriage was added, along with prayers of exorcism, the texts of which had been preserved in the sacramentaries mentioned earlier.⁸² The inclusion of exorcistic prayers for energumens in this type of liturgical book demonstrates the need for easy access to such prayers in the daily life of the parish priest.

According to Vogel, three Italian editions served as the stepping stones to the official 1614 ritual. The *Liber sacerdotalis* was compiled by the Dominican Albert Castellani in 1523, the *Sacerdotale* by Francis Samarino in 1579, and the *Rituale sacramentorum Romanum Gregorii XIII* by Julius Cardinal Santori in 1584.⁸³ The first two of these works circulated extensively both within and outside of Italy. The *Liber sacerdotalis* and *Sacerdotale* were instrumental in the production of diocesan rituals across Western Europe. The work by Santori, although influential as one of the principal sources of the RR1614, never received such a wide circulation because it was too lengthy to be easily portable. In fact, Pope Gregory XIII (1572-1585) commissioned Santori in 1575 to create the definitive ritual that would synthesize the directives of the Council of Trent with the ancient practices of the Church. While Santori produced several editions, he was still adding to his 712-page work when he died in 1602.⁸⁴

⁸² Because of the elusive historical development of the *libelli* and the early indigenous rituals, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly when the prayers of exorcism were first included. Studies like Adolph Franz's two volume, *Die kirchlichen Benediktionen im Mittelalter*, although excellent in scope, offer only rough approximations.

⁸³ VOGEL, *Medieval Liturgy*, p. 264-265.

⁸⁴ G. SIGLER, art. "Ritual, Roman," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, New York, NY, McGraw-Hill, 1967, pp. 523-524.

In 1612, Pope Paul V (1605-1621) appointed a commission to again take up the matter of the Roman Ritual. Giovanni Gabutius headed that commission. He was a member of the Clerics Regular of St. Paul (Barnabites) and was deeply influenced by a fellow Barnabite, Gianfrancesco Giussani (Bascapè), who worked closely with Charles Borromeo in the formulation of the *Sacramentale Ambrosianum*.⁸⁵ Under Gabutius' direction, the Commission extensively pared down Santori's work while, on the other hand, incorporating new material under the influence of Borromeo. A year later, Paul V was presented with the finished work. The pope introduced the ritual with the Bull *Apostolicae Sedi* of June 17, 1614.⁸⁶ In that bull, Paul V exhorted all those involved in the pastoral care of souls, especially bishops, parish priests, and abbots, to utilize the ritual.⁸⁷ Its use, however, was only recommended, not imposed. It is interesting to note that the RR1614 did not, in fact, abrogate indigenous diocesan rituals. In France, for instance, the ritual was not accepted unanimously until 1853, and the same in Spain and in Germany.⁸⁸ In spite of this, the Church finally had a ritual book that could give some uniformity to its parochial pastoral practice. The proof of the success of the RR1614 can

⁸⁵ See G. SIGLER, "The Influence of Charles Borromeo on the Laws of the Roman Ritual," in *The Jurist*, 24 (1964), pp. 119-168; 319-334. Sigler's innovative research, although forty plus years old, still has bearing on the study of the RR1614. His insights prompted me to explore the acts and decrees of the provincial councils of Milan over which Borromeo presided. It was there that I found a rich source of material that clearly shaped the 1614 Rite of Exorcism. To my knowledge, there are no other studies specifically connecting Borromeo's provincial councils to the formation of the 1614 Rite of Exorcism.

⁸⁶ *Rituale romanum Pauli V. pont. max. iussu editum*, Rome, Ex Typographia Reverendae Camerae Apostolicae, 1614. Extant copies of the original RR1614 are rare. Fortunately, the Monumenta Liturgica Concilii Tridentini series has reproduced an analytical edition with introduction and appendices. See *Rituale Romanum: Editio Princeps (1614)*, M. SODI and J. ARCAS (eds.), Vatican City, Libreria editrice Vaticana, 2004.

⁸⁷ *Roman Ritual – In Latin and English with Rubrics and Planechant Notation*, P. WELLER (trans. and ed.), vol. 1, Milwaukee, The Bruce Publishing Company, 1950, pp. 4-5.

⁸⁸ VOGEL, *Medieval Liturgy*, p. 265.

be found in its rapid dissemination. The new ritual book would have an essentially uninterrupted history for three and a half centuries.

Among the principal sources that contributed to the formation of the 1614 Rite of Exorcism [henceforth 1614Exor], the *Rituale sacramentorum Romanum Gregorii XIII* of Santori is, without a doubt, the most important one. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to look up to Santori's work and sometimes to that of his predecessors, Castellani and Samarino, from whom Santori borrowed extensively, and then to conclude that there were no other significant influences. This approach is unwarranted. Other specialists may have, in fact, contributed more than has been realized until now. By this point in history there was more to the rite of exorcism than simply prayers or the reading of texts from scripture. A great deal of thought and praxis had gone into developing a rite that would assist the exorcist in preparing for the exorcism and discerning the reality of the possession. A more detailed sacramental rite had replaced the simple adjurations of an earlier time.

Potential sources of material for the 1614Exor not directly connected to the work of Santori include the epochal contributions of Menghi and Thyraeus, already mentioned. Exorcistic works by Pietro Stampa,⁸⁹ Valerio Polidoro,⁹⁰ and Zaccaria Visconti⁹¹ were also prominent at the time the 1614Exor was compiled, and these authors may also have contributed to the final work. Neither should one discount the numerous indigenous diocesan rituals containing their own unique prayers and practice of exorcism.

⁸⁹ *Fuga Satanae*, published in Como in 1597.

⁹⁰ *Practica Exorcistarum*, published in Padua in 1587.

One definite contributor whose posthumous influence has not been sufficiently noted in studies of the rite of exorcism is St. Charles Borromeo (1538-1584). As mentioned above, Gerald Sigler's seminal work about Borromeo's influence on the RR1614 has shed some new light on the evolution of the ritual.⁹² Sigler, however, did not specifically examine the Rite of Exorcism contained in the ritual book. If he had, his hypothesis would have been further confirmed. Borromeo did, in fact, contribute significantly to the formation of the guidelines that introduced the 1614Exor, especially by way of legislation enacted at provincial councils over which he presided as Archbishop of Milan.

Borromeo came to Milan in 1564 and there he zealously set about implementing the reforms of the Council of Trent. He thus exercised considerable influence on the Church as a whole, affecting many facets of its daily life. Borromeo's pastoral activities included reorganizing the diocesan administration, opening a seminary, founding a religious society, and convoking eleven diocesan synods and six provincial councils.⁹³ The provincial councils had the greatest significance with respect to the practice of exorcism, especially the first, fourth, and fifth ones.⁹⁴

In September 1565, Borromeo presided over the first of the provincial councils of Milan. Contained in the second part of the constitutions of that council, there are four

⁹¹ *Complementum Artis Exorcisticae*, published in Venice in 1600.

⁹² "The Influence of Charles Borromeo on the Laws of the Roman Ritual."

⁹³ R. MOLS, art. "Borromeo, Charles, St.," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, pp. 710-711.

⁹⁴ In the case of each of the three councils, a brief introduction to the given council will be offered. This will be followed by a summary of the content pertaining to exorcism.

brief paragraphs at section 48 under the heading *De exorcista*. The constitution begins by limiting the work of expelling demons to individuals ordained to the order of exorcist. The constitution continues by instructing the exorcist to commit to memory the prayers of exorcism from books approved by the bishop. In addition, the exorcist must have the bishop's permission before proceeding with the exorcism. In the third part, the bishop is advised to send only a priest whose age and mores he has approved. Finally, the exorcist is warned to avoid questions during the exorcism which are based in curiosity, especially in matters involving divination.⁹⁵

Borromeo's single greatest contribution to the formulation of the guidelines of the rite of exorcism comes from the fourth provincial council. On May 10, 1576, twelve bishops, including Borromeo himself and the apostolic visitor general, set to work and produced the largest volume of constitutions to come from any of the six provincial councils.⁹⁶ In the second part of the constitutions, under the heading on sacramentals, one finds an extensive list of guidelines for the exorcist.

The relevant section begins by recalling the prescriptions already set forth in the first provincial council. In particular, mention is made of the need for the exorcist to have the faculty of the bishop to perform exorcisms. That faculty is to be granted in writing.

The constitutions then contain a series of very specific directives for the exorcist to incorporate into his practice. The exorcist, before proceeding with an exorcism, is

⁹⁵ *Concilium Mediolanense I* in *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, vol. 34A, col. 56. The directives of the three provincial councils presented here are my summary in English of the documents as they appear in the original Latin.

⁹⁶ LONDON, *A Manual of Councils of the Holy Catholic Church*, vol. 1, p. 380.

instructed to inquire into the life of the energumen, his/her integrity and mores. If necessary, a doctor is to be consulted to determine whether the person's situation may have some illness as its cause, or if it really must be attributed to a demon. The exorcist is also to inquire of the energumen if he/she has been excommunicated and whether absolution has subsequently been received.

Interestingly, the exorcist is cautioned against being questioned by the energumen. Also, he is not to receive any kind of gift whatsoever from the energumen, even the smallest thing. Exorcisms are not to be performed in private homes or hidden places but in open places, preferably in churches and the bishop must have approved the church of use. Exorcisms are not to be performed in front of a multitude of people. However, there must be witnesses present, honest people of a mature age, including one or two ecclesiastics. When the energumen is female, in addition to two men of proven age and life, women, equally of good repute and preferably with some relation or affinity to the possessed, are to be present. No other men can be present except for clerics.

The exorcist is not to perform an exorcism before the rising or after the setting of the sun. Two exorcisms are not to be performed at the same time. The exorcist, before proceeding with the exorcism, is to prepare himself well by prayer and fasting, by making his confession, and, if he is a priest, by celebrating Mass. In everything, the exorcist must act seriously, piously, and religiously.

If at all possible, the energumen is to go to confession, manifesting all the sins of his/her past life. The possessed is also encouraged to pray, to meditate, and to visit churches where the relics of saints are kept. The exorcist is instructed not to place his

hand on the head or body of a female energumen, unless this is done with great honesty and caution. Energumens are not to be placed on the altar, nor should the exorcist do anything else that could cause offense.

The exorcist is not to use exorcisms, prayers, and rites that are not found in the book approved by the bishop. Neither should anything be added, subtracted, or changed in the book of exorcism. Finally, the exorcist is instructed to diligently observe these prescribed rules. The rules should be kept in the place where exorcisms are performed.⁹⁷

The fifth provincial council convened and presided by Borromeo was held in 1579 and its acts contain only a short reference to the work of the exorcist. In the third part of the constitutions regarding initiation into the sacrament of orders, we read that the exorcist is to prepare by fasting and prayer as Christ the Lord testified. The bishop must see to it that clerics prepare themselves in this manner.⁹⁸

The guidelines set down by the provincial councils effectively represent the experience, legislation, and collective wisdom of the preceding centuries. They address practical matters of where and when to perform an exorcism as well as the wise requirement to contact a physician when necessary. Abuses are curtailed through the presence of witnesses, the use of prescribed texts, and the admonition to avoid questioning the possessed out of mere curiosity. The directives are guided by prudence, as in the discreet contact to be maintained when exorcizing a female energumen. The risk

⁹⁷ *Concilium Mediolanense IV* in *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, vol. 34A, cols. 216-217.

⁹⁸ *Concilium Mediolanense V* in *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, vol. 1, Patavii, Typis Seminarii, 1754, p. 229.

of creating a carnival atmosphere is diminished by not permitting the presence of bystanders. The requirement of oversight is satisfied by the obligation made to acquire the permission of the bishop and his approval of the exorcist's age and mores. Finally, there is an attempt to assure the spiritual well-being of both the exorcist and the energumen through prayer, fasting, and reception of the sacraments.

The provincial guidelines demonstrate that a synthesis of various sources had taken place under the direction of Borromeo. The diligent work that went into generating the above-mentioned guidelines had the effect of dissipating the climate of skepticism that had shrouded the practice of exorcism and which stemmed largely from a witch-craze mentality. This synthesis, coupled with recognition of the advances of medicine and a greater understanding of mental illness, brought credibility again to the work of the exorcist.

The provincial guidelines from Milan greatly influenced the directives that were actually promulgated as the introduction to the 1614Exor. The rite of exorcism (*De exorcizandis obsessis a daemonio*) appears as the last in a series of blessings in the second half of the RR1614.⁹⁹ In the first edition of the ritual, the directives are followed immediately by the prayers of exorcism. Later editions, especially after the addition of the prayers of Pope Leo XIII, divide the 1614Exor into chapters.

The guidelines themselves begin by stating that a priest or any other legitimate minister of the Church who undertakes the work of casting out the devil must possess

⁹⁹ *Rituale romanum Pauli V. pont. max. iussu editum*, pp. 198-219.

certain qualities.¹⁰⁰ These consist of piety, prudence and integrity of life, constancy and humility, immunity from striving for human aggrandizement, reliance on divine power, and mature years. The exorcist must be selected in light of his moral qualities as well as for his office. In addition, he should study and examine approved authors and cases as a means to grow in knowledge of the devil's ploys. The exorcist must also carefully observe the following points.

An exorcist should not believe easily that a person is possessed. Instead, he should attend to the possibility of other illnesses like melancholy. Signs of possession are: speaking in or understanding strange tongues; divulging future and hidden events; displaying powers beyond the age and natural condition of the subject; and other indications which accrue by concurrence. These signs are not to be considered conclusive proofs when taken individually, but must be weighed together, as a whole.

After the exorcism, the exorcist should ask the energumen what he/she experienced in his/her body and soul during the ritual. Words that apparently torment the devil should be used with greater stress and frequency. The exorcist should guard against the risk of giving up or being deceived to think there is no possession as a result of the arts and subterfuges of the evil spirits. Mistrusting appearances, he should not desist until he sees a clear sign of deliverance. The exorcist is advised that the demons can delude also the one possessed about his/her possession, place obstacles to his/her cooperation, cause him/her to fall asleep, and give illusions of deliverance.

¹⁰⁰ The guidelines presented here are my summary of the English translation as found in *Roman Ritual – In Latin and English with Rubrics and Planechant Notation*, P. WELLER (trans. and ed.), vol. 2, Milwaukee, The Bruce Publishing Company, 1952, pp. 168-175.

Despite demonic revelations of crimes and those who commit them, the possessed must not resort to sorcery, necromancy, or any superstition. Rather, the afflicted individuals should turn to the ministers of the Church for guidance. In periods of peace, and even calm reception of the Eucharist, the exorcist must be alert against being trapped by fraud. Relying on the instruction of the Lord (Mt 17:20), the exorcist must avail himself of prayer and fasting and encourage others to do the same.

The exorcism should be conducted away from the crowd in a church or other sacred and worthy place but not in a private home, except in case of illness or for another valid reason. The possessed, if healthy mentally and physically, should fast and pray, reflect with faith and humility, go to confession and receive the Eucharist frequently, and bear sufferings patiently, never doubting divine assistance. The exorcist should have a crucifix at hand and apply relics reverently to the head and breast of the energumen, always on his guard against risks of profanation. For that reason, the Eucharist should not be used.

An exorcist should not engage in frivolous and curiosity-driven conversations with evil spirits but bid the demon be silent except to answer questions. He should not allow himself to believe the intruder might be the soul of a saint or a deceased person, or even a good angel. Necessary questions concern the number and the names of the possessing demons, the time and cause of the possession, etc. Jesting and taunts by the demon should be despised and ignored. Bystanders are not to ask questions but must pray with humility and urgency. The exorcist should speak with a commanding and authoritative voice, and with confidence, humility, and fervor. He should threaten when

he sees the demon vexed, and use the sign of the cross and holy water where he sees signs of disturbance, pain, or swelling in the energumen's body.

Words and expressions that are found to punish and torment the demons should be repeated frequently. If progress becomes apparent, the exorcism should continue up to four hours and longer until victory is attained. Only a physician should recommend or dispense medicine for the afflicted individual. If the exorcism is being performed on a woman, several women of good repute, preferably close relatives, should assist the exorcist. For the sake of decency, the exorcist should avoid any word or act that might provoke evil thoughts in himself or others.

Words coming from scripture are preferable to the exorcist's own. He should discern any exposure by the possessed to necromancy, evil signs, or amulets. If the possessed person has ingested an amulet, the exorcist should force him/her to vomit it up; if an amulet is concealed on the person, the possessed must be made to expose it. In either case, the amulet(s) should be burned. The energumen should be exhorted to reveal all his/her temptations to the exorcist. After being freed, the possessed should guard against falling into sin, lest the demon might return and the person find him/herself in an even worse state.

A comparison of the provincial guidelines with those found in the 1614 Exor reveals striking similarities. Ten out of the twenty-one directives of the official ritual match the work done in Milan. The overlapping of the two is seen in the need for the exorcist to be a legitimate minister of the Church with the requisite mores and having attained a mature age. In preparation for the exorcism, the life of the alleged energumen

is to be examined and a physician consulted when necessary. The exorcist is to prepare himself by fasting and prayer and he should encourage any others involved to do the same. Ideally, the energumen should also avail him/herself of such practices.

The location of the exorcism and the type and number of witnesses are priorities present in both sets of guidelines. The use of relics is considered a helpful instrument in the expulsion of demons. The maintaining of proper decorum in the exorcizing of a female energumen remains a priority. Appropriate exchanges between the exorcist and the possessed are to be respected, including the avoidance of questions pertaining to whims of curiosity and hidden matters.

A further comparison reveals a surprising absence in the 1614Exor of any reference to the need for the bishop's permission to undertake an exorcism, since this had been a significant development early in the rite's evolution. In addition, there is no admonition to safeguard the integrity of the rite by avoiding the temptation to alter it in any way. On the other hand, it is surprising to find the list of criteria formulated by Thyraeus and others included in the official ritual, where the same list was absent from the acts of the provincial councils.

The influence of the provincial councils of Milan is clearly evident in the guidelines assembled for the 1614Exor. Sigler greatly contributed to the understanding of the evolution of RR1614 by clarifying Borromeo's influence, which remained powerful for nearly three decades after the cardinal's death.

The actual rite of exorcism immediately follows the guidelines. Apart from four sets of lengthy exorcistic prayers (supplicatory and imperative formulae), the rite contains

eleven psalms, four passages from the gospels, and the Athanasian Creed. The predominant themes in the chosen psalms reflect the power of God at work in creation and the defeat of one's enemies, while the New Testament selections attest to the Incarnation of the Lord, the disciples' ministry of exorcism, and the subjection of demons.

The rite opens with the recitation of the litany of saints and moves immediately into Psalm 53. After the reading of one or more of the gospel pericopes, the exorcist fortifies the energumen and himself with the sign of the cross while placing the end of the stole on the afflicted individual's neck. Later in the ritual, the exorcist is encouraged to devoutly recite traditional prayers such as the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary. Following the deliverance, a prayer of protection is said over the freed individual.

With the promulgation of the RR1614, the course of the rite of exorcism was set. Pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758), after correcting a few errors and otherwise emending texts, reissued the Roman Ritual in March 1752. The rite of exorcism underwent no major alteration in this subsequent edition. In fact, there was only one change in the rite of exorcism from the time it originally appeared in the RR1614 until the third edition was published in the first quarter of the twentieth century. In 1890, Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) attached a series of exorcistic prayers to the end of the rite which he entitled *Exorcismus in Satanam et Angelos apostaticos (Exorcism Against Satan and the Apostate Angels)*. These additional prayers were intended to expel any demon that held sway over a given locality, for example, a city, a parish, etc.¹⁰¹ It was at this point that the rite of

¹⁰¹ *Roman Ritual – In Latin and English with Rubrics and Planechant Notation*, vol. 2, p. 222-223.

exorcism was divided into chapters: the first one contained the guidelines; the second one, the actual rite of exorcism; and the third one, Pope Leo's addition.

Since Paul V had only recommended the use of the RR1614 without imposing it, and with the variety of diocesan rituals then current, the prominence of the Church's official ritual book and its rite of exorcism increased only very gradually. Even with an official rite of exorcism and the ones contained in local manuals, it is evident that perennial issues of abuse and the need for the regulation of the rite continued to confront the Church through the subsequent centuries. Provincial synods convened as much as three centuries after Borromeo's first provincial meeting in Milan bear witness to the problems still surrounding the practice of exorcism.¹⁰² Interestingly, though, the issues repeatedly addressed in those synods tend to revolve around the exorcist's neglecting to seek the bishop's approval before performing an exorcism and a persistent tendency to embellish the rite itself. Both issues were present in Borromeo's guidelines, but absent from 1614Exor.

Conclusion

Cyrille Vogel, as quoted earlier in this chapter, says that the development of the ritual in general had a complicated history. There is little doubt that the same could be said of the official rite of exorcism of the Latin Church. Its history, the obstacles to its acceptance, its variants have all contributed to the evolution of a rich sacramental.

¹⁰² The Provincial Synods of Naples (1699), Vienna (1858), Venice (1859), Prague (1860), and Utrecht (1865) are indicative of the challenges that were still confronting the practice of exorcism. The acts and constitutions of these synods can be found in *Acta et decreta sacrorum conciliorum recentiorum, Collectio lacensis*, vols. 1, 5, and 6, Friburgi Brisgoviae, Herder, 1870-1882.

In the course of that complicated history, the creation of *libelli* followed the period of improvisation in the liturgical practice of the ancient Church. There is just cause to assert that without this written tradition the rite of exorcism, at least in the West, would have developed very differently, if at all. The *libelli* thus served as a depository for the collective memory of the words used by the earliest practitioners of exorcistic prayer. Fortunately, the sacramentaries of the past were the means used to collate the prayers and rites of the ancient Church.

Already in the early centuries of the second millennium, critical voices raised questions about the purpose and need for exorcisms. The great scholastics like Peter Lombard and Aquinas reaffirmed the Church's belief in the devil's existence and understood the important role played by exorcists and their ministry in the lives of those variously afflicted. In spite of this positive assessment of exorcism, major challenges remained, especially in regard to abuses by individuals who manipulated the rite and used it for personal gain.

No period would be more potentially detrimental to the emerging rite of exorcism than the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. This was an age when superstition run riot and the credulity of many was giving way to the skepticism of others. Individuals like Marthe Brossier represent the extremes to which people were ready to go either to discredit the legitimacy of exorcism or to prove that the work of the exorcist was a viable means of curbing demonic activity. The Church was at the center of the struggle.

Eventually, however, practical-minded people were to challenge the order of the day. Johann Weyer and his contemporaries struggled to differentiate phenomena of an

organic nature from those belonging to the spiritual realm. A new understanding of medicine and mental illness paved the way to a more logical approach to the ills that burdened people. Girolamo Menghi and Peter Thyraeus carefully devised guidelines for the practice of exorcism and criteria that might be used to establish the fact of demonic possession, respectively. Their wisdom and that of others who similarly worked to bring deliverance to energumens shaped the developing rite.

While there is no conclusive list of people who in one way or another shaped the final form taken by the rite of exorcism, the influence of Charles Borromeo deserves particular mention. Gabutius, who ultimately compiled the final draft of the RR1614, was closely associated with a colleague of Borromeo. Through this association, Borromeo's mark has been left not only on the RR1614 but on the 1614Exor as well. A careful comparison between Borromeo's provincial guidelines and those contained in the official rite reveals the influence of the cardinal nephew's work.

Apart from the guidelines themselves, the 1614Exor is a compilation of material from the Old and New Testament, the creed, and actual adjurations addressed to the possessing demon. The rite, in spite of the centuries it took for it to gain universal acceptance, eventually became the pattern of exorcistic rites, a position it would hold until the end of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER 3

THE REVISION OF THE RITE OF EXORCISM

Introduction

The witch craze of medieval Europe, along with a concomitant fascination with superstitious beliefs, had cast a pall over the credibility of the practice of exorcism. Fortunately, sound theologically and scientifically-minded individuals then attempted and succeeded in bringing the practice of exorcism back into balance by devising practical instruments like criteria and guidelines to use to evaluate alleged cases of exorcism. These instruments, coupled with a scientific approach to mental illness, provided some degree of stability again in the exorcist's ministry. Undoubtedly, skepticism continued to exist in the minds of individuals for generations. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, however, the emergence of an official rite of exorcism, with its prudent directives, had furthered the re-establishment of the work of the exorcist.

As the evidence in the preceding chapter indicated, the adoption of the new rite and of the ritual itself, took time in certain countries. Although only progressively embraced, the 1614Exor would influence the practice of exorcism throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. With the historical development of the 1614Exor in mind, one can formulate the guiding question that will direct the presentation of chapter

three: What were the factors that brought about the revision of the 1614 Exor? The answer to this question itself presupposes that a whole series of further questions be raised.

To begin with, the codification in 1917 of the fruit of nearly nineteen hundred years of law represented a milestone in the history of the Latin Church. What had taken centuries to evolve was compiled into a single code through the diligent work of a commission and the synthesizing of numerous collections of laws. The result was the creation of one code comprised of some 2414 canons. Three of these canons addressed the work of the exorcist. How did the 1917 Code of Canon Law legislate the practice of exorcism?

The fields of psychiatry and psychology had developed extensively from the modest beginnings of Johann Weyer and his contemporaries. How did the modern medical practitioner respond when confronted with individuals who claimed to be the hosts of demonic entities? What is the relationship of psychiatrists and psychologists to exorcists who maintain that they have the means to bring relief to the allegedly possessed? Are there mental health professionals who are willing to cooperate with the Church's representatives in order to bring healing to those apparently tormented by evil forces?

With his call for an ecumenical council in 1959, Pope John XXIII steered the Church on a mission to "update" itself in order to remain relevant to a changing world. To characterize this renewal or updating, the pope used the Italian word *aggiornamento*. The work of the fathers of the Second Vatican Council responded to the call of its convener for an openness to embrace the modern world. In order to bring about the renewal of the

Church, the Council fathers and those who followed them set to work updating its laws and ritual practices. The process has continued through the rest of the twentieth century. For a second time within the same century, the work of the exorcist was to be influenced by the promulgation of new legislation and ultimately that of a revised rite. How did the revised law affect the 1614Exor? What did the change in law require of the exorcist? How did the promulgation of the revised rite alter the exorcist's work? What shape did the new rite take? Were there any differences in legislation between the revised Code and the 1998Exor?

The chapter will conclude with a brief look at the Catholic Charismatic Movement and its relationship to the ministry of the exorcist. The 1970s gave rise to this movement within Catholicism which proclaimed a new Pentecost and empowered its claimants with the ability to discern spirits and bring relief to the demon-afflicted. How did the Catholic Charismatic Movement affect the Church's exorcistic practice? Why did the Holy See deem it necessary to issue correctives for groups who used prayers of exorcism in their gatherings?

3.1 – Canons 1151-1153 of the 1917 Code

The task of taking Gratian's *Decretum*, plus the *Liber extra* (*Decretals of Gregory IX*) and the other components of the *Corpus iuris canonici*, and shaping them into a single code was daunting, to say the least. But, in 1904, Pope Pius X (1903-1914) set the wheels in motion to develop such a code for the Latin Church. The pope chose Cardinal Pietro Gasparri to head the commission and oversee the ten-year project. Delayed by the

First World War, Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922) promulgated the first *Codex iuris canonici* on Pentecost 1917; it took effect the following Pentecost.¹

The Pio-Benedictine Code, as it is generally known, brought a new order to the world of canon law. Even the practice of exorcism, with its long, tumultuous history, would have a place in the new code. Among the 2414 canons, in the third of its five books, *De rebus (On Things)*, three canons dealt with exorcisms and the work of the exorcist:

Canon 1151 §1. No one, even if endowed with the power of exorcism, can legitimately perform an exorcism over the [possessed] unless he has obtained express and specific authorization from the Ordinary.

§2. This authorization from the Ordinary can be granted only to priests outstanding for piety, prudence, and integrity of life; such a one shall not proceed to exorcism unless, after a diligent and prudent investigation, he finds that the one to be exorcised is actually [possessed] by a demon.

Canon 1152 Exorcisms by legitimate ministers can be performed not only on the faithful and catechumens, but also upon non-Catholics and the excommunicated.

Canon 1153 The ministers of the exorcisms that occur in baptism and in consecrations or blessings are those who are the legitimate ministers of those sacred rites.²

The first paragraph of c. 1151 speaks about the requirement of the exorcist to have the “express and specific” permission of the Ordinary before performing an exorcism. This admonition was already included in the constitutions of the provincial councils held under Borromeo, as seen in the preceding chapter. There was no mention, however, of the requisite permission anywhere in the 1614 Exor. The three fontes that were cited as

¹ BENEDICT XV, Apostolic Constitution *Providentissima mater*, 27 May 1917, which prefaces *CIC/17*.

² *CIC/17*, cc. 1151-1153, English translation E. PETERS (ed.), *The 1917 Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon Law*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2001, p. 394.

sources of the first paragraph of c. 1151 originated in documents written after the 1614Exor was promulgated and spoke of the necessity to obtain the permission of the Ordinary before proceeding with an exorcism.³ The first paragraph of the canon, therefore, reflected a clear shift in thought that had taken place. It was no longer sufficient to simply belong to the order of exorcist; permission was now required to exercise the office.

Several commentaries on canon 1151 §1, when discussing the matter of the Ordinary's permission, raised the question of whether it affects the validity of the exorcist's action, or if it was only needed for liceity. The consensus among the commentators was that for an exorcism to be valid, the permission of the Ordinary was not required; it was needed only for licit conduct.⁴

Two key requirements comprise the second paragraph of c. 1151. Like the permission of the Ordinary, those requirements had to be met before an exorcism could be undertaken. The first focused on the qualities of the exorcist himself. He had to be pious, prudent, and a man of integrity. These same qualities were required by the 1614Exor, although the rite presented a more elaborate list, including the purity of

³ The fontes are: Benedictus XIV, ep. *Sollicitudini*, 1 Oct. 1745, § 43; idem, ep. *Encycl. Magno cum*, 2 June 1751, § 34; S.C.de Prop. Fide, instr. (ad Ep. Scodren.), 11 Sept. 1779, n. 1 as found in *Codex Iuris Canonici Pii X Pontificis Maximi iussu digestus Benedicti Papae XV auctoritate promulgatus, praefatione, fontium annotatione et indice analytico-alphabetico ab emo Petro Card. Gasparri auctus*, New York, NY, P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1918.

⁴ See, e.g., J. PASCHANG, *The Sacramentals According to the Code of Canon Law*, Canon Law Studies, no. 28, Washington, DC, Catholic University of America, 1925, p. 100; see C. BACHOFEN, *A Commentary on the New Code of Canon Law*, third rev. ed., vol. 4, St. Louis, MO, B. Herder Book Co., 1925, p. 569.

intention and a mature age.⁵ The Ordinary was competent to make the determination as to whether the exorcist was suitably equipped.

Before moving on to the second part of the canon, it should be noted that the Ordinary could give this permission only to priests. Up to this point, it was also permissible for clerics in minor orders to perform exorcisms.⁶ The practice of the Church was now reordered by the canon.

Logically, even before the exorcist would request the Ordinary's permission to use the rite, one needed to determine whether the person to be exorcised was really possessed. The second requirement of c. 1151 §2 called for a thorough investigation of the matter. Sufficient evidence has been presented up to this point that charlatans can be found even among the genuinely possessed. The only guidance given by the canon is that one should act diligently and prudently. The 1614 Exor presumed that one would have to call on the services of a physician, since the exorcist, in the guidelines, is directed to distinguish between physical illnesses and true demonic activity. The list of criteria or "signs of possession" was provided in this context as a means to assist the discernment of the exorcist.⁷

⁵ Ch. 1, n. 1; *Roman Ritual – In Latin and English with Rubrics and Planechant Notation*, vol. 2, pp. 168-169.

⁶ H. AYRINHAC, *Legislation on the Sacraments in the New Code of Canon Law* [Lib. III, Can. 726-1011, 1144-1153], New York, NY, Longmans, Green and Co., 1928, p. 405.

⁷ Ch. 1, n. 3; *Roman Ritual – In Latin and English with Rubrics and Planechant Notation*, vol. 2, pp. 168-169.

Regardless of the form taken by the investigation, the exorcist at least had to have moral certitude as to the genuineness of the case before proceeding.⁸ The exorcist had to walk a difficult middle road. Two extremes were to be avoided: an over-zealousness to see the demonic where it is not and an *a priori* assumption that cases of possession are so rare that the individual seeking relief is almost certain to suffer from merely a physical ailment of some kind. The degree of moral certitude now had to be determined by the number of signs that could be proven.

Canon 1152 did not set any limit to the type of persons who could be exorcised by the minister described in the preceding canon. Not only the faithful, but catechumens, non-Catholics, and excommunicates could benefit from the Church's exorcistic ministry. This was not a new concession. In fact, it was a practice dating to Christ himself. Anyone afflicted by a demon could receive deliverance as long as he/she was properly disposed.⁹

The last of the three canons dealt with the exorcisms that were part of the rite of baptism and the rites of consecration and blessing. The lawful ministers of these ceremonies were the individuals allowed to perform them, and no special permission or delegation from the Ordinary was thus required.

In general, the canons on exorcism were meant to complement the 1614Exor. While not conveying many specifics, the drafters of the canons were content to stress the

⁸ PASCHANG, *The Sacramentals According to the Code of Canon Law*, pp. 104-105; T. BOUSCAREN and A. ELLIS, *Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, third rev. ed., Milwaukee, WI, The Bruce Publishing Company, 1957, p. 633.

⁹ PASCHANG, *The Sacramentals According to the Code of Canon Law*, pp. 114.

importance of who could benefit from an exorcism and who could perform it. This was all to be done under the watchful eye of the Ordinary and only with his permission.

With the new requirement that only priests could be allowed to perform exorcisms according to the new law of the 1917 Code, two guidelines of the 1614Exor required revision. In 1925, Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) accordingly issued a new edition of the Roman Ritual that reflected the changes brought about by the new code, the revisions of the Roman Missal, and some decrees of the Holy See.

More specifically, the opening line of the first directive of the 1614Exor was modified from “A priest, or any other legitimate minister of the Church, about to exorcise those harassed by a demon . . .”¹⁰ to “A priest, with the express and specific permission of the Ordinary, about to exorcise those harassed by a demon . . .”¹¹ The other modification could be found at the beginning of the actual rite of exorcism. The original text of the rite read: “A priest, or other exorcist . . .”¹² It was changed to: “A priest delegated by the Ordinary . . .”¹³ Apart from these two changes, the 1614Exor remained unaltered.

One later revision should also be noted. On January 25, 1952, Pope Pius XII (1939-1958) promulgated a new edition of the Roman Ritual, the third to follow in the

¹⁰ “Sacerdos, seu quis alius legitimus Ecclesiae minister, vexatos a daemone exorcizaturus . . .;” *Rituale Romanum: Editio Princeps (1614)*, p. 198.

¹¹ “Sacerdos, de peculiari et expressa Ordinarii licentia, vexatos a daemone exorcizaturus . . .;” *Roman Ritual – In Latin and English with Rubrics and Planechant Notation*, vol. 2, pp. 168-169.

¹² “Sacerdos, sive alius Exorcista . . .;” *Rituale Romanum: Editio Princeps (1614)*, p. 200.

¹³ “Sacerdos ab Ordinario delegatus . . .;” *Roman Ritual – In Latin and English with Rubrics and Planechant Notation*, vol. 2, pp. 174-175.

tradition of the RR1614. Like his immediate predecessor, Pius XII sought to update the ritual to correspond with recent legislation and to make it a model for all future editions.¹⁴

As part of the revision, two minor changes were brought to the third guideline. Firstly, whereas the original edition of the ritual referred to persons who suffer from “melancholy or some other illness,”¹⁵ the 1952 text speaks of people who suffer from “some illness, especially one of a psychological nature.”¹⁶ As to the second change, the original version states: “Signs of possession are the following: . . .”¹⁷ The revised texts reads: “Signs of possession may be the following: . . .”¹⁸ The revisions demonstrate the growing influence of modern psychology and psychiatry on the practice of exorcism. The rest of 1614Exor would remain unchanged until supplanted by the new revised rite of exorcism promulgated in 1998.

3.2 – Contemporary Psychology and Psychiatry

A presentation of the practice of exorcism in the twentieth century would be incomplete without a discussion of the roles played by the medical disciplines of psychology and psychiatry. These two disciplines raised serious questions, at least in the United States, about the practical use of the official rite of exorcism. The effects of

¹⁴ *Rituale romanum: reimpressio editionis primae post typicam anno 1953 publici iuris factae, textibus postea approbatis, introductione et tabulis aucta*, A. WARD and C. JOHNSON (eds.), Rome, C.L.V.-Edizioni Liturgiche, 2001, p. 4; *Roman Ritual: Complete Edition*, P. WELLER (trans.), Milwaukee, WI, The Bruce Publishing Company, 1964, p. v.

¹⁵ *Roman Ritual – In Latin and English with Rubrics and Planechant Notation*, vol. 2, p. 169.

¹⁶ *Roman Ritual: Complete Edition*, p. 641.

¹⁷ *Roman Ritual – In Latin and English with Rubrics and Planechant Notation*, vol. 2, p. 169.

¹⁸ *Roman Ritual: Complete Edition*, p. 641.

psychology and psychiatry on exorcistic practice were not unlike those brought about by the witch craze of fifteenth and sixteenth century Europe. From a positive viewpoint, psychologists and psychiatrists informed and helped to integrate exorcism in a modern world, but from a negative one, they called into question the credibility of exorcism as a means of restoring health. The unique challenges that these exchanges posed would not bring about a radical shift in Church practice regarding exorcism. However, the stances taken by some psychologists and psychiatrists would have an effect on the understanding of what might constitute genuine cases of possession.

The disciplines of psychology and psychiatry, although distinct practices, are treated together here. The reason is that they follow a similar path in this dialogue with the Church on the matter of exorcism. These disciplines, as two distinct means of responding to and treating mental illness, are essentially modern and both originated in the nineteenth century. In 1844, the American Psychiatric Association was founded by a group of thirteen doctors for the purpose of bringing new direction to the care of individuals with mental and behavioral disorders. In Leipzig, in 1879, Wilhelm Wundt founded the first laboratory dedicated exclusively to psychological research.¹⁹ Both disciplines, almost from their inception, have worked together to diagnose individuals suffering from mental illness and to provide therapy. For our purpose, it is important to note that psychologists and psychiatrists alike have been and continue to be consulted in cases of alleged demonic possession. It is in this context that the two disciplines can be similarly linked in their varied responses, over the course of the last century, as to the

¹⁹ A. ROBACK, *History of Psychology and Psychiatry*, Westport, CT, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1969, pp. 16-19.

benefit or detriment of using exorcism as a means of treating those who claim that their bodies are inhabited by demons.

Individuals working in the fields of psychology and psychiatry can be categorized in one of three groups, depending upon their view of the place that exorcism holds in treating individuals who claim to suffer from demonic possession. The first category represents the medical professionals who completely reject the use of exorcism in any circumstance. They believe that there is no room in the modern world for such medieval “hocus pocus” and they regard the work of the exorcist as completely bogus. In fact, they tend to consider the use of exorcism as detrimental to the person’s recovery. Typically, these individuals posit that there must be an organic explanation for any and every manifestation occurring in the patient. For them, sufficient extenuating circumstances can always be found that help to explain the condition of the afflicted. In general, for such people, religious beliefs and practices are considered to have little or no place in the scientific realm.

For the psychiatrist, in particular, the individual claiming to be a victim of demonic possession is normally diagnosed with Dissociative Identity Disorder²⁰ (formerly known as Multiple Personality Disorder) or with some other form of psychosis. The resulting treatment would consist in prescribing heavy doses of psychotropic medications in an attempt to quell any demonic or (from the practitioner’s point of view) pseudo-demonic manifestations that may present themselves. Unfortunately, the usual effect of such treatment is to plunge the person into a catatonic state without in any way

²⁰ *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th ed., M. FIRST (ed.), Washington, DC, American Psychiatric Association, 2000, pp. 526-529.

remedying the real problem. Among the proponents of this first category are Ralph Allison,²¹ William Alexander,²² and Selby McCasland.²³ Others, seen previously in this study, accept only psychological solutions to claims of demonic possession, among them, Edward Langton and Traugott Oesterreich.²⁴

The second category of practitioners consists of those individuals who can best be described as the “placebo” group. Psychologists, psychiatrists, and other practitioners in this category do not accept exorcism as having any intrinsic value in the scientific realm *per se*. They do perceive it, however, as having the potential to be a simple solution or a “quick fix.” If a person believes him/herself to be possessed, then by the same token, he/she is prone to believe that an exorcism will “cure” him/her. So, an exorcism is allowed only when standard treatment is unsuccessful. In his book *Jesus the Healer*, Stevan Davies goes to great lengths to promote the effectiveness of the placebo approach.²⁵

The final category, well-regarded by exorcists, is that of medical practitioners, including psychologists and psychiatrists, who are willing to work alongside exorcists and theologians in caring for the possessed and other people otherwise affected by

²¹ *Minds in Many Pieces: Revealing the Spiritual Side of Multiple Personality Disorder*, second ed., Paso Robles, CA, CIE Publishing, 1999.

²² *Demonic Possession in the New Testament: Its Relations: Historical, Medical and Theological*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1902.

²³ *By the Finger of God: Demon Possession and Exorcism in Early Christianity in the Light of Modern Views of Mental Illness*, New York, NY, Macmillan Co., 1951.

²⁴ LANGTON, *Essentials of Demonology*; OESTERREICH, *Possession and Exorcism*.

²⁵ *Jesus the Healer: Possession, Trance, and the Origins of Christianity*, New York, NY, Continuum, 1995.

demonical forces. The cooperative effort seen in this approach does not mean that any of the disciplines involved, medical or spiritual, be compromised. The individual is first evaluated by a physician to rule out the possibility that some naturally occurring condition is at the root of the problem. Next, the person is seen by a psychologist and/or psychiatrist to determine if some mental illness might not be responsible for the alleged possession. Finally, if and when no organic explanation has been found, the medical professionals, in concert with the exorcist, determine the necessity for proceeding with an exorcism. It is a cautious and clinical process in which all disciplines are consulted and respected. Among those who are recognized as leaders in that type of work are Jean Lhermitte,²⁶ Sydney Page,²⁷ and George Saxenmeyer.²⁸

All of this is crucial if we want to understand the climate in which the rite of exorcism is currently practiced. It cannot be presumed that all medical professionals are open to the possibility that an individual may, in fact, be possessed by a demon or that an exorcism will bring relief. However, the conscientious work of scientific minds is essential to rule out that one is in fact dealing with some natural occurrences. Before proceeding with an exorcism, the exorcist must rely, in part, on the assistance of qualified medical personnel to achieve some moral certitude. This interdisciplinary approach is far from new; it has a rich history dating back to the sixteenth century. However, there appeared in the twentieth century a popular tendency to replace spirituality with

²⁶ *True and False Possession*, P. HEPBURN-SCOTT (trans.), Faith and Fact Books, n. 57, New York, NY, Hawthorn Books, 1963.

²⁷ "The Role of Exorcism in Clinical Practice and Pastoral Care," in *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 17 (1989), pp. 121-131.

²⁸ "Approaching the Ministries of Healing and Exorcism: Methodologies for Approach," in *Journal of Pastoral Counseling*, 11 (1976-77), pp. 32-36.

psychology. The result has left little room for recognition of the possibility that demonic possession does actually occur. Undoubtedly, there has always been a certain degree of antagonism between the scientific world and that in which the exorcist ministers. But these worlds are not mutually exclusive, as the modern practice of exorcism indicates. Their common purpose is to provide legitimate care to the afflicted and fulfill the need for an accurate diagnosis.

Before closing this section on the crucial interaction between the exorcist and psychologists and psychiatrists, an observation must be made about certain books published in recent years that have led people to indulge in self-diagnosis of demonic possession. Certain authors, like Malachi Martin²⁹ and Gabriel Amorth,³⁰ have written books with the intention of helping people to live good lives and avoid the snares of the devil. Their books present alleged cases of demonic possession and exorcism in great detail. The matter would be less problematic if their reading audience was limited to seasoned exorcists, theologians, and medical professionals. The works would then serve as a useful means of sharing information and a comparative study of the techniques used. They could also be utilized as teaching tools for novice exorcists in offering informative case studies. Unfortunately, such literature becomes counterproductive when read by the general public, especially by impressionable individuals endowed with an overactive imagination. Indeed, these books can be a source of panic for some. The situation is not unlike that of an undergraduate psychology student who has an initial exposure to a

²⁹ *Hostage to the Devil: The Possession and Exorcism of Five Living Americans*, San Francisco, CA, Harper, 1992.

³⁰ *An Exorcist Tells His Story*, N. MACKENZIE (trans.), San Francisco, CA, Ignatius Press, 1999; *An Exorcist: More Stories*, N. MACKENZIE (trans.), San Francisco, CA, Ignatius Press, 2002.

textbook treating of abnormal psychology. Studying on his own, he begins reading the list of characteristics that go into diagnosing a particular deviant personality. As he reads on, he begins to reflect on the various traits and applies them to himself, as if the isolated occurrence of one or more of the characteristics might confirm a positive diagnosis of this or that deviancy. Now, experience reveals that a similar scenario all too frequently plays itself out with individuals who have read books such as that of Amorth.³¹ They read the criteria, dwell on the cases of exorcism presented, draw comparisons to their own lives, and convince themselves that they are victims of the same phenomenon. Although presumably well-intentioned, works of this nature cause unnecessary problems for the exorcist who is flooded with telephone calls and correspondence from individuals who have managed to convince themselves that they were possessed. There is no easy solution to this problem for the exorcist, apart from being aware of it and listening for indicators of self-diagnosis. Frequently, in such cases, an individual claiming to be possessed will end up referring to this or that author by name and cite from the book the symptoms he believes are manifest in his own person.

3.3 – The Supreme Authority of the Church on Exorcism and the Devil from Vatican II to John Paul II

Three pontificates have dominated the Catholic Church during the second half of the twentieth century, those of John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul II. Three popes' calls for church reform and revision of church discipline, as well as the implementation of the same during their reigns, have given the Church a renewed relevance in the midst of a

³¹ These observations and conclusions stem from the personal experience of the author.

changing world. Each pope has played a role in shaping the form that exorcisms would take on the eve of a third millennium of Christianity. Their labors have ultimately situated the practice of exorcism in a thoroughly modern context. They proposed that exorcism was not only a viable but still a necessary practice. Fundamentally, these three popes have rooted the renewal of exorcistic practice in the Church's consistent teaching on the existence of the devil and his involvement in human history.

Pope John XXIII (1958-1963) was the consummate advocate of *aggiornamento* within the Church. He had a clear vision of the need for reform and he is the one who set the process in motion. On January 25, 1959, he announced his plans for renewal, which included an ecumenical council at the Vatican and an updating of the Code of Canon Law.³² Pope John did not live to see those plans brought to fruition. He died before the Second Vatican Council ended in 1965, and the revision of the Pio-Benedictine Code was left to the oversight of his successors.

The Second Vatican Council, widely considered to be the most important event in the twentieth century Church, has affected all aspects of the life and mission of Catholicism. Nowhere was this more evident than in the reform of the Church's liturgical life. The primary document that reflected the liturgical modifications wished for by the Council fathers was the *Sacrosanctum concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), promulgated on December 4, 1963. Article 79 of the document is significant for the purpose of this study. The first of its three paragraphs states:

³² JOHN XXIII, Allocution *Questa festiva*, 25 January 1959, in *AAS*, 51 (1959), pp. 65-69.

The sacramentals are to be revised, account being taken of the primary principle of enabling the faithful to participate intelligently, actively, and easily. The circumstances of our times must also be considered. When rituals are being revised as laid down in Article 63, new sacramentals may also be added as necessity requires.³³

The rite of exorcism falls in this category, since it is a sacramental. In a straightforward fashion, the first paragraph details the perimeters of the revision that was to be carried out. In accordance with the council's overall approach to the revision of liturgy, the revised rite of exorcism was to be characterized by a more active participation. In light of the directive of article 79 to consider "the circumstances of our times," those responsible for revising the rite presumably would consult exorcists and other specialists of mental illness.

Paragraphs two and three of the article have no direct bearing on the revision of exorcism. The second paragraph specifically addresses reserved blessings and the third one speaks about the involvement of qualified lay people. Since the practice of exorcism was and remains limited to priests who had the express permission of the Ordinary, there was no allowance for lay people to administer the rite of exorcism. Although the impetus for the revision of the rite originated with John XXIII, the work could not be completed until thirty-five years after his death.

In speaking of the Second Vatican Council, it is crucial to note the frequency with which the subject of the devil was treated in the conciliar documents.³⁴ The Council was convened at a time in history when the very existence of the devil was being called into

³³ SC, no. 79, English translation in FLANNERY I, p. 23.

³⁴ Explicit reference to the devil was made sixteen times in five of the conciliar documents: SC 6; LG 5, 16, 17, 35, 48, 55, 63; DH 11; AG 3, 9, 14; GS 2, 13, 22, 37. Corrado Balducci offers a thorough presentation of the references in his work. See BALDUCCI, *The Devil*, pp. 43-46.

question. It would have been easier for the Council fathers to avoid the issue altogether or to leave it to the Holy See to produce, at a later date, a separate document addressing the Church's modern stance on whether or not the devil existed. However, the Council was pastoral in nature and thus could not but incorporate the Church's consistent belief in the existence of the devil. Like the First Council of Braga and the Fourth Lateran Council, as well as the Councils of Florence (1431-1437) and Trent (1545-1563), Vatican II understood the devil to be an active agent in the world, and this even in the "enlightened" context of the twentieth century. The references to the devil in conciliar documents would later help shape the revision of the rite of exorcism.

Pope Paul VI (1963-1978) not only had the challenge of bringing the council to a conclusion, but he was faced with the daunting task of implementing its decrees. On August 15, 1972, he set about reforming the Church's discipline regarding minor orders by his *motu proprio Ministeria quaedam*. As a result, the four minor orders, including that of exorcist, were removed as steps on the way to priesthood. At first glance, the *motu proprio* seemed to abolish the office of exorcist. However, one must remember that since the promulgation of the 1917 Code of Canon Law, only an authorized priest could perform the rite of exorcism. The order of exorcist had in fact already become obsolete. Nevertheless, Paul VI provided for the ongoing ministry of exorcism by stipulating:

In addition to the offices common to the Latin Church, nothing prevents episcopal conferences from petitioning the Apostolic See for others whose institution in their region, for special reasons, they judge to be necessary or very useful. To those, for example, belong the offices of porter, exorcist and catechist . . .³⁵

³⁵ PAUL VI, *Motu proprio, Ministeria quaedam*, 15 August 1972, in *AAS*, 64 (1972), pp. 531, English translation in *CLD*, vol. 7, pp. 692.

At almost the same time as Paul VI was suppressing the minor order of exorcist, he began speaking of the existence of the devil. Interestingly, for the first ten years of his pontificate, the pope had made little or no mention of the Christian belief in the devil's existence or activity. Then, at a general audience on November 15, 1972, he took as his theme the words, "deliver us from evil," and devoted his entire presentation to the subject of the devil.³⁶ He discussed the indications of demonic activity and the caution to be exercised when encountering the forces of evil. The fact that the two events occurred in the same year could be considered a coincidence. However, this appears unlikely, since the pope was to return to the topic on a number of occasions until a year before his death in 1978.³⁷

Less than three years after Paul VI began to address the problem of evil and the reality of the devil, a document on the same subject was published by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.³⁸ Published in the form of an article in French on June 26, 1975 and authored by an unnamed expert, the text once again affirmed the traditional faith of the Church in the existence of the devil, a belief that it traced back to the scriptures, the Fathers and councils of the Church, and the liturgical rites. Reflecting views expressed by the Council fathers and Paul VI himself, the document challenged the faithful to achieve a balanced understanding of the existence of the devil. While

³⁶ PAUL VI, Address, *Liberaci dal male*, 15 November 1972, in *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, vol. 10, Vatican City, Tipografia poliglotta Vaticana, 1972, pp. 1168-1173, English translation in *The Pope Speaks*, 17 (1973), pp. 315-319.

³⁷ BALDUCCI, *The Devil*, pp. 50.

³⁸ SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Fede cristiana e demonologia* (Christian Faith and Demonology), 26 June 1975, in *La documentation catholique*, 72 (1975), pp. 708-718, English translation in *The Pope Speaks*, 20 (1975), pp. 209-233.

cautioning against the tendency of becoming obsessed with the demonic, it insisted on the need for believers to be aware that cases of demonic possession still occur in the modern world.

Over the course of his twenty-six year pontificate, Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) spoke often about the existence and works of the devil. His two lengthiest texts on the topic were delivered at weekly general audiences on August 13 and 20, 1986.³⁹ In eminently pastoral presentations, the pope commented at great length about the fall of the angels and their resulting condition and activities. Throughout the talks, he supported his claims by frequently quoting scripture and magisterial teachings. At both audiences, John Paul II stated emphatically that the devil is able to take possession of a human person, the only remedy for that evil being an exorcism. He also cautioned the faithful against the danger of denying the devil's existence. Overall, these talks and others given over the course of his pontificate served to remind Christians of the reality of evil at work in their lives and in the world.

Not only did John Paul II restate the Church's belief in the existence of the devil, but under his pontificate a new rite of exorcism was promulgated. He was thus completing the work initiated by his predecessors. The vision of *aggiornamento* of John XXIII and the ensuing work of implementation by Paul VI took concrete form under John

³⁹ JOHN PAUL II, General Audience, "La caduta degli angeli ribelli, 13 August 1986," in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. 9, Vatican City, Libreria editrice Vaticana, 1986, pp. 361-366, English translation in *L'Osservatore romano*, 19, no. 33 (1986), pp. 1-2; idem, General Audience, "La vittoria di Cristo sullo spirito del male, 20 August 1986," in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. 9, Vatican City, Libreria editrice Vaticana, 1986, pp. 395-398, English translation in *L'Osservatore romano*, 19, no. 34 (1986), pp. 1-2.

Paul II in the revision of both the code, with its one canon on exorcism, and the rite of exorcism. It is to these specific projects that the present study now turns.

3.4 – Canon 1172 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law

Almost a quarter of a century had elapsed from the time John XXIII first called for an updating of canon law until the actual promulgation of the revised code. In the intervening years, numerous commissions worked diligently to refashion existing canons, jettison obsolete ones, and generate new legislative texts in light of the Second Vatican Council or as need dictated. The sole canon on exorcism in the 1983 Code of Canon Law would be the result of work started by the Coetus De sacramentis excepto matrimonio.

The first version of the revised canon was produced by the coetus when its members met from October 9 through 12, 1978. It bore the number 368 and was presented in two paragraphs:

§1. Nemo, potestate exorcizandi praeditus, exorcismos in obsessos proferre legitime potest, nisi ab Ordinario peculiarem et expressam licentiam obtinuerit.

§2. Haec licentia ab Ordinario concedatur tantummodo sacerdoti pietate, prudentia ac vitae integritate praedito.⁴⁰

The first paragraph remained exactly the same as paragraph one of c. 1151 of the 1917 Code. However, the second half of the second paragraph was excised. In other words, certain qualities of life were still expected of the exorcist, for example, piety and prudence, but any reference to a pre-exorcism investigation had disappeared.

⁴⁰ *Communicationes*, 13 (1981), p. 443.

When the canon, now numbered 1126, next appeared in the *1980 Schema*, it had undergone several changes. The first paragraph was missing a clause, namely “even if endowed with the power of exorcism” (*potestate exorcizandi praeditus*). Next, in both paragraphs, the word *loci* had been added to qualify *Ordinario*. Lastly, another quality of life, “knowledge” (*scientia*), had been added to the three existing qualities of piety, prudence and integrity of life already required of the exorcist. As a result, the canon appeared as follows:

§1. Nemo exorcismos in obsessos proferre legitime potest, nisi ab Ordinario loci peculiarem et expressam licentiam obtinuerit.

§2. Haec licentia ab Ordinario loci concedatur tantummodo sacerdoti pietate, scientia, prudentia ac vitae integritate praedito.⁴¹

In the 1981 *Relatio*, containing comments on the draft of the revised Code resulting from a broad consultation throughout the Church, there was only one comment on draft c. 1126, no change resulted from it in the text of the canon.⁴²

The text of the canon remained unchanged when it appeared in the 1982 *Schema*.⁴³ The only difference was that it had received a new number. It was now c. 1172, the same number that it would have in the 1983 Code.

⁴¹ PONTIFICIA COMMISSIO CODICI IURIS CANONICI RECOGNOSCENDO, *Schema Codicis Iuris Canonici iuxta Animadversiones S.R.E. Cardinalium, Episcoporum Conferentiarum, Dicasteriorum Curiae Romanae, Universitatem Facultatumque Ecclesiasticarum Necnon Superiorum Institutum Vitae Consecratae Recognitum*, Libreria editrice Vaticana, 1980.

⁴² Res arbitrio et prudentiae Ordinarii loci relinquatur, nullis indicatis qualitatibus requisitis (Quidam Pater). R. *Qualitates criterium utile praebent, uti experientia docet.*; in *Communicationes*, 15 (1983), p. 244.

⁴³ PONTIFICIA COMMISSIO CODICI IURIS CANONICI RECOGNOSCENDO, *Codex Iuris Canonici: Schema Novissimum iuxta Placita Patrum Commissionis Emendatum Atque Summo Pontifici Praesentatum*, Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, 1982.

On January 25, 1983, Pope John Paul II promulgated the revised Code of Canon Law.⁴⁴ The new code abrogated the 1917 Code and certain other laws in various categories (cf. cc. 2; 6, §1). One change was made to the text of the draft canon of the 1982 *Schema*. In the second paragraph, the word *presbyter* was substituted for the word *sacerdos*. Canon 1172, in its final form, states:

§1. Nemo exorcismos in obsessos proferre legitime potest, nisi ab Ordinario loci peculiarem et expressam licentiam obtinuerit.

§2. Haec licentia ab Ordinario loco concedatur tantummodo presbytero pietate, scientia, prudentia ac vitae integritate praedito.⁴⁵

In reflecting on the changes brought to the canon on exorcism throughout the revision process, a number of points deserve comment.

1) It is curious to note that, soon after the revision process began, any specific mention of the need for a thorough investigation to determine the authenticity of a case of possession was eliminated from the canon. From at least the time of Peter Thyraeus in the sixteenth century, exorcists had been admonished to use the resources available to them to investigate the genuineness of the energumen's condition. Now for guidance in the matter one was referred to the 1952 edition of the Roman Ritual.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Constitution *Sacrae disciplinae*, 25 January 1983, in *AAS*, 75, Pars II (1983), pp. vi-xiv.

⁴⁵ *CIC*, c. 1172, English translation *Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Edition, New English Translation*, prepared under the auspices of the CANON LAW SOCIETY OF AMERICA, Washington, DC, Canon Law Society of America, 1999. This translation is used for all subsequent citations of the canons of the 1983 Code. It should be noted that the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches does not contain any reference to the exorcist or exorcistic practices. This omission reflects the consistent belief of the Church in the East that the practice of exorcism is rooted in a charism, not an office.

⁴⁶ See chapter 1, n. 3; *Roman Ritual – In Latin and English with Rubrics and Planechant Notation*, vol. 2, pp. 168-169. Perhaps the reason for omitting the provision for an investigation was due to the fact that it was found in the liturgical law (cf. c. 2).

2) The 1917 Code had limited the ministry of exorcist to priests (*sacerdotes*), a category of both bishops and presbyters. The revised Code, unaccountably, limited this ministry further to presbyters alone, thus eliminating, rather oddly, bishops as lawful ministers of exorcism. One does not know why this change was made to the 1982 *Schema*. Perhaps the real intention was that bishops should be able to perform this ministry in virtue of the episcopal order without having to require permission of the local ordinary. However, the text of the canon does, in fact, explicitly exclude bishops from this ministry, a detail that was to be rectified in the 1998 revised rite of exorcism, as will be seen. Of more lasting significance was the change from the 1917 Code on the issue of who could grant permission for an exorcism. The 1917 Code had used the broader term “Ordinary,” so as to include major superiors of clerical exempt religious orders. The 1983 Code now speaks of “local Ordinaries,” a choice of terminology that excludes major superiors of clerical religious institutes of pontifical right and clerical societies of apostolic life of pontifical right; for these latter are Ordinaries but not local Ordinaries (c. 134, §1).

3) The second of the guidelines that introduced the rite instructed the exorcist to become knowledgeable about exorcism by reading the works of experts on the subject and studying actual cases.⁴⁷ In the 1980 *Schema*, *scientia* was added to the list of necessary qualities with which the exorcist was to be endowed. It is reasonable to presume that the revisers of the canon meant to emphasize the importance of the exorcist

⁴⁷ Chapter 1, n. 2; *Roman Ritual – In Latin and English with Rubrics and Planechant Notation*, vol. 2, pp. 168-169.

possessing such knowledge. The exorcist's specialized knowledge would aid him in determining whether he was confronted by a genuine case of possession or not.

4) While the former code explicitly stated that non-Catholics and the excommunicated could be numbered among people who could be exorcised,⁴⁸ the revised code eliminated this provision altogether. How should this be understood? The answer may be found in other legal texts. (a) An exorcism may be performed on behalf of Catholics who have been excommunicated. Canon 1331, §1, 2 bars excommunicates both from celebrating and administering the sacraments and sacramentals and from receiving the sacraments, but not from receiving sacramentals. (b) As for baptized non-Catholics, they may validly receive sacraments and, in some situations, also licitly (cf. especially c. 844), so they surely may receive sacramentals. As well, it will be seen that the 1998 revised rite of exorcism makes provision for the diocesan bishop to permit the exorcism of non-Catholics. (c) As for the non-baptized, they are not excluded from all sacramentals, as seen in c. 1170 on blessings.⁴⁹ This may well be a "parallel place" in the law (cf. c. 17) that could serve as a key to interpreting c. 1172 with respect to the non-baptized undergoing an exorcism by a Catholic priest using the Catholic rite. On the other hand, the ritual of exorcism presumes that the persons who are being exorcised have been baptized and even entreats them to renew their baptismal promises, a provision that implicitly excludes the non-baptized.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *CIC/17*, c. 1152.

⁴⁹ Blessings, which are to be imparted first of all to Catholics, can also be given to catechumens and even to non-Catholics unless there is a prohibition of the Church to the contrary.

⁵⁰ Seventeen of the *praenotanda* introducing the 1998 *Exor* refer to faith in Christ and baptism: 1, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 32, 34b, 34c, 36; see M. MARTÍN, in A. MARZOA, J. MIRAS and R.

5) The permission (*licentia*) to celebrate an exorcism must be “special and express.” Express permission excludes any merely tacit or presumed permission. According to María del Mar Martín, this is a reference to special delegation (*ad casum*), excluding general delegation.⁵¹ If that is so, then a priest must request permission for each and every exorcism. J. Huels and F. Reinhardt, however, do not exclude general delegation.⁵² On the contrary, they understand the canon as meaning that the permission must be granted to a specific priest, not to priests in general. In the actual practice of the Church, general delegation is given to individual exorcists to function habitually in their ministry.

The granting of a permission constitutes a singular administrative act. As such, it engages numerous canonical rules drawn from various sections of Book I of the Code, including applicable canons from the titles on the common norms on singular administrative acts (cc. 35-47), rescripts (cc. 59-75), juridic acts (cc. 124-128), and the power of governance (cc. 129-144). Since, by disposition of ecclesiastical law, only a priest is capable of performing an exorcism, the permission to do so could not validly be granted to a deacon or a lay person. As a singular administrative act, the permission should be in writing (c. 37), but this is required only for liceity (cf. c. 10). An oral grant

RODRÍGUEZ-OSCAÑA (eds.), *Exegetical Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, English language edition, E. CAPARROS (gen. ed.), vol. 3, Chicago, IL, Midwest Theological Forum, 2004, p. 1659; see F. REINHARDT, in K. LÜDICKE (ed.), *Münsterischer Kommentar zum Codex Iuris Canonici*, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Rechtslage in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz, vol. 4, Essen, Ludgerus, 1984, at c. 1172, p. 2.

⁵¹ MARTÍN, *Exegetical Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1658.

⁵² See J. HUELS, in J. BEAL, J. CORIDEN and T. GREEN (eds.), *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, commissioned by the CANON LAW SOCIETY OF AMERICA, New York, NY and Mahwah, NJ, Paulist Press, 2000, p. 1405; see REINHARDT, *Münsterischer Kommentar*, vol. 4, at c. 1172, pp. 1-2.

of permission would be valid (c. 59, §2). However, an oral grant should only be given for single cases (*ad casum*), as the existence of general delegation by means of an oral permission may be difficult to prove should it become necessary (cf. c. 74). This, for example, could happen when a new diocesan bishop takes office.

3.5 – The 1998 Revised Rite of Exorcism

By a decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments [henceforth CDWDS], the revised rite of exorcism was promulgated on November 22, 1998.⁵³ As a result of this decree, the former rite was implicitly abrogated by the principle of the integral reordering of law (c. 20) and also by the general formula found in the decree of promulgation itself, that is, “*Contrariis quibuslibet minime obstantibus.*”⁵⁴ The new rite is entitled *De exorcismis et supplicationibus quibusdam*.⁵⁵ John Paul II approved the rite on October 1, 1998, and it was subsequently published as a separate book in 1999. In that form it is comprised of two chapters followed by two appendices. The chapters are prefaced by the decree of promulgation, a foreward (*proæmium*), and the *praenotanda* (referred to as guidelines or directives when discussing the 1614Exor). The decree of promulgation stipulated that the Latin version of the rite

⁵³ CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, Decree *Inter sacramentalia*, in *Notitiae*, 35 (1999), p. 137.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Vatican City, Typis Vaticanis, 1999.

may be used immediately upon publication and that the various conferences of bishops should see to the vernacular translations.⁵⁶

The decree begins by reminding us that the rite of exorcism is a sacramental with a long history dating back to the ancient Church. Specially appointed to the task, exorcists labor to bring relief to those who are tormented by the devil. Using prayers in the name of God, they free the oppressed by putting the devil to flight. The decree goes on to speak about the appropriateness of the revision of the rite in light of the Second Vatican Council, with its specific call for the renewal of sacramentals (SC 79). By virtue of this decree of promulgation, the revised rite replaced the former title XII found in the 1952 edition of the Roman Ritual.

The foreward, in three paragraphs, lays a foundation for the *praenotanda* that immediately follow it. The author begins by distinguishing between angelic beings, who serve the divine plan, and fallen or diabolical beings, who try to thwart the work of Christ and tempt humankind to rebellion. A series of scripture quotations comprise the second paragraph. They detail the various titles given to the devil, often referring to his nature and functions. The foreward concludes by reminding believers of the power of Christ's victory over the forces of darkness and the role of the Church in bringing relief to people, places, and things affected by demonic activity.

⁵⁶ An unofficial translation of the entire rite was compiled by Morton Gauld, a professor of Latin at the University of Aberdeen and edited by Edward Traynor, a priest of the Diocese of Aberdeen soon after the rite first appeared. The work is entitled, "Exorcisms and Certain Forms of Prayer." Although unpublished, photocopies of the translation have circulated widely among exorcists in the United States for lack of an approved translation.

Divided into six headings, the 1998 Rite of Exorcism [henceforth 1998Exor] is introduced by thirty-eight *praenotanda*.⁵⁷ The first two headings⁵⁸ provide a theological background for the practice of exorcism. Tracing salvation history, the *praenotanda* begin by speaking about the goodness of all creation and the devil's rejection of God. After that the reader is reminded of the creation of man, the fall, and the coming of the Messiah. Numbers 3 through 7 of the *praenotanda* review Christ's saving mission from his Incarnation to the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit and the commissioning of the disciples for exorcistic ministry. The first heading concludes with the reaffirmation of the Church's role in administering the rite of exorcism.

The next grouping of *praenotanda* (nn. 8-12) focuses directly on the exorcistic work of the Church. Still in a theological tone, a necessary distinction is drawn between the exorcisms used in the rites involving catechumens preparing for baptism and the solemn or major form, which is reserved for genuine cases of demonic possession. Number 11 speaks about exorcism as a liturgical celebration and defines its sacramental nature. In the last norm formulated under this heading, a special emphasis is placed on the role of the Holy Spirit in combating the demonic foe. More so than under the remaining headings, the initial twelve *praenotanda* contain numerous references to decrees of councils, pronouncements of popes, and references to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The foundations for the *praenotanda* that follow are thus laid down.

⁵⁷ Pierre Bellemare of Saint Paul University provided the translation of the *praenotanda* that appears in the Appendix and which is used here.

⁵⁸ "The victory of Christ and the Church's power against demons" (nn. 1-7) and "Exorcism in the sanctifying office of the Church" (nn. 8-12).

Under the third heading, “The minister and the conditions for the performance of major exorcism,” concrete directives are provided to guide the exorcist in the use of the 1998Exor. As a result, the seven *praenotanda* of this heading will be discussed here in greater detail than the twelve already summarized. Overall, no. 13 is particularly rich in canonical aspects, more so than any of the other *praenotanda*. The requisite permission to perform an exorcism must come from the local Ordinary who, as a rule now, will be the diocesan bishop himself. Only a priest (*sacerdos*)⁵⁹ endowed with the necessary qualities of piety, knowledge, prudence, and integrity of life and who has undergone specific preparation for this work will be allowed to proceed with an exorcism. The task of the exorcist, whether entrusted to him for a specific occasion or on a regular basis, is to be carried out under the direction of the diocesan bishop.

According to no. 14, the exorcist must exercise caution in evaluating cases of alleged demonic possession. He must determine if the real source of the problem is mental illness or even an overactive imagination on the person’s part. On the other hand, the exorcist should not be tricked by the devil into believing that there is an organic explanation for the problem when, in fact, evil forces are at play. In other words, every means of investigation must be utilized to determine the true source of the affliction.

The exorcist, according to no. 15, must also know how to distinguish between the external assaults of the devil and situations when individuals have convinced themselves that they are victims of bad luck, a curse, or some other malevolence. In any of the cases mentioned, the exorcist should not use the rite of exorcism. However, the parties seeking

⁵⁹ It should be noted that by using the term *sacerdos* both bishops and presbyters may now administer the revised rite of exorcism.

relief should not be denied spiritual help. But the help they need does not require the expertise of an exorcist. Generally speaking, any priest or deacon can offer the spiritual assistance required, using suitable prayers.

The next norm, no. 16, opens by stressing the importance, for the exorcist to acquire some moral certitude before proceeding with the rite. The legislator then provides a list of telltale signs of demonic possession. They are: 1) the ability to speak and/or understand an unknown language; 2) the possession of occult knowledge; and 3) an abnormal physical strength. In and of itself, none of these signs constitutes a guarantee of true possession. Taken together, however, they do serve as strong indicators of a demonic presence. Additional factors to be explored are the spiritual and moral state of the individual as well as any marked aversion that he/she may have to the sacred. The evidence should be considered in its entirety before making a decision.

Number 17 reminds the exorcist of the importance of a careful enquiry into all of the circumstances surrounding the case at hand while respecting the seal of the confessional. The exorcist is also reminded of the need to resort to the expertise of medical and psychiatric professionals. Number 18 addresses the case of an energumen who is not Catholic and other more difficult matters. Such cases are to be referred to the diocesan bishop who may consult experts before deciding whether one may proceed with the exorcism.

The final norm in this section strives to protect the integrity of the Church by guarding against practices that may give an impression of magic or superstition. The practice of exorcism is not to result in a spectacle. The involvement of the media is not

permitted at any time. All parties involved in the rite must maintain strict confidence regarding the matters to which they may be a witness.

The fourth heading contains eleven *praenotanda* that focus on the celebration of the rite itself by outlining the components of ritual action. Number 20 reasserts the importance of certain gestures posed during the rite, namely the sign of the cross, the laying on of hands, breathing on the energumen, and the sprinkling with blessed water. Number 21 states that the rite must begin with the sprinkling of holy water, on which occasion those gathered are reminded of their baptism. If necessary, prayers for blessing the water can be said and they are provided for in the rite. The litany of saints follows (no. 22). Numbers 23 and 24 instruct the exorcist to pray the appropriate psalms and proclaim the Gospel. The exorcist then lays hands on the energumen and, if appropriate, breathes into the face of the possessed (no. 25). Afterward the creed is recited (the baptismal promises are included as an alternate form) and Satan is renounced. God the Father is implored to deliver “us” from evil through the praying of the Lord’s Prayer. The individual is subsequently shown a cross and the exorcist uses it to sign him/her (nn. 26 and 27). Number 28 then directs the exorcist to pronounce the supplicatory and imperative formulae of exorcism over the energumen. The latter formula is not to be used unless preceded by the former; however, the former may be used without the latter (The legislator does not provide an explanation for this curious approach.). Number 29 speaks about the repetition of the rite until the afflicted is finally freed from all assault. When he/she is finally freed, the rite concludes with words of thanksgiving, a prayer, and a blessing (no. 30).

The next heading deals with a series of circumstances and modifications. Number 31 reminds the exorcist of the importance of preparing himself before facing the demonic foe. Relying on the tradition embodied in scripture, the exorcist is to fast and pray. The energumen, as well, must prepare through mortification, the renewal of his baptismal promises, if appropriate, followed by the reception of the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist. If distracted or tormented in prayer, the possessed should call upon the assistance of family and friends to assist him/her to remain focused on the sacred (no. 32). An oratory or another suitable site should be used, provided there is privacy. Images of the Crucified and the Blessed Virgin should be prominently displayed in the place of the exorcism (no. 33).

In no.34, the exorcist is encouraged to avail himself of the various options set forth in the rite. He should carefully assess the physical and psychological condition of the possessed individual throughout the celebration of the rite. If he is exorcising the tormented person without the presence of the faithful, he should remember that the Church's presence is "constituted" in the exorcist and energumen. The exorcist should remind the possessed person of this fact as well. The energumen should strive to remain recollected and focused on the deliverance that comes from God.

Number 35 makes allowance for the presence of selected individuals during the celebration of the rite. They are admonished to pray for the afflicted person either privately or in a manner approved in the rite. They must not, however, recite the actual formulae of exorcism, which are reserved to the exorcist alone. Upon successful completion of the rite, the former energumen is to offer prayers of thanksgiving to God and to faithfully receive the sacraments of the Church (no. 36).

The final heading of the *praenotanda* addresses the modifications that may be made by episcopal conferences. Number 37 entrusts the conferences of bishops with the task of preparing faithful translations of the 1998 Exor and, with the consent of the Holy See, to modify signs and gestures within the rite in deference to the local culture. The final norm suggests the creation, by the conference of bishops, of a *Pastoral Directory on the Use of Major Exorcism* as an ancillary text to the preceding thirty-seven *praenotanda*. Such directories, reviewed by the Holy See in accordance with the norm of law, would serve as valuable resources in the training and on-going formation of exorcists from different regions and cultures. The sharing of knowledge and experience would aid those involved in exorcistic ministry.

Immediately following the introductory *praenotanda*, chapter one presents the actual Rite of Major Exorcism (*Ritus Exorcismi Maioris*). Twenty-eight rubrics direct the movement of the rite's celebration, providing such details as the type of liturgical apparel to be worn by the exorcist and the leeway he has in choosing psalms. The rite itself is best summarized by reviewing nn. 21 through 30 of the introductory *praenotanda* (presented above). While chapter two of the ritual provides alternate texts, a certain prominence is given to the readings that already appeared in the rite as presented in chapter one. Psalm 90 and the Prologue of John's Gospel (1:1-14), for instance, have played a singular role in exorcistic rites for many centuries, dating back to the Middle Ages. The Apostles Creed, Nicene Creed, and Baptismal Promises, on the contrary, are recent additions to the rite.

The ritual prayers and actions culminate in the recitation of the exorcistic prayers by the exorcist alone. The supplicatory and imperative formulae from chapter one of the rite are included here:

Supplicatory formula: O God, the creator and defender of mankind, look upon this your servant *N.*, whom you have created in your own image and called to share in your glory. The old adversary torments him (her) solely, grievously oppresses him (her) by his power, and cruelly alarms and distresses him (her). Send your Holy Spirit upon him (her) to strengthen him (her) in the conflict, to teach him (her) to pray amid tribulation and mightily to protect and defend him (her). Hear, O holy Father, the cry of your suppliant Church: do not permit your son (daughter) to be possessed by the father of lies, nor your servant, whom Christ redeemed by his blood, to be held captive by the Devil; permit no unclean spirit to dwell in this temple of your Holy Spirit. Hear, O merciful God, the prayer of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose Son, dying on the Cross, crushed the head of the old serpent and commended all mankind to his Mother as her children. Let the light of your truth shine upon this your servant, let him (her) be filled with joy and tranquility; let the Holy Spirit come upon him (her), and by his indwelling bestow on him (her) purity and peace. Hear, O Lord, the prayer of blessed Michael the Archangel and of all the angels who serve you. O God of hosts, we pray you drive away all power of the devil; O God of truth and pardon, remove forthwith all his snares of deception; O God of freedom and grace, break now all the bonds of wickedness afflicting this your servant *N.* Hear, O God, lover of man's salvation, the prayers of your apostles Peter and Paul and of all your saints, they, who by your grace have triumphed over the Evil One, ask that you deliver this your servant from all the power of the enemy and preserve him (her) in safety, so that he (she) may be restored to worship you in peace, to love you with all his (her) heart, and serve you by his (her) deeds, and to make of his (her) life a hymn of praise to your glory. Amen.

Imperative formula: I adjure you, Satan, enemy of man's salvation, acknowledge the righteousness and goodness of God the Father, who justly condemned your arrogance and enmity: depart from this servant of God, *N.*, whom the Lord has made in His own likeness, endowed with His gifts, and adopted as a child of His mercy. I adjure you, Satan, prince of this world, acknowledge the power and might of Jesus Christ, who conquered you in the wilderness, overcame you in the garden, robbed you of your prey upon the Cross, and by rising from the tomb, bore off your prize to the kingdom of light: depart from *N.* who God created, whom Christ by his birth made his brother (sister), and by his death won for Himself by His own blood. I adjure you, Satan, deceiver of mankind, acknowledge the Spirit of truth and grace, who banishes your snares and confounds your lies: depart from *N.* whom God created, who is sealed with the heavenly seal of the Spirit; leave forever

this man (woman) whom God has anointed to be a holy temple of His Holy Spirit. Amen.⁶⁰

Chapter two, as already indicated, serves as a source of additional texts. It includes nine psalms, five gospel pericopes, and two sets of supplicatory and imperative exorcistic formulae. The two appendices that complete the ritual offer additional means to combat demonic assaults. One must note, however, that they are intended to address situations that fall outside of the purview of a major exorcism. Appendix one presents a series of prayers to be used when confronted not only by the demonic harassment of individuals, but also when a demonic influence is exerted over objects and localities. While the bishop's permission is required to use the prayers, the priest conducting the service is not performing an exorcism in the strict sense of the word. The second appendix contains a collection of prayers that may be used privately by any of the faithful to ward off evil. No special permission is required in that case.

Slightly more than two months after the promulgation of the 1998 Exor and a day after the formal introduction and actual publication of the rite, a notification was published by the CDWDS.⁶¹ In the notice, the congregation was making a surprising concession. The second paragraph of the notification revealed that, on the day after the pope approved the revised rite of exorcism, he also had granted to the CDWDS a special faculty to permit the use of the former rite by a priest on whose behalf his bishop had requested this permission. The concession, as stated in the notice, was justified in view of

⁶⁰ These formulae were taken from the translation prepared by M. Gauld. See footnote 54 in this chapter. The exorcistic formulae from chapter two of the revised rite are provided in Appendix 2 of this work.

⁶¹ CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, Notification, *De ritu exorcismi*, 27 January 1999, in *Notitiae*, 35 (1999), p. 156.

the pastoral care that bishops exercise over their diocese and the compassionate aid that should be rendered to the faithful who struggle against the devil.

In the notice's final paragraph, the CDWDS stated its intention that this special faculty might be granted freely (*libenter*). It has the nature of a privilege,⁶² and as such, can be used only by those priests who have received it from the Congregation at the request of their diocesan bishop. Since the request for the faculty must come from the diocesan bishop, it follows that a priest could not use it in another diocese without the consent of the bishop of that diocese. Exorcists from outside a diocese are sometimes invited by a bishop to perform an exorcism. It cannot be assumed that the mandate given by a bishop to a priest from another diocese to celebrate an exorcism carries with it that bishop's consent to the use of the 1952 rite. The priest must still get the bishop's explicit permission to use the former rite.

Perhaps the CDWDS anticipated the negative response the 1998Exor would receive and an arrangement was made to build into the final revision of the rite a provision to allow for the continued use of the 1614Exor. A few critics did in fact challenge the suitability of the revised rite. Manfred Probst was among the first to negatively critique the 1998Exor. For Probst, the revision process lacked sufficient consultation⁶³ and this even though a rite *ad interim* had been disseminated among the

⁶² See JOHN M. HUELS, "Privilege, Faculty, Indult, Derogation: Diverse Uses and Disputed Questions," in *The Jurist*, 63 (2003), pp. 213-253.

⁶³ See M. PROBST, "Der grosse Exorzismus: Ein schwieriger Teil des Rituale Romanum," in *Liturgisches Jahrbuch*, 49 (1999), pp. 247-248.

conferences of bishops in 1991.⁶⁴ Cardinal Jorge Medina himself, the prefect of the CDWDS, when introducing the new rite on January 26, 1999, made reference to the revision process which had taken ten years to complete.⁶⁵ Others like Nicola Giampietro chose instead to stress the positive qualities of the revised rite, in particular its flexibility of use and the emphasis placed on supplicatory prayers.⁶⁶

Undoubtedly, the most acerbic review of the 1998 Exorcism came from the exorcist for the Diocese of Rome, The Reverend Gabriele Amorth. In June of 2001 an interview of Amorth by Stefano Paci appeared in the periodical *30 Days*.⁶⁷ To say the least, Amorth is biting in his responses to Paci's queries. Among other things, Amorth outlines a general timeline of the revision process and gives a number of reasons why he believes the commission responsible for updating the rite did not consult exorcists. He surmises that the commission members had no desire to seek input from experts, and that they had every intention of completely replacing the former rite. In the interview, Amorth goes so far as to question the faith of those involved, regarding their belief in the existence of the devil.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ *Les Exorcismes* (Rituel *ad interim* – Traduction provisoire), CIFTL 90/06, pp. 1-24. This French working draft is an example of the text that was disseminated to episcopal conferences. It was the only version I was able to access. My gratitude to Monsignor Roch Page.

⁶⁵ J. MEDINA ESTÉVEZ, "Il Rito degli Esorcismi, 26 January 1999," in *Notitiae*, 35 (1999), pp. 151-155, English translation in *L'Osservatore romano*, 32, no. 5 (1999), p. 12.

⁶⁶ See N. GIAMPIETRO, "Il rinnovamento del Rito degli Esorcismi," in *Notitiae*, 35 (1999), pp. 170-175.

⁶⁷ S. PACI, "The Smoke of Satan in the House of the Lord: Interview with Father Gabriele Amorth," in *30 Days*, 19, no. 6 (2001), pp. 28-34.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

Amorth, who, incidentally, is the founder and past president of the International Association of Exorcists, singled out several of the introductory *praenotanda* that he considers particularly limiting to the work of the exorcist. In the rite, number 15 rules out a number of phenomena often associated with signs of possession. Number 16 advises the exorcist against proceeding with an exorcism unless he has moral certitude, and then goes on listing the tangible indicators of actual possession. Amorth takes issue with both *praenotanda* because, in his view, there are times when it is necessary to use the rite, at least in part, as a diagnostic instrument to determine the actual presence of the devil. To deny such use of the rite, according to Amorth, is both very grave and harmful.⁶⁹ In fact, he posits that, in such matters, the commission was even contradicting the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* by restricting its use. Ultimately, Amorth views the deliberations of the commission as a consequence of both ignorance and inexperience.

Concerning the changes introduced in the legislation between the earlier revised Code and the later 1998Exor, J. Huels views the innovations as amounting to a complete reordering of c. 1172 and derogating from the earlier law.⁷⁰ Four changes deserve noting here, all of which occur in no. 13 of the introductory *praenotanda*. Firstly, there is an expansion in the scope of who may celebrate the rite of exorcism. Canon 1172 §2 prescribes that only a presbyter is permitted to use the exorcistic rite, while the 1998Exor utilizes the term “priest” (*sacerdos*), a concept that encompasses both presbyters and bishops. Secondly, in addition to the qualities of life required of the exorcist as stated in c. 1172 §2 and reiterated in the 1998Exor, no. 13 also specifies that the exorcist must

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 29.

⁷⁰ HUELS, *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, p. 1405.

undergo a special preparation for the function. Thirdly, the right to appoint an exorcist has been restricted primarily but not exclusively to the diocesan bishop, as opposed to the local Ordinary. Fourthly, regardless of whether the appointment of the exorcist is effected on a stable basis or *ad actum*, the exercise of the office falls under the moderation of the diocesan bishop.

Before closing this section on the revised rite of exorcism, it is important to note that, since its promulgation, the 1998Exor has been reissued in a corrected form. The *editio typica emendata* version of the 1998Exor came out in 2004⁷¹. The emendations to the text tend to be purely editorial: they include changes in word order, verb tenses, and punctuation. Occasionally a word is removed or a qualifying term is inserted. All in all, however, none of the changes affect the substance of the rite. There are more changes (twenty-six) in the *praenotanda* than in all of the other parts of the ritual combined. The prayer texts throughout the rite remain unaltered.

3.6 – The Catholic Charismatic Movement

The subject of the Christian Charismatic Movement, and specifically its Catholic counterpart, is included here because of the challenge it presented to the mainstream practice of exorcism by the Church during the second half of the twentieth century. Members of the Catholic Charismatic Movement [henceforth CCM], from the time of the group's inception, incorporated different types of exorcistic prayer in their healing services. Many members shared the belief of Tertullian that the work of exorcism

⁷¹ CDWDS, *De exorcismis et supplicationibus quibusdam*, editio typica emendata, Vatican City, Typis Vaticanis, 2004.

belonged to all the baptized and they actively fostered the practice. For the most part, the ministry of the movement proved beneficial to those who participated in its services. There were times, however, when certain prayer groups within the CCM found themselves in direct conflict with the official practice of the Church in matters of exorcism. This brief excursus traces the history of the movement⁷² and sets the background for the correctives that were eventually issued in the late twentieth century by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith [henceforth CDF].

The Pentecostal movement within Christianity, as practiced in the United States, can trace its beginning to the revival movement in the Negro Holiness Church in Los Angeles in the early twentieth century. From there it gradually spread across the country, through different branches of Protestant Christianity. The churches influenced by the pentecostal movement believe in the charismatic gifts of speaking in tongues, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and a ministry of healing that includes driving out demons from those claiming to be possessed. These gifts were not limited to ordained ministers of the given churches, but are believed to be imparted to whomever the Holy Spirit chooses, minister and congregant alike. Members of the pentecostal movement are said to receive such gifts directly from the Spirit and are called to use them accordingly.

In the early decades of the movement, mainstream Christian denominations were quick to doubt the reception of such obscure gifts and rejected their usage. However, by

⁷² Numerous histories of the Charismatic Movement within Catholicism exist. The following are the ones consulted for this study: R. QUEBEDEAUX, *The New Charismatics II*, San Francisco, Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983; M. NEITZ, *Charisma and Community: A Study of Religious Commitment within the Charismatic Renewal*, New Brunswick, NJ, Transaction Books, 1987; M. MCGUIRE, *Pentecostal Catholics: Power, Charisma, and Order in a Religious Movement*, Philadelphia, PA, Temple University Press, 1982.

the 1960s, the gifts of Pentecostalism were starting to be seen in a different light. The pentecostal experience had become a new way of encountering God. The experience had found its way even into Catholicism.

In the autumn of 1966, four faculty members at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, a Catholic institution, started holding regular meetings for prayer and discussion. Influenced by a book of pentecostal experiences,⁷³ they sought out the guidance of Protestant pentecostals to learn more about the charismatic style of prayer and gifts. From this nucleus, the CCM was born. The movement spread rapidly to other academic centers, including Notre Dame University in Indiana and Michigan State University. By 1974, the CCM boasted some 350,000 members.⁷⁴

CCM recognized many of the same gifts of the Holy Spirit as its Protestant counterparts. The list included speaking in tongues, prophecy, discernment of spirits, healing, and deliverance ministry. While Catholic charismatics do not question the gift of the Holy Spirit in Baptism and Confirmation, they believe that the Spirit also becomes present to a person in a decisively new way. The Spirit manifests itself especially through the person's Christian witness and by the conferral of charismatic gifts. It is the duty of every person to utilize the gifts he/she has received, whatever they may be.

Although the CCM had gained some acceptance by some of the clergy and members of the Church's hierarchy, it remained essentially a lay movement. From the earliest gathering of the four faculty members in Pittsburgh, the members of CCM have

⁷³ See D. WILKERSON, *The Cross and the Switchblade*, Old Tappan, NJ, Spire Books, 1963.

⁷⁴ MCGUIRE, *Pentecostal Catholics*, p. 6.

always believed that, as lay people, they were responding to the call of Pope John XXIII to help usher in a “new Pentecost” by renewing the Church. This belief in renewal was encouraged and guided by one of CCM’s most powerful allies, Cardinal Léon Suenens of Belgium. The movement eventually would rename itself to better emphasize this dimension, becoming the Catholic Charismatic Renewal [henceforth CCR].

For the most part, the CCR was well received and flourished in the communities and parishes where groups were established. For those who were inclined to the unique style of prayer that characterizes the CCR, the Spirit was seen to have bestowed its gifts and members grew in their commitment to bearing Christian witness. One practice, however, was to become problematic: deliverance ministry.

What is deliverance ministry? Under another name, it is a form of exorcism. Among the charismatic gifts believed to be conferred on CCR members by the Holy Spirit is the same gift that Tertullian believed all the baptized had received in common, that is, the ability to cast out demons or obtain deliverance. However, CCR members were aware of the fact that the official rite of exorcism could be used only with the express permission of the bishop and performed by a priest over an individual suspected of being genuinely possessed by a demon. A conflict of interest naturally ensued. CCR members believed not only that they were endowed with the ability to help those who came to them seeking relief from manifestations of the demonic, but also that they were under an obligation to come to such people’s aid. Since they did not wish to give the impression that they were functioning as Church officials, they devised a different nomenclature. Exorcism, in this context, became known as deliverance ministry, liberation prayer, or intercessory prayer.

The majority of the prayer groups under the CCR, mindful of the work performed by legitimately appointed exorcists, were cautious in their ministry. For them, it was important to discern whom they could assist by their private prayers and who should fall under the care of the exorcist. There is little doubt that boundaries were crossed over the years, but no documentation exists that could shed light on any abuses that may have occurred. By the 1980s, however, the CCR had become a mainstream prayer group with its own standardized practices and ministry.

Unfortunately, one problematic issue within the deliverance ministry continued to arise in the prayer meetings of the CCR and other similar prayer groups. There was a tendency, on the part of some, to use prayer texts drawn from the rite of exorcism when praying for the deliverance of individuals allegedly being assailed by demons. This apparently was not done with any disrespect for authority on the part of the individuals offering the prayers. However, the practice became a source of confusion for the persons seeking relief, especially in cases when the prayers were ineffective.

Perhaps it was to respond to this situation and similar ones in other contexts that, on September 29, 1985, the CDF issued a letter addressed to all bishops.⁷⁵ The document begins with the recognition of an increase in the number of prayer groups gathering to seek relief from demonic influence. The letter then proceeds to make three main points. Firstly, it summarizes c. 1172 by reminding bishops that a permission is required of them before an exorcist may proceed with the rite (§1) and by reiterating the qualities that must characterize the priest who is to function as exorcist (§2). The letter encourages the

⁷⁵ CDF, Letter, *Inde ab aliquot annis*, 29 September 1985, in *AAS*, 77 (1985), pp. 1169-1170, English translation in *CLD*, vol. 11, pp. 276-277.

bishops to show solicitude in this matter. Secondly, speaking directly to the matter presented above, the CDF states that the Christian faithful are prohibited from using both the formal prayers of the rite of exorcism and the prayers added to it by Pope Leo XIII. Bishops are to bring this matter to the attention of the faithful. Finally, bishops are to ensure that caution is to be exercised in cases where a lesser degree of demonic activity is encountered, that is, situations other than genuine demonic possession. If the prayer meeting is under the leadership of an individual who does not have the requisite authority in accordance with c. 1172 §1, he/she is prohibited from questioning the demon or seeking to know its name. Meanwhile, pastors must avail themselves of the opportunity to instruct the faithful about the tenets of the faith and encourage them to continue to gather for the purpose of prayer.

The matter of the use of exorcistic practices within the context of prayer groups would be taken up again when, on September 14, 2000, the CDF issued an instruction on prayers for healing.⁷⁶ Like the preceding letter, the instruction begins by recognizing the proliferation of prayer groups and their gatherings. Under the heading of “Doctrinal Aspects,” the instruction discusses the meaning and value of sickness and healing. CDF then goes on to stress the role of prayer in the economy of salvation. References are included on the charism of healing found in the New Testament and the treasury of prayers for healing that is available from the Church. The instruction finally focuses on the current practice of groups gathering for healing prayer, expresses its concern for appropriate conduct, and then issues ten disciplinary norms in that regard.

⁷⁶ CDF, Instruction on Prayers for Healing *Instructio de orationibus*, 14 September 2000, in *Notitiae*, 37 (2001), pp. 20-34; English translation in *ibid.*, pp. 51-65.

Norm eight is of particular interest to the present discussion. According to the Congregation, the diocesan bishop must closely moderate the ministry of exorcism. In addition, the prescriptions of c. 1172, the CDF letter of September 29, 1985 (detailed above) and nn. 13-19 of the introductory *praenotanda* of the 1998Exor are to be strictly adhered to when preparing for and performing an exorcism. The norm goes on to prohibit the use of the prayers of exorcism as found in the 1998Exor at healing services. Finally, the CDF forbids that such exorcistic prayers be inserted into the text of the Mass, in the other sacraments, and in the Liturgy of the Hours.

The Congregation in no way intended to discourage groups from coming together to pray on behalf of and over the sick. However, the use of the ritual prayers from the 1998Exor was deemed inappropriate for such gatherings, and a source of confusion for the faithful. Accordingly, it was decided that the prayer texts could not to be used outside the context of a major exorcism. A question remains, however, as to the use by prayer groups of the prayers found in appendix two of 1998Exor.

Conclusion

In no other time in its history did the official rite of exorcism undergo as many changes as were implemented in the twentieth century. From the time of its inclusion in the RR1614 until the beginning of the 1900s, the 1614Exor had appeared in two editions of the Roman Ritual, the original form promulgated by Paul V and the edition issued by Benedict XIV in 1752. The rite, however, remained practically unaltered when it appeared in its second edition. Later, in 1890, Leo XIII added what became a third

chapter to the rite, but again the rite itself was left unmodified. This would all change with the codification under one cover of nineteen hundred years of ecclesiastical law.

With the appearance of the 1917 Code of Canon Law and its three canons on exorcism, specific requirements had to be fulfilled in order to celebrate the rite of exorcism. Those requirements either reinforced what already existed in the 1614Exor or resulted from new legislation intended to regulate the use of the rite. Moreover, the 1917 Code established greater limitations on who could exorcise and under what circumstances. The new law precipitated a departure from the previous norm. The exorcist now had to be a priest, a requirement that amounted to a true reordering of Church practice. In addition, the permission of the Ordinary was now required in order to proceed with an exorcism. While this had not been a necessary condition explicitly stated in the 1614Exor, it could be found in the acts of provincial councils like those held in Milan before the promulgation of the official rite, but only in the form of particular laws. Certain directives in the new law reflected already existing practices such as the moral qualities deemed necessary for the exorcist and the singular importance of a diligent investigation to determine the reality of a case of demonic possession. Finally, other components of the legislation regulated who could be exorcised and who could perform exorcisms found in rites not pertaining to demonic possession.

The new editions of the Roman Ritual issued in 1925 and 1952 contained a version of the rite of exorcism that incorporated the new legislation of 1917 as well as, in the case of the latter edition, changes reflective of the advances made in the field of mental health. As the twentieth century unfolded, exorcists more actively engaged psychiatrists, psychologists, and other medical experts to help in the diagnosis of alleged

cases of possession. Those attempts to reach out were and are met, at least within the context of the United States, with varied reactions and this despite a manifest desire to make more informed diagnoses. Mental health professionals range in opinion from those who view the very idea of demonic possession as preposterous and exorcism as a form of magic to those who realize that there is such a thing as demonic phenomena and that only the Church has a remedy to offer. Then, somewhere in the middle, there is a group who encourages the use of exorcism for its placebo effect. Exorcists struggle to find medical professionals who are willing to consider the possibility of inorganic explanations for the manifestations that occur in some individuals. Certain authors further complicate the effort to achieve an accurate evaluation of alleged cases of possession by providing books that are then used by some for self-diagnosis.

In 1959, Pope John XXIII provided the impetus for the universal Church to begin a process of renewal. Over the course of the next forty years, the law of the Church regarding exorcism and the rite itself would be revised. John XXIII initiated the process for the updating of the Pio-Benedictine Code which would finally come to fruition in 1983. He convened the Second Vatican Council, which, in its first document, called for the revision of the sacramentals (SC 79). The revised rite of exorcism would be published in 1999.

Paul VI abolished the minor orders, including the obsolete order of exorcist, but not without making provision for episcopal conferences to request of the Holy See permission to establish additional ministries, including that of exorcist. John Paul II would ultimately be the pontiff responsible for the promulgation of both the 1983 Code of Canon Law and the 1998 revised Rite of Exorcism. Also, on various occasions, all

three of these popes publicly reaffirmed the Church's belief in the existence of the devil and his continued influence in human history.

The sole canon on exorcism in the revised Code essentially simplifies previous provisions. The revisers omitted the reference to a pre-exorcism investigation that has been required by the previous code. The list of moral qualities required of the exorcist was expanded to include knowledge. The new Code imposes limits on who may grant the permission for an exorcism. While it could come from any Ordinary in the 1917 Code, now the permission must come from the local Ordinary, that category includes the vicar general and episcopal vicar, but excludes the major superiors of clerical religious institutes of pontifical right and of clerical societies of apostolic life of pontifical right. The revised Code also restricts the category of those who may perform the rite (from priest to presbyter), but the latter was changed again in the 1998 rite to a priest (*sacerdos*), so as to include both bishops and presbyters.

The November 22, 1998 promulgation of the revised rite of exorcism by CDWDS supplanted the ancient rite. With a strong theological introduction, the 1998Exor contains new laws, including a change back to the use of the term *sacerdos* to indicate who can perform exorcisms, the requirement of special preparation on the part of the individual taking on the work of exorcism, and an emphasis on the office of diocesan bishop instead of the local Ordinary for granting the permission for an exorcism and overseeing the work of the exorcist, both on a stable and on an *ad actum* basis.

The new rite, while it became a target of negative criticism for having been compiled without consultation or input from experts, provides exorcists with a revised

format for celebrating exorcism. The rite admonishes the exorcist to exhaust all natural explanations for the manifestations that are occurring and thus achieve moral certitude before proceeding with the rite. It provides classic indicators to determine if demonic possession is actually taking place while stressing the importance of the careful monitoring of the possessed through the celebration of the rite. The rite itself incorporates the use of both supplicatory and imperative forms of prayer within the context of an updated prayer service.

Perhaps the greatest surprise surrounding the revision and promulgation of the 1998 Exor was the notification of the CDWDS that appeared in January 1999. The Congregation announced that, upon the request of the diocesan bishop, it would willingly grant to an individual priest the faculty to use on a regular basis the former rite of exorcism contained in the 1952 edition of the Roman Ritual. Although such a special faculty has the nature of a privilege *contra legem* and applies only to the priest to whom it is granted, the intention of the Congregation to “freely” bestow this privilege raises questions surrounding the actual significance of the revised rite itself.

The charismatic movement within Catholicism has struggled for more than thirty years to appropriately incorporate some form of deliverance ministry into its prayer meetings without being at odds with the institutional Church. For the most part, this has been accomplished. However, on two occasions, the CDF has had to respond to abuses by groups and individuals for using prayers drawn from the rite of exorcism. In both instances, the Congregation has issued correctives to protect the integrity of the practice of exorcism. Obviously, this has taken place as part of an on-going process.

CHAPTER 4

TWO RITES OF EXORCISM AND THE UNITED STATES

Introduction

The twentieth century was, as we have seen, an exceptionally active period of codification and revision within the Church. Certainly, other periods of history have served to bring about change. The Church does not exist in a vacuum. However, the last century of the second Christian millennium witnessed significant attempts by its leaders to guide the Church in thoroughly engaging the modern world.

The same type of upheaval that occurred within American society during the 1960s was mirrored in the Church as it underwent the renewal envisioned and inaugurated by John XXIII. The popes who followed him were largely responsible for implementing John's call and the Council's decrees. The result, at least for the practice of exorcism, was manifested in a single canon in an updated code and the revision of a rite dating back almost five centuries. Conscious of the innovations brought about in the twentieth century, we pose the guiding question for this final chapter: What do the revisions mean for the practice of exorcism?

The answer to the question will be presented initially within the context of an analysis of the revised rite of exorcism and its comparison to the former rite.¹ What do the rites have in common? In what ways is the 1998Exor different from 1614Exor? Is there any significance in the differences? Are there advantages in using one rite rather than the other? How has the work of the exorcist changed?

With a clear sense of the actual changes in mind, we will then turn to a discussion of a number of current issues surrounding exorcism as practiced and known in the United States. The issues to be addressed are: 1) American culture and belief in the existence of the devil, 2) reasons for the lack of a sufficient number of exorcists, 3) the exorcists themselves, 4) priests and exorcism, 5) training of new exorcists, 6) the revised rite in practice, 7) who are the people who seek relief, 8) the work of psychologists and psychiatrists, 9) the media, and 10) exorcism within the context of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

As with the conclusion of any study of this nature, there are usually matters left unresolved. What are the outstanding issues? Are there new issues that need to be addressed?

4.1 – A Comparison of the Rites

Perhaps the most obvious starting point for any comparison of the two rites of exorcism is the fact that both are grounded in the Church's consistent teaching on the existence and malevolent influence of the devil. Not only does the devil exist in the real

¹ For the sake of this analysis, the rite of exorcism found in the 1952 edition of the Roman Ritual will be used to represent the ancient rite.

world just as claimed in Catholic tradition and stated in the Catechism², but he interferes in the lives of people and, in certain instances, takes possession of their bodies.³

Admittedly rare, genuine cases of demonic possession are remedied through the sacramental known as the rite of exorcism. These are beliefs that have been reiterated time and again down through the centuries by popes, councils, and theologians.

In general, both the 1614Exor and the 1998Exor are comprised of introductory *praenotanda* followed by the actual rite of exorcism which includes rubrics. An additional series of prayers follows each rite. Structural differences exist in the way the two rites are formatted. However, these differences are more a matter of style and editorial preferences, and thus negligible for the purpose of this study.

The *praenotanda* of both versions offer preliminary directives to assist the exorcist in determining such matters as whether a case of possession is genuine. They also aid the exorcist in preparing for the celebration of the rite itself. The 1998Exor, however, quickly departs from its predecessor by opening with twelve *praenotanda* that provide, from a gospel perspective, the historical and theological backgrounds to the practice of exorcism, as already seen in chapter three. The revised rite also includes, at the conclusion of the *praenotanda*, two additional guidelines (nn. 37-38) that deal with the publication and translation of the rite in addition to making a provision for the creation of a pastoral directory for the use of exorcists. Nothing in the contents of these fourteen *praenotanda* was to be found in the 1614Exor.

² CCC 391, 395.

³ CCC 1673.

When the *praenotanda* of chapter one of the 1614Exor are compared with nn. 13-36 of the introductory *praenotanda* of 1998Exor, an overwhelming number of similarities are found. Among the more significant directives found in both rites is the listing of certain moral qualities that one expects to be exhibited by the officially appointed priest and the importance for him to be well educated in the subject of exorcism. The exorcist is also encouraged to draw on the expertise of medical professionals. When reviewing an alleged case of demonic possession he should be incredulous at first and he is to utilize the prescribed signs of possession to determine the authenticity or inauthenticity of the case under scrutiny. The exorcist must prepare by prayer and fasting before engaging the demonic foe. Likewise he should encourage the energumen to avail himself of the spiritual resources at his disposal, including prayer and the reception of the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist. Both rites encourage the presence of helpers to physically assist with the exorcism and to pray during the celebration for the relief of the afflicted. The old and the revised rites conclude with a prayer of thanksgiving for the success of the exorcism and a caution that the individual who has been freed from the demonic invasion should work in earnest to deepen his/her spiritual life so that a similar affliction may not recur.

There are noticeable differences in the *praenotanda* of the two rites but they are far fewer in number than the similarities. With this being said, it is important to recall the significant changes in the law pertaining to exorcistic practice presented in no. 13 of the introductory *praenotanda*.⁴ In addition, the 1998Exor explicitly states the need for the exorcist to acquire moral certitude before proceeding with the exorcism. The revised rite

⁴ The changes were discussed in chapter three of this work.

is also very clear as to when it may not be used, for example, in cases of persons plagued by bad luck or who believe that they are victims of a curse. An innovation of the 1998Exor is the inclusion, in eleven *praenotanda*, of a concise outline of the actual rite so that the exorcist may study its structure in brief prior to the celebration of the sacramental. While these points were not raised in the 1614Exor, the previous rite provided for circumstances or addressed aspects of the rite not explicitly stated in the revision. For instance, the 1614Exor readily allowed for an exorcism to take place in a private home for a just cause. The old rite also emphasized the importance of ascertaining the names and numbers of the inhabiting demons as part of the rite. As the result of medieval abuses, the exorcist, in the 1614Exor, was discouraged from diagnosing medical problems or dispensing medications to an energumen. Overall, these differences reflect more a change in emphasis than that of actual practice.

When a comparison of the two versions of the formal rite of exorcism is made, we find once again that the similarities far outnumber the differences. For instance, ten of the eleven psalms cited in the 1614Exor are also included in the 1998Exor, namely 3, 10, 12, 21, 30, 34, 53, 67, 69, and 90. Only psalm 117 does not appear in the revised rite. Interestingly, the theme of the omitted psalm is that of thanksgiving to God while the other ten psalms focus intently on the need for God's assistance and protection from evil. The most significant innovations to the psalms, implemented in the revised rite, are the addition of psalm prayers and the reformatting of the psalms in a responsorial style. Four gospel pericopes (Mk 16:15-18; Lk 10:17-20; Lk 11:14-23; Jn 1:1-14) are used in both versions of the rite. Two additional gospel passages are included in the 1998Exor. They are Mt 4:1-11 and Mk 1:21b-28. There is no clear indication why these two pericopes

were chosen from the pool of gospel passages that describe demonic activity and possession. The most noticeable difference among the psalms and gospel passages is the way in which they are presented. In the 1614Exor, all of the scripture texts were included in the actual rite. The 1998Exor, however, has Psalm 90 and Jn 1:1-14 set within the rite in chapter one while the remaining texts are presented as alternates in chapter two.

The Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the baptismal promises now replace the Athanasian Creed, used in the 1614Exor. As with many of the changes undertaken by the revisers of the 1998Exor, no explanation is given for the substitution. The supplicatory and imperative forms of the exorcistic prayers appear in sets in both versions of the rite. The 1998Exor, however, limits the number of sets to three while the old rite offers four. The revised rite further mandates that one form of the exorcistic prayers may not be used without the other. There is minimal correspondence in the exorcistic prayer texts between the two rites.

While the use of blessed water is found in both versions, the 1998Exor provides for the actual blessing of the water in the opening stage of the rite. In the 1614Exor, on the other hand, the water was blessed sometime prior to the rite's celebration. The recitation of the Litany of Saints assumes a more focal part of the celebration of the revised rite whereas in the former rite the litany served as an introductory prayer. The 1998Exor lends more emphasis to the laying on of hands and the communal recitation of the Lord's Prayer. Although both actions were present in the 1614Exor, a simplification of their usage has occurred. The concurrent placing of the exorcist's stole on the neck of the energumen with the laying on of hands is now omitted. And the suggestion to use other traditional prayers and canticles alongside the Lord's Prayer is no longer present.

Following the Lord's Prayer, in the revised rite, the exorcist is given the option to breathe on the face of the energumen (exsufflation), something not found in the former rite. The multiple signings of the cross on the forehead and breast of the energumen by the exorcist, present in 1614Exor, were eliminated in the revision process.

The first of the two appendices of the revised rite is not dissimilar in purpose to the prayers added by Leo XIII to the former rite. Although the prayer texts themselves vary both in content and in style, they are intended to bring relief from demonic influence over a person, a place, or a thing. The permission of the Ordinary is required in both versions. The second appendix is proper to the revised rite. It contains supplicatory prayers for the private use of the faithful to ward off the devil's interference. The main problem facing their usage, however, is accessibility. While some exorcists may be aware of the existence of the appendix of prayers, other people will not. It is difficult to recommend the use of something if its existence is unknown. Most people turn to their parish priest for direction when confronted with spiritual struggles, demonic or otherwise. They do not automatically seek out an exorcist.

Our analysis of the revised rite is now complete. At this point, it will be useful to highlight several scholarly articles on the topic that have appeared since the promulgation of the 1998Exor. The studies explore various aspects of the revised rite from the perspectives of canonists, theologians, and liturgists. Two of the articles came out as early as 1999, the same year the revised rite of exorcism was published. The first, by Nicola Giampietro, briefly traces the historical development of the practice of exorcism

through the revision of the old rite.⁵ While crediting the revised rite with greater flexibility, the author stresses the importance of the supplicatory prayers of exorcism over the imperative forms, suggesting that the latter should only be used as a last resort. This is a curious position to take considering that norm 28 of the introductory *praenotanda* ideally requires that both forms of the exorcistic prayers be used together.

The second article, from the same edition of *Notitiae*, focused on the structure of the revised rite itself.⁶ Its author, Giuseppe Ferraro, begins by exploring the general nature of the prayers utilized throughout the rite. He then offers a lengthy analysis of both the prayers found in the rite proper and the alternate forms found in chapter two. His work offers helpful insights into the formulation of the prayer texts of the revised rite.

A third study, by Alessandro Pistoia, examines the intricacies of the language used in various parts of the revised rite and ponders the difficulties that may arise when translating the rite into vernacular languages.⁷ The author concluded his work by offering some suggestions to facilitate the process. His insights would be particularly helpful to episcopal conferences undertaking the work of translation. The fourth study, by Achille Triacca, published in the same journal, focuses on the role of the Holy Spirit in the 1998Exor.⁸ Triacca calls the reader's attention to the frequency with which the Holy

⁵ GIAMPIETRO, "Il rinnovamento del Rito degli Esorcismi," pp. 164-176.

⁶ G. FERRARO, "Il nuovo Rituale degli Esorcismi, strumento della Signoria di Cristo," in *Notitiae*, 35 (1999), pp. 177-222.

⁷ A. PISTOIA, "Riti e preghiere di esorcismo: problemi di traduzione," in *Ephemerides liturgicae*, 114 (2000), pp. 227-240.

⁸ A. TRIACCA, "Spirito Santo ed esorcismo: in margine al recente Rituale," in *Ephemerides liturgicae*, 114 (2000), pp. 241-269.

Spirit is evoked throughout the rite and suggests possible reasons for this development. In a fifth study, Anthony Ward explores the addition of the psalm prayers to the rite. He explains how the prayers bring a context to each of the psalms that are used by the exorcist. Ward not only discusses the sources of the prayers but provides a brief commentary on them.

The last study of any import about the revision of the rite of exorcism was authored by canonist Ronny Jenkins and published in 2001.⁹ Jenkins begins this study by offering a fairly detailed historical overview of the development of the 1614Exor. He then proceeds to briefly outline the overall structure of the revised rite before discussing the Church's current discipline regarding exorcism. In the fourth part of his study, Jenkins methodically explores each component of the actual rite and then he concludes with his views on the relevance of exorcism today. Jenkins provides the most comprehensive discussion on the subject of the 1998Exor to date. It remains surprising that in the more than seven years since the promulgation of the 1998Exor no more studies have been published on this topic.

4.2 – The Present State of Exorcistic Practice in the United States

At the current time, a wide range of issues confronts the practice of exorcism in the United States.¹⁰ Many of these matters did not come into existence as a result of the

⁹ R. JENKINS, "History, Discipline and Ritual With Regard to Major Exorcisms in the Western Church," in *The Jurist*, 61 (2001), pp. 90-133.

¹⁰ The matters addressed in this section are drawn primarily from my own experience of working as an assistant to the exorcist for the Archdiocese of Chicago as well as from conversations with exorcists working in other regions of the United States. Since several of the exorcists' identities are not known

revision of the rite but have been present for a number of years. The following ten topics do not constitute an exhaustive list of issues. They are, however, among the matters most frequently discussed by exorcists who work in an official capacity.

1) It is impossible, when discussing the present state of exorcism, to ignore the distinct characteristics of the society in which the rite is celebrated. Therefore, the first issue to be addressed here is that of the particular context of the United States. A concern frequently raised by exorcists from this part of the world is that American culture has bred a strong tendency to deny the existence of the devil, especially as an autonomous being endowed with intellect and will. At best, the devil is perceived as some entity associated with evil and, resultantly, understood to be nothing more than an abstract concept. Such erroneous thinking has been supported over the past thirty years by theologians like Henry Kelly (cited in earlier chapters)¹¹ and the late professor Herbert Haag, formerly of the University of Tübingen.¹² This depersonalized conception of the devil is considered by exorcists to be a far more difficult foe to defeat because it only furthers people's disbelief in the devil. There is a common perception among exorcists that the devil's greatest victory rests in his ability to convince people that he does not even exist. Concomitant with this perception is the understanding that, as faith decreases, superstition increases correspondingly.

publicly, due to diocesan policy or as a result of their ministry, I will refer to them in generic terms throughout the remainder of this work.

¹¹ *The Devil, Demonology and Witchcraft* and *The Devil at Baptism*.

¹² Haag claimed to demonstrate the non-existence of the devil. His three principal works were: *Abschied vom Teufel*; *Teufelsglaube*; and *Vor dem Bösen ratlos*?

In addition, exorcists ministering in the United States claim that they find themselves functioning in a climate where moral relativism is on the rise. In this environment, the reality of sin has become completely subjectivized and any kind of moral authority is rejected. Those who are authorized to use the rite of exorcism state that they are doing so in a society that has become largely self-absorbed while at the same time the individuals who make it up remain aimless when engaging the problems of daily life. These circumstances provide the condition for the possibility of a higher rate of perceived demonic activity.

Another aspect that contributes to the complexity of the environment in which the exorcist finds himself is the growing tendency of Americans to live in isolation from one another. Thus, according to a recent article in the *Washington Post*, one quarter of Americans claim that they have no one with whom they can discuss personal problems.¹³ The end result is that people, more and more, exist and suffer alone. While seemingly unrelated to the work of the exorcist, this sense of existential isolation produces individuals who are more vulnerable to demonic attack, either real or imagined.

One final factor deserves mention when discussing the environment in which the exorcist must work. In the latter half of the twentieth century, alternative spiritual movements have grown in popularity in the United States by attracting people who had become dissatisfied with mainstream religion. Two emergent belief systems, in particular, have captured the popular imagination of individuals, namely New Age and

¹³ S. VEDANTAM, Social Isolation Growing in U.S., Study Says, 23 June 2006, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/22/AR2006062201763_pf.html (15 August 2006).

Wicca. The New Age movement, with its belief in reincarnation, channeling of spirits, and use of crystals, first appeared in the early 1980s. Wicca's adherents claim ties to ancient practices of magic and centuries-old neo-pagan religious movements. Both systems effectively convince their followers to abandon the beliefs associated with the practice of their religion and subscribe to the new self-centered system of thought.

Exorcists frequently encounter Catholics and occasionally non-Catholics who have abandoned their faith to experiment with either pseudo-religion but who eventually return to the practice of their faith. It is not uncommon for some of these individuals to experience manifestations of demonic influence and, albeit rarely, demonic possession.

2) Perhaps the single greatest struggle facing the practice of exorcism for the last forty years is that the number of exorcists being appointed is insufficient to meet the demand. American bishops are reluctant to appoint exorcists for a variety of reasons. The most frequently cited, either by their own admission or as perceived by exorcists in their conversations with bishops, are included here. a) The Roman exorcist, Gabriele Amorth, alleges, in an interview, that some bishops do not appoint exorcists because they themselves simply do not believe that the devil exists.¹⁴ Although a bold claim, several bishops told two American exorcists on different occasions that modern psychology and psychiatry can remedy all of the alleged demonic problems that may plague people. Ergo, there is no need for exorcists and exorcisms. b) The appointment of an exorcist and his ministry in general tend to cause a "media frenzy," as was the case in the Archdiocese of Chicago in 1999, with the first official appointment of an exorcist. The curiosity and

¹⁴ PACI, "The Smoke of Satan in the House of the Lord: An Interview with Rome's Exorcist, Father Gabriele Amorth," p. 54.

sensationalism aspects that surround the topic have deterred some bishops from appointing an exorcist, or if they do, this is done in secret. c) Several exorcists have reported that there are bishops who will not appoint an exorcist due to peer pressure or because they want to avoid undue criticism, be it from fellow bishops or from their own priests. d) Some bishops have the attitude that, since a neighboring diocese already has an officially appointed exorcist, any alleged cases of demonic possession they encounter can be referred to that other diocese. Several dioceses bordering on that of Chicago do not hesitate to direct their subjects there for assistance. This situation is not unique to Chicago. The Archdiocese of Indianapolis and the Diocese of Phoenix have had similar experiences. Unfortunately, diocesan bishops, who are caring for transient energumens, rarely, if ever, challenge the bishops of the home dioceses of the possessed to appoint their own exorcists.

Regardless of the reason for not appointing an exorcist, the end result is always the same: the denial of pastoral care to those afflicted with some form of demonic interference. Exorcists working in the United States have even encountered instances of individuals, genuinely tormented by the devil, who were turned away from their home dioceses without any kind of support or direction and were thus forced to search for an exorcist on their own. Some exorcists have developed a theory to account for the bishops' reticence in appointing exorcists. According to them, many bishops are not cognizant of the fact that exorcism is a form of pastoral ministry. They view any form of exorcistic practice as too esoteric and shy away from it. As a result, the bishops ignore a part of the Church's tradition and deny the faithful a sacramental that would bring needed relief to those who are tormented by the devil.

3) When attention is turned to the practitioners of exorcism themselves, it is staggering to realize that there are no more than seventeen officially appointed exorcists working in the United States. Seven dioceses have exorcists appointed on a stable basis¹⁵ and approximately ten exorcists work on a case by case basis in various parts of the country. The small number of authorized exorcists raises the concern about how to adequately diagnose the vast numbers of individuals who present themselves for liberation and, if the alleged possession is diagnosed as authentic, how to administer the sacramental in a timely fashion. Several exorcists have suggested that, in the dioceses where an exorcist has not been appointed, some type of intake process should be devised to gather basic data from the individuals who request the assistance of an exorcist. The information could then be used to help in determining the individual's actual need and how best to proceed with the case.

Another aspect related to the small number of exorcists is the concern that they may not always receive the proper care they need for their own well-being (both physical and spiritual) and the longevity of their ministry as exorcists. It may seem odd to raise the issue of exorcist burnout but the situation is becoming more critical. Exorcists are being confronted with an increasing number of individuals seeking relief, real or imagined, and, in each instance, the exorcist is responsible for drafting an appropriate plan of action. This, coupled with the fact that many of the exorcists in the United States are assigned as pastors or to some diocesan office, results in imposing an unusually heavy workload on them.

¹⁵ Archdioceses of Chicago, Indianapolis, and New York; Dioceses of Charleston, Palm Beach, Phoenix, and San Jose.

When speaking of exorcists, it is also necessary to raise the issue of those who have not been officially appointed. There are as many as a dozen known exorcists who function without permission throughout the United States.¹⁶ Legitimate practitioners frequently refer to these unauthorized exorcists as “lone rangers” or “independent contractors.” They come from different backgrounds. Some are retired priests who once worked as exorcists or who were involved in some form of deliverance ministry. Others believe that they are divinely called to this particular ministry and simply proceed to offer it. Still others are disenfranchised priests who view the ministry of exorcism as a means of correcting all that they think is currently wrong with the Church. News of their existence and how they can be reached are spread by word of mouth from those who have received help to those who are in search of deliverance. Since the permission of the diocesan bishop is required only for liceity,¹⁷ “independent contractors” can and, in many cases, probably do bring healing to the individual under demonic attack.

4) Exorcists periodically voice their frustration about fellow priests who frequently refer people to exorcists when there is no need to do so. It appears that priests forget at times that they have the power and spiritual means to help people, especially through the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist, and Anointing of the Sick as well as in spiritual direction. Many times exorcists meet with people who are experiencing some form of temptation or demonic assault, but there is no need for them to see a specialist, because their parish priest could offer them the relief they seek. Number 15 of the

¹⁶ See M. CUNEO, *American Exorcism: Expelling Demons in the Land of Plenty*, New York, Doubleday, 2001, pp. 257-269. Cuneo shares some of his experiences of interacting with itinerant exorcists.

¹⁷ See the discussion of this topic in chapter three of this study. For validity, the minister must be a validly ordained priest.

introductory *praenotanda* of the revised rite speaks about the spiritual assistance, especially by means of prayers and supplications, that a priest or deacon can offer to the person under attack.

A difficulty, however, often occurs at the parish level. According to the reports of several exorcists, the number of people who turn to their parish priest seeking relief from alleged forms of demonic influence is increasing. Surprisingly though, they are turned away by the priest who claims that he is exhausted and overwhelmed, unqualified to assist, or bluntly informs the individual that he/she is crazy and requires the services of a mental health professional. Because of the very nature of the issue, people frequently find their parish priest unwilling to listen and in some instances they are rudely treated. Such incidents are not limited to one part of the country but are occurring widely.

5) A relatively recent development and a sign of hope for exorcistic practice everywhere are the training sessions for exorcists that are now taking place both in Rome and in the United States. The Regina Apostolorum University in Rome offered its first program entitled “Exorcism and the Prayer of Deliverance,” from February through April 2005. The courses were repeated beginning in October 2005 and continuing into February 2006. In the U.S., a gathering of fifty participants (both lay people and clergy) took place in Green Lake, Wisconsin from August 20 – 25, 2006. The sessions included presentations for both new exorcists and veteran practitioners. Until then, there had been no formal process by which exorcists could receive training. They either studied under an experienced exorcist as an assistant or an apprentice, or they educated themselves by reading case studies and studying the rite and other relevant literature. Upon completion of the coursework offered to participants in the Wisconsin program, a number of new

exorcists will be appointed in American dioceses. These appointments will bring needed relief to the exorcists who are currently overburdened.

6) The next issue pertains to the revised rite of exorcism itself. A majority of exorcists in the United States considered the notification of the CDWDS to be a “lifeline” for those working in exorcistic ministry.¹⁸ The revised rite itself had not been well received. In fact, there was some question as to whether it had been received at all. After the promulgation of the revised rite, most of the exorcists had continued using the former rite until the revised rite was published and made available in 1999. Then, they immediately asked their bishops to request the indult of the Holy See so that they may continue using the previous form. To this day, at least eighty percent of the exorcists ministering in the United States use the 1614Exor. A number of the exorcists have experimented with the revised rite for a short period of time. Their conclusion, however, was that it was an inferior work. They judged the revised rite ineffective compared to its predecessor. Exorcists also viewed the use of the 1998Exor as much more restrictive than that of the former rite. Whereas exorcists would use prayers from the 1614Exor as a means of diagnosing if an individual was genuinely possessed, exorcists interpreted nn. 15 and 16 of the revised rite as not allowing any part of the rite to be used as a diagnostic tool. An additional problem continues to plague the revised rite in the United States: as of the writing of this study, an approved English translation of it is yet to come out.

¹⁸ The January 23, 1999 notification enables exorcists, at the request of their diocesan bishop, to obtain an indult from the CDWDS to use the former rite of exorcism contained in the 1952 edition of the Roman Ritual. The notification was discussed in chapter three.

7) The number of people who are calling diocesan chanceries requesting the services of an exorcist is steadily increasing across the United States. In the Archdiocese of Chicago, approximately twenty-five percent of the people who made inquiries in 2005 had already diagnosed themselves as demonically inhabited after reading books written by exorcists.¹⁹ In most cases, it was possible, using convincing reasons, to explain to these individuals over the telephone that they were not possessed or even demonically assaulted. The remaining seventy-five percent of the people who wanted to speak with or see the exorcist usually fell into one of three categories. Individuals of the first category clearly suffered from some form of pronounced mental illness (schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, etc.) and required prescription medications on a regular basis. These constituted about twenty-five percent of the contacts. There was little for the exorcist to do but to encourage those people to continue taking their medication and assure them of his prayerful support. At the other extreme were those individuals who, after thorough evaluation, clearly manifested a demonic presence, were diagnosed as possessed, and required the rite of major exorcism. Those cases made up less than ten percent of all calls received. The balance, or approximately forty percent, formed a middle group of individuals who were potentially suffering from a mild form of mental illness but who were also experiencing some level of demonic assault. It was this group that received the greatest amount of the exorcist's time, attention, and expertise.

Many of the callers were clearly products of their environment. They approached the exorcist with the "quick fix" mentality that permeates American culture. A significant

¹⁹ The percentages offered here are drawn from my own experience as the intake person for all calls related to occult matters coming into the chancery office of the Archdiocese of Chicago. They are based on the calendar year 2005. The type of books mentioned here was already discussed in chapter three.

percentage argued with the exorcist as to why they were convinced that they needed an exorcism. Some of these individuals refused to go through any formal diagnostic process.²⁰ Others simply wanted the exorcist to “work his magic” so that they may get on with their lives. In such moments the exorcist becomes something more than the practitioner of an exorcistic ministry. He becomes a catechist and an evangelist. On a regular basis, he has to undertake a journey of faith with the individuals who present themselves for healing. He works diligently to move them towards conversion. In the end, the demonic influences were removed from those who accepted to work cooperatively with the exorcist, most of the time without the benefit of the exorcistic rite.

8) A discussion of the viewpoints of psychologists and psychiatrists on demonic possession was already presented in chapter three. Of the three categories of specialists presented in the discussion, the first group, those who view the practice of exorcism as strictly a relic from less enlightened times, is obviously the most difficult for exorcists to work with and is the most detrimental to the genuinely possessed. Since mental health professionals in this category accept only organic explanations for all of the ills which torment people, they are not in any way open to the possibility that a demonic force may be at work. Instead, they prefer to treat the individual as exhibiting an extreme case of mental illness. The individual, as a result, is over-medicated to the point that he/she exists only in a catatonic state, oblivious to the world around him/her. Unfortunately, this is not a new phenomenon. In his study of possession and exorcism in the early 1970s, John Nicola wrote, “there are many people in mental institutions whose case file is marked

²⁰ Since they were unwilling to cooperate with the requisite diagnostic testing, the exorcist discontinued working with them.

‘incurably insane’ who would profit much more from exorcism than from psychiatric therapy.”²¹ Some exorcists themselves have erred on the side of being too skeptical, causing the energumen undue suffering and hardship by prolonging the presence of the demon within him/her.

Exorcists throughout the United States are constantly in search of mental health professionals who are willing to work cooperatively in diagnosing alleged cases of demonic possession. The role of objectivity is tantamount to the accurate evaluation of these cases. Psychologists and psychiatrists, who had previously considered an exorcism as having no more than a placebo effect, have since developed a new appreciation of the true significance of exorcism in the care of their patients, to the point of having become advocates for the ministry of the exorcist.

9) The issue of the media and their role in shaping the public perception of exorcism frequently belabors the ministry of the exorcist. Members of the press and television industry periodically request interviews with exorcists. They claim to act with the best of intentions and promise to present a balanced story about the work of the exorcist. Unfortunately, they regularly end up sensationalizing the report and paint the Church as a practitioner of medieval disciplines. The hope, on the part of the exorcist, is to offer a teachable moment whereby the faithful may be instructed in one aspect of their tradition and the general public can learn about the care the Church has for all people. As a result, and with but a few exceptions, exorcists are naturally more reluctant to grant interviews.

²¹ J. NICOLA, *Diabolical Possession and Exorcism*, Rockford, IL, Tan Books and Publishers, Inc.,

10) A tumultuous relationship between the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and the Church's ministry of exorcism has existed over the years. However, exorcists in the United States strive to interact with the members of CCR in their deliverance ministry. Since both groups have the care of the demon-afflicted as their primary focus, a sharing of resources is invaluable. In several of the dioceses that have an exorcist appointed on a stable basis, CCR members serve as part of a team that gathers data from individuals claiming to be tormented by demons. They work at a preliminary level of evaluation and pray with those seeking healing. In the Archdiocese of Chicago, certain members of the CCR assist the exorcist in the celebration of the rite of exorcism by praying in silence for the afflicted persons and, when necessary, by restraining them physically.

The issue of the role of the laity in exorcistic ministry remains contentious. Clearly, there is no room for discussion when it comes to the matter of major exorcism and who may celebrate it. The code and the revised rite provide the directives that shape its practice. There is no restriction, however, for the laity to use private forms of exorcism. As discussed in the first chapter of this study, there was a belief in the early Church that, through baptism, everyone, both men and women, received the power to cast out demons. Eventually, the Church, primarily as a response to abuses, created the order of exorcist and the result was to limit the use of exorcism. The rite that developed over the centuries came to be an act of the ecclesiastical order. This, however, did not prohibit the use of private exorcism by the laity.²² With the inclusion of Appendix Two in the

1974, p. 104.

²² See M. & D. LINN, *Deliverance Prayer: Experiential, Psychological and Theological Approaches*, Ramsey, NJ, Paulist Press, 1981, pp. 72-85; see F. MACNUTT, *Healing*, rev. and expanded, Notre Dame, IN, Ave Maria Press, 1999, pp. 167-184.

revised rite, the Church continues to encourage the faithful to pray for protection from the devil and his influences for themselves and on behalf of others. Private exorcism remains a ministry of all the faithful and can be used without permission of the bishop. Moreover, a future reform of the law could allow deacons and lay persons to perform major exorcisms, as the faculty to celebrate a sacramental is not a power of order of the divine law (cf. c. 1168).

4.3 – Outstanding Issues

The last section of this chapter aims to elucidate a few outstanding issues. The order in which these are dealt with does not necessarily indicate an order of priority. Several of the points were raised in the context of conversations with exorcists while others arose from this study. This is not an exhaustive list but it does reflect needs currently felt in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

1) There has been an on-going discussion about the possibility of creating a forum for the exorcists working in the United States. The purpose for such a structure would be multifaceted. Firstly, it would provide an opportunity for exorcists to share ideas about their ministry and to examine at trends in exorcistic practice. Secondly, exorcists could seek the advice of their peers and offer direction to one another. Exorcists who are new to the ministry would thus have the occasion to network with their brothers and receive the benefit of their collective wisdom. Fourthly, until there is a larger band of exorcists working in the United States and even after the number has grown, the forum would offer them a sense of solidarity and mutual support. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, such a structure would give exorcists the opportunity to gather together for pray and

spiritual refreshment. The International Association of Exorcists meets every two or three years outside of Rome as an international body. A national forum of American exorcists could assemble on one of the other one or two years, or even on a yearly basis. The moral support of such gatherings would undoubtedly be beneficial.

2) Number 38 of the introductory *praenotanda* of the revised rite provides for the creation by the conference of bishops of a pastoral directory to practically assist the exorcist in his ministry. The norm suggests the inclusion of documents that could inform the exorcist's judgment and direct him in the manner of addressing and questioning the alleged energumen. The knowledge acquired by experienced exorcists could contribute to further shape the directory. Considering the litigious climate that prevails in the United States, it may also prove helpful to include a section that would address such matters as the obligation of the diocese to the individual undergoing evaluation or the celebration of the rite. One diocese has already produced permission and release forms by which the energumen relieves the diocese of any responsibility should any complications result out of the celebration of the rite of exorcism. Other considerations could also be added as desired. The directory could be formatted in such a way as to reflect circumstances proper to the practice of exorcism in the United States. If it could receive the *recognitio* of the Holy See, a directory of this type could prove to be a tremendous help to new exorcists. If the conference of bishops does not take up this matter, however, it might be advisable for the exorcists themselves to prepare and publish a directory, either to be published privately or under the authority of a diocesan bishop. Since such a directory would not obtain the *recognitio* of the CDWDS, it would not be juridically binding

except under the authority of individual diocesan bishops who may promulgate it for their dioceses or require its use by a precept directed to their priests involved in this ministry.

3) As mentioned briefly in the preceding section (under point 3), a standardized intake form for use throughout a diocese could facilitate the gathering of information from individuals who believe that they are experiencing demonic attack. Certain types of data, common to all cases, must be gathered from those who present themselves for consultation with the exorcist. The intake form should elicit basic biographical information from the individual, including family history, religious background and current religious practices. Inquiries should include a brief summary of any and all physical and mental health issues as well as whether the person is receiving medication for any psychological condition or disorder. The individual should also provide a detailed account of any and all personal and familial occult activity, past or present. Finally, the person should elaborate on any manifestations that have occurred or are occurring that leads him/her to believe that there is demonic activity involved. The customary confidentiality policies should be followed in the use of all information gleaned by means of the intake form.

4) In 1983, Léon Cardinal Suenens published a book entitled *Renouveau et puissances des ténèbres* (*Renewal and the Powers of Darkness*). In it, he took issue with the way in which exorcistic ministry had been handled with respect to the charismatic renewal. At one point, he wrote, "Cases of genuine possession, which only the bishop or his delegate may deal with, are rare. But everything that falls short of possession in the

strict sense remains a blurred, ill-defined area where confusion and ambiguity prevail.”²³

He went on to raise concerns about the complexity of vocabulary, the inconsistency with which terminology was used, and the lack of adequate distinctions between genuine cases of possession and demonic influence. Near the end of the work, Suenens highlighted two specific matters that he believed needed to be addressed by the Church. The first one was a new pastoral teaching on the subject of exorcism.²⁴ That instruction, in his opinion, should be comprehensive in scope, addressing not only the traditional practice of exorcism but also the work and practices of groups like CCR and their ministry of deliverance. The second one was a daring call to revise the criteria used in the rite of exorcism to determine the authenticity of cases of possession.²⁵ According to him, the criteria were inadequate and needed to be more informed by modern science. Suenens’ requests, by and large, have gone unheeded. To this day, no new pastoral document on exorcism has been issued and the revised rite includes exactly the same criteria –neither more nor less – than were first published in the rite of 1614. Both matters raised by Suenens deserve further consideration and discussion.

5) At least one more issue is in need of a resolution. Although it may even appear insignificant, it remains a matter of controversy among exorcists. This is the issue of the language to be used in the rite. Is the use of Latin more than or just as efficacious as that of the vernacular? Exorcists have long debated this question, and a clear-cut answer may never be found. As a matter of fact, however, a majority of practitioners of the exorcistic

²³ L. SUENENS, *Renewal and the Powers of Darkness*, O. PRENDERGAST (trans.), Ann Arbor, MI, Servant Books, 1983, p. 74.

²⁴ See SUENENS, *Renewal and the Powers of Darkness*, p. 96.

²⁵ See *ibid.*, p. 94.

ministry lean more favorably to the use of Latin. They believe, based on the results it produces, that Latin is more effective than the vernacular languages. Against this, a minority would prefer to use the vernacular, but, as we have seen, no official English translation exists as of now. This debate will surely continue for some time to come.

Conclusion

Living as we do in what is frequently described as a post-Christian world, why is it necessary to retain the practice of exorcism? The answer is simple. The devil still exists. Regardless of which version of the rite of exorcism is used, the premise remains the same. The rite exists because the devil exists. In analyzing the 1998 Exor, the teaching of the Church on the existence of the devil is once again underscored. The comparative analysis of the two rites can be summarized as follows.

The series of *praenotanda* that introduce the revised rite depart somewhat from its predecessor. In the updating of the rite, twelve *praenotanda* were added to lay down a more solid scriptural foundation. No equivalent exists in the former rite. Some attention is also given to matters of translation and publication as well as the creation of a pastoral directory. The core *praenotanda* (nn.13-19) focus predominantly on canonical issues, guidelines for the use of the rite, and criteria for determining genuine cases of demonic possession. The majority of these norms have equivalents in the previous rite. Some, however, are new, especially those regarding the involvement in exorcistic matters of the diocesan bishop, as opposed to the local ordinary, the inclusion of both presbyters and bishops (*sacerdotes*) in exorcistic ministry, and the call for specific preparation by the

exorcist. Others changes are nuanced, like the explicit mention of the need to acquire moral certitude and the discouragement to use the rite as a diagnostic tool.

The comparison of the actual rite of exorcism in both versions results in the identification of many similarities. Ten of the eleven psalms found in the 1614Exor were retained in the revision as well as the four gospel pericopes. The revisers, however, added two other gospel texts and replaced the Athanasian Creed with three different creedal formulae. Although the prayers of exorcism vary in content and number between the two versions of the rite, the purpose remains the same – the removal of demonic influence. Additionally, there are alterations in the placement of certain prayers such as the litany of saints and the Lord's Prayer. But the use of holy water and the laying on of hands is consistently present in both versions. The 1998Exor does limit the number of signings of the cross and adds the exsufflation. The first appendix of the revised rite bears a strong resemblance to chapter three of the 1614Exor. Appendix two is an innovation in the rite of exorcism. It offers helpful prayers for use by the laity, but its comparative lack of accessibility is a problem.

It is surprising to see that so few scholarly works have dealt with the new rite. Does this reflect a lack of interest in the ministry of exorcism? Or perhaps everything has already been said?

The exorcists working in the United States are known for their lively discussions and deep convictions on their mission. Ten aspects of their ministry have been discussed in this chapter. The most fundamental challenge facing the exorcist is the disbelief in the devil's existence. This, coupled with the inclination towards self-absorption and

experimentation with alternative spiritualities, intensifies the need for the exorcist's ministry. The lack of practitioners further complicates the work of those who have been appointed, as some bishops prefer to turn a blind eye to the needs of the faithful. In this climate, exorcists seek to find balance in their ministry and contend with the fallout of the "lone rangers." Another issue is the neglect of their duties by parish priests when there is something that they could concretely do to assist the afflicted, if they are inclined to help. The training of new exorcists offers a glimmer of hope for the few overburdened practitioners currently scattered throughout the United States.

The revision of the ancient rite of exorcism has raised concerns about its quality and effectiveness. For the majority of exorcists who work in the United States, the 1998 Exor was never accepted and remains largely unused. Many of the people who seek the assistance of an exorcist share the prevalent mindset of American society and expect immediate relief from their affliction without any conversion of heart. The genuine cases of demonic possession continue to remain few in number, while those who suffer some other form of torment by the devil are numerous. The assistance of mental health professionals is crucial in the diagnosing of cases, but cooperative ventures are difficult to set up. A high percentage of psychologists and psychiatrists perceive the sensationalistic view of exorcism, often generated by the media, as an accurate reflection of the subject and do not want to be associated with exorcistic practice. The reports of the media, unfortunately, do not offer the pedagogical opportunities that exorcists would wish to use. Finally, the CCR's members seek to work cooperatively with exorcists in dispelling the devil's ploys but a new level of trust needs to be established, while the laity finds their role in the ministry of exorcism.

Various outstanding issues remain, at least in the United States. Those highlighted in this study are: the creation of a forum whereby exorcists could gather for support and prayer; a pastoral directory on exorcism, including elements of education and the sharing of experiences that might be published by the conference of bishops, a diocesan bishop, or privately by the exorcists themselves; the need to generate an intake form for the processing of cases of alleged possession; the need to finally address the unanswered challenges posed by Léon Suenens; and the lingering question of whether it is more beneficial to use Latin or the vernacular in the celebration of the rite.

Conclusion

From the beginnings of civilization, human beings have grappled to understand the world in which they live and, in particular, have tried to come to terms with the forces of evil at work in their world. Frequently, the use of some form of exorcistic rite was the response to counter perceived malevolent assaults. The books of the Hebrew Bible, especially the intertestamental literature, witness to this response.

The ministry of exorcism assumed a radically new dimension with the dawning of the Christian era. The work of Jesus Christ as exorcist and the commission to do likewise that he gave to his disciples were indicators of the in-breaking of the kingdom of God. They also signaled the ending of the tyranny of the devil's reign. As a result, exorcism became an integral part of the ministry of the Church.

In the ancient Church, the work of exorcism could be exercised by all Christians in virtue of their baptism. Over time, largely due to abuses, this ministry was limited to the order of exorcist or to those duly appointed by ecclesiastical authority. Exorcistic practice gradually became more formalized and elaborate, typical of liturgical development in general, as it moved from the simple use of Jesus' name to drive out the demonic presence to the addition of other words and actions. Over the course of the first five centuries of Christianity, indigenous exorcistic prayers evolved in various regions. At this time, no other dimensions of an exorcistic rite existed, nor were there any fixed criteria to determine the authenticity of a case of possession or guidelines to direct the celebration of the rite.

As the first millennium of the Christian era waned, exorcistic prayers, initially appearing in *libelli*, were preserved in the most prominent of the liturgical books, the sacramentaries. Without this fortunate circumstance, the remnants of these ancient prayers may have been lost.

The credibility of exorcists came under attack as a result of a general skepticism and a wide spread witch craze from the fourteenth through the seventeenth centuries. The integrity of exorcistic practice was restored, in part, by the development of quantifiable criteria for determining cases of genuine possession which unmasked the deceptions of charlatan energumens and exorcists alike. In addition, the formulation of guidelines for exorcistic practice brought consistency and clarity to the exorcist's work.

The publication of the 1614 Roman Ritual was a major accomplishment in the standardizing of the rite of exorcism. While debates still rage as to the definitive list of contributors to the rite, the influence of Charles Borromeo is undeniable. The 1614 Rite of Exorcism remained virtually unaltered for over four hundred years and is still in use today.

The twentieth century was a time of reform and revision in the Latin Church for both exorcism's praxis and the requirements necessary to be an exorcist. The Pio-Benedictine Code reordered the Church's exorcistic practice by limiting the rite's usage only to priests. The permission of the bishop to use the rite had become required as well. The later reforms inaugurated by John XXIII continued the renewal of the legislation pertaining to exorcism and the rite itself, culminating in c. 1172 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law and the 1998 Rite of Exorcism. The new Code abrogated the former one and

reduced the number of canons on exorcism from three to one. The revised rite likewise abrogated its predecessor and reordered the liturgy and practice of the Church. The changes in the new rite include a return to the word *sacerdos* to establish who can validly perform an exorcism (presbyters and bishops) and the requirement that the exorcist have special preparation. In addition, the competence of the diocesan bishop is enhanced by stressing his role in appointing an exorcist and by asserting that it is under his direction that the exorcist accomplishes his ministry. Perhaps in response to criticism of the new rite by some exorcists, a 1999 notification by the CDWDS announced that this congregation would freely grant the faculty to an individual priest to use the former rite as long as the diocesan bishop requested it. The long-term consequences of this notification for exorcistic practice remain to be seen. At present, a large percentage of exorcists working in the United States continue to use the former rite. They do so legitimately, but it is to be expected that new exorcists undergoing instruction will be trained in the use of the revised rite. Additionally, acceptance of the 1998 Rite of Exorcism should be more widespread once an approved English translation is available.

The interaction of psychologists and psychiatrists with exorcists as well as the interplay between the charismatic movement and exorcism factor into the discussion of exorcistic practice during the second half of the twentieth century. There is legitimate cause for concern in the care that the genuinely possessed are receiving at the hands of mental health professionals who do not believe in the possibility of demonic inhabitation. The present practice by some physicians of over-medicating the afflicted individual and institutionalizing them does not address the real roots of their problem. Further attempts at open dialogue are needed. Unlike many mental health providers, members of the

charismatic movement tend to believe too readily in the presence of demons and too readily resort to exorcistic prayers. These tendencies and similar issues have been addressed twice by the CDF. Here again, a balance must be achieved in the diagnosis and resulting care of energumens.

In comparing the revised rite of exorcism to its predecessor, it is evident that there are more similarities than differences in both the *praenotanda* and the actual rite of the two versions. The principal changes in the law have already been pointed out. What remains, for the most part, are a number of small changes with little alteration to the substance of the rite. While the exorcistic prayers fashioned for the revised rite are new, they are intended to produce the same result as the prayers contained in the ancient rite, that is, to drive out the devil. The addition of theological *praenotanda* and the rearranging of elements of the celebration do not constitute a new approach to exorcism. To paraphrase the words of Michel Marescot cited in chapter two: nothing much new, much the same, a little from altering.

A major challenge facing the practice of exorcism at the present time arises from cultural realities, and another challenge is the dearth of qualified exorcists. In the present culture of the United States, disbelief in the devil's existence, moral relativism, growing isolationism, and experimentation with alternative spiritualities all militate against the exorcist's work. This cultural environment, coupled with too few practitioners, deleteriously affects individuals who genuinely need spiritual assistance but have no access to it. Unauthorized exorcists and priests who are unwilling or ill-prepared to care for the demonically-tormented only complicate the situation and often worsen it.

American exorcists, often overburdened, are nevertheless encouraged by training programs being offered for new exorcists. They realize that the culture of the United States is not going to change radically any time soon or that every diocesan bishop will appoint an exorcist, but the gradual increase of officially authorized exorcists provides hope.

Not the least among the problems regularly confronting the exorcist today is that of individuals who come seeking relief from perceived demonic afflictions without the desire to change their heart. For them, the exorcist must be a catechist and an evangelist. The exorcist needs to provide a “teachable moment” for them, as also in his communications with the media. The pastoral objective should be to help afflicted persons toward true healing, not just a “quick fix.”

What, then, does the future hold for the practice of exorcism? The response of the faithful to three challenges may well determine the outcome of this question. The first is the challenge to believe in the power of God. Every age has had to grapple with its questions about the existence and machinations of the Evil One. The devil, according to sacred tradition, is going to do everything in his power to thwart the full realization of the kingdom of God, though he is only a finite creature. The challenge for the believer is to recognize, despite indications to the contrary in modern society, that Christ has vanquished the Evil One and that the Church continues his salvific mission. The second challenge is to continue the renewal begun by John XXIII and Vatican II: *Ecclesia semper reformanda est*. In every age, the Church must work to renew itself and to express itself in a way that responds to the signs of the times. However, this does not mean jettisoning the past. There are strong indicators that this renewal is taking place

with respect to the practice of exorcism. The former rite of exorcism has been revised. New exorcists are being trained. Pope Benedict XVI has warmly encouraged the work of exorcists. The renewal continues. The third challenge is to maintain hope. The response of Christianity to the devil's ploys is to be found in the person of Jesus Christ and the exorcistic ministry he bequeathed to the Church. The revision of the rite of exorcism is more than simply the fulfillment of the Second Vatican Council's mandate (*SC 79*), it is also cause for hope. Through the celebration of the rite, afflicted persons find relief and hope is sustained that the power of God ultimately triumphs over the power of evil.

Ecce Crucem Domini, fugite, partes adversae.

Appendix 1

[The following is a translation of the *praenotanda* from *De exorcismis et supplicationibus quibusdam* (editio typica 1999) rendered into English by Pierre Bellemare of Saint Paul University.]

Praenotanda

I. The Victory of Christ and the Church's Power against Demons

1. The Church firmly believes that there is one only true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the one originator of the universe, creator of all things visible and invisible.¹ Now God in his providence protects and governs all that he has created (cf. Col 1:16),² and has created nothing that was not good.³ Even "the Devil . . . and other demons were good in their nature when created by God, but became evil by their own doing."⁴ They would therefore be good, if they had remained as they were created. But because they put their natural pre-eminence to evil use and did not abide in the truth (cf. Jn 8:44), they did not pass into a contrary mode of being but revolted from the supreme Good, to whom it was their duty to cleave.⁵

2. Man was created in the image of God "in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph 4:24), and his dignity requires that he act in accordance with his conscience and free choice.⁶ Urged by the Evil One, however, he completely misused the gift of his freedom; by his sin of disobedience (cf. Gen 3; Rom 5:12), he fell under the power of the devil and

¹ Cf. FOURTH LATERAN COUNCIL, cap. 1: *De fide catholica*: Denz.-Schönm. 800; cf. PAUL VI, *Professio fidei*: AAS 60 (1968), p. 436.

² Cf. FIRST VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius* de fide catholica, cap. I: *De rerum omnium creatore*: Denz.-Schönm. 3003.

³ Cf. S. LEO THE GREAT, Letter to Turibius *Quam laudabiliter*, cap. 6: *De natura diaboli*: Denz.-Schönm. 286.

⁴ FOURTH LATERAN COUNCIL, cap. 1: *De fide catholica*: Denz.-Schönm. 800.

⁵ Cf. S. LEO THE GREAT, Letter to Turibius *Quam laudabiliter*, cap. 6: *De natura diaboli*: Denz.-Schönm. 286.

⁶ Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, n. 17.

death, and became a slave to sin.⁷ Therefore “the whole history of mankind is filled by the bitter struggle against the powers of darkness, which began from the very beginning of the world and will endure until the last day, according to the word of the Lord (cf. Mt 24:13; 13:24-30 & 36-43).⁸

3. The almighty and merciful Father sent his beloved Son into the world to deliver men from the power of darkness and bring them into his own kingdom (cf. Gal 4:5; Col 1:13). Therefore, Christ, “the first-born of all creation” (Col 1:15), while renewing the old man, clothed himself in the flesh of sin “so that by his death he might destroy the one who had the power of death, that is the Devil” (Heb 2:14), and by his Passion and Resurrection, and by the gift of the Holy Spirit, constitute as a new creation our damaged human nature.⁹

4. In the days of his flesh, the Lord Jesus, victorious over temptation in the wilderness (cf. Mt 4:1-11; Mk 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-13), by his own authority, banished Satan and other demons, imposing on them his own divine will (cf. Mt 12:27-29; Lk 11:19-20). By doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the Devil, he manifested his saving work, to deliver mankind from sin and its consequences, and also from the one who is the original author of sin, a murderer from the beginning and father of lies (cf. Jn 8:44).¹⁰

5. As the hour of darkness approached, the Lord “becoming obedient unto death” (Phil 2:8), repelled Satan’s last onslaught (cf. Lk 4: 13; 22:53) by the power of the Cross,¹¹ triumphing over the pride of the ancient enemy. And this victory of Christ was revealed in his glorious resurrection, when God raised him from the dead and set him at his right hand in heaven and put all things in subjection under his feet (cf. Eph 1:21-22).

6. In the discharge of his ministry, Christ gave his apostles and other disciples power to cast out unclean spirits (cf. Mt 10:1-8; Mk 3:14-15; 6:7, 13; Lk 9:1; 10:17, 18-20). He promised them the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, proceeding from the Father through the Son, to convince the world of judgment, because the prince of this world is already judged (cf. Jn 16:7-11). Among the signs that will accompany believers, the casting out of demons is mentioned in the Gospel (cf. Mk 16:17).

7. Ever since apostolic times (cf. Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:18; 19:12), the Church has exercised the power she received from Christ to cast out demons and demonic influence.

⁷ Cf. COUNCIL OF TRENT, Session V: *Decretum de peccato originali*, nn.1-2, *Denz.-Schönm.* 1511-1512.

⁸ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, n. 37; cf. *ibid.* n. 13; 1 Jn 5:19; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 401, 407, 409, 1717.

⁹ Cf. 2 Cor 5:17.

¹⁰ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 517, 549-550.

¹¹ Cf. *Roman Missal*, Preface I of the Passion.

And so she prays continually and confidently “in the name of Jesus” to be delivered from the Evil One (cf. Mt 6:13).¹² In the same name also, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, she commands demons by various means not to hinder the work of spreading the Gospel (cf. 1 Thes 2:18), and to restore to the “one who is mightier” (cf. Lk 11:21-22) dominion over all things and indeed over every individual person. “When the Church publicly and authoritatively asks in the name of Jesus Christ that a person or thing be protected against the influence of the Evil One, and be subtracted from his dominion, this is what it called an *exorcism*.”¹³

II. Exorcism in the Church’s work of sanctification

8. In the most ancient tradition of the Church and one preserved without interruption, the path of Christian initiation is so ordained that the spiritual struggle against the devil’s power (Eph 6:12) is clearly signified and in reality begins therein. During their catechumenate, the simple form of exorcism is to be performed or the Church’s minor¹⁴ prayers of exorcism said over the elect, so that, instructed on the mystery of Christ’s deliverance of man from sin, they may be released from the consequences of sin and from the influence of the Devil, and strengthened on their spiritual journey, and that their hearts may be opened to receive the gifts of the Savior.¹⁵ Finally, in the celebration of baptism, those to be baptized renounce Satan and his influences and powers and counter him with their personal profession of faith in the one and triune God. In infant baptism also a prayer of exorcism is said over babies “who will experience the lures of this world and fight against the snares of the devil,” that they may be defended by Christ’s grace “on their journey through life.”¹⁶ By the washing of regeneration, man shares in Christ’s victory over the Devil and sin, when he passes “from the state in which . . . he is born a son of the first Adam to the state of grace and ‘adoption as sons’ of God through the second Adam Jesus Christ,”¹⁷ and is freed from the bondage of sin through the freedom which Christ has bestowed upon us (cf. Gal 5:1).

9. Although the faithful are reborn in Christ, they nevertheless experience the temptations of the world and so must be watchful regarding prayer and sobriety in their manner of life, for their adversary “the devil prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Pet 5:8). They must resist him, steadfast in the faith and strengthened “in the Lord and in the power of His might” (Eph 6:10), and sustained by

¹² Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 2850-2854.

¹³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1673.

¹⁴ Cf. *Roman Ritual*, Order of Christian Initiation of Adults, n. 101; cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1673.

¹⁵ Cf. *ibidem*, n. 156.

¹⁶ Cf. *Roman Ritual*, Order for Infant Baptism, nn. 49, 86, 115, 221.

¹⁷ COUNCIL OF TRENT, Session VI: *Decretum de justificatione*, cap. IV, *Denz.-Schönm.* 1524.

the Church, which prays that her children may be protected from all anxiety.¹⁸ By the grace of the sacraments and especially by the repeated celebration of the rite of penance, they receive strength to attain to the full freedom of children of God (cf. Rom 8:21).¹⁹

10. The mystery of divine love is, however, more difficult for us to understand²⁰ in those instances which God sometimes allows to occur, when in a special way, the Devil besets or possesses someone who has been joined to the people of God and illumined by Christ in order to walk as a son of light upon the path that leads to eternal life. It is then that the mystery of the lawlessness which is at work in the world (cf. 2 Thes 2:7) manifests itself clearly (cf. Eph 6:12), although the Devil cannot pass the limits set by God. This form of diabolical power over man differs from that deriving from original sin, which is sin.²¹ When such instances occur, the Church offers prayer to her Lord and Savior Christ, and relying on his power, she offers to the faithful beset or possessed many means of help whereby they may be delivered from such assault or possession.

11. Foremost among these means of aid is the solemn form of major exorcism, also called "great,"²² which is a liturgical celebration. In fact, exorcism, by this means, aimed at "driving out demons or delivering one from demonic attack by virtue of the spiritual power which Jesus entrusted to his Church," is a petition²³ by which its nature ranks among sacramental rites; it is, therefore, a sacred sign by which "effects, especially spiritual effects, are signified and gained by the prayer of the Church."²⁴

12. In ceremonies of major exorcism, the Church, joined to the Holy Spirit, beseeches Him to aid our infirmity (cf. Rom 8:26) and constrain demonic powers from injuring the faithful. Relying on that inbreathing whereby the Son of God bestowed the Spirit after his resurrection, the Church in exorcism acts not in her own name but solely in the name of God or of Christ the Lord, to whom all things, even the devil and demonic powers, must render obedience.

¹⁸ Cf. *Roman Missal*, Embolism following the Lord's Prayer.

¹⁹ Cf. Gal 5:1; *Roman Ritual*, Order of Penance, n. 7.

²⁰ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, nn. 14-22: AAS 77 (1985), pp. 206-207; idem, Encyclical Letter *Dominum et vivificantem*, n. 18: AAS 78 (1986), p. 826.

²¹ Cf. COUNCIL OF TRENT, Session V: *Decretum de peccato originali*, cc. 4 and 5: *Denz.-Schönm.* 1514-1515.

²² Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1673.

²³ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁴ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum concilium*, no. 60.

III. The Minister and the Conditions for the Performance of Major Exorcism

13. The power to minister exorcism to those possessed is granted by special and expressed permission of the local Ordinary, who will, as a rule, be the diocesan bishop himself.²⁵ Such permission must be granted only to a priest possessing devotion, knowledge, prudence, and integrity of life,²⁶ who has undergone specific preparation for this function. The priest, in fact to whom the role of exorcist is entrusted, whether on a regular basis or for a specific occasion, must carry out this work of charity with faith and humility, under the direction of the bishop of the diocese. When the term “exorcist” is used in this document, it must always be taken to mean “priest-exorcist.”

14. In any case of so-called diabolical possession, the exorcist must above all exercise necessary and extreme circumspection and prudence. In the first place, he must not be too ready to believe that someone beset by some illness, especially mental illness, is a victim of demonic possession.²⁷ Likewise, he should not immediately believe that possession is present as soon as someone asserts that he or she is in a special way tempted by the Devil, abandoned, or indeed tormented, for people can be deceived by their own imagination. He should also not be misled by those wiles and crafts which the Devil uses to trick mankind into persuading those possessed that they should not undergo exorcism, but rather that their infirmity arises from natural causes or requires medical treatment. He must use every means to investigate accurately whether the victim’s claim to be tormented by a demon is really true.

15. He must correctly distinguish cases of devilish attack from instances of that credulity whereby some people, including even the faithful, think themselves victims of evildoing, of bad luck, or of a curse brought by others upon them, their dear ones, or their goods. He should not deny them spiritual help, but must by no means resort to exorcism. He may, in fact, offer suitable prayers in their company and on their behalf, so that they may find the peace of God. Likewise, there are believers whom the Evil One does not touch (cf. Jn 5:18), but who are badly tempted by him when they desire to hold fast to their loyalty to the Lord Jesus and to the Gospel. This can be done by a priest who is not an exorcist, or even by a deacon, using suitable prayers and supplications.

16. The exorcist, therefore, should not proceed to celebrate the rite of exorcism unless he has discovered to his moral certainty that the one to be exorcised is in actual fact possessed by demonic power,²⁸ and should, if possible, have the tormented person’s consent.

²⁵ Cf. *CIC*, c. 1172 §1.

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, §2.

²⁷ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1673.

²⁸ Cf. BENEDICT XIV, Letter *Sollicitudini*, 1 October 1745, n. 43; cf. *CIC/17*, c. 1152 §2.

According to approved practice, the following are regarded as signs of demonic possession: extended utterance in an unknown tongue, or the ability to understand such utterance; the power to reveal what is distant and hidden; and the displaying of physical strength beyond what is appropriate to one's years, or natural state. These signs can offer some indication. But since signs of this sort are not necessarily to be considered of devilish provenance, attention should be paid to other factors, especially in the realm of the moral and the spiritual, which can in a different way be evidence of diabolic intrusion. Examples of these are a violent aversion to God, the Most Holy Name of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints, the word of God, holy things, holy rites (especially of a sacramental nature) and holy images. And finally, careful consideration must be given to the manner in which all signs relate to faith and the spiritual struggle in the Christian life; for indeed, the Evil One is, above all, the enemy of God and of all that unites the faithful to the saving work of God.

17. Regarding the need to use the rite of exorcism, the exorcist will prudently judge this after a diligent investigation, always maintaining the seal of confession and after consulting, as far as possible, experts in spiritual matters and, according to need, such experts in medicine and psychiatry who have some awareness of spiritual matters.

18. In cases involving one who is not a catholic and in other more difficult circumstances, the matter is to be referred to the diocesan bishop, who may, at his discretion, seek the advice of several experts before a decision is reached regarding exorcism.

19. Exorcism is to be carried out in such a way that it manifests the faith of the Church and no one can consider it a magical or superstitious act. Care is to be taken that it does not become a spectacle in the eyes of those present. One shall not afford in any way to any of the media any opportunity to get involved, either during or before the exorcism, and, afterwards, the exorcist and those who were present must preserve due discretion and disclose no information.

IV. The Rite to be Followed

20. In the rite of exorcism, in addition to the actual forms thereof, special attention is to be given to those rites and gestures whose original place and meaning derives from those used at the time of purification during the journey of catechumens. These include the sign of the cross, the laying on of hands, breathing on the candidates, and sprinkling with blessed water.

21. The rite begins with the sprinkling with blessed water, by which, being as a reminder of the purification received in Baptism, the one tormented is defended against the snares of the enemy.

If convenient, the water can be blessed before the rite or during the rite itself, before the sprinkling, and salt may be mingled with the water.

22. There follows the litany, in which the mercy of God is invoked, through the intercession of all the Saints, upon the one tormented.

23. After the litany, the exorcist may read one or more psalms which implore the protection of the Most High and extol Christ's victory over the Evil One. The psalms are recited either straight through or responsorially. When the psalm is finished, the exorcist may himself add the appropriate psalm prayer.

24. Then the Gospel is proclaimed as a sign of the presence of Christ, who through his own word as proclaimed by the church, heals the infirmities of mankind.

25. Next, the exorcist lays his hands on the one tormented, whereby the power of the Holy Spirit is invoked, so that the Devil may depart from the one who became a temple of God through Baptism. At the same time, the exorcist may also breathe on the victim's face.

26. At that point, the creed is recited or the promises of baptismal faith are renewed, along with the renunciation of Satan. There follows the Lord's Prayer, in which our God and Father is implored to deliver us from Evil.

27. When these things have been done, the exorcist shows the victim the cross of the Lord, which is the fount of all blessings and grace, and makes the sign of the cross over him, by which Christ's power over the Devil is indicated.

28. He finally pronounces the deprecative formula, by which God is entreated, as well as the imperative formula, by which the Devil is directly adjured in the name of Christ to depart from the tormented person. The imperative formula is not to be used unless preceded by the deprecative. However, the deprecative formula can also be used without the imperative.

29. All things already mentioned can be repeated according to need, whether during the same celebration, taking account of the content of n. 34 which follows, or at another time, when the tormented person is completely free.

30. The rite is concluded with a song of thanksgiving, a prayer, and a blessing.

V. Circumstances and Modifications

31. Mindful that demons can be cast out by prayer and fasting, the exorcist should, as much as possible, ensure that, after the example of the holy fathers, both he and others avail themselves of these two powerful remedies that one may use to obtain divine help.

32. The faithful person who is troubled might, and especially before exorcism, if it is within his or her power to do so, to pray to God, practice mortification, frequently renew the faith of the Baptism once received, and with greater frequency, make use of the sacrament of reconciliation, as well as fortify himself or herself with the Holy Eucharist. If prayer too easily escapes him or her, his or her parents, friends, and confessor or spiritual director can assist him or her in prayer by their love and by the fact of their presence as other members of the faithful.

33. If possible, exorcism should be carried out in an oratory or other suitable place. It should take place out of the public's way and where an image of the Crucified is prominently displayed. There should also be present in that place a likeness of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

34. Having regard to the state and circumstances of the one who is tormented, the exorcist should feely make use of the various options set forth in the rite. Accordingly, for the celebration of the rite, he should keep to such structure and arrangement and select such forms and prayers as are needful, ordering all things according to the circumstances of the individual person.

a) He should, first of all, pay attention to the physical and psychological state of the tormented person, and to the way in which this may possibly vary from day to day or from one hour to the next.

b) When the faithful are not present, even in small numbers, as discretion and wisdom require as a matter of faith, the exorcist should remember that the presence of the Church is now constituted in himself and the victim, and should remind of this fact the faithful person who is afflicted.

c) The faithful sufferer should, if possible, do his or her best to remain entirely recollected during the exorcism, and should turn to God and pray to him with steadfast faith and in all humility for deliverance. And when he or she is more vehemently tormented, he or she should patiently suffer, never despairing of the help of God, (reaching him or her) through the ministry of the Church.

35. If it seems desirable that certain carefully selected persons be permitted to be present at the celebration of exorcism, they should be admonished to pray fervently for their brother or sister who is afflicted, either privately or in the manner indicated in the rite, refraining, however, from uttering themselves any formula of exorcism or any formula, either deprecative or imperative, for the use of those is the exclusive prerogative of the exorcist.

36. It is appropriate that the faithful person when delivered from affliction should, both on his own and together with friends and family, render thanks to God for the peace which has been granted to him (her). Moreover, the person who has been delivered should be prevailed upon to remain constant in prayer, drawing especially on the resources of Holy Scripture. He/she should make regular use of the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, as well as strive to lead a Christian life filled with works of charity and with fraternal love towards all.

VI. Modifications which may be made by Bishops' Conferences

37. It is the task of Bishops' Conferences:

a) to prepare translations of texts that are to be complete and faithfully preserve the sense of the original;

b) with the consent of the Holy See, to modify signs and gestures of the actual rite, if this is judged necessary or advantageous, having regard to the culture and national character of the people.

38. In addition to a translation of the *Praenotanda*, which must be retained in full, Bishops' Conferences may, if they consider it advantageous, add a *Pastoral Directory on the Use of Major Exorcism*. This is to enable exorcists not only to understand more deeply the teaching of the *Praenotanda* and to appreciate more fully the significance of the rites, but also to have available in collected form documents from approved authors on the manner of acting, speaking, questioning, and forming judgments. Directories of this sort, which may be compiled with the collaboration of priests who have the knowledge and mature experience gained from long exercise of the ministry of exorcism in every region and culture, must have the *recognitio* of the Apostolic See, according to the norm of the law.

Appendix 2

[The following is a translation of the exorcistic formulae from chapter two of *De exorcismis et supplicationibus quibusdam* (editio typica 1999) rendered into English by Morton Gauld of the University of Aberdeen.]

III

Formulae of Exorcism

Supplicatory formula

O God of heaven, God of earth, God of angels, God of archangels, God of patriarchs, God of prophets, God of apostles, God of martyrs, God of priests, God of virgins, God of all the saints; O God, you have power to give life after death, rest after toil; there is no other God but you, creator of all things seen and unseen. O God, you desire that all mankind be saved, and so loved the world that you gave your only-begotten Son to bring to naught the works of the Devil. We humbly entreat your glorious majesty to deliver this your servant *N.* from all the power, the snares, the deceits, and wickedness of all the spirits of hell, and to keep him (her) in safety. We beseech you, O Lord, send forth the Spirit of truth, which your Son promised to his disciples; as once you cast down the devil like lightning from the heavens, so now send forth the Paraclete from above to drive far away the accuser and oppressor of mankind and protect us against all that would harm us. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Imperative formula

I exorcize you, ancient enemy of mankind: be gone from *N.* whom God created. I command you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, by His humility, defeated your arrogance, by His generous bounty, overthrew your jealousy, by His gentleness, trampled your fury. Be silent, father of lies, nor hinder this servant of God from blessing and praising the Lord. I command you in the name of Jesus Christ, wisdom of the father and splendor of truth, whose words are spirit and life. Come out from him (her), unclean spirit; yield to the Holy Spirit. I command you in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, who was born in purity of the Spirit and the Virgin and cleansed the whole world by His blood. Be gone, therefore, Satan; be gone in the name of Jesus Christ, who in His might cast you out by the finger of God and destroyed your kingdom. By the faith and the prayer of the Church, depart! By the power of the holy + Cross, flee. For by the Cross, the gentle Lamb who was sacrificed for us, saved us from your cruel dominion, even our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Supplicatory formula

Holy are you, O Lord of hosts; heaven and earth are full of your glory, for everything that the whole universe contains was created by you. You are enthroned above the Cherubim and your dwelling is on high; you look upon heaven and earth and behold the depths. Let your eyes, Lord, be open to the affliction of *N.* who you have created, for whom we now offer to you our prayers. Call forth your power and send your Holy Spirit to beat off every assault of the Devil and confound all his snares and deceits, so that this your servant may be made pure in heart and mind and serve you alone as he (she) ought. O God, the creator and restorer of mankind, in the beginning you made mankind after your own image and gave them charge over the whole world, so that, serving you alone, their Creator, they might govern all your creatures. Remember, O Lord, our human condition, wounded as we are by sin, and show your goodness to this your servant *N.*, who is helpless before the deceits of the Devil; deliver him (her) now from the enemy, so that he (she) may acknowledge you alone as Lord and God. O God of infinite mercy, you sent your only-begotten Son into the world for our redemption, so that none who believe in him should perish, but have eternal life. You lifted up your Son upon the Cross, to wipe out our sentence of death and draw all things to Himself. We beseech you, mercifully hear the prayer of your Church for your servant *N.* in his (her) tribulation: drive away from him (her) all adversity; let your right hand protect your servant, whom Jesus Christ our Lord redeemed by the shedding of His blood. We ask this through Him who lives and reigns with you for ever and ever. Amen.

Imperative formula

I exorcize you, by the living God, by the true God, by the holy God, foul spirit, enemy of faith, foe of mankind, bringer of death, father of lies, root of all evil, seducer of man, architect of deceit. I adjure you, accursed dragon: in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, be now rooted out and put to flight from this creature of God. I command you in the name of Jesus Christ, who commanded the sea, the winds, and the storms. I command you in the name of Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God made flesh, who for the salvation of our race, ruined by your enmity, humbled Himself and became obedient unto death. Go in terror of Him who was offered for sacrifice in Isaac, who was sold in Joseph, who was slaughtered as a lamb, who was crucified as man, who then triumphed over death. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God; flee in trembling as we invoke the holy name of Jesus: hell trembles before Him; the Powers of heaven, Thrones and Dominions are made subject to Him; Cherubim and Seraphim sing His praise, as with unwearying voice they cry: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of power and might. Be gone, therefore, in the name of the Father, + and the Son, + and the Holy + Spirit: yield to the Holy Spirit by this sign of the holy + Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

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