

The Religious Grounds of Possession and Exorcism in the History of Christianity

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Abstract

In the *Holy Bible*, we are face with some evil creatures that are considered as enemies of God, Jesus Christ, and Christians. Perhaps, the most significant and tangible declaration of presence of these creatures is in possessing human beings, and on the other hand, the role of Jesus and his apostles in the expulsion of them.

In this article, we have first dealt with the concept of possession and exorcism, then, exemplums and implications existing on this subject in the Old Testament and New Testament have been mentioned in detail, and the subject is thematically classified. And at last, a brief chronicle of exorcism in the history of the Christianity has been presented

This query indicates that, unlike religions such as Islam, in which issues such as exorcism fit within the realm of the popular and informal religion, in Christianity, especially Catholicism, the approach towards this issue, in the normative religion and the popular religion, is intertwined, and it is almost impossible to separate them. In fact, exorcism is the junction, sharing point, and even the rivalry between the normative and the popular religion. Therefore, the Catholic Church insists on monopolizing the rituals associated with it.

Keywords: Possession, Exorcism, the *Holy Bible*, Catholic Church, Popular Religion.

1. Introduction

1-1 Conceptual and lexical exploration

In the worldviews that believe spirits have a hand in people's lives, it is believed that when a person seems excited, and speaks and acts with eagerness and passion, there is a good spirit within him giving him the passion of life; but if he is filled with craziness, an evil spirit has taken over him and is causing all this unhappiness for him. Based on these beliefs, there is no sick or ill person who doesn't carry a trace of these within himself (Durkheim, 1912, 68-69). This is the main point of possession.

“Possession” is a word used in the English language to describe full ownership of, or capturing something fully. In Christian literature, this word is applied to complete possession by a spirit in a form similar to hypnosis (Welte, 2006, 1676). Possession usually refers to a phenomenon in which a human being is filled with supernatural forces that are more powerful than themselves. These supernatural beings could be the souls passed away ancestors, spirits, or even both (Boddy, 1994, 407). In such a case, the spirit takes complete control over the possessed person, or at least deeply influences his actions.

Possessing spirits can fit into one of these three groups: good and useful spirits, evil and crazy spirits, and souls of recently passed away (Caciola, 2005, 2928). Accordingly, possession could be positive or negative.

The vastest influence of believing to possessing spirits -in its positive form-, may be found within the Shamans. In Shamanism, sickness happens when an evil spirit enters the body or a good spirit leaves it. And so, Shaman is someone who can relieve the sick person; someone with the ability to connect with spirits. A shaman can enter or bring out a spirit from a body by entering a spirit into his own body for assistance (Eikemeier, 2006, 1724).

The Shamans are not the only ones to believe in the positive side of possession. Being possessed by the Holy Spirit is also one of the positive possessions, and Christians believe in that. Further on we shall see that, based on the Old Testament, good spirits have taken over some people; And Based on the New Testament, Jesus himself was glorified by the Holy Spirit (*John* 7: 37-39, 16: 13-15, *Romans* 1: 3-4, *John* 16: 14-15, *Acts* 2: 33, *John* 16: 13-14, *Revelation* 22: 17).

Possession may also be classified based on the characteristics of the host or victim: unwanted possession and self-wanted possession. In the self-wanted possession, the person is willing to open himself to a spirit so with the entrance of that spirit its powers and characteristics will also transfer into him; in such cases, the person opens his body to good and helpful spirits.

In unwanted possession, the possessing spirit which is usually evil, enters the body without the will of the host, and takes over all of him. Usually, for the first group, the possession is wanted and for the second group it is unwanted and for the third group, it might be both wanted

and unwanted. In these cases, expulsion of possessing spirits is necessary, and it's called exorcism.

In the English language and Christian literature, in the discussion of throwing out the spirit who has taken over the body of the possessed, the term "exorcism" is used. Exorcism has been derived from the Greek word "exorkizein" which is a combination of "ex" that means "out" and "borkizein" which means "to swear an oath to something" (Caciola, 2005, 2928).

The spirits that are to be thrown out are usually the demons. These creatures might cause physical illness for the victim by interfering with the usual physiological processes, or cause mental illnesses by effecting the victim's feelings, emotions, and wishes. The victim usually shows abnormal behavior towards friends and family, and the continuation of these behaviors brings the people around to the conclusion that an evil spirit has possessed him/her (Eikemeier, 2006, 1724).

1-2 the signs of possession

Being possessed has signs that are usually similar to mental illnesses. Thus, psychologists have developed a special interest in the subject of possession and exorcism. The prevailing approach to this phenomenon by psychologists is linking it with mental disorders and denying its relationship with external factors. They believe that the signs of the possessed are the same signs of the schizophrenic or psychotic patients (Welte, 2006, 696).

The belief that psychological illnesses are not linked to external factors is not limited to today's psychologists. For example, since long ago, epilepsy which was said that the Shaman's were generally affected by it (Eikemeier, 2006, 1723), was known as a sacred disease. A theory that Hippocrates, the ancient Greek sage, opposed off. According to Hippocrates, "epilepsy is no more heavenly or sacred than other diseases" (Spilka, et al, 1965, 85).

In church texts, four important signs for a possessed person have been stated. These signs have been explained in the *Rituale Romanum* as follows (Schmidt, 2006, 695):

- Understanding and speaking foreign languages, without any previous familiarity with them, at various times: Glossolalia;
- Having knowledge of secrets or far away and speaking of truths that is completely impossible for the possessed person to have any knowledge of: Propheticism, Divination;
- Sudden change in behavior, such as use of shameful, indecent, and obscene names, often in a state of seizure or with abnormal powers;
- Extreme reactions to Christian symbols or sacred objects.

What's interesting is that being filled with the Holy Spirit also has similar signs to being possessed by evil spirits. In the *Acts*, one of the special signs of being filled with the Holy Spirit is the person speaking in other languages and do Propheticism (Acts: 2: 4,18).

1-3 Expulsion of demons and witchcraft

In general, ways and rituals with which demons and spirits are cast out, and its extent over various cultures depends on how each culture understands attacking spirits, but at last, all these rituals are formed with one purpose: calling some special forces and using them against the attacking spirit (Caciola, 2005, 2929).

The act of exorcism was usually done by witches, priests, or holy men. What's interesting is that, despite the longstanding feud of religious clergymen with wizards and magic, there is no great difference between the rituals of exorcism of priests and witches. We especially see more of this similarity during middle ages. Although the rituals of medieval Christian priests were carried out in a special Christian ceremony that was not exist within the witches, in both rituals, special spells and chants were sung and the possessing spirit was sworn to holy names to leave; with the difference that the priest would only call onto the demon to come forth and expelled it and had no other purpose, but the witch continued a special and prolonged ceremony in which only the "end" was the exit of the demon from the victim's body (Page, 2004, 45-46); a ritual which could consist of giving the poor victim a syrup made of a white dog's feces to drink (ibid, 29)!

Despite the profound similarity between exorcism and sorcery, exorcism is counted as more of a religious ritual than witchcraft; a ritual that is performed in many religions and traditions throughout the world. But in the Christian-Jewish tradition, the possession and exorcism of demons has a stronger presence.

The subject of being possessed by demons, and exorcism by Jesus Christ and his apostils is one of the most frequent issues in the New Testament. The importance of this subject stands out when, usually, immediately after Jesus preaches the good news about the Kingdom of Heaven being near to his disciples, he also issues the order of exorcism; thus, it can be said that if exorcism and preaching in the name of Jesus are of no equal value in the Christian theology, it is at least as important in comparison.

Before dealing with this subject, it seems better to consider its roots in the Old Testament.

2. The history of possession and exorcism in the Old Testament

During the time between the Old Testament and the New Testament, meaning the end of the fourth century B.C. till the year 70 A.D. in which the Romans ruined Jerusalem, new beliefs entered Judaism which was largely as a result of the confrontation of other huge civilizations and cultures such as the Persian civilization and culture, and after Alexander's conquest, the Greek civilization and culture. The majority of these new beliefs were related to semantics, and consequently belief in spirits (Zwi Werblowsky, 1959, 35). Specially after dealing with the Persian religions and faiths, and as a result of the comments related to the Ahriman and Divs in Persian religions, beliefs of demons, and subsequently, possession and the expulsion of demons also came into Judaism (Schmidt, 2006, 696).

In the second era of the Temple, possessions and their treatments became more important in Judaism. The Qumran texts have special emphasis on the attacks of demons on humans and consequently, attacks of humans on demons. These human anti-attacks were often in the form of protective spells. In the Jewish literature of the time, fighting demons had roots in a tradition that King Solomon had founded (Caciola, 2005, 2931).

The secrets that are attributed to King Solomon have been recorded in a book under the title *The Key of Solomon*. In the *Key of Solomon, Book II*, there are many sectors under the subject of exorcism. These sectors include chants and spells in which various names of God are used as oaths for the evil spirit to leave. Of course this kind of exorcism isn't from the possessed, but it's rather a kind of cleansing and preparation tools for witchcraft. These sectors are The Exorcism of Water, The Exorcism of Incense, The Exorcism of Fire and The Exorcism of Bat and other animals (*Key of Solomon, Book II, 1999, 105*)

Nevertheless, the issue of being possessed by spirits and belief of such wasn't very strong in the Old Testament. In the few books that have dealt with this issue, somehow, show that in the First Temple Era and the beginning of the Second Temple Era, being possessed and ultimately, expulsion of demons did not hold much importance in Judaism.

There are two different approaches to evil beings in the Old Testament. On the one hand, any kind of spell or witchcraft and connection with evil beings, including demons, ghosts, and spirits is banned; and on the other hand, there is much evidence that shows Jehovah's prophets and historians belief in evil beings and their ability to create mental and physical harm to humans was linked with the popular beliefs (Patai, 2010, 139). In the Old Testament, especially in the final books, there are narratives about being possessed and expulsion. In these narratives, exorcism usually means an attempt to reduce the effects of disasters (Welte, 2006, 696).

The most distinct narrative relating to being possessed and exorcism is in the *Samuel I*, where an evil spirit from God possesses Saul and torments him:

(14) Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil a spirit from the LORD tormented him. (15) Saul's attendants said to him, "See, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you (Samuel I, 16: 14-15).

The people around Saul tell him that the only way to be relieved of this evil spirit is if a musician plays for Saul so the spirit can regain his calm and leave:

(16) Let our lord command his servants here to search for someone who can play the lyre. He will play when the evil spirit from God comes on you, and you will feel better. ... (23) Whenever the spirit from God came on Saul, David would take up his lyre and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him (Samuel I, 16: 16 & 23).

And thus David plays on the lute and soothes the spirit.¹

Although it is said that the above mentioned narrative is the first and even only narrative of such a story in the Old Testament (Welte, 2006, 696 & Caciola, 2005, 2931), other incidents can be searched in which a spirit possesses a human body, for instance in *Kings I*, 22: 18-23.²

In this case, God sends an evil spirit to make Ahab's prophets lie. In another story, in the *Kings II*, a spirit is sent to deceive the king of Assyria into returning to be killed. Yet, in another story, an impudent spirit is sent by the Lord to set the Egyptians astray, or it is said that a sinful spirit has led the tribe astray. The interesting point is that in most of these cases, God himself has sent the evil spirit to deceive, lure, and seduce the people.

In these cases, there are samples in which spirits compel people to do inadmissible things. It comes to note that in the mentioned examples, being possessed is not like the example of Saul and nothing is done to calm and save the person possessed, but the action of being possessed by an evil spirit and losing all control to the spirit still stands.

As mentioned before (1-1) being possessed by good and useful spirits, is a kind of possession which is generally something good and not only does it not have the same signs of being possessed by an evil spirit, it is also known as a blessing.

In the *Exodus* (35:31 & 31:3 & 28:3), the wise performance of God's spirit is mentioned. The characteristic of God's spirit is to compel people to piety and to commit to religious acts and the will of God (*Exodus*, 35:21). In the *Numbers*, another one of the characteristics of the Spirit of Jehovah is mentioned. "As the spirit entered him, so he prophesied and did no more." (ibid, 11:25, *Numbers*. 11: 16–17, 11: 26-27 & 29. See Heidari, Hossein and Mohamad Aghajani, P32)

Revelation and the ability to interpret dreams is another one of the gifts of having the Spirit of God within; such as what we see in *Daniel*, 4: 4-5 & 8-9³.

These are samples of the several examples that can be found in the Old Testament about being possessed (CF: Heidari, Hossein and Mohammad Aghajani, P21-42). Of course, these samples, compared to the samples, and also the expulsion of demons mentioned in the New Testament on this issue, is much less.

3- Possession and exorcism in the New Testament

There are numerous narratives of possession and exorcism in the New Testament. From these narratives, the roots of many beliefs related to this phenomenon can be found.

1 . Similar narratives in *Samuel I*, 18: 9-12 & 19: 9-10.

2 . Similar narrative in *Chronicle II*, 18: 18-22.

³ . Also *Daniel*, 4: 18, 5: 11, 5: 14.

3-1 Accusing prophets of having Demons and Jesus's connection with Demons.

Being crazy – having a demon – was one of the accusations with prophets faced. John the Baptist is one of the prophets who was accused of such.

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.'
(Matthew, 11: 18, also, Luke, 7: 33)

Jesus himself wasn't free of these accusations either:

"You are demon-possessed," the crowd answered. "Who is trying to kill you?"
(John, 7: 20, and also, John 8: 48-52 & 9: 19-21)

The Jews from the time of Jesus, In addition to their accusations of him being possessed by demons, also accused him of being in contact with a specific demon by the name of Beelzebul, the head of all the demons. This accusations would be made when Jesus was successful in banishing and expulsion of demons and would so easily heal that they never dared come near them. And so, the enemies of Jesus Christ accused him of being connected with the chief of demons, or even accused him of being the chief of demons himself:

But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons." (Matthew, 12: 24, and also, Luke, 11: 15)

Of course Jesus became aware of his enemies' thoughts and would give them the simple answer that the banishing of demons is only possible with the Grace and help of God and would announce it as a symbol of the Kingdom of Heaven come.

3-2 The negative outcomes of being possessed in the New Testament

Just like the earlier mentioned narratives of the influence of evil spirits on sins written in the Old Testament, in the New Testament some examples can be found in which the domination of Satan counted as the cause of sins.

Deception

Amongst the most important cases of being possessed by Satan in the New Testament is related to narratives in which Satan enters a person and withholds him from obeying Jesus and even causes much more disastrous incidents. One of these cases is related to Peter; when he rejects Jesus' death and resurrection⁴. But the most distinctive of these narratives is the story in which Satan enters one of Jesus' disciples, Judas Iscariot, and compels him into doing something wrong, and that being giving Jesus up to the enemy. The complete report of Judas Iscariot's possession by the Devil and how he compelled him into surrendering Jesus, is in the Gospel of John:

⁴ . Matthew, 16: 20-23, and, Mark, 8: 30-33.

As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. So Jesus told him, "What you are about to do, do quickly." (John, 13: 27)

Lying

In the New Testament, lying is one of the sins that is related to Satan taking control of the lying person. There is a story in the *Acts* in which Peter understands that the lies and deception of Ananias and his wife is caused by the devil possessing them. In this story, Ananias sells a piece of land in order to give the money to the apostles but, keeps some of the money and gives the rest. Peter called this as trials for deception and testing the Holy Spirit:

Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? (Acts, 5: 3)

Of course here, lying can be known as the result of Satan's temptations. In any case it must be said that this sample has no similarities with the clear kind of possessions in which the person being possessed shows unnatural behavior.

3-3 The signs of possession in the New Testament

In the New Testament, those who have demons show signs of it. All due to the unusual and abnormal behavior of the person, these signs can be extracted from amongst the stories in which being possessed has been mentioned.

Epilepsy and physical abuse

Of the most important signs of being possessed are physical problems. Possessed people are usually epileptic and ill. The possessing demon could cause severe harassment and abuse for the victim:

A man in the crowd called out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. (Luke, 9: 38)⁵

Physical abuse in the form of epilepsy is not the only kind of such abuse. Even a hunched back can be counted as a sign of being possessed (Luke, 13: 11).

Supernatural acts

One of the features that is used to describe a possessed person, is the ability to do extraordinary things; such as foreseeing the future and soothsaying:

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. (Acts, 16: 16)

⁵ . This patient has other signs of illness in parallel narratives in Mark, 9: 17-18 and Matthew, 17: 14-15.

Refusing to eat or drink

When Jesus is upset at the Jews for declaring John of being possessed, he expresses signs for being possessed. Here Jesus explains that the reason they have declared John as possessed is his refusing to eat or drink:

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.'
(Matthew, 11: 13, and Luke, 7: 33)

Bewilderment and Violence

Possessed people are wild and violent. This feature is seen in one of Jesus' most famous miracles, where a possessed person has gone to live in a graveyard and is tormenting people:

When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, c two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. (Matthew, 8: 28)⁶

This violence is mentioned in the Acts even more clearly:

Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. (Acts, 19: 16)

Talking and beseeching of the demon

People who are possessed, or better say, demons who possess speak with the use of their victim's body. These demons all know Jesus and are afraid of him and beg him not to harm them:

(2) When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil b spirit came from the tombs to meet him. ... (6) When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. (7) He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!" ... (10) And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. (12) The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them." (13) He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs... . (Luke, 5: 2- 13, and also Matthew, 8: 29-31 and Mark, 8: 28-32).

In this story, the demons not only know Jesus and praise him, but also speak to him and make requests, and just so happens that Jesus accepts their requests. In addition to this story, there are other cases in which demons speak to Jesus or other people.⁷

⁶ . In other synoptic Gospels, the story is about one possessed person: Mark, 5: 2 and Luke, 8: 27.

⁷ . Mark, 1: 23-24, 3: 11, Luke, 4: 33-34, 41, Acts, 16: 17, 19: 15.

Speaking in strange and new ways

It seems that the public contemporary to Jesus considered speaking in strange way as a sign for possession, and the main reason Jesus was accused of being possessed was the things he would say. These words were in fact alternate ways of saying what the Old Testament and previous prophets had said:

(48) The Jews answered him, "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?" (49) "I am not possessed by a demon," said Jesus, "but I honor my Father and you dishonor me. (50) I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge. (51) Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death." (52) At this they exclaimed, "Now we know that you are demon-possessed!... (John, 5: 48-52)

The possibility of being possessed by several demons and returning of demons in a person

The demons that are expelled from a body might return and make matters even worse than before, because both the possessed are more ready and the demons have become bolder. Jesus explains this as follows:

(43) "When an evil b spirit comes out of anyone, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. (44) Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. (45) Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation." (Matthew, 12: 43-45)

3-4 Expulsion of Demons as miracles

Expulsion of demons is one of the most important, if not *the* most important, miracles of Jesus. The high number of healing possessed people and exorcism in the New Testament is an evidence for this claim. Jesus' first miracle, by which he became famous throughout the land, happened in Seria:

News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. (Matthew, 4: 23)

Once Jesus himself called the expulsion of demons a divine blessing and implicitly announced it as a sign of his legitimacy (Matthew, 12: 27-28, and also, Luke, 11: 20); he accounts these exorcisms as almost equal to prophesying (Matthew, 7: 22-23). Jesus' disciples repeat this claim also:

(37) You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached (38) how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. (Acts, 10: 37-38, and also, Mark, 1: 39)

Being rid of demons has been significantly pointed to in the Synoptic Gospels (the first three Gospels) and just about anywhere Jesus commits to preaching of the kingdom come, he also expels demons. The interesting point is that this miracle is not limited to Jesus and his disciples. Even those who were not part of his followers could exorcise by using his name (Mark, 9: 38-39, and also, mark, 10: 49).

3-5 Exorcising demons as an advertising tool

In the New Testament, the importance of advertising for the ability to expel demons is very high. The importance can be seen in the fact that when Jesus would send his disciples to spread the news of the Kingdom of Heaven, he would also give them the ability to exorcise:

(7) As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'

(8) Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. (Matthew, 10: 7-8)⁸

And thus we can see that being possessed and exorcising Demons were very important in Jesus and his disciples' preaching and invitations. Of course it must be pointed that in such advertising, the borderline between the abilities of Jesus and his disciples is quite clear. Meaning that, there were instances when his disciples weren't able to expel a Demon and he had to take action personally (Matthew, 17: 14-21).

4. Possession and exorcism in the Christianity history and tradition

As mentioned, there is deep belief in being possessed by demons and exorcising them in Christianity. In fact these demons are of evil powers and followers of the Devil. Exorcism has a long history in Christianity, especially in the Catholic tradition, and the firmest and most systematic and continuous beliefs of this field is related to this tradition.

Driving out demons was one of the pillars of victory of new believers in the first generations of Christian movement. A Second century's Christian theologian, Justin the Martyr, believed in exorcism as a gift within Christians and said that demons, no matter how powerful they are, will surrender to the name of Jesus Christ (Caciola, 2005, 2928-29).

The cultures of the middle ages had various ideas about being possessed and exorcism that weren't necessarily the same as the definitions of the church. In some areas there were men who would call themselves secular exorcists and healers, and each had their own unique way and method. They used innovative methods and techniques for healing the possessed (ibid, 2929).

⁸ . Other examples: Matthew, 10: 1, Mark, 3: 13-15, 6: 12-13, Luke, 9: 1-2, 10: 17-19)

The 15th century has been a turning point in the history of exorcism within the Catholic Church. During this time, the church decided to begin exorcism based on the traditional writings and Church rituals (ibid). And so, two kinds of exorcism were mentioned: major exorcism and minor exorcism based on which the church took control of the exorcism rituals and withholding the priests from innovative and decentralized exorcism (Welte, 2006, 696).

The Church method of exorcism was that they would swear the spirit out of the victim's body. In the exorcism guide writings, it is suggested that in order to take control of the possessing demons, you use the demon's own language. The demon's language consists of unclear and meaningless words that is said to have been made by the Devil himself. After adjuring the demon in its own language, the exorcist might ask him of his exact identity, his reason for taking possession of the victim, and the necessities of a successful exorcism. In general, it was believed that the expulsion of the demon, if followed by him answering the questions under pressure, would become easier (ibid, 2030).

The quotation below, shows how an exorcism of a Demon based on the churches official rituals begins (Caciola, 2003, 248-249):

Take the head of the possessed person in your left hand and place your tight thumb in the possessed person's mouth, saying the following words: ABRE MONTE ABRYA ABREMONTE CONSACRAMENTARIA SYOAR YPAR YTUMBA OPOTE ALACENT ALAPHIE. Then hold him firmly and say these conjurations: I conjure you, evil spirits, by the terrible name of Gad Agla. ... I also conjure you by the great name Pneumaton and by the name Ysiton, that you ascent to the tongue and give me a laugh. If they do not respond, then know that they are mute spirits. Then exorcist should diligently discover and require whether it is incubi, or succubi, or even dragons that possesses the obsessed person; whether they are attendants of Pluto, or servants of Satan, or disciples of Astaroth; if they are from the east or west; from noonday or evening; from the air, earth, water, fire, or whatever kind of spirit.

In this little piece, Incubi and Saccubui are masculine and feminine devils who have sexual interactions with men and women in their dreams (Meir, 1999, 852). **Astaruth** is the same **Ashtarut** of the Old Testament (Wyatt, 1999, 113). Pluto, meaning rich, is a title the Greek use for pleasing Hades (Grant, 2002, 285-86).

During the Reformation, a considerable growth appeared in the phenomena of demons, both being possessed and exorcism. The reformers did not rule out the possibility of being possessed by demons, but brought serious doubt on the effectiveness of the Catholic Church rituals. In the Protestant scripts of the time, they would lampoon the sprinkling of holy water on the victim and drawing the cross over his body, and would call it superstition, empty traditions, witchcraft and so forth. Most Protestant groups would stay away from traditions related to adult exorcism, but

would accept its simpler forms, such as prayer and fasting, and would deem it as seeking divine aid against demons (Caciola, 2005, 2930)

.In the Europe of the 18th century, exorcism began to decline, but it never completely disappeared. Among the educated class, signs that were previously known as the signs of being possessed were now known as natural injuries such as hysteria, psychosis and melancholy. In this century, a change of basic taste, towards pharmaceutical psychotherapy, was made. As a result, exorcism was less known as a form of therapy (ibid, 2931).

In the year 1985, the "Catholic Congregation of the Faith" banned minor exorcism, or exorcism by common and unspecialized people whose license and authority was not approved by the Vatican. The approving party of this law believed that natural mind disorder could easily be mistaken for being possessed. Another reason for this ban was the danger that threatened the exorcist: one of the main parts of expulsion of the demon is to face and speak directly to the Devil. In such cases, if the exorcist is not trained and dominant, there is the danger he would be influenced by the demon, or even be killed. And so, official and Church exorcism is also only permitted with the authorization and confirmation of the relevant Bishop (Welte, 2006, 696).

In any case, it cannot be denied in Jesus' preaching in the New Testament, the Kingdom of God would appear in a near future and its dawn was during the life of Christ and its signs were the miracles he would perform, specially the expulsion of evil spirits (Bultmaan, 1997, 20). The Kingdom of Heaven is mentioned in the New Testament with reasoning, which consist of: "believing in the fact that although God created the world, demons and the Devil are dominant over it, and that the host of Satan, meaning evil spirits, are the cause of all evil and sins and diseases (ibid, 22).

Conclusion

In general, by studying and comparison of multiple cases in which the *Holy Bible* has mentioned being possessed and exorcism, the following can be concluded:

1. The mentioning of being possessed and exorcism has been more in the New Testament than in the Old. And in these few cases, there are obvious differences between the concepts of the New Testament:

First: in the Old Testament and in the majority of cases, the possessing spirit possesses people by the direct order of Jehovah, while in the New Testament, the possessing spirits, despite the respect they have for Jesus Christ, are Satan's followers and enemies of God.

Second: the mentioning of being possessed by good spirits in the Old Testament is no less, if not more, than being possessed by evil spirits. While in the New Testament, these references are far less in comparison.

Third: in the Old Testament, there is more emphasis on being possessed, while in the New Testament, there is more emphasis on the expulsion of demons.

2. The most important function of Jesus' exorcism was promotional and the display of power against dissidents, and this show could be seen more in front of the Jews.

3. The phenomena of being possessed was more common during the time of Jesus Christ and other people, whether Jesus' disciples or others, were also successful in the expulsion of Demons. Considering the Catholic church's claim during the present era based on the rarity of being possessed, it can be guessed that during the era of Jesus, many diseases, especially mental and behavioral disorders was assumed to be caused by demons.

4. Exorcism has only been mentioned in the synoptic Gospels and Acts, and there is no mention of it in the Gospel of John and Paul's epistles, that are more influenced by Hellenism in comparison.

5. Based on the above principles, exorcism has an important place within the systematic Catholic theology, and without doubt this belief has roots in the numerous references and emphasis of it in the *Holy Bible*, especially in the New Testament. Ironically, unlike religions such as Islam, in which topics of exorcism is within the realm of informal and popular religion, in Christianity, the normative religion and popular religion are combined in it, and it is almost impossible to separate them. In fact, exorcism is the connecting, sharing, and even, competing and challenging point of normative and popular religion, and the emphasis of the Catholic Church on monopolizing its rites pertaining to casting out demons, shows its special importance within the Catholic religion.

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