

The Battle of Good and Evil Through the Rite of Exorcism According to Greek Christian Orthodox and Roman Catholic Perspective

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Abstract: The Exorcism Ritual attracts considerable attention by symbolizing the ongoing struggle between Good and Evil and portraying humanity's spiritual journey as an ascent. Although various exorcism practices exist across world religions, research primarily focuses on two main doctrinal traditions: Roman Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity. The Orthodox tradition follows a traditional spiritual framework that does not explore the diverse aspects of demonic manifestations. Conversely, the Roman Catholic Church has established a comprehensive approach to exorcism. Nevertheless, the existing research literature is limited, and more scientific investigation is needed in this area.

Keywords: Exorcism, Roman Ritual, Saint Cyprian and Justina, possession, magic, horror movies

Introduction

The topic of the battle of good and evil is not regarded only as a subjective matter. Subjectivity² emerges as a key aspect of human life, developing alongside mental and psychological

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² Inna Semetsky, "The Problematics of Human Subjectivity: Gilles Deleuze and the Deweyan Legacy," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 22, no. 3/4 (January 1, 2003): 211–13,
<https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1022877506539>.

awareness, cognition, academic competence, and social life.³ Subjectivity turns out to be the vehicle of expressing an outward view after it has been through a mental process.⁴ Reality, though, could be different from a view and vacuum spiritual reality, despite its negative critique; despite this, spiritual reality, despite its negative critique, gains a lot of ground, since human awareness is deepened through faith in God.⁵

Indeed, the issue of faith is significant for discussion and scholarship. To put it simply, humans rely heavily on faith to succeed in the world, as all forms of faith with evaluative content aimed at progress and thriving originate from the fundamental divine source, God.⁶ The conflict between good and evil—represented by God as the Holy Trinity and the Devil—is not merely a matter of subjectivity but involves a question of actual substantive reality. That means that either evil plays an energetic role in the political and human historical arena or illustrates metaphysical and esoteric consequences in the human body and spirit through possession or otherwise.⁷ This ongoing struggle is ancient; even in Mesopotamian cultures, where the many deities worshiped reflect an ancient belief in good and evil existing in the spiritual realm.⁸ In this context, it is helpful to examine key examples of this battle through scriptural accounts, which are

³ Ibid.

⁴ Deleuze theory describes subjectivity as the vehicle of mental exchange and development in: Semetsky, “The Problematics of Human Subjectivity: Gilles Deleuze and the Deweyan Legacy.”

⁵ Bishop and McKaughan, “Faith (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).”

⁶ Ryan Preston-Roedder, “Faith in Humanity,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 87, no. 3 (March 15, 2013): 667, <https://doi.org/10.1111/phpr.12024>.

⁷ Gordon Christo, “The Battle Between God and Satan in the Book of Job,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 11, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 282–86,

<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1328&context=jats>.

⁸ Fatemeh Ya’aghoubi Ghazvini, Muhammad Fazeli, and Reza Ashrafzadeh, “The Opposition Between Good and Evil in the Story of Jamshid,” *Propósitos Y Representaciones* 9, no. SPE1 (January 1, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.20511/pyr2021.v9nspe1.814>.

central to this spiritual warfare.⁹ Here are some references from the Old Testament.

- **1 Samuel 16:14:**

“But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.”

This marks the beginning of Saul’s repeated affliction by an evil spirit after God’s Spirit departs from him.¹⁰

- **1 Samuel 16:23:**

“And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took a harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.”

David’s music could temporarily alleviate the evil spirit’s effect on Saul.

- **1 Samuel 18:10:**

“And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul’s hand.”

Here, Saul experiences disruptive behaviour while under spiritual affliction.

- **1 Samuel 19:9:**

“And the evil spirit from the Lord was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with his hand.”

- **Judges 9:23:**

“Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech.”

⁹ Victor L. Budha, “Intercultural Criticism of Spiritual Warfare (Ephesians 6:10–20),” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 78, no. 3 (February 22, 2022): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i3.6905>.

¹⁰ Budha, “Intercultural Criticism of Spiritual Warfare (Ephesians 6:10–20),” 4.

This passage describes an evil spirit acting to sow discord, though not personal possession in the New Testament sense.¹¹

- **1 Kings 22:21-22** (see also 2 Chronicles 18:20-22):
“And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him.’
“And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith?’ And he said, ‘I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And he said, ‘Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.’”¹²

A spirit takes on the role of deceiving Ahab’s prophets, but is not described as possessing a single individual.

These key Old Testament verses highlight how evil spirits influence or afflict individuals, especially King Saul. However, they do not depict possession in the explicit, dramatic way shown in the New Testament, where demons are said to control or dwell within a person’s body and speech. Instead, the Old Testament descriptions generally refer to effects like distress, mental disturbances, or behavioural shifts caused by spiritual evil influence.¹³

One more case found regarding the famous witch of Endor:

- **Witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28):**

The most well-known story is the story of the “Witch of Endor.”¹⁴ King Saul, after being rejected by God, seeks out a woman “with a familiar spirit” (a medium) to summon the spirit of the prophet

¹¹ There are two Hebrew terms in that occasion: a. Dehber (דָּבַר) and b. Mitanu (מִתְּנָה) as the opposite in Jozef Jancovic, “‘Before Him Went Pestilence’ (Hab 3:5): Biblical Lexis and Semantic Field of Epidemics,” *Old Testament Essays* 36, no. 2 (November 13, 2023): 532, <https://doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2023/v36n2a13>.

¹² God permits the invasion of an evil spirit to punish a disobedient king.

¹³ Jancovic, “‘Before Him Went Pestilence’ (Hab 3:5): Biblical Lexis and Semantic Field of Epidemics.”, *ibid*.

¹⁴ Arvid Kapelrud, “Shamanistic Features in the Old Testament,” *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* 1 (August 1, 1967): 94, <https://doi.org/10.30674/scripta.67025>.

Samuel. The Hebrew term for people with “familiar spirits” is ‘ob’ or ‘yiddeonim’, which refers to necromancers or mediums who claimed to call forth the dead. This act is strongly condemned in the law. Saul seeks supernatural information, and the story shows that such practices connect the practitioner with malevolent, deceptive spirits, not the genuine souls of the dead.¹⁵

In the Old Testament, evil participates mainly through the enemies of Israel (Hebrew: רע – ra=evil), by the will of God, so that the latter may educate the former in His law.¹⁶ Therefore, the battle with evil has mostly a realistic and political rather than an esoteric form.¹⁷ On the other hand, in the New Testament, things seem to be different. Here are some references from the New Testament:

- **Mark 1:23-26:**

“And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. 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.’ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be silent, and come out of him!’ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.”¹⁸

¹⁵ M. Gaster, “Art. VI.—The Sword of Moses. An Ancient Book of Magic, Published for The First Time, From an Unique Manuscript (Cod. Heb., Gaster 178),” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland* 28, no. 1 (January 1, 1896): 181, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0035869x00023455>.

¹⁶ Ezek. 38:3, Jer. 49:7-22, also see: Ryan A. R. Ferries, “Edom and Babylon: Archetypal Enemies of God and His People. A Comparative Analysis of Obadiah and Isaiah 13:2-14:23,” *Old Testament Essays* 35, no. 3 (February 10, 2022): 475–95, <https://doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2022/v35n3a7>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ In quite essential cases, like the above, demons provoke exorcists through the knowledge of their identity. For more, see also: Joseph L. Kimmel, “Demons Seeking Identity? The Psychic Life of New Testament Exorcisms,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 143, no. 1 (March 15, 2024): 85–104, <https://doi.org/10.15699/jbl.1431.2024.5>.

- **Luke 4:33-35:**

“And in the synagogue, there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Ha! 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.’ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be silent and come out of him!’ And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm.”¹⁹

- **Matthew 9:32-33:**

“As they were going away, behold, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him. And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds marveled, saying, ‘Never was anything like this seen in Israel.’”

- **Mark 5:2-6 (The Gerasene Demoniac):**

“When Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit... Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains, he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him.”²⁰

- **Acts 16:16-18:**

“As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling... Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’ And it came out that very hour.”²¹

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ In the Greek text, it is also called a “Pythona” spirit, similar to the Python snake, as the snake’s form is well-known for its evil and cunning will (Gen. 3:1-15). Another interpretation is based on Pythia, the Ancient Delphi Oracle, which predicted and offered ambivalent responses. Thomas Aquinas agrees in Summa Theologica (I, q.57, a.3), noting that demons can predict the future, but only God, being omnipotent and all-wise, has complete knowledge of everything.

- **Acts 19:13-16:**

“Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits... But the evil spirit answered them, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?’ And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.”²²

These passages consistently use language such as "had a spirit," "possessed by a demon," "evil spirit," or "unclean spirit," clearly indicating that individuals were under supernatural, malevolent influence. Generally, the context involves human suffering, loss of self-control, supernatural knowledge or strength, and the immediate acknowledgement of Jesus' authority by the possessing spirit, which ultimately signifies the acknowledgement of Jesus as an exorcist, even though there is no specific mention or quotation of that term.²³

Historically, through the divine incident of Pentecost, Jesus Christ conveyed powers and charisma (χαρίσματα και δυνάμεις) to his disciples and, of course, the power to cast out demons.²⁴ The demonic influence during the times of Christ and before may vary in each case, and profoundly ancient people called to help the afflicted ones couldn't figure out precisely the nature of each occasion, whether the demonic attack was a demonic one or not, due to the lack of specific knowledge and expertise that scientists have nowadays. However, in either case, all the cases

²² Profoundly, the itinerant Jews who were eager to exercise the exorcistic power of Jesus had a tremendous lack of faith, which the demon directly acknowledged. See also the article below from a cinematographic perspective: Amy C. Chambers, "‘Somewhere Between Science and Superstition’: Religious Outrage, Horrific Science, and the Exorcist (1973)," *History of the Human Sciences* 34, no. 5 (May 10, 2021): 32–52, <https://doi.org/10.1177/09526951211004465>.

²³ Kevin Volkan, "Encounter With the Demonic: Western, Eastern, and Object Relations Approaches," *Psychology* 11, no. 09 (January 1, 2020): 1457, <https://doi.org/10.4236/psych.2020.119092>.

²⁴ Acts 2:1-4, 14-43.

have been influenced under the umbrella of demonic attack, and surely a large part of them behave like them, have been cured immediately by Jesus or his disciples.²⁵ The latter indicates the ultimate divine power of God against any form of evil and affliction,²⁶ which has naturally been inherited by the church, and which, in turn, ad hoc reveals the supernatural character of the charisma.

Discussion

The word “Exorcism” comes from the Greek word «ἐξορκίζω (οἰ)», meaning that someone is about to be bound by oath. That’s a crucial occasion for the exorcism procedure, since it denotes a firm restriction, a bondage situation, a robust framing against the subject of reference (usually a demonic one)²⁷. The definition is not regarded only as a dictionary account or output, but it holds a theological significance of great value.

When starting to wonder about the topic, a famous convent related closely with it emerged in mind, named “Saint Cyprian’s and Justin the Martyr Convent.” It is located far from the center of Athens but is just 15-20 minutes from the outskirts of the Capital, at Filis, initially placed in the Attica district. The monastery adheres to the Orthodox Traditional Calendar, known as “Christians of Purity,” which is a branch of the mainstream Orthodox Tradition in Greece, and this affiliation poses some

²⁵ Kevin Volkan, “Encounter With the Demonic,” 1466.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ R. Kieckhefer in his work “Magic in the Middle Ages” makes a distinction between Orthodox Christian Exorcists and Necromancers from a religious perspective, although the comparison may not seem so theologically consistent with the Christian dogma of exorcism. He asserts: “*Orthodox exorcists and necromancers both use the terms exorcise, conjure, and adjure interchangeably.... The difference, of course, is that while the orthodox exorcist is struggling to dispel demons, the necromancer is trying to allure and use them for his ends*”. The previous notation is very interesting, though, in Hilaire Kallendorf, “The Rhetoric of Exorcism,” *Rhetorica* 23, no. 3 (January 1, 2005): 216, <https://doi.org/10.1525/rh.2005.23.3.209>.

challenges in using the Julian Calendar accordingly. However, there aren't any other doctrinal issues in general, except for one of the dating in the frame of worship. The convent is wide open to visitors, but like all monasteries, it follows a strict schedule, especially regarding confession visits. Its name derives from the great magus Cyprianus, who was notorious for his witchcraft and black magic practices, and for commanding the demons, whom he had power over, especially against Justina, a reverent daughter, to execute the will of a pagan Aristocrat, before the Lord proved him wrong and made him bishop of Antioch. In addition, the name should not be confused with Cyprian of Carthage, as several accounts conflate the two. Their story survives in both Greek and Latin versions of the *Acta Sanctorum*, as well as Syriac and Ethiopic translations, and was popularised in the *Golden Legend*. The point is that Cyprian, after being amazed by failing to convert Justina's feelings using the most insidious demons, he understood that the power of God was beyond any of them. By that moment, he devoted himself to His service, even achieving to be one of his bishops.

In the convent, as mentioned earlier, every Thursday, the priest reads the sermon of the extended exorcism, which is aimed at those afflicted by demons or possessed. The text is directed toward them.²⁸ After studying a great deal of black magic and hidden black texts and gaining personal experience,²⁹ he concluded that demonic realms and control over humans can be overcome through the power of Jesus Christ and invoking His name.³⁰ In 2023, after discussing exorcism and the specific

²⁸ Daniel G. Van Slyke, "The Ancestry and Theology of the Rite of Major Exorcism (1999/2004)," *Antiphon* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 71, <https://doi.org/10.1353/atp.2006.a921647>.

²⁹ Skinner, Stephen, David Rankine, Peter J. Forshaw, and Saint D. Cyprian, *The Grimoire of Saint Cyprian: Clavis Inferni: Sive Magia Alba Et Nigra Approbata Metratona: The Key of Hell With White and Black Magic Proven by Metatron, Being Wellcome MS 2000* (2009), <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BB03380714>.

³⁰ Orthodox Church in America, "Hieromartyr Cyprian, Virgin Martyr Justina, and Martyr Theoctistus, of Nicomedia," October 2, 1949, <https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/1949/10/02/102835-hieromartyr-cyprian->

abilities required for a priest to perform one with a priest in the convent, he didn't say much. Still, he admitted that every Orthodox priest also holds the position of exorcist by default.³¹ This latter declaration caused considerable intrinsic controversy, since the time span involved is approximately fifteen centuries, during which the office developed. At the same time, today, different cases of exorcism have emerged worldwide, especially in the United States,³² which may require further specialization if possible. Perhaps the exorcism issue should be scrutinized widely by the Orthodox clergy involved, especially in the case of Greece, and systematized similarly to how it happens in the Catholic Church.

The practice in the Greek ministry mainly involves experienced priests, often elderly, morally upright, and reverent, who have the authority to perform exorcisms when requested. They usually take great care to first meet with the victim's family members to gather feedback about the incident. Later, the priest meets the affected individual to assess their condition.³³ He performs the exorcism either on a different day scheduled with the family or immediately, providing further instructions. The exorcism ritual involves either Saint Basil's exorcism or Saint Cyprian's ritual, as handed down from the Fathers above. It is not clear within the Orthodox tradition whether the priest distinguishes between mental illness and possession. Traditionally, older priests have not always been properly educated, and driven by faith and a strong desire to help the

virgin-martyr-justina-and-martyr-theoctistus.

³¹ "By default" indicates no formal education is necessary, but apostolic succession grants the authority to exorcise, in Jesmond Micallef, "Exorcisims in the Greek Orthodox Church," *Www.Academia.Edu*, August 26, 2015, 298–99,

https://www.academia.edu/15190273/Exorcisims_in_the_Greek_Orthodox_Church.

³² Michael W. Cuneo, *American Exorcism: Expelling Demons in the Land of Plenty* (Doubleday Books, 2001), 3–13. See also: Malachi Martin, *Hostage to the Devil - Reissue: The Possession and Exorcism of Five Contemporary Americans* (Harper Collins, 1992).

³³ Mostly in the Roman Catholic Church.

afflicted and their families, they often rush to perform the exorcism.³⁴

Possession is uncommon but often involves complex dispersion, as the devil's snares are not always immediately apparent. The core issue is that science, especially psychiatry, has identified numerous mental illnesses such as psychosis, schizophrenia, dissociative identity disorder, personality disorders, epilepsy, severe neurosis, speech sound abnormalities, and others, each with distinct causes.³⁵ Every mental health case varies significantly, requiring unique physical and medical treatments.³⁶ In severe instances, hospitalisation in a psychiatric facility and appropriate medical care are necessary. Exorcism is a powerful ritual that can cause a significant shock to the afflicted, especially when performed correctly. Such an event might unmask other aspects of the mental disorder that were previously hidden or undiagnosed. In either scenario, the outcome can be disastrous, potentially leading to the patient's deterioration, guilt or addiction.³⁷ It is not accidental to compare Exorcism to a flow of energy, like electricity, which can be beneficial or harmful depending on the context.

The Catholic Church historically established specific protocols for approving exorcisms, especially after the Second Vatican Council. Despite the rite's negative associations stemming from the Middle Ages and its lingering evil connotations for modern educated audiences, a contemporary Catholic Archdiocese can still authorize an exorcism if certain essential criteria are met. Those are:³⁸

- a. A medical evaluation will take place first

³⁴ In Greek Orthodox cases.

³⁵ Cuneo, *American Exorcism: Expelling Demons in the Land of Plenty*, 11.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Samuel George Hansdak and Raja Paulraj, "Are We Doing Harm by Omission? Addressing Religiosity of the Mentally Ill," *World Psychiatry* 12, no. 1 (February 1, 2013): 40, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20011>.

³⁸ Volkan, "Encounter With the Demonic: Western, Eastern, and Object Relations Approaches," 1457.

- b. The Medical evaluation has failed to clarify the occurrence
- c. The afflicted speak alien or ancient languages that they have never spoken before
- d. The afflicted manifests a strong ability to read other people's minds
- e. The afflicted manifests a strong ability to hold the knowledge of the past of a person without knowing the person whatsoever
- f. The afflicted manifest supernatural powers like throwing objects by distances or even levitating in extreme measures
- g. The afflicted detests sacred objects like the crucifix, holy water, blessings the stole of the priest

Of course, there are many other different demonic manifestations depending on the situation, such as the skill level of the exorcist, the power or rank of the demon, the will of the person affected to help themselves find redemption, and so on. Every case is completely different and requires a unique approach. In many Greek cases of demonic possession, the afflicted person moans or groans, speaks vulgar words, mocks Christ, and recognizes the appearance of the Church Saints by their nicknames. For example, when Saint Dimitios is present to help, the demon calls him "Dimitris"; for Saint George, his nickname is "George," and so on.³⁹

The process of the Exorcism is not an instant treatment. It is a demanding procedure, which takes time for the afflicted to be

³⁹ The nickname calling is a usual strategy of the demons to denote the identification of the saint or even the mocking of his name of authority. Unfortunately, the Greek Bibliography lacks sufficient studies on the names of the Saints and their power over the manifestation of evil. However, one of the globally recognized theologians, Richard Kickhefer, notes to the general authority of the saints that three aspects are considered of great importance for sanctity recognition: ascetism, contemplation and action in Richard Gribble CSC, "Saints in the Christian Tradition: Unraveling the Canonization Process," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 6, no. 1 (May 25, 2011): 3–4, <https://doi.org/10.6017/scjr.v6i1.1691>.

healed entirely. The healing process takes a long time to be obtained.⁴⁰ The point is that after healing, the ex-possessed has to follow for some months a strict conservative rule of obedience to the Holy Church, like drinking every day holy water, praying, receiving the Holy Communion, etc. By this rule, the individual fortifies him/herself, hindering a dangerous relapse, since demons are like lions ready to devour anyone unprotected. In several cases, the relapse is often as the elder Ephraim of Arizona states.⁴¹ The exorcist must be highly experienced to distinguish between genuine healing and fake healing. Demons are masters in deceit and telling lies, or even worse, mixing truth with lies.⁴² That's why elder priests are usually the front-exorcists.

In Greece, exorcisms typically occur at sacred sites such as churches or convents and rarely in private residences of the afflicted. The demon needs to be challenged on Holy Ground to weaken it. There are several theoretical approaches, like confronting the demon on neutral or indifferent ground during the night, to provoke easier manifestation. Demons love the hide and seek game using it as a tool to mock Christ, the priest and the Christian believers. On the other hand, the prayers of the flock can function as a shield and at the same time a weapon against the evil spirit.⁴³ The prayer is a Christ's command after all.

Methodology

A few years ago, it was decided that a School of Exorcists would be established first in Rome and then in the United States

⁴⁰ Ted J Kaptchuk, Catherine E Kerr, and Abby Zanger, "Placebo Controls, Exorcisms, and the Devil," *The Lancet* 374, no. 9697 (October 1, 2009): 1234–35, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(09\)61775-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(09)61775-x).

⁴¹ Ευφραίμ Φιλοθεΐτης, *Ο Γέροντάς μου Ιωσήφ ο Ηουχαστής* (Ελληνικές Εκδόσεις, 2020).

⁴² Sophie Lunn-Rockliffe, "The Devil as 'Father of Lies': Ideas of Diabolical Deceit in the Donatist Controversy," *Studies in Church History* 60 (May 23, 2024): 17–42, <https://doi.org/10.1017/stc.2024.1>.

⁴³ Karl Peltzer, "Faith Healing for Mental and Social Disorders in the Northern Province (South Africa)," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 29, no. 3 (January 1, 1999): 387–88, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157006699x00395>.

due to the many demonic attacks that occurred. This incident is also depicted in the movie titled “The Rite”, starring the famous and respected actor Anthony Hopkins and described in detail by Matt Baglio, the author of the homonymous book. The Catholic Church decided to take swift and decisive action since there were not many exorcists available. However, special training was required to educate the future priests-exorcists, making them experts in the field, as many Catholic dioceses lacked such specialists. The logic behind those systematic seminaries of the Catholic Church was this: to fight evil, you first need to understand it better. Demons are foot soldiers of the Devil ranked according to their mission, role, and affiliation with Satan. Learning about demons, their methods, habits, or demands was a necessary step for effectively identifying and confronting the enemy. Therefore, demonology classes quickly began to provide this knowledge to Catholic priests first, and later to priests of other denominations. This approach was definitely different from traditional Orthodox practices and might even be considered unorthodox, as the focus was on Satan rather than Christ,⁴⁴ reminding one of Clausewitz's strategy of striking at the enemy's centre of strength. From a human perspective, this seemed wise. However, difficulties and unexpected setbacks were to be expected, since the enemy was ancient, spiritual, and undoubtedly knew much more about humans from the very beginning of time.⁴⁵

Catholic methodology includes the diagnostic phases below:

- a. infestation
- b. obsession
- c. oppression, and
- d. finally possession

⁴⁴ Bernard Doherty, “Mapping the Territory of the Devil: Roman Catholicism, the Satanism Scare, and the Origins of Contemporary Demonology,” *Religions* 15, no. 6 (June 6, 2024): 13, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15060703>.

⁴⁵ Edward James Furton, *Urged on by Christ: Catholic Health Care in Tension with Contemporary Culture* (2007), 206.

Infestation⁴⁶ is the first step taking by the demon and is about a situation according to which an evil spirit is targeting his victim and his/her place of living and emerges several lightweight but awkward incidents around his/her environment reminding a great deal human oversights, omissions, errors, misunderstandings, contradictions and simultaneously changing the surrounding in an ominous and undefinable distressed way. That's why people cannot discern the occurrence from the real one, since demon mimics human habits and defaults all the way during this phase letting the spirit act freely and the most important empowering itself at a very high level.

The second step is obsession⁴⁷ according to which the individual starts to feel and act little by little beyond reason, having nightmares, making ominous thoughts or even having visions. At this point psychologists or psychiatrists take over but most of the times without bringing positive results. In addition, every effort they make to shape a therapy plan for the afflicted, the most worse the condition for the patient is being made. In that point, the demon might take advantage of the situation, since if the individual is going to be facilitated there is a high chance to be possessed rapidly under the disguise of a psychotic phenomenon consuming the soul of the poor victim without the doctors or therapists even noticing it. Strategically, if there is someone close more intuitive or spiritual and educated as well, a possible controversy might start with the rationalist therapists, which in the context of time functions in favor of the evil spirit. In those situations, time is considered to be enemy too for the afflicted.

The third step is oppression.⁴⁸ During this phase, an essential battle begins between the human and the evil spirit(s). The plural "s" is not placed randomly, since many times demons

⁴⁶ Mark Crooks, "On The Psychology of Demon Possession: The Occult Personality," *The Journal of Mind and Behavior* 39, no. 4 (October 1, 2018): 272, <https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1P4-2197745730/on-the-psychology-of-demon-possession-the-occult>.

⁴⁷ Crooks, "On The Psychology of Demon Possession: The Occult Personality," 272.

⁴⁸ Mat, 15:22.

function as hordes or legions and attack in group formations.⁴⁹ However, the will of the person and the measure of his or her faith in God are what count to cast out the demon, especially with the added alliance of an exorcist.⁵⁰ There is no assurance of the outcome whatsoever. Although human resistance might be strong, so too will be the attack. The evil spirit aims to possess the victim and bring to battle anything its sinister nature disposes of to achieve it.⁵¹

The final step is the possession of the individual.⁵² At that point, the demon has won the battle of possessing the body. The soul of the person is actually imprisoned in the body of the victim. However, it is not dogmatically formatted,⁵³ and the demon(s) control when the person can speak naturally or when the demon(s) take over. In that case, the dual personality schema is quite close to the phenomenon of possession. Still, the latter differs significantly, especially when combined with other criteria mentioned previously. Unfortunately, exorcists take over similar situations during the final stage. Still, there are many times when they bring excellent results for the victim when other psychiatric measures have failed early, or when psychologists or psychiatrists work harmoniously with the priest-exorcist.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Mrk, 5:9.

⁵⁰ Mat, 9:33.

⁵¹ Mark, 9:29.

⁵² Crooks, "On The Psychology of Demon Possession: The Occult Personality.", *ibid.*

⁵³ Gabriele Amorth, *An Exorcist Tells His Story* (Ignatius Press, 2015), 28–35. Frank Leslie Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (1997), 1300, and Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Devil, Perception of Evil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity* (1982), 186–89.

⁵⁴ K. Tajima-Pozo et al., "Practicing Exorcism in Schizophrenia," *BMJ Case Reports* 2011, no. feb15 1 (February 15, 2011): 1–4, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bcr.10.2009.2350>, and Mwansa C. Kimpinde and Yolanda Dreyer, "Pastoral Care With Young People Suffering From Depression in the Context of Soweto," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 76, no. 3 (November 10, 2020): 1–3, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v76i3.6225>.

What texts are used during exorcisms? In the Eastern Orthodox tradition, the ancient and sacred exorcism scriptures of Saint Cyprian and Saint Basil the Great serve as powerful tools.⁵⁵ They are read by the Orthodox priest-exorcist with a tone that must sound resolute, reflecting the purity and firm faith of the minister. The reading should be commanding and assertive, with no lapses allowed. Evil spirits are clever enough to detect any weakness or lack of determination or faith in the minister, which can cause the process to fail before it begins. The structure of these exorcism texts varies, inspired by divine insight from the Fathers, believed to be derived from Christ himself.⁵⁶ Each word holds divine power and should be treated with reverence.⁵⁷ Conversely, the Roman Catholic Church employs the Roman Ritual, which exists in two versions: the Old Roman Ritual and the Revised Roman Ritual. The latter was developed after the Vatican II reforms,⁵⁸ which removed several key phrases. Sadly, these changes diminished the text's sacred dynamic due to rationalistic reforms. Nonetheless, the Roman Ritual remains functional and practical against demonic activity.⁵⁹

During an exorcism, two essential stages are clearly distinguished in both Orthodox and Catholic texts: the first duty of the exorcist is to determine the nature of the enemy, which means

⁵⁵ Ciprian I. Streza, "Modern Theological Research: The Authorship of the Byzantine Anaphora of Saint Basil Under Investigation With the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae Database," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77, no. 4 (August 10, 2021): 41–60, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i4.6684>, and *Ἱερὰ Μονὴ Ἀγίων Κυπριανοῦ Καὶ Ἰουστίνης – Φυλὴ Ἀττικῆς*, επιμ., *Εὐχή κατὰ τῆς Μαγείας καὶ ἡ Ἱερὰ Παράκλησις τῶν Ἀγίων Κυπριανοῦ καὶ Ἰουστίνης* (Γεώργιος Χοροζίδης, 2013), 14.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Timothy P. Millea, "Book Review: Healing in the Early Church: The Church's Ministry of Healing and Exorcism From the First to the Fifth Century," *The Linacre Quarterly* 86, no. 2–3 (April 9, 2019): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0024363919838846>.

⁵⁸ Christopher O'Brien, "Ordo Benedictionis Novae Domus. Text, Context, and Theology," *Yearbook for Ritual and Liturgical Studies* 37 (December 31, 2021): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.21827/yrls.37.22-34>.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

discovering the actual name of the demon(s).⁶⁰ The name itself is a crucial element that gives the exorcist the authority to recognize and control the demonic entity. Demons adhere to a hierarchy and cannot disobey the one who controls their essence.⁶¹ The name includes many parameters such as rank, duty, mission, potentials, and weak spots. Every demon has weaknesses and knows how to hide them. Therefore, the exorcist must be focused and cunning to distinguish lies from truths. The second duty of the exorcist, after recognizing the demon, is to cast it out from the human being. The usual questions the exorcist asks the demon(s) must be:

- a. What are your names?
- b. Why are you torturing this poor servant of God?
- c. What is the time of your departure?

No matter how cruel the suffering the demon inflicts on the afflicted, it is entirely under the command and authority of the Holy Trinity, and the demon cannot surpass God's power. Since the exorcist represents Christ, he can command the demon using the name and authority of Christ conferred through Apostolic Succession. Typically, once the demon's name is revealed, the demon's departure is imminent. Exorcists worldwide have handled many cases of varying severity, often encountering dangers along the way. The greatest fear, however, remains the loss of the afflicted.⁶² When dealing with a highly powerful demon—such as Baal, Belial, Astaroth, Pazuzu, Lucifer, etc.—the victim, after enduring suffering, may reach the brink of life and death, fulfilling their destiny. The demon has probably captured the victim's soul

⁶⁰ Andries G. Van Aarde, "Christus Medicus – Christus Patiens: Healing as Exorcism in Context," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 75, no. 4 (November 14, 2019): 1–5, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i4.5798>.

⁶¹ Kevin Volkan, "Encounter With the Demonic: Western, Eastern, and Object Relations Approaches," *Psychology* 11, no. 09 (January 1, 2020): 2–5, <https://doi.org/10.4236/psych.2020.119092>.

⁶² Jose Luis Mosso Vazquez et al., "Resting stated-tractography-fMRI in Initial Phase of Spiritual Possession - a Case Report," *Trends in Medicine* 18, no. 3 (January 1, 2018): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.15761/tim.1000137>.

for hell or that, during the demon's departure, vital organs give up, leading to death.⁶³ This is a terrifying prospect for any Christian believer, regardless of the circumstances. In such cases, the exorcist, as a warrior of God, may feel defeated. Subsequently, a process of systematic pastoral care, psychological evaluation, and support for the family must begin immediately.

Exorcism in the Movies Industry

The development of horror movies throughout the cinema industry has included the exorcism process as a topic of the big screen. One classical one is "THE EXORCIST"⁶⁴ divided into three continuous stories regarding the spiritual adventure of Regan McNeal (Linda Blair): The "EXORCIST" directed by William Friedkin (1973), the "EXORCIST II: THE HERETIC" directed by John Boorman (1977) and the "EXORCIST III" directed by William Peter Blatty, the writer of the first story of the Exorcist (1990).

There are also later releases featuring the exorcism topic as a prequel to the previous movies, such as "EXORCIST: THE BEGINNING,"⁶⁵ directed by Renny Harlin (2004). This film depicts an awkward excavation in Africa by priest-archeologist Lancaster Merrin, who is shown in his mid-age (Stellan Skarsgård), contrasting with the older depiction of the first Exorcist movie's character (Max von Sydow). The movie is self-

⁶³ There is, of course, the probability that the soul has been redeemed from Christ through an angel or other guide, but there is no proof of that during an exorcism attempt. During the research, a few sources emerged accordingly, such as Hilaire Kallendorf, "The Rhetoric of Exorcism," *Rhetorica* 23, no. 3 (January 1, 2005): 209–37, <https://doi.org/10.1525/rh.2005.23.3.209>.

⁶⁴ Amy C. Chambers, "Somewhere Between Science and Superstition': Religious Outrage, Horrific Science, and the Exorcist (1973)," *History of the Human Sciences* 34, no. 5 (May 10, 2021): 41–4, <https://doi.org/10.1177/095269512111004465>.

⁶⁵ Mark Kermode, "Exorcist the Beginning (Film)," *Sight & Sound/Sight and Sound* 14, no. 12 (January 1, 2004): 46–7, <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=1055729>.

contained but logically connected to the previous films, dealing with the awakening of a demon (possibly Pazuzu⁶⁶) after the uncovering of an unorthodox Byzantine-style temple, beneath which was buried an ancient demonic worship center of old demon-gods. Afterwards, the “EXORCIST THE DOMINION”⁶⁷ followed by the same protagonist who dealt one more time with a possession case in Africa on a greater scale, this time using the same Kenya landscape among the Turkana tribe. In the same context, the movie “EXORCIST THE BELIEVER”⁶⁸ Directed by David Gordon Green (2023) illustrates a whole different cinematographic narrative dealing with different demonic possession occasions (of two young girls) and the quest and efforts of their fathers to deal with it. Additionally, one of the fathers approached the old Regan McNeal for spiritual assistance.

Beyond the horror fiction culture of the classical exorcist, there is also plenty of room for other similar movies like “STIGMATA”⁶⁹ Directed by Rupert Wainwright (1999), starring Patricia Arquette and Gabriel Byrne. A Catholic priest, an expert in investigating God's miracles, is assigned a mission to examine one. When he meets a young woman possessed by the spirit of an older priest, she manifests the stigmata of Francis of Assisi simultaneously. The movie depicts a very interesting viewpoint regarding the exorcism process, since the object of the latter may be the soul of a deceased person, who hasn't got his/her way to the light and redemption. The previous particular observation may also be an autonomous research topic for discussion.

Furthermore, the “EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE”⁷⁰ Directed by Scott Derrickson (2005), the film stars Tom Wilkinson

⁶⁶ Michael Brown, “The Demon Pazuzu as Noise in the Exorcist,” 2018, 3–12, <https://shorturl.at/CFFdZ>.

⁶⁷ “Dominion: Prequel to the Exorcist (2005) 5.1 | Drama, Horror, Thriller,” IMDb, August 1, 2005, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0449086>.

⁶⁸ “The Exorcist: Believer (2023) 4.8 | Horror,” IMDb, October 6, 2023, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt12921446/?ref_=fn_all_ttl_1.

⁶⁹ “Stigmata (1999) 6.2 | Horror, Mystery,” IMDb, September 10, 1999, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0145531/?ref_=fn_all_ttl_1.

⁷⁰ “The Exorcism of Emily Rose (2005) 6.7 | Drama, Horror, Thriller,” IMDb, September 9, 2005,

as the priest-exorcist and Jennifer Carpenter as the possessed student, who is possessed by a powerful evil spirit during her university studies. The movie describes, through the trial of the exorcist-priest, all the happenings during the exorcism. Emily (Jennifer Connelly) demonstrated remarkable psychological resilience and faith during her torment; consequently, the Great Lady (Panagia) honored her by her presence while she was still possessed. Another interesting movie is the “EXORCISM OF KARRIN WALKER”⁷¹ Directed by Steven Lawson (2018) describing the personal story of a brother deciding to take care of his sister who has been for many years hospitalized for possible mental illness. But still her brother, intuitively and under certain circumstances, searched her case deeply and found out, with the help of a Kirlian camera, that her sister might be possessed.

Of course, there are many more movies under the topic; however, the main reasons the above movies were mentioned are: a. quite a few of them are based on real incidents, making the tragedy of the exorcism process a public narration of great interest for all ages in the context of a long-term spiritual pedagogy,⁷² b. They are demonstrating essential attributes of the process of exorcism, which dispose of metaphysical and realistic characteristics c. Those movies illustrate the battle between God and Satan, Good and Evil, in a way that God acts through human drama, often emerging as the victor. The cinematographic horror metaphysical literature provides a wealth of theological and psychological information that can be utilized in academic discourse, despite the mythological elements enriching each film.⁷³ The latter

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0404032/?ref_=fn_all_ttl_1.

⁷¹ “Beneath Your Skin S1E53 - the Exorcism of Karen Walker (Podcast Episode 2021),” IMDb, August 9, 2021,

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt24731302/?ref_=fn_all_ttl_2.

⁷² D. R. Ralbovska and M. Zavis, “Replenishing the Spiritual Needs in Patients With Infaust Prognosis in Praguean and the Central Bohemian Region’s Hospitals (Research Note),” *Clinical Social Work and Health Intervention* 8, no. 4 (December 28, 2017): 80,

https://doi.org/10.22359/cswhi_8_4_10.

⁷³ Chambers, “‘Somewhere Between Science and Superstition’: Religious Outrage, Horrific Science, and the Exorcist (1973).”, *ibid.*

observation could be used creatively for a separate Academic Study as well.

Results

There are no definite results during an exorcism, only expected ones. The process always involves significant dangers, which can be deadly, as mentioned. Despite any ominous turn of events, every exorcist must be prepared both before and after the exorcism. The expected results vary little from exorcist to exorcist; therefore, the most important could be listed below:

- a. The defeat of the demon
- b. the deliverance of the human being
- c. the spiritual guard and protection of the person afterwards
- d. the gradual acceptance of Christ in the life of the person and his/her family

It is profound to note that the process of exorcism comprises two distinct phases: prior to the deliverance and subsequent to it. Even if the exorcism has been successfully concluded and the individual's deliverance has been effected under the protection of God, there are numerous instances of regression to the original condition or deterioration thereof. Within this scope of study, demons are not regarded as completely unintelligent,⁷⁴ contrary to the assumptions of some exorcists. This perspective does not diminish their experience, spiritual efforts, or warfare against evil but instead presents an alternative and serious possibility. Demons are inherently hypocritical and deceiving entities,⁷⁵ capable of feigning ignorance or stupidity without

⁷⁴ Hilary Powell, "Demonic Daydreams: Mind-Wandering and Mental Imagery in the Medieval Hagiography of St Dunstan," *New Medieval Literatures*, February 16, 2018, 66–8, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781787442047.002>.

⁷⁵ Lunn-Rockliffe, "The Devil as 'Father of Lies': Ideas of Diabolical Deceit in the Donatist Controversy," *ibid.*

genuine intent. Even if they are destined to lose the spiritual conflict—faced with fabricated ignorance—such a defeat may be preordained to cause further harm, potentially orchestrated by their leader, Satan. Therefore, exorcists must remain vigilant throughout the entire process.

Exorcism is a spiritual case of warfare, and despite the worldwide incidents that have occurred, exorcists don't discuss or reveal the full spectrum of this battlefield. The latter may be wise to do; however, without sources, theological research and scholarship are becoming increasingly impoverished. Therefore, many more publications must be obtained regarding the phenomenon. There are apparent differences between the Christian Orthodox and the Roman Catholic exorcism process, which have been illustrated analytically in the previous parts of this study. It would be pretty helpful to have an overview of them through the table provided below:

Table 1. Differences concerning the exorcism process

DIFFERENCES CONCERNING THE EXORCISM PROCESS	
ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH	ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
The presence of evil can manifest in different forms.	likewise
Evil Spirits manifest throughout the Old and New Testaments.	likewise
The charisma of the exorcist has been passed down to the Church by Jesus Christ during Pentecost.	likewise
The current Orthodox Christian Exorcists are usually elderly priests.	The age of the Catholic priests as Exorcists varies.
The modern Christian Orthodox Church doesn't provide any expertise to a priest to become an exorcist.	The Roman Catholic Church provides academic courses to priests who are interested in becoming exorcists.
Christian Orthodox priests use the exorcism rite of Saint Cyprian and Saint Basil the Great.	The Roman Catholic priests use the text of the Roman Ritual, either the old or the reformed version.
The process of exorcism is not divided into stages, but is approached as a whole.	The process of the exorcism is methodologically divided into stages and is approached accordingly.
There is also an aftermath spiritual care situation	likewise

Table 2. Estimated annual exorcism activity

COUNTRY/REGION	ESTIMATED ANNUAL EXORCISM ACTIVITY / NOTABLE DATA
Italy	Approx. 500,000 people request exorcisms per year—240+ Catholic exorcists.
Poland	120–150 Catholic exorcists active; exorcism centers present.
France	~2,500 exorcism requests per year in the Ile-de-France region; 50 validated as “genuine” cases per year.
Mexico	~120 Catholic exorcists; very high and rising demand for exorcisms.
United States	Estimates range from 50 (2005) to 150 (2023) trained Catholic exorcists. One U.S. archdiocese reported 1,700 requests for exorcism in one year. Public and media interest is high.
Brazil	Identified “hot spot” for Pentecostal exorcisms, often televised; exact numbers unknown.

As someone can observe, there is about a 50% common philosophical and methodological approach in approaching the phenomenon of exorcism and its development between the two Christian churches. In addition, it is very interesting to notice the development of the exorcism process throughout the world. A statistical overview is provided below:

Even if the above data are not considered homogenous, their sources are provided below:

Table 3. Sources per country

SOURCES PER COUNTRY	
Italy https://archivio.agensir.it/2016/12/04/exorcists-in-italy-and-in-the-rest-of-the-world-the-priests-engaged-in-the-extremely-difficult-fight-against-the-devil/	Poland https://www.dw.com/en/why-exorcism-is-booming-in-poland/a-36739778
France https://theweek.com/87467/exorcism-industry-booming-in-france-italy-and-uk	Mexico https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exorcism_in_the_Catholic_Church
United States https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/social-sciences-and-humanities/exorcism	Brazil https://www.independent.co.uk/news/exorcism-increasingly-frequent-including-after-us-protests-exorcism-exorcism-roman-catholic-pope-francis-exorcism-b1478055.html
UK https://theweek.com/87467/exorcism-industry-booming-in-france-italy-and-uk	Other https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/social-sciences-and-humanities/exorcism

The sources vary and are drawn from different news outlets online, offering interesting statistical data for assessment. The number of exorcist requests per year is not very high relative to the total population of the country. Nevertheless, this underscores the real-world aspect of the event, illustrating its relevance in the

modern historical context. The countries selected are primarily based on their strong Catholic traditions, as Catholic theology has recently emphasized a statistical approach to monitoring exorcism processes. Unfortunately, in the Greek context, there are no statistical reports on the phenomenon. Apparently, the statistical task has been omitted, since the baptism ritual is regarded as the first exorcism performance during the life of the baptized.

The problematic nature of exorcism is considerable and offers numerous viewpoints for further academic discussion and research. Consequently, the conflict between Good and Evil⁷⁶ is in perpetual development and activity, necessitating observation from various human perspectives⁷⁷ to enable mankind to redefine their true mission and destiny in relation to the world.

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⁷⁶ Mark, 3:20-35

⁷⁷ Victor L. Budha, "Intercultural Criticism of Spiritual Warfare (Ephesians 6:10–20)," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 78, no. 3 (February 22, 2022): 1, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i3.6905>.

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