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By

Jesmond Micallef

Transcription with liturgical and theological
comments

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Devil is small, but his acts are large.
Byzantine proverb

From the Gospel of Mark 5:2-19:

«When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice, ‘What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Have you come to torture us before the appointed time?’ Then Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name?’ ‘My name is Legion,’ he replied, ‘for we are many’. And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus, ‘Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them’. He said to them ‘Go!’ and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, ‘Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you’».

The subject of demons and demon possession has always seemed somewhat remote and academic to the sophisticated modern man. Bible-believing Christians have always accepted the existence of demons and their activity in the New Testament times. However most of us are inclined to relegate demonic activity in these days to pagan lands and missionary experiences. Like it or not, demons and demonic activity are likely to become much more of a concern to our society in the days to come. In his letter to the Ephesians 6:12, Saint Paul writes that our struggle is, at bottom, a spiritual one:

«For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places».

The existence of the devil and his works of evil is a teaching of the Scriptures. The New Testament reveals that Jesus Christ himself banished demons from afflicted persons. The mission of Christ was not only to reveal the nature of the True God, but also to destroy the power of Satan. The film *The Exorcist* (1973) aroused curiosity but seemingly created an awareness and fear of «demonic influence». Even if the film is frightening, shocking, pornographic, hideous, causes people to become ill, and blasphemous in gruesome detail, it is so appealing to the public.

The fact is that the main struggle the Christian has always faced is against the evil forces that surround him not only in today's turbulent world, but from the time of the «fall» of man in Paradise. Today's social climate cannot be fully understood unless it is remembered that there is an evil force working to tempt everyone and to win against those who are unbelieving and indifferent. Evil is a reality. The evil spirit develops and progresses because of indifferent and compromising attitudes toward moral standards and goodness. The behaviour of man and the world at large cannot be understood unless one remains conscious of this fact. This «demonic» force works within the individual, because he consciously or unconsciously cooperates with the evil one. Everyone has to make a personal decision as to whether the «demonic force of evil» or the Spirit of God will occupy his heart and mind.

In his very first homily on March 14th 2013, Pope Francis warned cardinals gathered in the Sistine Chapel the day after he was elected that «he who doesn't pray to the Lord prays to the devil»¹. He has since mentioned the devil on a handful of occasions. In May 4th 2013 during his morning Mass in the Vatican chapel, he spoke of the need for dialogue – except with Satan. «With the prince of this world you can't have dialogue: Let this be clear! » he warned².

Why studying the theme of Exorcism?

The controversial theme of Exorcism today attracts renewed interest in the Western Church, especially after the Roman Catholic Church on the 28th January 1999 published the exorcistic rite entitled DESQ³ which triggered a multitude of publications and academic works. However the problem of evil has always been one of the most serious philosophical challenges to the Christian faith. The presence of evil and suffering in the world has even been argued by some philosophers from Epicurus (341-270 B.C.) to David

Hume (1711-76 A.C.) who casted doubt on the existence of God. Other modern writers such as Freud and Marx sought to show that religion's explanations of the presence of evil and suffering were based on delusions.

There is a widespread conviction that the oriental tradition regarding this theme is more reserved than the western one. As a result one notes how byzantine iconography is more discreet when it comes to the representation for example of the wicked angels who appear in only three scenes: the *Anastasis* or Resurrection of Christ, the Last Judgement and the icon of St. George (and sometimes, in Russian art, in the icon of St. Dimitri). It has to be stated that in the Orthodox world, exorcism is mainly connected with baptism. As a result in the Orthodox theology we find lacunae when studying the theme of Exorcism maybe because of the importance given to baptismal exorcisms⁴. Also the lack of proper studies in demonology in the Orthodox world plus the scarcity of information about exorcisms, helped the spreading of some popular beliefs and imaginations. It is only by turning to authoritative and contemporary Orthodox sources and recalling some fundamental lines of orthodox doctrines about demons that one can arrive to some considerations about exorcisms. It is evident that Eastern scholars do not give the amount of attention this theme deserves with the result that there is no tentative systematic evaluation of it.⁵ Academically, it has typically been coldly addressed and neglected by Orthodox moralists, a fact they themselves attest. Is it perhaps considered by many as a psychological issue and thus not convincingly adapted to be explored and written about? It would be also wrong to think that orthodox theology gives little consideration to the reflection of the real personification of the demon. Studies on oriental Christianity of the 4th century and the Byzantine millennium dwell clearly on the presence of the demonic theme in hagiographic texts, spiritual texts, in exorcisms, superstitious practices and popular exorcist prayers; they show the presence of a learned demonology which is, in some lines, a continuation of the pagan philosophy. This presence is not lacking in popular religious belief during the post-Byzantine period. Superstitious practices and popular exorcistic prayers with pagan-Christian characteristics that mix together the divine, saints and demons, are still widespread⁶. Spiritual literature based on the texts of the Fathers does not forget the demon. On the other hand, Russian literature and theology have tried in the last centuries to penetrate the personality of evil by examining the mysterious demons. It is enough to read N. Gogol and F. Dostoevsky to understand their contribution to this subject. The latter for example, gave a huge contribution in the understanding of evil through his famous novel *Demons* where he depicts the demons in the ideas of idealism, rationalism, empiricism, materialism, utilitarianism, positivism, socialism,

anarchism, nihilism and ultimately atheism. Getting man to relinquish these ideas is to have mankind embrace the asceticism of Russian Orthodoxy⁷.

I. FROC says that «the other aspects of orthodoxy seem less categorical (absolute) when it comes to the personification of the demon»⁸. However what we have been seeing shows the close and essential relationship that in Orthodoxy unites redemption and victory over the evil one, salvation and expulsion of demons. Seen in this light, the exorcist dimension in the Orthodox vision of salvation is not some marginal or added dimension but rather a structural and fundamental component.

From the Orthodox theological point of view we can conclude that:

1. **Christ** is the exorcist par excellence for it is He who won the victory over the power of the devil;
2. **Priests** follow Christ's example in the performance of the holy sacraments and in preaching the word of God;
3. **All Orthodox Christians are exorcists** as they struggle against personal sin and social evil. In fact, «the whole Church, past, present and future, has the task of an exorcist to banish sin, evil, injustice, spiritual death, the devil from the life of humanity»⁹. The late Archbishop Iakovos, in a sermon at the Sage Chapel, Cornell University, spoke on exorcism in the following manner: «Both healing and exorcising are ministered through prayers, which spring from faith in God and from love for man...All the prayers of healing and exorcism, composed by the Fathers of the Church and in use since the third century, begin with the solemn declaration: *In Thy Name, O Lord*»¹⁰.

In summary, the four prayers of exorcism by Saint John Chrysostom and the three of Saint Basil ask in the name of God to deliver the possessed from the captivity of the devil. Some can be healed by faith accompanied by fasting and purification. However, the use of exorcism must be made with discretion and great care.

This diversity and multiplicity of liturgical rites and the abundance of forms found in the eastern and western catholic traditions, permit the use of a comparative study of liturgies. These factors enhance the study of Catholic worship, which has been enriched by scholars exploring the depths of different liturgical traditions, especially by those who have brought to light connections between the historical developments of the various liturgical families. However, in the field of comparative liturgical studies there is a dearth of published euchological sources. Frequently, this creates a serious obstacle for the development of the liturgical studies in general, and

comparative liturgical studies in particular¹¹. The technique of comparative liturgical study would only enhance our understanding of such a text¹².

3. Limitations.

The edition presented in this work is limited to one particular manuscript (the Xiropotamou 98) and to its euchological importance. As for the contents of the manuscript, the texts already known were simply transcribed, while a critical edition was reserved for the unedited exorcistic prayer found in the manuscript and on which a commentary was devised. The aim of this work is to present an unedited source allowing the research to focus on the section concerning exorcism and eastern euchology.

4. Objectives.

The research attempts to produce an edition of the Xiropotamou manuscript 98 preserved at the Library of the Xiropotamou monastery of Mount Athos in Greece. It is not known whether these prayers were recited only at the monastery of Xiropotamou or elsewhere in other monasteries of the peninsula. I have recorded a number of interviews with the monks of the Athos so as to answer this dilemma and other questions that may arise in trying to fill the gaps that exists in this field of exorcism studies. The manuscript was transcribed as it is, accepting typical customs of the scribes/diplomats. Variations of the manuscript were not made so that attention was not deterred from the singular emphasis of the research. Only the most common/simple errors and orthographic information provided by the indicated manuscript (its spellings, punctuation, capitalization, line divisions) which are produced on the printed page have been corrected. **However this is not a purely liturgical study.** It is a study which cushions the liturgical exorcistic prayer of the manuscript between a biblical study of this ancient activity of the Church and an overview of the Rite of Exorcism in Orthodox usage of Early, Middle, and Late Byzantium, a work which to my knowledge, has not been yet studied. It should be clear that my intent was only to study exorcism as practised in the Greek orthodox church since the Xiropotamou manuscript is a Greek manuscript.

5. Method.

The choice of publishing a late 16th century manuscript is founded on the principle of *recentiores non deteriores* – that is «the most recent witness of the text is not the worst». The fact that a text is more recent, and therefore less ancient, does not mean that it is not valid for the reconstruction of the

original text. This *Xiropotamou 98 Euchologion* is especially interesting for it includes different kinds of rites and prayers concerning rural life in a village, blessing of water, a blessing for meat and food, for the *Kollyba*, prayers to the Virgin Mary, *Megalinarias*, prayers recited during Christmas period and others. However most interesting are the prayers against the evil spirits and the exorcisms of Saint Tryphon, Saint Nichodemus of the Mount Athos, Saint Basil the Great, Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Gregory, Saint Ypatios, Saint Charalambos, Saint Mamas of Caesarea, Saint Simeon Stylite the Elder and Saint John the Miracleworker.

The editing and the contextualisation of a manuscript are overlapping exercises that belong to different fields ranging from Classical Philology and Patristics to codicology, palaeography and historical liturgical studies. The use of these disciplines obliges one to utilize the criteria of the ecumene academia and therefore, the utilisation of the gold standard in developing a research programme. My reference point for the description of the manuscript will be the method of A. PETRUCCI,¹³ for codicology the methods of M.L. AGATI,¹⁴ for Palaeography the school of P. CANART, and G. CAVALLO,¹⁵ and for liturgical studies, the method of comparative liturgy of J. MATEOS, R. TAFT and S. PARENTI¹⁶.

6. Division of work.

This study covers three major parts:

PART ONE:

Chapter 1: Jesus the Exorcist.

Chapter 2: An Overview of the development of the Exorcistic prayer in Orthodox usage of Early, Middle, and Late Byzantium.

PART TWO:

Chapter 1: Paleographical description of the *Xiropotamou 98* manuscript.

Chapter 2: Transcription of the manuscript.

Chapter 3: Edition and critical apparatus of folios: 133v-139v.

PART THREE:

Chapter I: Analysis and commentary of some single liturgical units of the exorcistic prayer (folios [φφ] 133v-139v) = Z' – Prayers against the demons: (φ.133r-138v) – H' – Prayer against the Vampires and how to destroy them: (φ.139r-[140r-149v=missing] 150r).

7. Sources.

The scope of the research, amongst others, is the preparation of the edition of the Xiropotamou manuscript which determines the sources of this research. The main sources of this work have been the printed editions of these euchologies, namely:

ARRANZ, M., *L'Euclologio costantinopolitano agli inizi del secolo XI. Hagiasmatarion & Archieratikon (Rituale e Pontificale) con l'aggiunta del Leitourgikon (Messale)*, Roma 1996.

GOAR, J., *Euchologion Sive rituale Graecorum, Rituale Graecorum complectens ritus et ordines Divinae Liturgiae, officiorum, sacramentorum, consecrationum, benedictionum, funerum, orationum, etc. Editio secunda expurgata, et accuratior*, Venice 1730.

DMITRIEVSKIJ, A., *Opisanie liturgiceskich rukopisej chranjas c ichsja v biblioteka chpravoslavnao Vostaoka, t.II, Eûxología*, Kiev 1901.

PARENTI, S – VELKOVSKA E., *L'euclologio Barberini gr. 336*, Roma 20002.

ΠΑΠΑΔΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, Ν., ed., *Ευχολόγιον το Μέγα*, Αθήνα 1927.

8. Originality.

Currently, there is no integral published edition of the Xiropotamou 98 manuscript, nor are there any studies about its unique liturgical contents as regards to the healing and exorcistic prayers it contains. This manuscript is still largely unpublished except for a small extract quoted by professor Charles Stewart, who in his book himself states that it would be appropriate for someone to review the manuscript through more rigorous criteria¹⁷. It was through Prof. Stewart's encouragement that this work was undertaken as a research on liturgical exorcisms.

9. Bibliography.

The bibliography brings together all the sources that are used for this study. It includes books and articles that deal directly or indirectly, with the arguments discussed. The methodology used in this work is according to the system proposed by MEYNET, R – ONISZCZUK, J., *Norme tipografiche per la composizione dei testi con il computer*, Roma 2011.

Notes

¹ Homily of the Holy Father Pope Francis, Sistine Chapel, Thursday, 14 March 2013 [access 29.10.2014],

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130314_omelia-cardinali.html.

² *The Associated Press*, Vatican City, May 22nd 2013. «The devil's influence and presence in the world seems to fluctuate in quantity inversely proportionate to the presence of Christian faith», said the Rev. Robert Gahl, a moral theologian at Rome's Pontifical Holy Cross University. «So, one would expect an upswing in his malicious activity in the wake of de-Christianization and secularization» in the world and a surge in things like drug use, pornography and superstition: See the following link: [access 29.10.2014],

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/05/21/pope-francis-exorcism/2347197>.

Besides this, one has to mention that as from the 13 June 2014 the *The International Association of Exorcists* (IAE) containing about 250 priests, now has a legal status. The Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* reported on the 2nd of July 2014 that the *Congregation for the Clergy* approved the association's statutes and recognized it under Canon Law (Canon 322, par. 1) as a private international association of faithful in accordance with Canon 116, par. 2 and has all the rights and obligations stated within the Code.

³ Cf. *De exorcismis et supplicationibus quibusdam*.

⁴ It is important to underline that despite the growing literature on demons in late antiquity, there has been no detailed study of demons in the Cappadocian father's theology. Demons occupy a liminal place in Cappadocian cosmology, eschatology and pastoral theology: demons were personal, rational beings, who were created good, fell from their original state, and became locked into an irreversible habit of willing evil, which contradicted but parasitically co-existed with their nature as part of God's good creation. This liminal status explains the demons' use in the Cappadocian theology not only to illustrate the power and nature of evil, but also as an exaggerated representation of humans' own condition: especially in preaching and hagiography, demons served to highlight the way in which human sin contradicts humans' original creation and to warn humans against the possibilities of locking themselves into a permanent habit of sin. Cfr. M. LUDCOW, «Demons, Evil and Liminality in Cappadocian theology», *JEC* 20 (2012) 179-211.

⁵ B. PETRA, «Demoni ed esorcismi nella tradizione ortodossa», 157.

⁶ One has to underline that as far as the Greek society is concerned Satan and his demons are a reality. They encounter these supernatural entities in the form of the evil eye and on very rare occasions through demonic possession. The evil eye is intensely integrated into the faith, culture and traditions of the Greek people, who go out of their way to avoid having the evil eye put on them or their families. What is considered to be a silly superstition in the West is a reality that is much feared in Greece and in much of the Mediterranean. From a sociological perspective it can be said that the Greeks have been conditioned to believe that Satan is a being with supernatural powers. Collectivist societies, such as the Greek societies, explain things, such as bad luck, on external factors such as the evil eye, instead of thinking that it could just be a coincidental event. Thus, the Greeks believe that Satan is a real threat to their well being. There is also a secret rite performed by superstitious people to avert the evil eye, which verges on the magical. Though the Church encourages even the laity to pray and exorcise evil, it rejects magical practices and rites. This secret rite is described *as follows*: The exorcist (not a priest, but an old woman) prepares a vial of olive oil and a small glass of water. She dips a finger in the oil, rubs it in a sign of the Cross on the victim's forehead and lets one drop fall onto the water; she repeats the process, making a cross on the forehead, on the chin and both cheeks. If the devil is indeed present, the four drops of oil in the water join to form the ellipsoid shape of an eye. The ritual then calls for the reading of prayers and repeating the four signs of the Cross; the drops of oil will not join in the water, but will disperse. Cfr. M. LUDCOW, *Demons, Evil and Liminality in Cappadocian theology*.

⁷ F. DOSTOEVSKY, *Demons*, xiii.

⁸ I. FROC, *Esorcisti e mistero del male*, 37,43.

⁹ G. PAPADEMETRIOU, *Exorcism and the Greek Orthodox Church*, 10.

¹⁰ Homily given on the March 10th, 1974. . Here the Pope is referring to the exorcistic cited afterwards.

¹¹ In the case in point, one notes that in the Byzantine rite there is a lack of published sources about exorcism. For example, in the Eastern Liturgies, only a minimal part of the most ancient sources of the exorcistic ritual attributed to St. John Chrysostom (the four prayers of exorcism) and Saint Basil (the three prayers of exorcism) is now published or accessible to scholars. However, with particular reference to the rite of exorcism, an important text still survives, at the Xiropotamou monastery of Mount Athos.

¹² The comparative study of eastern and western liturgy was also advanced by I.H. DALMAIS – H.J. SCHULZ, *The Byzantine Liturgy*. Finally, a major aid in the study of the liturgical theology of the Byzantine Church is that provided by R. BORNET, *Les commentaires byzantins de la Divine Liturgie du VII^e au XV^e siècle*.

¹³ A. PETRUCCI, *La descrizione del manoscritto. Storia, modelli, problemi*.

¹⁴ M.L. AGATI, *Il Libro Manoscritto da Oriente a Occidente. Per una codicologia comparata*.

¹⁵ P. CANART, *Paleografia e codicologia greca*, 22-29.

¹⁶ R.F. TAFT – A. BAUMSTARK, *Comparative Liturgy Revisited*; J. MATEOS, *La célébration de la Parole dans la liturgie byzantine*; R.F. TAFT, *History of the Liturgy*; ID., «Come crescono le liturgie», 219-252.

¹⁷ Cf. A. STEWART, *Demons and the Devil*. Stewart's book offers the data collected during his field research on the island of Naxos. In this work he combines a series of folkloric and theological materials found in the cultural historical context of Naxos which proved indispensable for his ethnographic material. The way people on Naxos currently live with ideas of the *exotiká* constitutes a synchronic moment where ideas about polymorphous evil demons take shape in relation to life in a particular place. The *exotiká* has been developing in the eastern Mediterranean, in relation to standard Orthodox Christian ideas of the Devil for at least 1500 years. The placement of the contemporary *exotiká* in historical context makes this work relevant to cultural historians. It challenges theologians to discern between folklore, magic and faith. My desire is that this work one day will be translated into modern Greek so as to augment the awareness that «our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places» (Eph. 6:12).

PART I

CHAPTER 1

JESUS THE EXORCIST

Jesus inaugurates his mission as God's suffering servant¹ through his baptism in the Jordan River. He allows himself to be numbered among sinners. Immediately after his baptism, God empowers him through the Holy Spirit to begin waging a cosmic war with Satan. Here just before his public ministry Jesus goes into the wilderness in order to confront the devil, «the tempter», who has claimed authority over «all the kingdoms of the world» (Mt 4:3; 4:8).

In the Beelzebul controversy Jesus implies that by performing exorcisms he is waging a war against Satan's «house», thus rupturing the authority of «the prince of demons» on earth, and shattering «his kingdom» of spiritual evil (Mk 3:22-30; Mt 9:34; 12:24-30; Lk 11:15-23). Jesus' ministry then plays out as an ongoing battle with Satan, his minions, demons, and unclean spirits – a battle which does not reach its climax until the Romans nail Jesus on the cross. From that cross Christ announces his triumph over Satan's empire, when he says, «It is finished» (Jn 19:30). Christian scripture attests to the belief that although victory has been declared, the battle against the «spiritual forces of evil» continues in the lives of Jesus' followers (Eph 6:10-18; Rv 12:17). Only at his final coming, the *parousia*, when God makes a final apocalyptic judgment, will Jesus' original work of destroying the authority of evil be complete, and the promised kingdom of God will be fully revealed. For this reason, Jesus' exorcisms have cosmic, apocalyptic, and anti-imperial implications².

1. Jesus, the Exorcist?

1.1 Jesus, as healer

The demonical tradition pertaining to Jesus Christ, that is, his having authority over demons and the power to heal demoniacs is nothing new. James Dunn proposes emphatically that since Christianity's inception there has been a demonical tradition which was faithfully preserved and transmitted in the early «Jesus community»³. Dunn's unique approach asks the question of how Jesus had impact on his followers and how his followers

remembered him. Jesus' ability to heal and exorcize would have been an unforgettable facet of his ministry, one that touched his contemporaries enormously and not only during the ministry prior to the crucifixion, but for subsequent generations. While virtually all those engaged in research into the historical Jesus presuppose that Jesus was a teacher and that all his actions were part of a teaching ministry – the «fame» of Jesus was as a healer and exorcist, not a teacher (cf. Mt 4:24; Acts 10:37-38)⁴.

Even the greatest anti-Christian apologists in the early centuries, such as Celsus, who tried to fight by every means the validity of the Christian message did not question the miracles of Jesus of healing and exorcism – so indisputable they were in the popular memory. Instead the only rational way Celsus could undermine Jesus' miracles was to claim they flowed from a power that was not of God but was magical, proposing that Jesus had learned from magicians while he was in Egypt⁵.

For Jesus in the synoptic Gospels, healing and exorcism were both signs and demonstrations of the reality of the reign of God, a reality that lay at the very heart of his proclamation (cf. Mk 1:14-15; Lk 11:20)⁶. For the disciples of Jesus, healing and exorcism continued to demonstrate a fundamental reality of the faith: if Christ is alive and enthroned *in heaven* as the King of the universe as promised in Scripture (cf. Ps 110:1; Dn 7:13-14), then he has endowed believers with royal power (cf. Dn 7:27), particularly the apostles⁷, who exercised authority to perform miracles, «Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay» (Mt 10:8). Along with the command to baptize and teach (Mt 28:19) – the faith is to be spread and its truth confirmed by power encounters, that is, exorcism and healing in the name of Jesus (cf. Acts 5:12; 19:11-17). These miracles confirm the divine authority of Jesus himself, and without them many would not believe that Jesus is who he claims to be (Jn 4:48).⁸ The Gospels tell us that «whenever» the people with unclean spirits saw Jesus, they fell down before him and cried out, «You are the Son of God» (Mk 3:11). This indicates that the demons and demoniacs know who Jesus is because in the realm of the spirit, the power and reputation of Jesus are undeniable.

In the synoptic Gospels, demonic possession is different from sickness or illness, just as exorcism is distinct from healing. A demoniac is someone under the control of a hostile non-human force, thus exorcism would entail a full deliverance and restoration of the victim to family, to community and to God's created order. Jesus commissioned the Twelve to be with him, to learn from him, and to proclaim the kingdom of God by participating with him in healing and exorcism – through the centuries Jesus' message has endured by those who seek to embrace and teach it.

It seems natural for a modern reader to include the phenomenon of possession in the category of disease, and to regard the exorcism narratives of the New Testament as «special case» narratives of healing of disease⁹. Since the New Testament does not seem to tell us about the healing of mental diseases, it seems natural to regard the exorcism narratives as exactly that: people suffering from mental disorders who were healed¹⁰. However the authors of the Gospels inhabited a symbolic universe quite different from that of many modern readers¹¹. Thus, without surrendering their own scientifically-based models of sickness and health, modern cultural analogies can be instructive with respect to shaping the Gospel accounts. In them, a crucial theological affirmation is awaiting discovery: the forces that oppose health also oppose the will of God, that is to say, God's final purpose, as Jesus discloses it, is not sickness but health, not death but life. Both spiritual illness and physical illness are interrelated, and God is not indifferent to either. Thus, by whatever model we explain the phenomena of sickness and healing, this affirmation of God's desire for human wholeness must stand at the centre of a theology of healing informed by the Gospels. The fact that so many of Jesus' acts of healing (at least in the synoptic Gospels) are exorcisms indicates that such maladies reflect, not sins for which the sufferer should repent, but oppression from which liberation is necessary. The goal is that the victim may be restored in body and also liberated from oppressive thought patterns that vex the heart and mind – which, in the language of the Gospels, are caused by oppressive spirits. Jesus is not a dualist; he does not separate body and soul, but treats the whole person, and in his exorcisms both the mind and body undergo spiritual and physical restoration. Undoubtedly this language of demonic possession and exorcism poses a challenge for the interpreter today. As with the miracles generally, many modern readers of the Bible reject (or simply ignore) exorcisms, regarding them as the expression of an outmoded worldview.

Exploring the exorcism narratives as special cases of disease narratives may explain the causes of disease as the work of evil spirits or demons. In antiquity, possession and exorcism were not a phenomenon of disease but had a different and more comprehensive hermeneutic framework.

To identify and examine the beliefs of Jesus and the early Christians regarding exorcism, one may use the lens of modern notions regarding exorcism. But in contrast to Western Christian ideas of *magic* and the activities of Jewish exorcists of the first century, Jesus and the early Christians after him did not follow the magical practices of the contemporary pagan world¹². The unique features in the exorcisms performed by Jesus and his disciples will be brought to light in the present study.

1.2 Exorcisms of Jesus and the early Christians

In two of the six exorcism stories of the Gospels, namely, Mt 9:32-34 and Mt 12:22f (par. Lk 11:14), there is nothing said about the technique used by Jesus. In three exorcism stories Jesus expels demons with short, succinct commands such as, «Be silent and come out of him!» (Mk 1:25; Lk 4:35); «Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!» (Mk 5:8; Lk 8:29)¹³. The brevity and authority of such commands and the absence of the invocation of divine or angelic names are aspects which contrast sharply from the lengthy adjurations and invocations that characterize formulas seen in the papyri indicative of magic and sorcery in early times. That Jesus could confidently command demons and expect instant obedience indicates that he regarded himself as someone in full possession of the supernatural power necessary for the performance of such acts. Unlike other Jewish exorcists, Jesus never uses secondary means in his exorcisms, such as fumigations, rings, roots or herbs. Nor does Jesus use incantations, liturgical prayers or specially-composed psalms of praise as part of his exorcist practice. When the disciples were unable to drive out a demon, Jesus explains that there are different types of demons, and some of these can only come out by prayer (Mk 9:14-29; Mt 17:14-21; Lk 9:37-43a). However there is no indication that Jesus himself used prayer as a means of exorcism. Rather, Jesus drives out demons simply by directly commanding the demon(s) to come out of a person¹⁴. When exorcizing the boy with the demon that caused him to be deaf and dumb, for example, Jesus says, «You deaf and mute spirit...I command you, come out of him and never enter him again» (Mk 9:25). Moreover, unlike other Jewish exorcists, Jesus does not appeal to any authority for these exorcisms other than himself, not even to YHWH¹⁵. This is different from the exorcist whom the disciples discover casting out demons but who was not one of their group (the so-called «strange exorcist» Mk 9:38-41). This unidentified exorcist did indeed cast out evil spirits but did so only on the basis of Jesus' authority. Likewise, the disciples themselves practiced exorcism, but they also did so by Jesus' authority (Mk 3:15; 6:7). When they returned from being sent out to announce the kingdom of God, they marvelled: «Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name» (Lk 10:17).

Clearly Jesus was also unique among exorcists because evil spirits submitted to him without opposition or struggle. Sometimes the demons engaged Jesus in dialogue and in one instance they appealed to him for leniency. The «Legion» in the Gadarene demoniac for example sought to have Jesus promise that he would not torment them¹⁶. But there is never a sense of a real power struggle between Jesus and the evil spirits that he removed from people, unlike with other exorcists (e.g. Acts 19:13-16). The

fact that Jesus exorcized without opposition probably explains why witnesses of his exorcisms were astonished at what they experienced (Mk 1:27; Lk 4:36; Mt 9:33). Jesus' complete «authority and power» (Lk 4:36) over evil spirits also explains the alarm and terror that the spirits exhibit when they encounter him; they fear for their continued well-being because they believe that Jesus has the power to torment them and to send them to the Abyss (Mk 5:10; Lk 8:31). In fact, the demons recognize Jesus as the kingly Davidic Messiah who has been given authority over the spiritual world. Just as David had received exorcistic power after his anointing (cf. 1 Sa 16:13, 23) so Jesus displays this royal, messianic power in performing exorcisms. Thus the demons fall down before Jesus, addressing him with the appropriate messianic titles: «O son of God» (Mt 8:28; cf. 2 Sa 7:14; Ps 2:7; 89:26), «the holy one of God» (Mk 1:24; Lk 4:34; cf. Ps 16:10), «You are the son of God» (Mk 3:11; Lk 4:42), and «Jesus, son of the most High God» (Mk 5:7; Lk 8:28). Mental illness and psychosis cannot explain this characteristic insight that many of the demoniacs have into Jesus' messianic identity, especially since most «normal» Jews lack this insight.

Jesus was a first-century Palestinian Jew, and the writers of the New Testament documents were Christians of the first, or perhaps, 2nd century writing for Christians of their own time. For Jews of this historical period, in addition to God and his material creation, there existed a world of spiritual beings, some good and some evil, both of which can interact with human beings. The evil spiritual beings would seek to do harm to humans and God permitted these spirits to lead people into disobedience to God's law. There are three principle sources of the formulation of this belief.

Firstly, in Genesis 6:1-4, there is the story of the «sons of God» or Watchers who were angelic beings of the antediluvian period that «took brides for themselves» from the daughters of men, thus corrupting themselves and the human beings over whom they were perhaps responsible to keep watch¹⁷. From this the tradition developed that the angels and humans had spiritual offspring who continued the corrupting influence on the human race begun by their fathers. This topic we will discuss in greater detail below (cf. 3.4).

Secondly, after king Saul has been rejected by God because of disobedience, God sends an evil spirit to afflict Saul (1 Sa 16:14-16; 18:10; 19:9-10). This happens immediately after David received the Spirit of the Lord at his anointing, because he will eventually replace Saul as king (1 Sa 16:13). Interestingly David, as newly anointed messiah, is given a divine power of exorcism, so that when he is invited to play the harp in Saul's court every day, the evil spirit departs from Saul (1 Sa 16:23; 18:10). This «royal gift» seems to have passed to David's son Solomon who gains the reputation

as one of the great exorcists of antiquity¹⁸, even in non-Jewish circles. Thus exorcism comes to be associated with God's anointed (i.e. messiah) – a detail which, as we have seen, the writers of the Gospels were well aware.

Thirdly, many texts speak of the existence of evil spirits in the post-diluvium period who are subordinate to a ruling evil spirit, variously named Belial (or Beliar), Satan, Mastema, angel of darkness, spirit of deceit, Melchirešha, and the devil (διάβολος), but without any reference to the story of the Watchers¹⁹.

To understand and highlight beliefs, held either against or in common with their contemporaries, it is perhaps helpful to ask an *a priori* question: What did the people of the New Testament world and its cultural context think about such things as spirits, demons, possession, magic, healing, healers, exorcism and exorcists? Jesus' ministry traversed the area of Palestine. Most of the Gospel material came to its present form as the faith expanded into the wider Greco-Roman world. To clarify what Jesus and his audience thought about exorcism, one must examine the background material concerning the social and religious life in first century Palestine. On the other hand, it is not accurate to think of two separate, clearly defined «worlds» between Jewish and Gentile beliefs, separated by a cultural and intellectual barrier, implying that Christianity passed from an exclusively Jewish to an exclusively Hellenistic milieu. The New Testament writers themselves, who were both Jews and non-Jews, have a largely shared worldview; the ancients, both pagans and Jews alike, conceived of the world as ordered by divine forces for the purpose of worship²⁰. Even before the «conquest» of Canaan by the bulk of the Hebrew tribes, what was to become the homeland of the Jews had been a cultural, political, and economic crossroads of the ancient world. For this reason, and because of its small size, this homeland was never able to remain a closed society. Indicative of this is the great number of Jews from different parts of the ancient world who came annually to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem bringing with them new customs, including the language of their new homes (cf. Acts 2:5-12). The wider Greco-Roman world was not one homogeneous «Hellenistic» culture but included a vast number of Jews whose position in society, in Hellenistic Egypt for example, was not marginal.

1.3 Hebrew personification of evil, the Jewish Tradition

Despite the view that, «God was responsible for everything, good or evil», ancient Israel maintained a belief in the existence of evil spirits that Jewish scripture related to idolatry and the pagan gods²¹. The importance and significance of this view requires investigation into the Old Testament

development of ancient demonology. Robert C. Dunston states:

«Further influences on Israel's ideas concerning demons came from the wilderness and from neighboring religions. The wilderness was a sinister, forbidding place and seemed to be a fitting abode for demons (Is 34:14). In some cases, phrases may indicate the names of earlier demons...but in other cases, specific names were used. The demons Resheph, Lilith, and Azazel clearly show the influence of the desert and other religions on Israel. Resheph was the Canaanite god of plague and pestilence (Dt 32:24 'burning heat', 'plague'; Hab 3:5), Lilith was the Mesopotamian storm demon who in the O.T. became a night demon of the wilderness (Is 34:14 'night hag'), and Azazel was the desert demon to whom the scapegoat was sent on the Day of Atonement (Lv 16:8,10,26). Demons such as these survived in Israelite thought and practice and eventually found a place in Israel's theology»²².

Israelite demonology extended into the realm of angelology. Judaism accepted and adopted the gods of other nations but neither considered them divine, nor worthy of worship. Rather they were considered guardian spirits/angels of each nation (cf. Dt 32:8), nations who had become corrupted by worship of these spirits in place of their Creator, and, therefore, these nations were under God's judgment²³. As such, the children of Abraham were not henotheists. By the time of the New Testament, however, the influence of Hellenistic culture had undoubtedly exerted itself with regard to the understanding of supernatural deities. In fact, «*Demon* is a transliteration of a Greek term referring originally to either good or bad spirit beings» – δαιμόνιον²⁴. Perhaps the Israelite conception of demons arose from the fact that «ancient people feared demons because they inhabited lonely places such as dark, shadowy, deserted areas, places of waste, or ruins of crumbling buildings»²⁵.

Pre-exilic Hebrew religion held that YHWH made all that was in heaven and earth, both good and evil. The «devil» as such did not exist, at least, not as Christian and later Jewish thought conceived of him. However the idea that human good was disrupted by a created being, an adversary, can be seen for example in the astonishing «serpent» of Eden who tempts Adam to sin, an act for which God curses the serpent and makes him and his «offspring» the eternal enemies of the «offspring» of Eve. The serpent's offspring must afflict all humanity in subsequent generations (Gn 3:15)²⁶. Could not the offspring of the serpent be a reference to demonic forces? Such a theory is not articulated later in the Hebrew Bible²⁷.

An interesting case of a spiritual enemy of human good is from the Book of Job, perhaps the oldest book in the Bible and a beautiful example of Hebrew poetry; it sings of Job's great sufferings coming as a direct result of a kind of wager between God and a mysterious «Adversary», *satan*. This

Satan is one of the *bene-ha-Elohim*, «the sons of God» (Jb 1:6) and so he has a unique relationship with his Creator. In Job as in Zachariah God permits this Satan to stand before him and speak to him in the heavenly court (cf. Zec 3:1-3). God boasts to him of the goodness of Job: «And the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?'» (1:8). Satan says Job's goodness is a result of God's blessings and protection, but if God were to remove his protection over Job «he will curse you to your face» (1:11). So God allows Satan to bring great calamities upon Job, «And the LORD said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your hand'» (Jb 1:8-11; 2:1-7). Despite the loss of everything including his health and family, Job maintains his integrity; he does not curse God, but blesses him – he only maintains that it was unfair that he suffer, and so he complains until the final chapters. Then in an act of total surrender to God's will, Job gives all glory and credit to the Creator to do whatever he likes with his creation, and repents of having accused God of injustice (Jb 42:2-6). God then blesses Job enormously and makes him an intercessor for humanity, a role for which he became famous (Jb 42:10; Ez 14:14, 20; Jas 5:11). Therefore by means of Job's patience and sincerity, his love of God and total surrender, clearly God has won the «wager» and Satan has lost.

Despite the crucial role of the serpent in the temptation ordeal of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, and «Satan's» effort to disrupt Job's relationship with God, an understanding of the devil as *both* tempter and accuser, that is, both serpent and Satan, developed only gradually in Jewish tradition, arising from certain tensions within the concept of YHWH²⁸. The fact that the spirit of evil, the devil, is not a fully unified concept in the Old Testament is not grounds for rejecting his existence in later Jewish or Christian theology. Such rejection would be a case of the genetic fallacy: the notion that in order to find the truth of a word or concept one must look at it in its earliest form. Rather, historical truth is a development through time, and theological understanding likewise can mature as generations reflect upon their experience of suffering and joy in the light of providence confirmed in the sacred writings of their faith tradition.

The devil could be considered the personification of evil in any culture. But several difficulties arise in discussing this concept in Hebrew religion. The word «devil» derives through Latin from the Greek *diabolos*, which is a rendition of the Hebrew *satan*²⁹. Conceptually, the Hebrew word *satan* is not *par essence* identical to the spirit of evil, but merely descriptive of one of the characteristic roles that he plays. *Satan* derives from a Hebrew root meaning «to oppose», «obstruct», «accuse». It was translated into the Greek as *diabolos*, «adversary», whence it passed into Latin *diabolus*, German

Teufel, and English *devil*. *Satan* appears as a common noun several times in the Old Testament in reference to a human opponent, as when David says to the sons of Zeruiah, «What right have you...to oppose me today»?³⁰ In another early passage, an angel of the Lord blocks the road on which Balaam seeks to travel riding an ass. Since the angel obstructs the road, he is referred to as *Satan* (Num 22:22). The sense is clearly that of a common noun. The angel is not being called a «Satan», but in this instance, is merely an obstructor of the road.

In order to posit the «prince of demons» as a possible metaphysical reality, the origin and existence of demons/evil spirits must to be further clarified. Dunston noted above that at least several demons came into Hebrew tradition from foreign gods or from the desert. Indeed humans by nature associate what is unknown with evil, tending to demonize it. But this is only a first glance at evil, to grasp the more profound and spiritually rich elements in the Hebrew concepts of demonic power, one needs to first understand and underscore the tremendous love by which Israel believed herself to be upheld and sustained through the centuries: God's covenant love. Israel's national identity was partly formed out of the oral tradition of the patriarchs to whom God had accorded blessings and promises, and this identity would be further solidified by the covenant through Moses at Sinai. The God of Abraham liberated Israel from bitter slavery in Egypt because, as God says to Pharaoh, «Israel is my firstborn son... Let my son go that he may serve me» because the worship of God is true freedom (Ex 4:22-23; Ps 19:7-10). In the desert God calls Israel to covenant because he wants them to be exclusively devoted to him so as to fulfil a special vocation he promised Abraham: to be God's blessing to «all nations» (Gn 22:18), «a kingdom of priests and a holy nation» that, by keeping the covenant with God, will invite all the other children of God back to the freedom and joy of worshipping their true Creator (Ex 19:4-6; Dt 28:10). But this universal vocation is wounded by Israel's own unfaithfulness. The apex of all evil for humanity is what prevents God from blessing the world through Israel's worship, namely, rupture of the covenant (Dt 32:16-26; Is 24:5-6). This evil is much greater in God's eyes, in fact, than the religious practices of the *goyim* who are not bound by a covenant with him (cf. Dt 6:4-15; 29:24-26). Furthermore, it is covenant faithfulness and not cultural superiority that sets Israel apart as a nation. According to Ezekiel Jews cannot claim to have a different origin than their *goyim* enemies; by blood Jews are the same as the Canaanites, Amorites, and Hittites³¹. In this context it cannot be stressed enough that even before Moses the «foreign gods» were *never* truly foreign to Israel. The people of Israel were quite familiar with the sexual rituals that pagan worship entailed, just as Aaron knew precisely how to build a golden

calf and invite the people «to play» around it (Ex 32:1-35; Nm 25:1-9). Although Israel had sworn their fidelity to God in fear and trembling before stormy mount Sinai (Ex 19:16-19), just forty days later they broke that covenant without any fear whatsoever, not through ignorance of foreign gods, but through knowledge of them. So there must be another reason for why foreign gods became demons besides cultural ignorance and prejudice.

The covenant in Exodus 24 cannot be broken, because its promise is sealed by the word of the Eternal God: «I have loved you with everlasting love... O virgin Israel!» (Jer 31:3-4). Despite centuries of betrayal, God is still a faithful «husband» and longs for the time when his people would love him «as a bride» (31:32; 2:2)³². The nuptial imagery connotes a spiritual truth: the golden calf incident, the orgy of Baal of Peor, etc. ruptured the covenant marriage with God with such severe contempt for God's love that it rendered Israel on par with Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Is 1:10-11). Reflection upon the contrast between Israel's infidelity to the covenant through Baal worship vis-à-vis the pristine fidelity of monotheism practiced by Abraham and the «fathers» of oral tradition may have influenced the very roots of the Hebrew language³³. It is no coincidence that Israel's idolatry involved cult prostitution and promiscuity with «foreign women» in worship of the erotic (Ex 32:6, 25; Nm 25:1-3). «How sick is your heart, declares the Lord GOD, because you did all these things, the deeds of a brazen prostitute» (Ez 16:30). The scriptural witness is unanimous: idolatry is spiritual *adultery*. Both male and female cult prostitution, through which Israel spiritually fornicated with foreign gods in contempt for her husband, became the quintessential evil urge³⁴. Now we can see why the Hebrew word for foreign gods was not principally something abstract like evil spirits or *shadim*, «demons», but *baalim*, בעלים «husbands», «masters»³⁵. God ordered the prophet Hosea to marry a prostitute, so he would become a living sign to the people of God's frustration with Israel (Hos 1:2). But God promises to cast aside Israel's lovers: «I will remove the names of the Baals [*baalim*] from your lips... And I will betroth you to me forever» in a new «covenant» (Hos 2:17, 19). At this stage in Jewish history the word *baalim* would be more filthy and suggestive to Jews, and hence more evil than any unseen spirit could be. In the Torah the worship of these foreign «husbands» brought death to any Israelite who merely suggested it, even if that person were a family member (Dt 13:6-10). The lesson here is very concrete: foreign nations may follow their own gods to their own loss, but Israel is to abide by her promise to worship YHWH alone. Only when one understands in Jewish eyes the unconditional love of God for his special people could we understand how anything that sought to break that love was seen as hideous – even if, at this stage, evil was not conceived of as a concrete

entity, we can already see the trajectory of where evil must finally take shape: **as enemy of the God of the covenant, not through Jewish ignorance of evil but through intimacy with it.** Therefore it is essential to see that the Hebrew Bible, especially the prophets, did not permit Israel simply to project evil onto foreign cultures and their gods, the experience of evil required of Israel, a very personal, if harrowing, look in the mirror.

How did worship of the *baalim* pass from being innocent games with stone, wood, and stars to something understood to be concretely evil? How did occult practices lead to the opening of a metaphysical world in Jewish consciousness where spiritual evil is not just a perpetual, natural urge to sin (or fornicate), but something manifest in the actions of demons afflicting human beings?

One can see how the Greek Septuagint, composed in the 2nd – 3rd centuries B. C., was indicative of this process of the demonization for both disease and foreign gods in Jewish post-exilic theology – a process that has influenced the modern concept of daemon as a malefic spirit. A prime example is Ps 91:6, where God promises to protect his faithful from mysterious plagues such as «the pestilence that stalks in darkness... the destruction that wastes at noonday». But the LXX translates pestilence (דבר) as πράγματος «thing» (π. διαπορευομένου ἐν σκότει «thing walking in darkness»), and destruction (טף) as δαιμονίου μεσημβρινοῦ «the daemon of noonday». What were Hebraic metaphors for the invisible action of disease became in Greek spiritual entities «walking in darkness». This is one example of a process: demons that cause disease had begun to take shape in the Jewish mind; but why? Here one could demonstrate the influence of Egyptian or Babylonian mysticism, or Hellenistic influences from Greek philosophy, the Platonic forms or the *daimonia* of Greek religion. But we can also see this as a deepening of spiritual elements already present in Hebrew tradition, a tradition which was never separated from its diverse Near Eastern socio-cultural milieu. Psalm 91 is about spiritual combat, God sends his angels to protect humans from invisible evil vv. 11-12. So even without the insertion of free-floating demons this passage already posits the existence of guardian angels, unseen spirits who inhabit a metaphysical realm of good and evil that is invisible but real. Into this world these disease-causing spirits bring death, which is not a new idea in Hebraic thought. That angelic spirits brought death is confirmed in the Pentateuch, most memorably the angels who destroy Sodom (Gn 19:13), the angel of death of Exodus (personified by YHWH himself), the plagues against Egypt, and plagues that killed tens of thousands of Israelites because of Baal worship and disobedience to Moses (Ex 12:29; Nm 15:9; 16:49). Later during the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. in a single night

«the angel of the LORD went out and struck down a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians» (Is 37:36; 2 Kgs 19:35)³⁶. God's angels also conducted Israel out of Egypt and lead them into battle against all their enemies (Nm 20:16; Ex 33:2). So the power of unseen spiritual forces, both good and evil, already exists in the Hebrew scripture and operates in accordance with God's blessing or his wrath. Whatever the precise origin of the idea that disease was caused by δαιμόνια, this idea had already become commonplace in the Judeo-Hellenistic worldview in which the New Testament was written, and in which exorcism and healing were related though not identical. However it should be noted that the process of demonization of evil predates the Septuagint. An «evil spirit» or «Satan» was sometimes sent by God to seriously afflict people, as in the case of Job, Abimelech (Jg 9:23), and the unfaithful king Saul (1 Sa 16:14; cf. 18:10; 19:9). Here evil is clearly under God's direct control, as Satan was in Job, but the novelty of the LXX of Ps 91 seems to be the concept of *spiritual combat* between invisible forces of good and evil, between the αγγελοι who protect God's people and the δαιμόνια who would seek to harm them in darkness³⁷.

As we have seen not all gods were made demons; δαιμόνιον only occurs eight times in the Septuagint, whereas Baal occurs eighty-one times. Regardless of the influence of Hellenic thought, Jews of post-exilic period may have been already inclined to consider the worship behind the idols as indicative of real spiritual evil, i.e. non-human entities with intelligence. It is worthwhile to reflect on the context of Dt 32:17 and Ps 106:36, the only two passages where foreign gods are explicitly identified with demons, because the context here is sacrificial worship, «they sacrificed to *shedim*» (A)ru «demons» NRSV) who are both «not gods» and «new gods» (Dt 32:17). In these contexts we will see an awareness of something new: the emergence of religious practices in biblical history that could not be relegated to the category of spiritual fornication in violation of Israel's covenant, but they were objectively evil from any perspective, namely, the sacrifice of one's own children.

«And you took your sons and your daughters, whom you had borne to me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. Were your whorings so small a matter that you slaughtered my children and delivered them up as an offering by fire to them?» (Ez 16:20-21). To whom are the children being sacrificed? The word *akal*, «devoured», is the common word for eating, indicating that some «thing» has eaten these children, but who? Answering that question would bring Israel to confront an evil force they likely never wanted to face. The insane, exalted fury by which the kings of Israel and Judah fed the blood of their children to gods – practices which

caused disaster, confusion, and exile for the whole nation – does not make sense if the idols are nothing more than «wood and stone» as earlier tradition had maintained³⁸. Unlike cult prostitution the evil of these acts could have no logical explanation in human nature; therefore they must point to the existence of concrete spiritual evil, an unholy yet intelligent influence, that is, unseen demonic forces. This realization was compounded by the fact that these senseless acts were not committed by the ignorant but by the educated elite, such as Manasseh, the son of great King Hezekiah, descendant of the glorious David. God said King Manasseh's «abominations» would be cause the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile (2 Kgs 21:11-15), not only because he defiled God's temple with idols but because Manasseh «made his son to pass through the fire, used magic, and used divination, and dealt with mediums and necromancers... Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another» (2 Kgs 21:6, 16).

How is magic involved? A post-exilic Jewish understanding seemed to develop that if occult spiritual power was directly invoked somehow demons or evil spirits could infiltrate the human will. Just as when God sent the «evil spirit» to infiltrate the mind of king Saul, provoking him to insanity and murder, so also the spiritual forces behind divination, necromancy, and sorcery were the goal that motivated Judah's kings to do intrinsically evil acts such as human sacrifice (2 Kgs 17:17; 21:6; 2 Ch 33:6, Ps 106:36f). The example of King Saul in 1 Samuel is telling. Saul is warned by Samuel that his disobedience to God was equivalent to «the sin of divination» and «idolatry» (1 Sa 15:23). In the next chapter we see evidence that spiritual infiltration by demonic power has occurred: «The Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrified him» (16:14). This evil spirit continued to afflict Saul day by day so that he called David to comfort him with music that made the spirit leave him (16:23). But once again «the evil spirit from God came on Saul» and it motivated several insane attempts to kill David, «Saul threw the spear, and said, I will strike David» (18:10-11; cf. 19:9-10). To believing Jews Saul's malady may have appeared to be a mixed kind, natural and diabolical. There is too much of apparent human nature in it to believe it was all spiritual; and there is too much of apparently supernatural influence, to believe it was all natural. In any case the illness of Saul becomes paradigmatic of spiritual infiltration – scriptural proof that evil spirits exist and afflict those who venture outside God's protection. It is very significant that Saul's *peccata capitalia* was that he sought the counsel of a spiritual medium to obtain secret knowledge which instead of helping him led to his death (1 Sa 28:7f; 1 Ch 10:13). Saul's case is a warning to future kings to avoid all contact with spirits