

ERIC SORENSEN

Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament and Early Christianity

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

157

Mohr Siebeck

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*Mache dich, mein Herze, rein,
Ich will Jesum selbst begraben.
Denn er soll nunmehr in mir
Für und für
Seine süße Ruhe haben.
Welt, geh aus, laß Jesum ein.*

—Bach, *Matthäus-Passion*

Preface

This book represents a revision of my doctoral dissertation, “The Temple of God, the House of the Unclean Spirit: Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament and Early Christianity,” submitted to the Divinity of the University of Chicago in December 2001. Though based upon a dissertation, my hope is that a broad audience will find the study accessible, and that readers will recognize the sometimes extensively annotated footnotes as a resource for, rather than a distraction from, the main text. I express my thanks to Dr. Henning Ziebritsky, Theology Editor at Mohr Siebeck in Tübingen for his initial interest in my manuscript, and to Dr. Jörg Frey of the Evangelisch-Theologische Fakultät, University of Munich, who, as Managing Editor read and approved the selection of my work for the WUNT 2 series. Among Dr. Frey’s helpful suggestions was to present the material on “Ancient Israel and Early Judaism” as a chapter independent of the ancient Near Eastern material. I also thank the support staff at Mohr Siebeck for their patient and always friendly assistance in bringing this manuscript to print.

I would like to acknowledge my appreciation of the University of Chicago generally, which not only provided a curriculum that engendered the research topic, but a community of interested scholars and specialists who offered their time and suggestions, and whose own teachings and writings have informed the following pages. I extend my particular thanks to my dissertation committee — Adela Yarbro Collins (advisor, now of Yale Divinity School), Hans Dieter Betz, and Elizabeth R. Gebhard — for their careful reading of my work and their substantive suggestions for delineating its boundaries. I am grateful to have had the friendship and respect that they have held for each other over the years also directed toward my own scholastic development. Informal readers have included Erica Reiner and Robert Biggs of the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute, who read through various incarnations of the section on ancient Mesopotamia and offered useful bibliographic suggestions. Bruce Lincoln of the Divinity School and John J. Collins (now of Yale Divinity School) offered critical readings and constructive comments on the sections that pertained respectively to Zoroastrianism and Ancient Israel and Early Judaism. I am also grateful to the students and faculty who participated in the Divinity School’s New Testament Dissertation Seminars of 1997 and 1999 for their valuable criticism and guidance; Margaret M. Mitchell’s participation in the latter year proved especially fortunate. Matthew W. Dickie, of the University of Illinois at Chicago, and Peter Brown, of Princeton University, also provided helpful

bibliographic guidance for the classical world as well as a shared interest in magic in antiquity.

I received a Charlotte W. Newcombe Dissertation Fellowship in 1996, and am indebted to the encouragement that Mrs. Newcombe's gift offered at that stage. I would also like to thank Wallace A. Alston, Director of the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton, New Jersey, who offered me the resources of the Center for the fellowship year. Those resources extended to privileges at the Princeton Theological Seminary and Princeton University libraries, as well as at Princeton's Index of Christian Art. I would also like to express my appreciation to the CTI staff, and other residents during the 1996–1997 year, especially William Lazareth who, as acting director prior to Dr. Alston's tenure, had initially extended the invitation for residency to me.

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NOTE ON STYLE

The Bibliography includes all works cited in the dissertation. I have presented them in accordance with the guidelines set forth in *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*, Patrick H. Alexander et al., eds. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999). I have also followed *The SBL Handbook of Style* for the journal and serial abbreviations found in the notes, and have provided the unabbreviated titles in the Bibliography. Abbreviations of early Jewish, Christian and patristic titles follow *The SBL Handbook of Style*. Abbreviations used for titles by Greek and Roman classical authors are included in the Reference Index after their full Latin titles. When I have quoted a translation for a classical work I have cited the edition of the translation and included it in the Bibliography. Translations of ancient authors in Greek or Latin without citations are my own. For the biblical passages I have referred to *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983); *Septuaginta*, edited by Alfred Rahlfs (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979); Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993). Unless otherwise indicated, biblical quotations in English are from the New Revised Standard Version. Translations of the Septuagint are my own.

Chapter 1

Introduction: The Christian Exorcist in the Greco-Roman World

1.1 Definition of Terms

It is important at the outset to define some central concepts of this study. Jonathan Z. Smith interprets the “demonic” as a label for what is marginal, protean, and unstructured within a given society, so that when identifying the demons one should not ask “who” they are but “what” they represent.¹ For Smith, demons are the reifications of human anxieties over what is uncertain, and they serve to identify the boundaries or liminalities of social structures. Smith’s deconstruction is helpful in understanding the concept of the demonic, but the question still remains how given societies envision their liminalities. As for the early Christians, they interpreted them as demons, which in turn dictated how they acted towards them, and it is these demons as discrete spiritual entities with which this present study is concerned. Within the context of the New Testament, demonic possession may be defined as a culturally shared belief in the potential for a maleficent spiritual being to disrupt, often in a way observable to others, the well-being of an unwilling host.² In the same context, exorcism may be defined as the forced removal of

¹“The demonic is a relational or labeling term which occurs only in certain culturally stipulated situations and is part of a complex system of boundaries and limits” (Jonathan Z. Smith, “Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity,” *ANRW* 2.16.1 [1978] 429). Compare also Jeffrey Burton Russell’s assessment of evil and its personification as a part of the human experience: “The Devil is the hypostasis, the apotheosis, the objectification of a hostile force or hostile forces perceived as external to our consciousness” (Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977] 34).

²Erika Bourguignon, who takes into account the biblical record in her cross-cultural anthropological study of possession, has noted that the phenomenon of possession requires a culturally shared belief: “Possession beliefs and rituals then reflect and express both social structures and the personalities of the participants. They are not simply matters of historical inheritance. When such inheritance loses its social significance and profound personal psychological meaning, the beliefs will disappear and possession trance rituals will become theatrical performances” (Erika Bourguignon, *Possession* [Chandler and Sharp Series in Cross

such a hostile spirit for the purpose of restoring the victim of demonic possession to well-being. Exorcism is accomplished by a person, the exorcist, who engages and mediates a superior spiritual power³ against the offending demon in order to accomplish its removal from the possessed and its relocation elsewhere.⁴

1.2 Argument and Scope of the Present Study

The present study argues for the adaptation of exorcism in early Christian mission to the cultural sensibilities of the non-Christian Greeks and Romans. The subject arises when noting that exorcism was an unconventional activity in Greco-Roman society during Christianity's early centuries. Despite this, by the middle of the third century of the Common Era, as we learn from a letter of Cornelius, Bishop of Rome, to Fabius, Bishop of Antioch, the church of Rome had "fifty-two exorcists, readers and doorkeepers" on its roster of 154 clergy.⁵ This letter raises the question of how a phenomenon held at the

Cultural Themes; San Francisco: Chandler & Sharp, 1976] 49). Following this, I interpret the presence and effectiveness of exorcism also to be socially conditioned. Given the social belief in demonic possession and exorcism in first century Palestine, and given the fact that Jesus is considered by his followers and foes alike to have engaged in exorcism, I find it likely that Jesus did perform exorcisms as part of his historical activity. In his medical anthropological approach to healing in the New Testament, John Pilch also emphasizes the role society plays in constructing models for both understanding illness and applying treatment. Exorcism would fit into this context as follows: "In other words, healing boils down to meaning and the transformation of experience. The change or transformation is created by all participants who effectively enact culturally authorized interpretations. When demons are exorcized, the anxious client believes the cause of the problem is gone. This conviction is affirmed by the healer and encouraged by the social circle. It alters the client's cognitive processes from apprehension to calm" (John J. Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000] 35).

³The spiritual power sometimes lies in the background of exorcism stories as that quality of divine favor in which the authors portray their miracle workers (e.g., in the synoptic authors' portrayal of Jesus, in Josephus' of Eleazar [*Ant.* 8.45–49], and Philostratus' of Apollonius [*Vit. Apoll.*]).

⁴Smith draws attention to exorcism as a relocation of the possessing spirit, and he describes the re-locative aspect of early rituals associated with demons in this manner: "The demon is 'placed' by being named, entrapped and removed to its proper realm (e.g. exorcism) or redirected to a 'proper' goal (i.e. to somewhere or someone else, as in so-called 'hostile' magic)" (Smith, "Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers," *ANRW* 2.16.1:428–29).

⁵ἐξορκιστὰς δὲ καὶ ἀναγνώστας ἅμα πύλωροις δύο καὶ πενήκοντα (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.43.11. English translation in Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History*, translated by Kirsopp Lake and J. E. L. Oulton [2 vols. LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964–1965]). The letter, recorded by Eusebius and dated to 251, does not specify the number of exorcists among the fifty-two. It also does not say to what extent the

periphery of conventional healing activity not only survived in the early church, but apparently flourished to make the transition from superstition to institution in the Greco-Roman world.

Within the context of the Christian scriptural background the logic behind exorcism's eventual institutionalization is understandable.⁶ Jesus' own exorcistic activity as presented in the synoptic gospels, and his command to his disciples to do the same, grant to exorcism a place of consequence in early Christian tradition.⁷ But it also makes it a subject with which the church would eventually have to come to terms in its missionary appeal to Greek and Roman audiences. The continuation of exorcism in the westward expansion of early Christianity is noteworthy because it appears to have survived in an environment that relegated its demonology and the human powers involved with it to a magical or an occult status rather than a cultic one. In Greece the charge of magic is brought against neither medical practitioners nor the activities of the Asclepius healing cult. On the one hand, doctors rarely claim to do the extraordinary, but follow instead a naturalistic therapy of diagnoses and prognoses based upon observed precedent.⁸ Even should they solicit

exorcists may have worked within or outside of the church community. The others on Cornelius' list include one bishop, forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, seven sub-deacons, forty-two acolytes, and over 1500 widows and others in distress.

⁶Compare the Ordinal begun in the Byzantine Church which, "from doorkeeper to bishop," justifies by an example from the life of Christ each of the grades of clergy. (Referred to in J. N. Hillgarth, ed., *Christianity and Paganism, 350-750: The Conversion of Western Europe* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986] 179).

⁷Jesus commands his followers to perform exorcisms in his name when he commissions the Twelve Apostles (Mark 3:14-15//Matt 10:1; Mark 6:7-13//Matt 10:7-8//Luke 9:1-6), and the seventy disciples (Luke 10:17-20). After the resurrection Jesus gives a final commission to the eleven remaining apostles in the longer ending of Mark, where casting out demons is considered one of the signs that will accompany anyone who believes and is baptized (Mark 16:15-18). The idea of imitation occurs throughout a variety of New Testament works, from the gospels to the Pauline and catholic epistles, with the object of imitation ranging from the divinity ("God"—Eph 5:1; "Christ"—Matt 10:24; John 13:15-17; 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; 1 Thess 1:6-7; 1 Pet 2:21-25), to the early apostolate ("Paul"—1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; 1 Thess 1:6-7; 2 Thess 3:9), subsequent leaders of the church ("Timothy"—1 Tim 4:12; "leaders"—Heb 6:11-12; 13:7; "presbyters"—1 Pet 5:3-4), and the congregation as a whole for other congregations ("Thessalonians"—1 Thess 1:6-7; "Churches of Judea"—1 Thess 2:14-16). Hence, supervisors and peers become models of faith and activity within the Christian community. See R. J. S. Barrett-Lennard's summary of healing in early Christianity, and the precedent for such found in the New Testament (R. J. S. Barrett-Lennard, *Christian Healing after the New Testament: Some Approaches to Illness in the Second, Third and Fourth Centuries* [New York: University Press of America, 1994]. Note especially Chapter 5: "Irenaeus: Demon-Possession and Exorcism").

⁸One occasionally comes across statements in the medical writings that all things are curable. Consider this passage from the pre-Common Era *The Sacred Disease* included in the Hippocratic corpus of writings: "This disease styled sacred comes from the same causes as others, from the things that come to and go from the body, from cold, sun, and from the

divine powers in this process the method remains essentially unchanged.⁹ On the other hand, although the Asclepius cult claims to do the miraculous, it

changing restlessness of winds. These things are divine. So that there is no need to put the disease in a special class and to consider it more divine than the others; they are all divine and all human. Each has a nature and power of its own; none is hopeless or incapable of treatment.” (Αὕτη δὲ ἡ νοῦσος ἡ ἱερὴ καλεομένη ἀπὸ τῶν αὐτῶν προφασίων γίνεται ἀφ’ ὧν καὶ αἱ λοιπαὶ ἀπὸ τῶν προσιόντων καὶ ἀπιόντων, καὶ ψύχεος καὶ ἡλίου καὶ πνευμάτων μεταβαλλομένων τε καὶ οὐδέποτε ἀτρεμιζόντων. ταῦτα δ’ ἐστὶ θεῖα, ὥστε μὴδὲν δεῖ ἀποκρίνοντα τὸ νόσημα θεϊότερον τῶν λοιπῶν νομίσαι, ἀλλὰ πάντα θεῖα καὶ πάντα ἀνθρώπινα· φύσιν δὲ ἕκαστον ἔχει καὶ δύναμιν ἐφ’ ἑωυτοῦ, καὶ οὐδὲν ἄπορόν ἐστιν οὐδὲ ἀμήχανον.) (Hippocrates, *Morb. sacr.* 21. English translation in *Hippocrates*, translated by W. H. S. Jones et al. [8 vols. LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972–1995]). This passage likely represents the confident flourish of a rhetorician, but it nevertheless reveals a current opinion that whether or not a cure was known, it did in fact exist and merely awaited discovery. In general, however, and beginning with the historical Hippocrates, we see a concern to bring credibility to the healing art that includes an acknowledgment of its limitations. Also from the Hippocratic Corpus the author of *The Art* defines the tasks and limitations of medicine as follows: “In general terms, it is to do away with the sufferings of the sick, to lessen the violence of their diseases, and to refuse to treat those who are overmastered by their diseases, realizing that in such cases medicine is powerless.” (τὸ δὲ πάμπαν ἀπαλλάσσειν τῶν νοσεόντων τοὺς καμάτων καὶ τῶν νοσημάτων τὰς σφοδρότητας ἀμβλύνειν, καὶ τὸ μὴ ἐγχειρεῖν τοῖσι κεκρατημένοις ὑπὸ τῶν νοσημάτων, εἰδότας ὅτι ταῦτα οὐ δύναται ἱητρικὴ.) (Hippocrates, *De arte* 3 [Jones, LCL]. See also *De arte* 8). Such a public admission of its limitations ultimately served to strengthen the medical profession by setting the patient’s expectations in proper perspective. Even *The Sacred Disease* itself illustrates medicine’s limitations where it mentions epilepsy’s potential “overmastery” of the sufferer: “In fact, when the disease has become chronic it then proves incurable, for the brain is corroded by phlegm and melts, and the part which melts becomes water, surrounding the brain outside and flooding it, for which reason such people are attacked more frequently and readily.” (οὕτω δ’ ἔχει καὶ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ· ὁπόταν γὰρ ὁ χρόνος γένηται τῇ νούσῳ, οὐκ ἔτι ἰήσιμος γίνεται· διεσθίεται γὰρ ὁ ἐγκέφαλος ὑπὸ τοῦ φλέγματος καὶ τήκεται, τὸ δὲ ἀποτηκόμενον ὕδωρ γίνεται, καὶ περιέχει τὸν ἐγκέφαλον ἐκτὸς καὶ περικλύζει· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πυκνότερον ἐπίληπτοι γίνονται καὶ ῥᾶον.) (Hippocrates, *Morb. sacr.* 14 [Jones, LCL]).

⁹That absolutes cannot be drawn between categories of medicine as a secular craft distinct from religious healing becomes clear on several counts. The definitions blur, for example, on the role of divine power in medicine. Although it is generally true that medicine depends solely on human knowledge to discern cause and cure of a given malady, on rare occasions the practitioners also implore the gods through prayer to assist in the healing (e.g., from the Hippocratic Corpus, *On Dreams* 90 [*Regimen* Book 4]). One also finds acknowledgment of the role of gods in the restoration of health, so that the sixth chapter of *Decorum* even attributes cures in medicine to gods, with physicians merely acting as the means toward that end. In addition to such prayers, there is also the commitment to the gods sworn to by the physician in the opening lines of the *Hippocratic Oath* itself: “I swear by Apollo Physician and Asclepius and Hygieia and Panacea and all the gods and goddesses, making them my witnesses, that I will fulfill according to my ability and judgment this oath and this covenant

operates within a healing tradition whose authority is recognized by the state. The accusation of magic, then, rests not upon extraordinary activity per se, but ultimately upon the authority from which that activity is perceived to derive. This is echoed in the Palestinian setting for the synoptic portrayals of Jesus, where critics question Jesus' authority to heal, not his ability to do so.¹⁰

Granted, the demarcation between magic and socially accepted religious practices in antiquity is a fluid one, and depends more upon the perspective of the one who distinguishes between the two than on any intrinsic qualities they may have held, but it is just this subjective criterion of perception that is of relevance for the present study.¹¹ The fact that some Greeks and Romans in positions of political power and cultural influence associated Christianity with magic and superstition was a perception that early Christian missionaries would have to have taken into account.¹²

..." (Ὅμνῶ Ἀπόλλωνα ἱητρὸν καὶ Ἀσκληπιὸν καὶ Ὑγίαν καὶ Πανάκειαν καὶ θεοὺς πάντας τε καὶ πάσας ἱστορας ποιούμενος ἐπιτελέα ποιήσῃν κατὰ δύνανμιν καὶ κρίσιν ἐμὴν ὄρκον τόνδε καὶ συγγραφήν τήνδε) (Ludwig Edelstein, *Hippocrates The Oath: Or the Hippocratic Oath* [Baltimore: Ares Publishers, 1943] 2–3). Although Hippocratic medicine itself originated out of the Asclepius cult and doctors of this tradition were called Asclepiads, or "sons of Asclepius," one cannot assume that priests of Asclepius were necessarily Hippocratic doctors, and vice versa. The testimonia for the cult suggest no systematic interest in diagnosis and prognosis of ailments as were essential to Hippocratic medicine.

¹⁰In the synoptics, note especially the Beelzeboul controversy (Matt 12:22–30; Luke 11:14–23; cf. Mark 3:22–27), where the practice of exorcism is considered legitimate for other Jews.

¹¹John Gager reflects this social view of magic, and says of any attempt to define it: "... the only justifiable (answerable) historical question about magic is not 'What are the characteristics of, for example, Greek magic?' but rather 'Under what conditions, by whom, and of whom does the term "magic" come to be used?'" (John Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1992] 25). Fritz Graf intentionally avoids giving a "rigid and artificial terminology" to the subject of "magic" in his study that spans from the sixth century B.C.E. to the end of antiquity, but seeks instead to understand how it was used by the early Greeks and Romans themselves in their "discourse on the relationship between the human and the supernatural" (Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* [Revealing Antiquity 10; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997] 18–19). Although I run the risk of undermining his subtlety by attempting to gather his findings into a cohesive summary, I interpret Graf to consider magic a form of religion, whose practitioners use persuasive analogies in their communications with the divine.

¹²A charge that early anti-Christian polemic makes against Jesus was that he performed his miracles by means of magic learned in Egypt. Celsus first makes the connection: "... Jesus ... having hired himself out as a servant in Egypt on account of his poverty, and having there acquired some miraculous powers, on which the Egyptians greatly pride themselves, returned to his own country, highly elated on account of them, and by means of these proclaimed himself a God." (τὸν Ἰησοῦν . . . διὰ πενίαν εἰς Αἴγυπτον μισθαρνήσας, κάκει δυνάμεων τινων πειραθεὶς, ἐφ' αἷς Αἰγύπτου

The foreignness of the Jewish and Christian practices of exorcism to the Greco-Roman world becomes readily apparent in the context of healing. The synoptic gospels and Acts portray exorcism either explicitly as a healing activity (Matthew, Luke and Acts), or as a closely related event (Mark). In contrast, the practice of exorcism and demonic possession as an illness are noticeably absent from conventional Greek healing traditions until the turn of the era, and as a consequence exorcism does not play a role in medicine or the healing cults. The Hippocratic Corpus and the writings of noted medical practitioners as late as Galen (ca. 129–199) are unconcerned with the phenomena of demonic possession and exorcism or, where discussed, treat them polemically.¹³ Prior to the turn of the era, even the religious healings attributed to the god Asclepius appear to deal neither with possession as a malady from which their patients suffer nor for which they seek a cure.¹⁴

With the locus of Greek medicine in the Asclepieia, both medical and religious healing offered culturally sanctioned alternatives to magical practices, and they likewise would have benefited from magic's discreditation. On the one hand, this explains the absence of such references in earlier Greek literature, though the presence of exorcism in early magical contexts, too, is by and large wanting. On the other hand, the apparent irrelevance of possession and exorcism to culturally sanctioned healing, and the lack of evidence for it even in magic, raises the question of how exorcism was to prove effective as a missionary activity if no apparent demand for exorcism existed in Greek society prior to the Common Era.

σεμνύνονται, ἐπανήλθεν ἐν ταῖς δυνάμεσι μέγα φρονῶν, καὶ δι' αὐτὰς θεὸν αὐτὸν ἀνηγόρευσε.) (Celsus, *True Doctrine* = Origen, *Cels.* 1.28 [ANF 4.408; PG 11.713]). See, Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984) 98–101, 109. See also Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978).

¹³*The Sacred Disease* first states a current superstitious interpretation of epilepsy as possession by a deity, then refutes it in favor of a physiological explanation. Klaus Thraede finds exorcistic reference in Galen, *fac. simpl. med.* 6.68 (Klaus Thraede, "Exorzismus," *RAC* 7:51).

¹⁴This conclusion is based upon a survey of the evidence published in Emma J. and Ludwig Edelstein, *Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies* (2 vols.; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1975). Robert Garland notes that at least 320 Asclepieia existed around the Mediterranean by the second century Common Era (Robert Garland, *Introducing New Gods: The Politics of Athenian Religion* [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992] 122, note 2), which, depending upon the degree of their discovery and excavation, suggests that a great amount of material evidence remains to be examined. Later literary sources do attribute exorcisms to Asclepius. In the *Acts of Pilate* (ca. late third century) Pilate credits Jesus' power to exorcize to the authority granted him by Asclepius (*Acts Pil.* ch. 1). Likewise, Philostratus (ca. 170–ca. 245) says that Asclepius heals wounds caused by demons, not by carelessness (*Ep.* 18).

In literary contexts as well exorcism remains a field untrodden, and is undocumented in Roman society until late in the first century Common Era.¹⁵ Then, Josephus (37–ca. 100), writing in Greek to a Roman audience, mentions Eleazar having exorcized a demon before Vespasian.¹⁶ In his account Josephus mentions both the technique and proof of that exorcism, as well as the pedigree of the practice in general, which he claims to stem from Solomon. It would appear to be something of a novelty to his readers. From the second century onward exorcists become occasional subjects of Greco-Roman literature in genres as diverse from Josephus' historiography as the jurisprudence of Ulpian (fl. 212–217), who distinguishes exorcism from proper medicine;¹⁷ the philosophy of Marcus Aurelius (121–180), who treats the exorcist with disdain;¹⁸ the satire of Lucian (ca. 120–ca. 180), who treats

¹⁵Although Pliny the Elder (23/24–79 C.E.) mentions magic and popular healing techniques in chapters 20–32 of his *Natural History*, he does not record any incidents of exorcism.

¹⁶Josephus, *Ant.* 8.45–49.

¹⁷Domitius Ulpianus, *De omnibus tribunalibus*, Book 8: *De extraordinariis cognitionibus*. The passage was incorporated into Justinian's digest of Roman law (Ulpian, *Dig.* 50.13.1.1–3). Ulpian states that the work of obstetricians and medical specialists are justly paid positions because of their concern with health (*salutis hominum ... curam agant*), but in contrast: "... one must not include people who make incantations or imprecations or, to use the common expression of imposters, exorcisms. For these are not branches of medicine, even though people exist who forcibly assert that such people have helped them." (*non tamen si incantavit, si imprecatus est, si, ut vulgari uerbo impostorum utar, si exorcizavit: non sunt ista medicinae genera, tametsi sint, qui hos sibi profuisse cum praedicatione adfirmant.*) (Theodore Mommsen and Paul Krueger, eds., *The Digest of Justinian*, trans. Alan Watson [4 vols.; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985] 4:929). Tony Honoré argues that Ulpian wrote during a period of heightened cultural syncretism. This was evident even in traditional Roman law, which recognized the Punic, Gallic and Assyrian (i.e., Aramaic) languages in addition to Greek and Latin, as valid for drafting certain legal documents. The metropolitan climate was most affected by the *constitutio Antoniniana* (212 C.E.), an imperial edict that granted citizenship to virtually every free inhabitant of the Roman Empire. Ulpian's prolific summation of Roman law during the reign of M. Aurelius Antoninus (Caracalla) (211–17) amounted to the systematic publication of that law for the new citizenry. This move toward political inclusion, however, did not extend to toleration of marginal social activities. As Honoré says: "Superstition, for example Judaism, or imposture, for instance that practised by exorcists, is condemned" (Tony Honoré, *Ulpian* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982] 31).

¹⁸Marcus Aurelius (121–80) says that he understood from the example of one Diogenes: "... not to be taken up with trifles; and [not] to give credence to the statements of miracle-mongers and wizards about incantations and the exorcizing of demons and such like things." (τὸ ἀκενόσπουδον καὶ τὸ ἀπιστητικὸν τοῖς ὑπὸ τῶν τερατευομένων καὶ γοήτων περὶ ἐπωδῶν καὶ περὶ δαιμόνων ἀποπομπῆς καὶ τῶν τοιούτων λεγομένοις.) (Marcus Aurelius, *Ad se ipsum* 1.6. English translation in Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, *The Communings with Himself*, translated by C. R. Haines [LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961]).

exorcists as fraudulent entrepreneurs in a superstitious world;¹⁹ and the hagiography of Philostratus (ca. 170–ca. 245), who shows the first century wise man Apollonius of Tyana to perform his miracles under a cloud of suspicion and misunderstanding by the Roman authorities.²⁰

Exorcism, not without reason, leaves an exotic impression upon these literati, an “easterness” which they tend to interpret as “foreignness.” Thus, Vespasian encounters a Jew adept in a craft excelled in by Jews.²¹ For Lucian, a connection with the east is a near prerequisite for exorcistic conjuration. He notes Egypt for its familiarity with magic in general,²² and in particular he mentions a contemporary Syrian exorcist famous for his work in Palestine,²³ a “Chaldean” from Babylonia who successfully casts spells and incantations,²⁴ and an Arab who possesses a ring used to control demons.²⁵ Philostratus mentions that Apollonius received an education in eastern wisdom,²⁶ which in part translated into his ability to discern and control spirits.

These critical assessments of the exorcist and his craft nevertheless record their underlying popular fascination and appeal. The story of Lucian’s Arab itself attests to this interest in conjuration and its conveyance to Greece from the east. Accordingly, the Arab gives the ring to Eucrates, a Greek, and teaches

¹⁹Lucian, *Philops.* 16–17. Brenk notes: “Lucian’s ridicule of all these [exorcistic] practices is surely typical of the attitude of many Greek intellectuals of the time” (Frederick E. Brenk, “In the Light of the Moon: Demonology in the Early Imperial Period,” in *ANRW* 2.16.3, W. Haase, ed. [New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1986] 2.16.3:2112). In another work, Lucian also corroborates Ulpian’s higher expectations for medicine when he says that the physician Paetus acted in a manner unfitting of his profession by believing in the deceits of Alexander of Abonoteichus, the “false” prophet of Asclepius (Lucian, *Alex.* 60).

²⁰Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 1.2. Philostratus was commissioned to write the *Life of Apollonius* by the Syrian princess Julia Domna, Septimius Severus’ second wife, whose intellectual circle also included Ulpian (Honoré, *Ulpian*, 31). This attests to a range of views with regard to exorcism within the intellectual and social elite at this time. Wizardry is a constant charge against Apollonius, and one which Philostratus assiduously refutes (see below, Chapter 6). Lucian also views Apollonius of Tyana and a student of his, whom he identifies only as a γόης, unfavorably as the teachers of Alexander (Lucian, *Alex.* 5).

²¹Josephus, *Ant.* 8.45–49.

²²Lucian, *Philops.* 31. See also Origen, *Cels.* 1.28. Klaus Thraede considers exorcism a magical practice picked up by the Jews from the priestly magical traditions of Babylon and Egypt during the Hellenistic period, but that Egypt was the dominant source of inspiration for exorcism as it continued to spread throughout the Mediterranean during the Hellenistic period (Thraede, “Exorzismus,” *RAC* 7:57).

²³Lucian, *Philops.* 16–17.

²⁴Lucian, *Philops.* 9–11.

²⁵Lucian, *Philops.* 17; cf. 24.

²⁶Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 1.2. As a Pythagorean, Apollonius also inherited the reputation for eastern wisdom once attributed to Pythagoras himself (cf. Pliny, *Hist. nat.* 24.156; 25.13; 30.8–9). The Indian sage Iarchas also performs an exorcism (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 3.38).

him along with it “the spell of many names”,²⁷ it is precisely the type of practice ridiculed by the critics. The Arab’s ring and spell converge with the magical papyri, amulets, and curse tablets that have survived from the early Common Era as a growing corpus of firsthand evidence of conjuration’s popularity at this time.²⁸ These sources, however, essentially confirm exorcism’s place in the eddies of the cultural mainstream.

Even while pagan authors offer their criticisms of the exorcist, Justin Martyr (ca. 100–165) and Tertullian (ca. 160–240) appeal to exorcism in their defenses of Christianity. The references to exorcism made by the apologists differ from the contemporary magical evidence in that they are directed publicly toward the civil authorities, some of whom have maligned the practice in their own writings.²⁹ Throughout their apologies both Justin and

²⁷ ἡ ἐπωδὴ ἡ πολυώνυμος (Lucian, *Philops.* 17. English translation in *Lucian*, translated by A. M. Harmon et al. [8 vols. LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959–1967]).

²⁸ We can add to this evidence the collection of books found at Nag Hammadi, and the New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. See also, Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1994) for texts from the first to the eleventh/twelfth centuries. Numerous curse tablets and binding spells attest to the prevalence of phenomena similar to exorcism among non-Christians, that is, the conjuring of spiritual powers to further one’s intentions (see, e.g., John G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells*). Some of the Greek Magical Papyri from the fourth century C.E. onward show the interest among exorcists themselves of passing on the formulae they have inherited and developed. See especially the exorcistic passages in *PGM* 4.86–87; 1227–64; 3007–86; 5.96–172; 7.429–58; 579–90; 12.270–350; 13.1–343 (242–44); 94.17–21; 114.1–14.

²⁹ Justin addresses his apologies to Marcus Aurelius (called here Verissimus the Philosopher), as well as the Emperor Antoninus Pius, Lucius, the holy Senate (ἱερὰ συγκλήτω), and all the Romans (δῆμῳ παντὶ Ῥωμαίων) (Justin, *1 Apol.* 1.1). In his *Second Apology*, Justin says that Jesus became incarnate: “... for the sake of believing men, and for the destruction of the demons. And now you can learn this from what is under your own observation. For numberless demoniacs throughout the whole world, and in your city, many of our [Christian] men exorcising them in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, have healed and do heal, rendering helpless and driving the possessing devils out of the men, though they could not be cured by all the other exorcists, and those who used incantations and drugs.” (ὕπερ ... τῶν πιστευόντων ἀνθρώπων καὶ <ἐπὶ> καταλύσει τῶν δαιμόνων, <ὥς> καὶ νῦν ἐκ τῶν ὑπ’ ὅσιν γινομένων μαθεῖν δύνασθε. Δαιμονιολήπτους γὰρ πολλοὺς κατὰ πάντα τὸν κόσμον καὶ ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ πόλει πολλοὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων ἀνθρώπων [τῶν Χριστιανῶν] ἐπορκίζοντες κατὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τοῦ σταυρωθέντος ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου, ὑπὸ τῶν ἄλλων πάντων ἐπορκιστῶν καὶ ἐπαστῶν καὶ φαρμακευτῶν μὴ ἰαθέντας, ἰάσαντο καὶ ἔτι νῦν ἰῶνται, καταργοῦντες καὶ ἐκδιώκοντες τοὺς κατέχοντας τοὺς ἀνθρώπους δαίμονας.) (Justin *2 Apol.* 6.5–6. Greek text from Miroslav Marcovich, ed., *Iustini Martyris Apologiae pro Christianis* [PTS 38; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994] 146). Tertullian addresses his apology to the Roman religious authorities (*Romani imperii antistites*) (Tertullian, *Apol.* 1.1), and at several places mentions the success of Christian

Tertullian join with their audiences in condemning magic. In order simultaneously to uphold the legitimacy of exorcism the apologists redefine Christianity for their Roman audience as an authentic religion. Having once established the legitimacy of their faith the apologists can then rehabilitate exorcism's reputation insofar as it is practiced within that faith. With Christian exorcism thus liberated from the realm of magical deception, the apologists can appeal to it as a practice that exposes the falsity of other religions while at the same time substantiates its own: by drawing their authority to perform exorcisms from the Christian godhead, Christian exorcists are able to control the so-called gods of pagan belief.³⁰

It is in the area of Christian mission, where Christian values confront non-Christian sensibilities, that one would expect the practice of exorcism to undergo the greatest adaptation. Yet, at face value the exorcisms referred to by the apologists appear consistent with the exorcisms of the synoptic tradition. The most marked departure from the synoptic precedent occurs not in the exteriority of mission, but within the confines of the church itself. The differences in form and meaning of exorcism within Christianity are highlighted when we look several centuries after the evangelists to an early example of a Christian liturgical exorcism.³¹ In the *Apostolic Tradition*, attributed to

exorcists in subduing the supposed pagan gods by the power of the one true God. References to exorcism by Christians occur at 21.17; 23.6–7, 16; 27.5–6; 32.2–3; 37.9 (cf. 43.2); and 46.5.

³⁰In the 23rd chapter of his *Apology*, Tertullian shows how exorcism validates Christianity: "Produce someone before your tribunals, who is admittedly demon-possessed. Let any Christian you please bid him speak, and the spirit in the man will own himself a demon—and truly—just as he will elsewhere call himself a god, falsely. Similarly bring forward some one or other of those persons who are supposed to be god-possessed ... if they do not confess they are demons, not daring to lie to a Christian, then shed that impudent Christian's blood on the spot! What could be plainer than such a deed? What proof more reliable?" (*Edatur hic aliqui ibidem sub tribunalibus vestris quem daemone agi constet. Iussus a quolibet Christiano loqui spiritus ille tam se daemonem confitebitur de vero quam alibi dominum de falso. Aequè producatur aliquis ex his qui de deo pati existimantur ... nisi se daemones confessi fuerint Christiano mentiri non audentes, ibidem illius Christiani procacissimi sanguinem fundite! Quid isto opere manifestius? Quid hac probatione fidelius?*) (Tertullian, *Apol.* 23.4–7. English translation in Tertullian, *Apology*, translated by T. R. Glover [LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966]). In the fourth century, Athanasias reiterates the claim that any Christian worth his salt can cast out demons, which he supports by referring to Matthew 10:8 (Barrett-Lennard, *Christian Healing after the New Testament*, 213).

³¹The earliest reference to renunciation of the devil as part of the Christian baptismal ceremony is found in the gnostic writings of Theodotus of Rome (fl. early II C.E.), as preserved in the writings of Clement of Alexandria. The relevant passage reads as follows: "For this reason baptism is called death and the end of the old life, since we renounce the evil principalities; it is called life according to Christ, since he is the master of this life." (Ταύτη θάνατος καὶ τέλος λέγεται τοῦ παλαιοῦ βίου τὸ βάπτισμα, ἀποτασσομένων ἡμῶν ταῖς πονηραῖς Ἀρχαῖς, ζωὴ δὲ κατὰ Χριστόν, ἥς

Hippolytus (ca. 170–ca. 236), but perhaps a composite work that in its extant form dates to the early fourth century,³² the author describes exorcism's place

μόνος αὐτὸς κυριεύει.) (Francois Sagnard, ed., *Extraits de Théodote* [2d ed., SC 23; Paris: Cerf, 1970] Excerpt 77; citation and translation in Barrett-Lennard, *Christian Healing after the New Testament*, 156, n. 87). Further along Theodotus also notes the tenacity of demons and the need to safeguard against them even into the very baptismal waters: "It is proper to come to baptism rejoicing, but since often unclean spirits also descend [into the water] with someone, accompanying and receiving the seal with him, and becoming incorrigible thereafter, fear mixes with joy, so that each one descends alone, pure. For this reason fasts, entreaties, prayers, [laying on] of hands, and genuflexions are done to save a soul from the world and from the maw of lions ..." (Ἐπὶ τὸ βάπτισμα χαίροντας ἔρχεσθαι προσῆκεν ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ πολλάκις συγκαταβαίνει τισὶ καὶ ἀκάθαρτα Πνεύματα, <ᾗ>, παρακολουθοῦντα καὶ τυχόντα μετὰ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τῆς σφραγίδος, ἀνίατα τοῦ λοιποῦ γίνεται, [ᾗ] τῇ χαρᾷ συμπλέκεται φόβος, ἵνα τις μόνος καθαρὸς αὐτὸς κατέλθῃ. Διὰ τοῦτο νηστεῖται, δεήσεις, εὐχαί, <θέσεις> χειρῶν, γονυκλισίαι, ὅτι ψυχὴ «ἐκ κόσμου» καὶ «ἐκ στόματος λεόντων» ἀνασφύζεται.) (*Extraits de Théodote*, 83–84).

³²The *Apostolic Tradition*, formerly known as the *Egyptian Church Order*, has generally been attributed to Hippolytus, also called the Antipope, placed in Rome, and dated to ca. 215 (Gregory Dix, *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome, Bishop and Martyr* [2d rev. ed. reissued with additional corrections by Henry Chadwick; London: Alban Press, 1992] xxxv–xxxvii). Barrett-Lennard notes that the author himself considers his descriptions of church offices and procedures to represent models rather than fixed practices (cf. Hippolytus, *Trad. ap.* Prologue). Even so, he supports the early date based upon the charismatic gift of healing as an authentic yet unordained office received through revelation by God in *Apostolic Tradition* 14, in contrast to Chapter 8 of the mid-fourth century Egyptian work, the *Canons of Hippolytus*, which expects those with healing abilities to be ordained (Barrett-Lennard, *Christian Healing after the New Testament*, 250). He says: "Certainly the *Apostolic Tradition* reflects a considerably more primitive situation where it was seen to be appropriate that a lay, charismatic ministry of healing existed alongside the ministry to the sick by the leadership of the Church" (Barrett-Lennard, *Christian Healing after the New Testament*, 253). Paul Bradshaw recognizes the scholarly consensus over the attribution and date of the *Apostolic Tradition*, but warns that "one ought not automatically to assume that it provides reliable information about the life and liturgical activity of the church in Rome in the early third century" (Paul Bradshaw, *The Search for Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy* [London: SPCK, 1992] 92). Bradshaw notes that the earliest manuscript evidence dates to a late fifth century copy of the Latin translation (L) of the lost Greek original (Paul Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites of the Ancient Churches of East and West* [New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1990] 3). In a preliminary analysis, Bradshaw advances Marcel Metzger's doubts with respect to the date of the *Apostolic Tradition* (Paul F. Bradshaw, "Redating the *Apostolic Tradition*: Some Preliminary Steps," in *Rule of Prayer, Rule of Faith: Essays in Honor of Aidan Kavanagh, O.S.B.*, Nathan Mitchell and John F. Baldwin, eds. [Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1996] 3). Bradshaw interprets the extant document to be a composite work that shows evidence of continuous revision, and he dates the work as a whole to the first quarter of the fourth century based upon its use by other documents that can be dated to later in that century (e.g. *CH* [ca. 336–340]; *AC* [ca. 375–380]). Bradshaw acknowledges, however, that the *Apostolic Tradition*'s own source material would likely be of varying dates, and he describes

in connection with Christian initiation.³³ In the *Apostolic Tradition* “exorcist” does not refer to a clerical rank, as it does in Cornelius’ Rome.³⁴ It is, however, a clerical activity, performed during the baptismal ceremony by a bishop and presbyter with the assistance of a deacon.³⁵ In this context those catechumens who are set apart for baptism undergo repeated exorcisms throughout their period of instruction, and receive a final exorcism in the baptismal ceremony itself.

The method of exorcism in the *Apostolic Tradition* differs markedly from the portrayals of exorcism in the New Testament. Contrary to the predominantly verbal method of exorcising demons in the New Testament, such as by rebuke and command,³⁶ the baptismal ceremony of the *Apostolic*

the initiation ceremony in particular as “a conflation of different traditions from different periods, and very probably different places” (Bradshaw, “Redating the *Apostolic Tradition*,” 15). A further clue to the date of the *Apostolic Tradition* may be found in other types of Christian literature. The liturgical prescription of catechetical and baptismal exorcism in The *Apostolic Tradition* finds a literary complement in the third century pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*. In the *Recognitions*, an initial confrontation between Peter and Simon Magus offers an opportunity for the author to expound upon “orthodox” teaching to correct the deceptive mission of Simon Magus. This instruction involves not just the retelling of Scripture, but also the critique of the beliefs and philosophies out of which the catechumens have come. These impromptu lectures essentially serve as catechetical instruction for the uninitiated, Clement included. In the romance Peter often ends his days of teaching by summoning the sick and demon-possessed for healing and exorcism (Pseudo-Clement, *Recogn.* 2.70; 3.30; 4.7; 5.36; 10.52), and occasionally this is followed by baptism (Pseudo-Clement, *Recogn.* 6.15; 10.68–71; also Pseudo-Clement, *Hom.* 7.5). This pedagogical process also occurs in the seventh of the *Clementine Homilies*, where Peter offers the Two Ways instruction, heals (exorcism included), and advises baptism (Pseudo-Clement, *Hom.* 7.7–8).

³³Hippolytus, *Trad. ap.* 21–22. Compare *On the Soldier’s Crown* (written 201), where Tertullian says of renunciation at baptism: “Finally that I may comment upon baptism, those of us then about to approach the water, but prior to entry into the church, profess under the hand of the bishop that we renounce the devil and his ostentation and his angels.” (*Denique, ut a baptisate ingrediari, aquam adituri ibidem, sed et aliquanto prius in ecclesia, sub antistitis manu, contestamur nos renuntiare diabolo et pompae et angelis eius.*) (Tertullian, *Cor.* 3.2; Latin from Q. Septimi Florentis Tertulliani, *De Corona* [Érasme; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966]).

³⁴Barrett-Lennard notes in a chapter on Irenaeus: “There is nothing here [in the literary sources] that would suggest that, in the late second century, different spiritual gifts were being associated with particular offices in the church” (Barrett-Lennard, *Christian Healing after the New Testament*, 118). He finds evidence for an emerging “order of exorcists” in the third and fourth centuries, and refers to Hippolytus’ *Apostolic Tradition* and Cyprian’s 23rd *Epistle* as the primary evidence for this transition (Barrett-Lennard, *Christian Healing after the New Testament*, 202).

³⁵Hippolytus, *Trad. ap.* 21. Hippolytus does not say who perform(s) the exorcisms during the period of catechesis.

³⁶The exclusively verbal method of exorcism is true for Mark and Matthew. Luke offers an exception with his unparalleled presentation of the woman bent double. In this story Luke

Tradition uses an “oil of exorcism” (*oleum exorcismi*), and the placement of the cleric’s hand upon the head of the catechumen (*manum imponens super eum*). When words are used they form a command for the catechumen to renounce Satan. This renunciation also shows how the character of the person possessed differs from the New Testament example: the tangible rituals of oil and touch are applied to one who makes a conscious decision to be relieved of demonic forces compared to the New Testament’s passive victims of demonic aggression.

The context for exorcism in the *Apostolic Tradition*, now part of a private initiation ceremony, also differs from the New Testament. By its repetition during the period of catechesis, exorcism in the *Apostolic Tradition* is more similar to purification rituals than to the exorcisms performed in the New Testament for the sake of healing and the display of the exorcist’s power and authority. The focus of the ceremony is not upon the priesthood, but upon the catechumen who is to receive baptism. Thus, the “possessed” rather than the exorcist takes center stage. The fact that exorcism occurs in catechetical instruction and within the baptismal ceremony itself shows that it is now no longer reserved for the unusual and extraordinary otherness of the demonically possessed as one finds them in the gospels and Acts. Instead, demonic possession and the subsequent need for the exorcists’ services are applicable to the catechumen and, hence, to virtually all Christians upon their entry into the church. Consequently, exorcism is not a relic of the New Testament tradition mimicked and preserved in the early church for tradition’s sake, but is a ritual that had a function of immediate relevance to every member of the Christian community, at least with regard to their initiation into that community through baptism.

The placement of exorcism in the *Apostolic Tradition*’s baptismal ceremony alters the purpose of exorcism relative to its practice in the New Testament. In the *Apostolic Tradition*, demonic possession becomes correlated to the idea of divine possession, so that exorcism now serves as a prerequisite cleansing of the body in preparation for its habitation by the Holy Spirit.³⁷ The two

thoroughly blends exorcism and healing with regard to both the interpretation of an ailment and its method of cure. He describes the woman’s physical condition in terms of possession by a “crippling spirit” (πνεῦμα ἔχουσα ἀσθενείας), which Jesus “heals” (ἔθεράπευσεν) by both word and touch: “When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, ‘Woman, you are set free from your ailment’ (γύναι, ἀπολέλυσαι τῆς ἀσθενείας σου). When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God” (Luke 13:12–13). On another occasion, Luke figuratively describes Jesus to perform exorcisms “by the finger of God” (ἐν δακτύλῳ θεοῦ) (Luke 11:20).

³⁷The Latin version is less explicit in the summoning of the Holy Spirit into the baptizand: “O Lord God, who has made them worthy to deserve the remission of sins through the washing of regeneration of the Holy Spirit, send into them your grace, that they may serve you according to your will ...” (*D[omi]ne D[eu]s, qui dignos fecisti eos remissionem mereri peccatorum per lauacrum regenerationis sp[irit]u[s] s[an]c[t]i, immitte*

types of possessing entities, demonic and divine, are not brought together in this way in the gospel texts.³⁸ Rather, the gospels leave us with the prospect of a demoniac swept clean of his demon only to have it return again with others more evil still.³⁹ Consequently, this early Roman baptismal rite illustrates one means by which the activity of exorcism established itself in the church as a theologically founded activity which employed exorcism of the demonic as a preliminary step toward invocation of the divine.⁴⁰

Franz Joseph Dölger has done much to explain the changes in early Christianity's practice of exorcism, including its incorporation into the

in eos tuam gratiam, ut tibi seruiant secundum uoluntatem tuam ...) (Hippolytus, *Trad. ap.* 21. Latin from Hippolyte de Rome, *La Tradition Apostolique* [SC, 2d ed.; Paris: Cerf, 1984]). In the Bohairic Coptic, as well as the Arabic and Ethiopic versions, the language more explicitly states the subsequent possession by the divinity: "... make them worthy that they may be filled with the Holy Spirit and send over them your grace that they may serve you according to your will ..." (... *fac eos dignos ut repleantur spiritu sancto et mitte super eos gratiam tuam ut [ἵνα] tibi seruiant secundum voluntatem tuam ...*) (Hippolytus, *Trad. ap.* 21).

³⁸There are a few passages in the New Testament that have some relevance for a correlation between demonic and divine possession. The most evocative but least helpful of these is the baptism and temptation sequence of Jesus. The passage is evocative for the close proximity in which it places the devil's wiles to the reception of the Holy Spirit at baptism, though in reverse sequence. It appears that Bultmann is correct in questioning "whether the linking up of Baptism and Temptation can be traced to the cultic connection of Baptism with Exorcism" at the time of Jesus. In the Marcan context Bultmann places the baptism of Jesus under the theme of messianic kingship, for which he finds no inner connection with the Temptation (Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* [rev. ed. from the 2d German ed. of 1931; New York: Harper & Row, 1968] 253–57). Elsewhere in the synoptics Mark 3:29 directly correlates demonic and divine possession as mutually exclusive states of existence: to say that Jesus has a demon is to blaspheme the Holy Spirit within him. Matthew's and Mark's conclusions to the Beelzeboul controversy echo this sentiment. A more illustrative correlation comes in Acts 5:3–9, where Peter catches Ananias withholding a promised gift from the community and charges him with being filled at heart with Satan (τί ἐπλήρωσεν ὁ σατανᾶς τὴν καρδίαν σου), and of falsifying the Holy Spirit (ψεύσασθαί σε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον). As a result of Ananias' own action, then, the Holy Spirit no longer abides in him (οὐχὶ μένον σοὶ ἔμενεν καὶ πραθὲν ἐν τῇ σῇ ἐξουσίᾳ ὑπῆρχεν). This illustrates the replacement of one type of possession with another.

³⁹Matt 12:43–45//Luke 11:24–26; cf., the wandering spirits in 4 Ezra (2 Esdras) 7:78–99.

⁴⁰Compare also from the *Apostolic Constitutions*: "Let us earnestly entreat God on behalf of the catechumens ... that he may cleanse them from all pollution of flesh and spirit, and dwell in them ..." ('Υπὲρ τῶν κατηχουμένων πάντες ἐκτενῶς τὸν θεὸν παρακαλέσωμεν ... καθάριση δὲ αὐτοὺς ἀπὸ παντὸς μολυσμοῦ σαρκὸς καὶ πνεύματος, ἐνοικήση τε ἐν αὐτοῖς ...) (*Const. ap.* 8.6.5–6. Greek text and English translation in David A. Fiensy, *Prayers Alleged to Be Jewish: An Examination of the Constitutiones Apostolorum* [BJS 65; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985]).

baptismal ceremony, and some of his conclusions are worth stating here.⁴¹ Dölger considered exorcism and baptism to have become entwined by the second century after having originally operated independently of each other in the earlier Christian communities.⁴² He determined the merger to have resulted from two principal beliefs. First was Christianity's demonization of foreign pantheons and cultures, a factor aided by the otherwise morally neutral term "*daimon*" which assumed an exclusively negative sense among Jewish and Christian writers. By associating what was pagan and heretical with demons and the devil, Dölger derived a cause for exorcizing those catechumens who were coming to Christianity out of these traditions.⁴³

The second impetus for the merger, related to the first, was the association made between sin and Satan. This association led Dölger to distinguish between corporal and ethical possession (*leibliche Besessenheit*; *ethische Besessenheit*).⁴⁴ To some extent, the association of moral weakness with bodily illness contributed toward the changes of method within Christian exorcism, so that, for example, the use of oil in exorcism, unattested earlier in the New Testament writings, "healed" the soul of its sins in analogy with oil's healing effects upon the body.⁴⁵ But the eventual association of exorcism with

⁴¹Franz Joseph Dölger, *Der Exorzismus im altchristlichen Taufritual: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Studie* (Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums 3.1–2; Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1909).

⁴²Dölger says: "Consequently, not just the thought of rebirth [παλιγγενεσία], sealing [σφραγίς], and enlightenment [φωτισμός] were joined to baptism; there was also attached to it the significance of an exorcism, due to the influence of contemporary teachings about demons." (*Es wurde, sonach mit der Taufe nicht bloss der Gedanke der Wiedergeburt, Besiegelung und Erleuchtung verbunden, es wurde ihr auch unter dem Einfluss der damaligen Dämonenlehre die Bedeutung eines Exorzismus beigemessen.*) (Dölger, *Exorzismus im altchristlichen Taufritual*, 4–5).

⁴³"The Devil is joined with the heathen and heretic; he lives in him." (*Mit dem Heiden und Ketzer ist der Teufel verbunden, er wohnt in ihm.*) (Dölger, *Exorzismus im altchristlichen Taufritual*, 24).

⁴⁴Dölger, *Exorzismus im altchristlichen Taufritual*, 33–37. Dölger insists that both forms of possession constituted real beliefs in real demonic spirits that reside within the possessed; ethical possession is not merely a metaphor of human sinfulness: "By ethical possession one understood not perhaps a powerful influence of the devil upon the soul, but a real inhabitation by the demonic powers." (*Unter ethischer Besessenheit verstand man aber nicht etwa eine dynamische Einwirkung des Teufels auf die Seele, sondern ein wirkliches Einwohnen der dämonischen Mächte.*) (Dölger, *Exorzismus im altchristlichen Taufritual*, 153). Thraede also makes use of the distinction between corporal and ethical possession (also called by Dölger "spiritual possession" [*geistliche Besessenheit*]) in his study (e.g., Thraede, "Exorzismus," *RAC* 7:79).

⁴⁵Dölger, *Exorzismus im altchristlichen Taufritual*, 77–78, 146–47. Compare the combination of oil and prayer for healing in James 5:14–16. Gabriele Winkler offers an alternative view to Dölger's. She sees the use of oil in the prebaptismal ceremony as an addition by the Syrian and Armenian theologians who, rather than as an apotropeion, applied this to baptism as a messianic rite in analogy with the anointing of kings in the Hebrew

ethical possession also had a more profound effect. Dölger considered both corporal possession and its exorcism to have been a belief and practice of Jesus and his contemporaries that became increasingly outdated among subsequent generations of Christians.⁴⁶ By demonizing humanity's sinful nature, and by applying exorcism to ethical possession in the baptismal ceremony, Dölger saw the church to have maintained a theological basis for the dominical command to exorcize.⁴⁷

Dölger's work on the development of exorcism within Christianity has been affirmed and refined by more recent research.⁴⁸ The focus for Dölger and

Bible. (See Gabriele Winkler, "The Original Meaning and Implications of the Prebaptismal Anointing," *Worship* 52 [1978] 24–45). In support of Winkler's view compare the *Gospel of Philip* from the Nag Hammadi codices, where the chrism ceremony, distinct from the baptismal ceremony, serves to make one a "Christ" (*Gos. Phil.* 67d, 95). We see command and touch to play a role in exorcism also in Tertullian's *Apology*: "Thus at a touch, a breath from us, they are seized by the thought, by the foretaste of that fire, and they leave the bodies of men at our command, all against their will, in pain, blushing to have you witness it." (*Ita de contactu deque afflatu nostro, contemplatione et repraesentatione ignis illius correpti etiam de corporibus nostro imperio excedunt inviti et dolentes et vobis praesentibus erubescetes.*) (Tertullian, *Apol.* 23.16 [Glover, LCL]. Cf., 21.17; 27.5–6; 46.5).

⁴⁶Dölger, *Exorzismus im altchristlichen Taufritual*, 127. In support of Dölger we can refer to the work of Barrett-Lennard, who has collected and commented upon written sources from the second half of the second century to the fourth century as evidence of the popularity of exorcism within Christian circles. These sources include papyrus letters of the laity, literary writings by educated leaders and pastors, and liturgical sources, which provide a wider spectrum of church thought for a given region. What is interesting is a lack of reference to exorcism in the ephemeral writings prior to the fourth century. Barrett-Lennard says of this: "... I am not aware of any pre-fourth century Christian papyrus letter which makes reference to either an act of exorcism or to a demon-possessed person. This contrasts sharply with the situation in relation to our literary and liturgical sources" (Barrett-Lennard, *Christian Healing after the New Testament*, 137).

⁴⁷The Council of Carthage (256) offers the first evidence of exorcism and baptism unified into a single ceremony, for which it finds biblical basis in the dominical mandates to baptize and exorcize found respectively in Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:17 (Dölger, *Exorzismus im altchristlichen Taufritual*, 12–13).

⁴⁸For example, Thraede, "Exorzismus" *RAC* 7. Note also Elizabeth Ann Leeper's outline of the gradual institutionalization of exorcism in the church from its charismatic origins in early Christianity. Leeper concludes that exorcism as an institution aided the church's stability and growth by bringing "healing, control, and initiation" to the three liminal areas of health, orthodoxy, and ecclesial organization. She notes that exorcism's importance: "... goes back to the need of Christianity to create a new symbolic universe, to bring converts into a new order of being, and to instill in them a new identity if the movement was to survive. The church, whether aware of it or not, was involved in ordering and maintaining reality" (Elizabeth Ann Leeper, *Exorcism in Early Christianity* [Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1991] 341). Leeper defines exorcism's role as "reality ordering" in relation to both of Dölger's forms of demonic possession: physical exorcism is a means of restoring health, and ethical exorcism is an "inner" or "social reordering" as a means of initiating the catechumen into the cosmological view of Christianity. Leeper also sets forth a third category

later researchers, however, has been upon exorcism as an “intra-mural” activity, that is, as it takes place within the church and among the converted. What I hope to do in the following chapters is to explore how exorcism also played a role in the process of conversion, as Christianity formally introduced itself to the host cultures of Greece and Rome. In order to argue the relevance of exorcism to Christian mission, one must make a case for either a change in Greek thought that led to its accommodation of the exorcist (Near Eastern influences on Greco-Roman thought and practice), or a change in the practice of exorcism that may have brought it more into synchronicity with the Greek world-view, or a synthesis of both. The issues of cultural adaptation will be discussed under five chapter headings. Chapters 2 and 3 discuss analogous practices from the ancient Near East that, although initially rejected in the biblical texts, gained a credibility during the intertestamental period that would add legitimacy to the portrayals of exorcism in subsequent Judaism and early Christianity. Chapter 4 discusses the Greek cultural background that undermined this legitimacy. Chapter 5 discusses the various uses of exorcism in the New Testament that would have facilitated its adaptation in the early centuries of Christian expansion. Chapter 6 discusses the actual reception of the Christian exorcist as it can be gathered from the literary sources, to determine where changes may have taken place either in the Christian practice of exorcism to accommodate the sensibilities of the audience to be converted, or in the world-view of the audience that the exorcist hoped to convert. The present study’s time frame for early Christianity extends from the first to the early fourth centuries of the Common Era. The closing terminus reflects Constantine’s favorable recognition of Christianity, and assumes that the acceptance or tolerance of Christianity that followed thereafter would have affected the contemporary perceptions of its traditions, exorcism included.

not distinguished by Dölger, that of “reality maintaining,” as a means of controlling the deviant and maintaining orthodoxy within the church (Leeper, *Exorcism and Early Christianity*, 342–45). Another way to think of exorcism, still compatible with Leeper’s three categories, is to emphasize exorcism’s role in reconciliation: reconciling the sick to creation, the schismatic to the one church, the uninitiated to the true God.