

Károli Gáspár Reformed University

Doctoral School of Theology

PHENOMENOLOGY AND POIMENIC REFLECTION
ON HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY EXORCISM
BASED ON BELIEFS

THESES OF THE Ph. D. DISSERTATION

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Summary of the contents of the thesis:

Protestant demonology and Protestant exorcism. My dissertation is built around these two concepts, illuminating from the perspectives of cultural anthropology, ethnography, religious anthropology, exegesis, dogmatics, psychology, medicine, and poimenics the unique and complex system we find in a space sustained by ancient motifs, here in the 21st century. The paper answers questions about what we can do with all this in conservative Protestant congregations and how we can form tools to support the healing of those experiencing obsessive symptoms through pastoral care. Through the material produced, I hope to break the general silence and provide a guide for pastors and pastoral care workers to understand the roots of the phenomenon and its physical and spiritual background, in order to provide a contemporary response to church members who are increasingly dealing with demons today. Protestant demonology must therefore deal not with imagined or real demons, but with very real people who have shifted their focus from God to the creatures of the underworld, so that ultimately rite becomes evangelisation.

Theses of the dissertation:

1. The magical thinking has permeated man's relationship to evil and his ideas of exorcism from the beginning, thus bringing to the forefront among the possible solutions methods of a magical-ritual nature. The roots of the ideas on this subject are thus far removed from pre-Christian times and cultures, making it difficult to structure contemporary interpretations and to recognise the impact of these roots on these interpretations.
2. The related folk beliefs and church traditions have been and continue to be interwoven through continuous two-way transmission over the millennia, shaping and continuing to shape the interpretive

framework of the contemporary believer. The everyday Protestant viewpoint of the demonic world and exorcism thus becomes a rationalised, yet layered with superstitions and by no means uniform, belief system based on Catholic and popular understanding.

3. The exegetical analysis of the interpretation of the possession can support and enable a biblical understanding of both personal and impersonal evil. On the ground of either of these, the linguistic tools justify the presumption of personal responsibility on the part of those who suffer biblical possession. In contrast, however, no magical-ritual practice of exorcism can be inferred from the Revelation.

4. From the beginning, church thinkers were divided on the existence and personal nature of evil and demons, similar to the diversified positions of our day. And this change in understanding of the nature of evil is clearly correlated with the philosophical and scientific establishment of each era.

5. On the one hand, religious exorcism can cause physical and mental illness, and on the other hand, psychiatric, neurological, physiological, pathological and toxicological factors may underlie the symptoms of possession, but the assumption of possession may also be due to perceptual characteristics of the healthy mind, in addition to demonic and physiological explanations.

6. A paradigm shift is needed in the cases concerned, from the point of view of phenomenology and interpretation, as well as from the point of view of mental health care. For the latter, this shift may bring results in the field of exorcism, in the dialogue between counselling and therapy in order to alleviate suffering, and in this light, there may be a psychological basis for counselling which is still exorcist.

7. A ritual in a Protestant framework could be used in the pastoral care of persons experiencing symptoms of possession or touching by evil, as a complement to almost any methodology of poimenika.

8. The future development of the exorcist psychodrama method could make pastoral care in these special cases, which is difficult in many respects, more successful.

Publications on the subject of the thesis:

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