

Chapter Three
The Reality of Spiritual Evil
The Exorcisms of Robbie Mannheim and Julia
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I am sure that many members of the psychological and psychiatric profession – and many of my academic colleagues – believe that personified evil is a medieval superstition or the stuff of “folk spook stories” that have no place in contemporary scientific models. I don’t think this viewpoint has been justified by any logical, empirical, or scientific method. In fact, I think there is considerable empirical evidence for the preternatural – not simply the existence of spirits of the deceased and poltergeists, but also angelic spirits--both benevolent and malevolent.

I.
Evidence of the Preternatural, Supernatural, and Angelic Spirits

I present this evidence – not to scare people or engage in a counter academic polemic, but rather to inform people about what they are *really* up against in what I have called “the cosmic struggle between good and evil.” In *The Soul’s Upward Yearning* (Chapter 2),¹ I summarized the thought of Carl Jung on the archetypes – and the archetypal hero myth – as well as the thought of contemporary “myth writers,” such as J.R.R. Tolkien (Lord of the Rings), George Lucas (Star Wars), and J.K. Rowling (Harry Potter). I suggested there that the reason why these contemporary myths enjoy such great popularity (greatest popularity next to the Bible and a few perennial classics in Western literature and film making) is that they resonate with the archetypal myth of the hero in our unconscious psyche. I would further add at this juncture, that these are not mere fantasies, but represent – in mythic language – a reality in the real spiritual world around us – a struggle between the good forces of divine providence, and demonic forces that have rebelled against it – a struggle in which we are immersed. There is considerable evidence for the presence of these good and demonic forces that I will endeavor to present (quite briefly) throughout this article. The way we interact with this cosmic struggle can have a significant effect on our lives in this world and our eternal destiny.

My objective is not to convince a completely close-minded skeptic about the reality of spiritual evil, because no amount of evidence—such as levitation, objects flying through a room, use of unknown languages, and awareness of people’s thoughts and discreet communication—will ever convince a “true skeptic,” for he can always make recourse to implausible explanations such as mass hypnosis or mass hysteria among multiple psychologically balanced, even-tempered, rational witnesses. He can also claim fraud or conspiracy on the part of those witnesses--even when the proceedings of most exorcisms are kept secret—and later leaked.

¹ Spitzer 2015 *The Soul’s Upward Yearning: Clues to our Transcendent Nature from Experience and Reason* (Ignatius Press).

The same kinds of implausible explanations can be used to dismiss the tens of thousands of reports of spirits, hauntings, and poltergeists whose witnesses were previously skeptical about the preternatural. The evidence for the existence of such spirits is overwhelming in every country and culture throughout the world—particularly in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The existence of the spirits of deceased human beings has been medically and scientifically studied in the veridical data of near death experiences (which I have described in detail in *The Soul's Upward Yearning* Chapter 5. Principal among these are the studies of Dr. Samuel Parnia et al. at Southampton University (2014),² Dr. Pim van Lommel et al. (reported in the prestigious British medical journal *The Lancet*),³ Dr. Kenneth Ring's study of near-death experiences of the blind,⁴ and Dr. Janice Holden's analysis of veridical evidence in NDE's from thirty-nine independent studies.⁵ These studies are amplified by many other researchers (e.g., Emily Kelly⁶ and Bruce Greyson⁷) at the Department of Perceptual Studies in the Department of Psychiatry and Neurobehavioral Sciences at the University of Virginia Medical School.⁸ These studies validate independently verified unique veridical data accurately reported by patients at the time of clinical death – as well as evidence that 80% of blind people have accurate visual perception at the time of clinical death. Thorough analysis of these reports by neuroscientists such as Mario Beauregard,⁹ and psychiatric neurobehavioral scientists such as Bruce Greyson,¹⁰

² Sam Parnia, K Spearpoint, G de VO, P Fenwick, D Goldberg, J Yang, J Zhu, et al. 2014 “AWARE – Awareness during Resuscitation – A Prospective Study” *Journal of Resuscitation* (October 6, 2014).

[http://www.resuscitationjournal.com/article/S0300-9572\(14\)00739-4/abstract](http://www.resuscitationjournal.com/article/S0300-9572(14)00739-4/abstract)

³ Pim van Lommel, R van Wees, V Meyers, and I Elfferich. 2001. “Near-Death Experience in Survivors of Cardiac Arrest: A Prospective Study in the Netherlands.” In *The Lancet*. Vol. 358, Issue 9298, pp. 2039-2045.

⁴ Kenneth Ring; Cooper, Sharon; and Tart, Charles. 1999. *Mindsight: Near-Death and Out-of-Body Experiences in the Blind*. (Palo Alto, CA: William James Center for Consciousness Studies at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology).

Kenneth Ring, and Lawrence, M. (1993). Further evidence for veridical perception during near-death experiences. *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 11, 223–229.

⁵ See Janice Holden 2009. *Handbook of Near Death Experiences: Thirty Years of Investigation*. (Connecticut: Praeger Press).

⁶ Emily Kelly, 2001. “Near-Death Experiences with Reports of Meeting Deceased People.” In *Death Studies*, Vol. 25: 229-249, 2001.

<http://www.medicine.virginia.edu/clinical/departments/psychiatry/sections/cspp/dops/dr.-stevens-publications/STE30ArePersonsReportingNDEs.pdf>

And also E. Kelly, B. Greyson, & I. Stevenson, 2000. “Can experiences near death furnish evidence of life after death?” In *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying*, Vol. 40, pp. 39-45.

⁷ See Bruce Greyson, Bruce & Flynn, C. P. 1984. *The Near-Death Experience: Problems, Prospects, Perspectives*. (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas).

And also 2010. “Seeing Dead People Not Known to Have Died: ‘Peak in Darien’ Experiences.” *American Anthropological Association*. Nov. 21, 2010.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1548-1409.2010.01064.x/abstract>

⁸ See the research area of near death experiences on their website <https://med.virginia.edu/perceptual-studies/>.

⁹ See Mario Beauregard, 2012 (a). *Brain Wars: The Scientific Battle Over the Existence of the Mind and the Proof that Will Change the Way We Live* (New York: Harper One).

¹⁰ See Emily Williams Kelly, Adam Crabtree, Alan Gauld, Michael Grosso, and Bruce Greyson, 2007, *Irreducible Mind: Toward a Psychology for the 21st Century*, (New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield) which attempts to reconcile contemporary cognitive psychology and mainstream neuroscience with studies in parapsychology (e.g. near death experiences and mystical states).

and physicians such as Eben Alexander,¹¹ and Pim van Lommel,¹² indicate that physicalist explanations of these reports are altogether inadequate. Hence, these data show the strong likelihood of the survival of human consciousness after clinical death. Though many of these people move to a transphysical domain which is frequently described as “heavenly” (populated by other deceased persons and overseen by an intensely loving white light and/or Jesus), many remain in the physical world where they might be able to make their existence known. When they do, they are frequently called “apparitions” or “ghosts” or “spirits.”

Apparitions are another indication of the survival of human spirits after bodily death. These have been studied by the Society for Psychical Research,¹³ the American Society for Psychical Research,¹⁴ and the Department of Perceptual Studies at the University of Virginia Medical School.¹⁵ According to Ian Stevenson, these “apparitions” can be verified beyond simple visual apprehension of a spirit – which might be explained by hallucination or interpsychical suggestion. He gives three principle criteria for such verification¹⁶:

1. The same apparition witnessed by multiple individuals who describe it similarly.
2. The witnesses were unaware of the death of that individual, because it occurred at a different place (e.g., a foreign country) and the witnesses had not yet been informed of the death.
3. The description of the person matched their state at the time they died – not at the time they were last seen by the witnesses (e.g. a deceased person had grown a beard overseas which none of the witnesses had previously seen, yet this is precisely how he appeared after his death).

After studying a considerable number of these cases from the Society of Psychical Research and the American Society of Psychical Research, Stevenson believed that only about 2,000 cases qualify for this kind of validation over the course of a century.

Additionally, there are literally thousands of anecdotal reports of hauntings and apparitions of both human and demonic spirits. Hundreds of these “paranormal phenomena”

¹¹ See Eben Alexander 2012 “My Experience in Coma” *AANS Journal of Neurosurgery* Volume 21, Number 2 in <http://www.ebenalexander.com/my-experience-in-coma/>.

¹² Pim van Lommel 2015 “Continuity of Consciousness” in the *Journal of Near Death Studies* <http://iands.org/research/nde-research/important-research-articles/43-dr-pim-van-lommel-md-continuity-of-consciousness.html>. Originally published in: *Brain Death and Disorders of Consciousness*. Machado, C. and Shewmon, D.A., Eds. New York, Boston, Dordrecht, London, Moscow: Kluwer Academic/ Plenum Publishers, Advances in Experimental Medicine and Biology *Adv Exp Med Biol.* 2004; 550: 115-132.

¹³ See the website: <http://www.spr.ac.uk/>.

¹⁴ See their website: <http://www.aspr.com/who.htm>.

¹⁵ See their website: <https://med.virginia.edu/perceptual-studies/>.

¹⁶ See Ian Stevenson 1982 “The Contribution of Apparitions to the Evidence for Survival” in *The Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* Vol. 76, October 1982. Reprinted in the Department of Perceptual Studies (University of Virginia Medical School) website:

<https://med.virginia.edu/perceptual-studies/wp-content/uploads/sites/267/2015/11/STE10.pdf>.

The references given in this article are extensive, and give detailed assessments of many of the cases examined by Stevenson.

For additional more contemporary studies, see Karlis Osis and Erlendur Haraldsson, *At the Hour of Death: A New Look at Evidence for Life after Death*, 3rd edition. Norwalk, CT: Hastings House, 1997. OOP.

have been tested with varying degrees of scientific instrumentation – such as ambient temperature sensor, electromagnetic field sensor, and ultra-sensitive motion detectors. The number of reports is so prolific that one cable channel -- Destination America has cataloged and videoed hundreds of hauntings by spirits of both human and demonic origin. Though the producers do not approach the subject in a scientific way, and the “experts” used to test the signs of paranormal phenomena are not research scientists, the hundreds of credible (and even previously skeptical) witnesses and the evidence of objects flying through a room, property being destroyed, and objects being moved from one place to another without known physical or human causation is hard to dismiss cavalierly.¹⁷ Additionally, dozens of books and websites have also been devoted to these phenomena cataloging hundreds of accounts by witnesses, some of whom have great scientific and academic credibility.¹⁸ Even if one discounts 95% of these accounts as the work of over-active imaginations, suggestive or gullible personalities or religious fanaticism—which I do not believe to be the case—the remaining 5% reported by scientists, doctors, and other professionals should at least give one pause. As Peter Kreeft observed:

...without our action or invitation, the dead often *do* appear to the living. There is enormous evidence of ‘ghosts’ in all cultures... We can distinguish three kinds of ghosts, I believe. First, the most familiar kind: the sad ones, the wispy ones. They seem to be working out some unfinished earthly business, or suffering some purgatorial purification until released from their earthly business... Second, there are malicious and deceptive spirits – and since they *are* deceptive, they hardly ever *appear* malicious... Third, there are the bright, happy spirits of dead friends and family, especially spouses, who appear unbidden, at God’s will, not ours, with messages of hope and love.¹⁹

As noted above, my purpose here is not to convince the close-minded skeptic, because I believe, as Chesterton did, that such skeptics are in reality, dogmatists who either disdain the common person, or arbitrarily and aprioristically foreclose the possibility of the transphysical:

The plain popular course [of non-academic “common folk”] is to trust the peasant's word about the ghost exactly as you trust the peasant's word about the landlord. Being a peasant he will probably have a great deal of healthy

¹⁷ For video of seventy of these hauntings, see the *Destination America* website:

<http://www.destinationamerica.com/tv-shows/a-haunting/videos/a-dark-spirit-called-the-shadow-man-haunts-the-flo-rida-woods-and-torments-a-local-family/>.

¹⁸ See for example a Catholic explanation of these phenomena in:

<http://www.uscatholic.org/articles/201309/paranormal-activity-do-catholics-believe-ghosts-27887>

See also 2,000 accounts of witnesses of varying degrees of credibility in:

<http://www.ghost-mysteries.com/true-ghost-stories.php>

Amazon.com lists dozens of books about hauntings, spirits and the preternatural in:

<http://www.amazon.com/lm/R27CCW39SP5BEK>

¹⁹ Peter Kreeft 1990 *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Heaven – But Never Dreamed of Asking* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press) pp. 33-34.

agnosticism about both. Still you could fill the British Museum with evidence uttered by the peasant, and given in favour of the ghost. If it comes to human testimony there is a choking cataract of human testimony in favour of the supernatural. If you reject it, you can only mean one of two things. You reject the peasant's story about the ghost either because the man is a peasant or because the story is a ghost story. That is, you either deny the main principle of democracy, or you affirm the main principle of materialism—the abstract impossibility of miracle. You have a perfect right to do so; but in that case you are the dogmatist. It is we Christians who accept all actual evidence—it is you rationalists who refuse actual evidence being constrained to do so by your creed.²⁰

The individuals to whom I am writing are those who are open to the “enormous evidence” of ghosts, apparitions, and near death experiences – that is those who are not aprioristically and unjustifiably closed to the possibility of the transcendent and supernatural.

Why write about such things? Can't a case against evil be made without making recourse to demons, ghosts, and malicious human spirits? Yes – a very convincing case can be made on the basis of natural law to do good and avoid evil, to pursue virtue, and avoid vice – for the sake of oneself, others, culture, and the world. Yet strong as the natural law and natural virtue case may be, it is only a small part of the story. We are living not only in the physical world, but also within a *supernatural* struggle between good and evil which has effects on the human soul or spirit beyond the physical universe and throughout eternity. It is this dimension of evil – the dimension with which Jesus was urgently concerned – that I intend to bring up in this book – precisely because it is frequently ignored or overlooked while having transcendent and eternal consequences. If we are open to the whole story – the transcendent and eternal story – then we will not be able to escape the supernatural dimension of good and evil – angels and demons, beneficent and malevolent human spirits, and the supernatural struggle between good and evil.

Why is the whole story so important? As every prudent person knows, “forewarned is forearmed.” If there really is a calculating, dangerous, dark, destructive and vicious evil force who intends us harm—even eternal harm—then we should want to know about it. If a terrorist is living in our neighborhood, wouldn't we want to swallow the bitter pill of knowing this fact so that we could do something about it – or would we rather pretend that he is not there until he goes away? The devil, like the terrorist, does not go away if we ignore him. Instead, he increases his influence, domain, destructiveness, and malevolent intent to seduce and goad “the unaware” into his eternal darkness. Putting our hands in front of our eyes and insisting, “You can't see me!” is a highly ineffective strategy for contending with a demon of remarkable intelligence and cruelty.

So what kind of strategy is effective? One that recognizes the presence of spiritual evil, how it works, and most importantly, who and what prevents it from working. Though all the world's religions have rites and prayers to ward off and exorcise demons, Christianity and

²⁰ Chesterton *Orthodoxy* p. 106

particularly the Catholic Church has the most extensive, nuanced, and deep articulation of the sources of evil, its workings, and the ways to protect ourselves from it. It is not based on magical incantations and practices – which fall prey to the very evil it is trying to avoid – but rather is based on the teachings, prayers, and redemptive actions of Jesus Christ – and faith in Him. Jesus definitively defeated evil which means that all free agents who trust and try to follow Him can never be *ultimately* subjugated by evil. Jesus will always have the last salvific word. If we throw ourselves upon His mercy while trying to follow His “way,” His Holy Spirit will guide us to the heavenly kingdom He has prepared for us with His Father.

Nevertheless, spiritual evil can still tempt us, deceive us, attack us, and try to seduce us away from God into its lair of emptiness, coldness, darkness, and loneliness. To be sure, it disguises its dark reality with desirable objects which appear to be sources of true happiness – power, dominion, egocentricity, and all Seven Deadly Sins (see the article on this landing page), but eventually it will reveal glimpses of the darkness into which it is leading.

The purpose of this article is to show not only the reality of malevolent human spirits, but also the reality of demons – malevolent angelic beings – “fallen angels.” By exploring the relatively rare phenomenon of demonic possession, I hope to show the reality of demonic angels and spirits whose activities are far more extensive than possessing people who are directly connected with or associated with the occult. Though there is a growing number of people involving themselves in satanic worship and occult practices (séances, conjuring’s, ouija boards, and even the new game “Charlie Charlie”) leading to an increased number of demonic possessions around the world,²¹ the phenomenon of possession is still rare when compared with the other more disguised activities of satan and other demonic spirits – such as temptation, deceit, and discouragement/despair.

²¹ Matt Baglio gives statistics for this marked increase in the occult, Satanism, and Wicca both nationally and internationally. See Matt Baglio 2010, *The Rite: The Making of a Modern Exorcist* (New York: Doubleday) pp. 6-7. The Catholic Church has become quite concerned about this increase in Satanism and occultism which has led to a substantial increase in demonic possession and hauntings throughout the world. In 2011, the Vatican held a special conference for priests and other officials at the Regina Apostolorum Pontifical University in Rome to address this issue. Since that time an annual course in possession and exorcism has been held at the same University – and Pope Francis has asked that each diocese throughout the world appoint an exorcist with appropriate knowledge of demonic possession and the Catholic ritual of exorcism. Much of the increase in occult practice has come from the internet – and appeals specifically to young people who are either psychological fragile or seeking thrills from supernatural power. They are apparently unaware of the dangerous world into which they are entering which can lead to both demonic possession and haunting.

See Ann Schneible 2015, “Practical help for the demon-possessed: Vatican rolls out new exorcism course” in *Catholic News Agency*

<http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/practical-help-for-the-demon-possessed-vatican-rolls-out-new-exorcism-course-36248/>.

See also Yasmine Hafiz 2014, “Exorcism Conference At Vatican Addresses The Need For More Demon-Fighting Priests” in the *Huffington Post*

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/13/exorcism-conference-rome-priests_n_5316749.html.

See also Nick Squires 2011, “Surge in Satanism sparks rise in demand for exorcists, says Catholic Church” in *Daily Telegraph*

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/8416104/Surge-in-Satanism-sparks-rise-in-demand-for-exorcists-says-Catholic-Church.html>.

See also Matt Baglio 2009, *The Rite: The Making of a Modern Exorcist* (New York: Doubleday) pp. 9-38.

In a very serious, but humorously portrayed book about the correspondence between a very mature and “wise” demon (Uncle Screwtape) and his novice nephew (Wormwood), C.S. Lewis describes the strategy of Satan with respect to keeping his activities disguised:

My Dear Wormwood,

I wonder you should ask me whether it is essential to keep the patient in ignorance of your own existence. That question, at least for the present phase of the struggle, has been answered for us by the High Command. Our policy, for the moment, is to conceal ourselves. Of course this has not always been so. We are really faced with a cruel dilemma. When the humans disbelieve in our existence we lose all the pleasing results of direct terrorism and we make no magicians. On the other hand, when they believe in us, we cannot make them materialists and sceptics. At least, not yet. I have great hopes that we shall learn in due time how to emotionalise and mythologise their science to such an extent that what is, in effect, belief in us, (though not under that name) will creep in while the human mind remains closed to belief in the Enemy [God]. The “Life Force”, the worship of sex, and some aspects of Psychoanalysis, may here prove useful. If once we can produce our perfect work – the Materialist Magician, the man, not using, but veritably worshipping, what he vaguely calls “Forces” while denying the existence of “spirits” – then the end of the war will be in sight. But in the meantime we must obey our orders. I do not think you will have much difficulty in keeping the patient in the dark. The fact that “devils” are predominantly comic figures in the modern imagination will help you. If any faint suspicion of your existence begins to arise in his mind, suggest to him a picture of something in red tights, and persuade him that since he cannot believe in that (it is an old textbook method of confusing them) he therefore cannot believe in you.²²

II.

The Signs of Demonic Possession

My objective in this section is to give a brief description of the primary indications of demonic presence. When a large number of these indications are manifest in a single person, a reasonable inference of demonic possession or severe oppression can be made. The following list of demonic manifestation was taken from Craig Isaacs’ *Revelations and Possession: Distinguishing Spiritual From Psychological Experiences*,²³ and may also be found in Matt

²² C.S. Lewis 2015 *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Harper One Reprint) p. 31.

²³ Craig Isaacs 2009 *Revelations and Possession: Distinguishing Spiritual From Psychological Experiences* (Kearney, NE: Morris Publishing) pp. 114-126 and 164-165.

Baglio's *The Rite: The Making of a Modern Exorcist*,²⁴ and Fr. Jose Antonio Fortea's *Interview With an Exorcist*.²⁵

In a possession, a demonic spirit (or spirits) inhabits a person's body (but not his soul). This spirit (or spirits) can choose to manifest its presence when it wants – and when it does so, the victim goes into a trance (generally with the eyes rolled back), and begins to manifest a very dark, arrogant, and controlling personality. This sudden transition (called a “crisis”) is frequently accompanied by knowledge of facts and languages with which the victim would have no acquaintance. Paranormal activity – sometimes on a significant level – often accompanies the manifestation of the demonic personality. After its manifestation, the demonic spirit retreats into the background, allowing the victim's personality to re-emerge. Victims appear to have no recollection of the manifestation of the demonic personality within them. Those who witness the manifestation are confused and often terrified, but the victim—even long after a successful exorcism—has no recollection of it.²⁶ When threatened with exorcism, a demon (or demons) will frequently move the victim into the trancelike state and confront the exorcist with its blasphemies, rages, and spiritual power. The demon's first tactic is to hide behind the victim's personality, making it appear that nothing is wrong, but when confronted by holy objects and the prayers of exorcism, it will generally emerge to confront the exorcist directly.

The following list (given in Sections II.A – II.C) gives three kinds of indications of demonic presence: paranormal indications, behavioral indications, and effects of demonic presence on other people. Notice that these indications of demonic presence are not restricted to a demonic possession, but can also occur in what is called “severe demonic oppression” – where the demonic spirit attacks victims – pushing, hitting, scratching, or even levitating them. It also tries to influence or invade victims, temporarily overwhelming their personalities with feelings of hatred, arrogance, and violence. The key difference between possession and severe oppression is that in the latter, the demon does not inhabit the victim with the intent to stay. It intends only to attack and invade victims for the purpose of intimidating and terrifying them and their loved ones.

As will be seen below (in Section IV), possession occurs when either a victim voluntarily cooperates with the occult or demonic forces – or when another person actively cooperating with demonic power brings it to bear on a victim. According to Matt Baglio, possession must originate either from a person opening the door to the devil or being a victim of one who has opened that door.²⁷ In contrast, severe oppression can occur merely by being in a demonically infested house or being emotionally close to someone who is possessed. Oppression need not take place in the infested house—demons can follow victims outside the house and attack or invade them in remote places. Opening oneself to the demonic or being directly cursed by a demonically influenced person is not ingredient to demonic oppression (as it is for possession).

²⁴ Matt Baglio 2009 *The Rite: The Making of a Modern Exorcist* (New York: Random House) pp. 49-51.

²⁵ Fr. Jose Antonio Fortea 2006 *Interview With an Exorcist* (Westchester, PA: Ascension Press) pp. 86-87.

²⁶ This will be important in answering the question of why God would allow a demon to possess an innocent person like a child—or allow an evil person to curse a child into demonic possession. See below Section IV.

²⁷ Matt Baglio 2009, *The Rite* p. 59.

We now proceed to the three kinds of indications of demonic presence:

1. Paranormal indications (Section II.A).
2. Behavioral indications (Section II.B).
3. Effects of demonic possession on others (Section II.C).

Recall that the trancelike state (with the eyes generally rolled back into the head) and the emergence of an alternate personality which is filled with hatred, arrogance, and violence, is almost always present in a possession along with other indications.

II.A Paranormal Manifestations of Demonic Possession

There are eight common paranormal manifestations of a demonic spirit which have been observed in virtually every culture throughout the world:²⁸

1. *Poltergeist activity* – flying objects and destruction of objects (without known physical cause), slamming of doors, loud footsteps, evidence of footprints, loud noises, and movement of furniture (without known physical cause).
2. *Levitation* – possessed person defies gravity and is elevated without known physical cause.
3. Excessive weight of an individual -- individual can become so heavy that they are impossible to lift with several strong men, and sometimes collapse the beds or furniture on which they are reclining.
4. Telepathy, ability to read the mind and communicate with remote individuals – and even to effect phones and other information devices.
5. Remote movement or destruction of religious objects.
6. Understanding (and sometimes speaking) hitherto unknown foreign languages with proficiency – e.g. Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.
7. Knowledge of the personal secrets and sins of the exorcist and exorcism team members.

²⁸ One of the most common beliefs among the world's diverse religions and cultures is the belief in demonic spirits, their capacity to haunt and possess, and the need for rituals of exorcism to free dwellings and people from their effects. See the accounts of possession and exorcism in China and India detailed in L. Stafford Betty's, 2005 "The Growing Evidence for "Demonic Possession": What Should Psychiatry's Response be?" in the *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 44, No. 1, Spring 2005.

<http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~jporter/spiritualism/Stafford%20demonic%20possession.pdf>

There is belief in demonic spirits and rites of exorcisms in other religions. For Judaism see Rabbi David Wolpe 2012 "Dybbuiks, demons and exorcism in Judaism" in *Jewish Journal* posted June 27, 2012.

http://www.jewishjournal.com/cover_story/article/dybbuks_demons_and_exorcism_in_judaism_20120627

For Islam, see <http://www.islam-universe.com/Exorcism.html>.

For Buddhism, see Aromiekim 2015, "Tibetan Buddhism: Ghosts, Demons, and Exorcisms."

<https://exorciseme.wordpress.com/2015/01/28/tibetan-buddhism-ghosts-demons-and-exorcism/>

For Taoism, see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daozang>.

8. Appearance of dark figures, animals or insects, and other apparitions.

Every possession is not the same, and some possessions have very few paranormal features, but the ones discussed in Section III—Julia and Robbie Mannheim-- have virtually all of the above paranormal features seen by multiple witnesses. In view of this, a reasonable judgment of possession can be made.

II.B Behavioral Manifestations

By “behavioral” manifestations, I am speaking only of *outward* manifestations of mental and emotional states, but not the actual interior mental or emotional states themselves. Some of these behavioral manifestations are less frequent than others, but in virtually every possession, trance-like states, violent and blasphemous reactions to religious or holy objects, and revulsion at the name of Jesus or holy objects are present.

- Trance-like states (frequently with the eyes rolled back) during exorcism rite frequently followed by blasphemous and violent outbursts.
- Scratching’s on the body (sometimes words) – not produced by the subject or others.
- Revulsion toward anything religious or holy – holy water can cause pain; being touched by religious artifacts can cause violent reactions.
- Fear or revulsion at the name of Jesus, hatred of religious objects, destruction of religious objects.
- Extreme secretions generally from vomiting (beyond normal bodily capacity).
- Remarkable strength – far beyond subject’s normal capacity.
- The presence of another personality (personalities) frequently manifesting a deep guttural voice. Sometimes the voice or voices emerge when the jaw is clamped shut.
- Highly irregular changes in facial features – sometimes manifesting “an evil face with an evil smile.”
- Extreme bodily contortions – sometimes into seemingly impossible positions.

II.C Effects of the Possessed Person on Other People

In addition to witnessing paranormal phenomena (particularly poltergeist activities), team members or other witnesses at an exorcism may see, feel, or smell the following:

- Significant drop in room temperature (without known physical cause).
- Acrid or putrid stench.
- A feeling of pressure on the chest.
- Feeling of a dark or dangerous alien presence (not the subject) in the room.

Craig Isaacs gives a fuller explanation of all the above phenomena.²⁹ We are now in a position to examine four well-documented cases of possession, after which we will address the difference between possession and mental illness as well as the causes of possession.

III. Two Documented Cases of Possession

There are many documented cases of exorcisms throughout the world, but the best documented ones (which include analysis from psychologists and psychiatrists) come from Catholic exorcism rites and Christian deliverance ministry in the United States and Europe.

The following well-documented cases – the case of Julia and that of Robbie Mannheim (underlying the movie “The Exorcist”³⁰) – are sufficient to show the reality of demonic spirits, because they are based on multiple witnesses whose good reputation is indisputable, paranormal phenomena of almost every sort, and most of the other signs of demonic possession given above (Section II). They will be explained in detail below in Sections III.A (Julia) and III.B (Robbie Mannheim).

Readers interested in additional cases of exorcism will want to consult the two cases of exorcism detailed in Scott Peck’s book, *Glimpses of the Devil* (which were videotaped and had a team of psychological and religious experts present).³¹ Readers may also want to consult the 2012 exorcism of La Toya Ammons and her three children detailed in the *Indianapolis Star* as well as a memorandum of the principal exorcist Fr. Michael Maginot.³² Matt Baglio’s work, *The Rite - The Making of a Modern Exorcist* details several contemporary exorcisms witnessed and performed by Father Gary Thomas in the early twenty-first century.³³

²⁹ Craig Isaacs 2009 *Revelations and Possession: Distinguishing Spiritual from Psychological Experiences* (Kearney, NE: Morris Publishing) pp. 114-126.

³⁰ See the detailed description of this case in Robert Spitzer 2017 *Called Out of Darkness: Contending with Evil through Virtue and Prayer* (San Francisco: Ignatius), Chapter 1.

³¹ Scott Peck 2005 *Glimpses of the Devil* (New York: Simon & Schuster) pp. 15-132 (For Case #1 – Jersey) and pp. 133-170 (For Case #2 – Beccah).

³² The reporter from the “*Indianapolis Star*” Marisa Kwiatowski who assists 800 pages of documentation on the exorcism from psychologists, Department of Child Protective Services case workers, the four officers from the Gary Police Department, family members, and friends. See Marisa Kwiatowski “The Exorcisms of La Toya Ammons” in *The Indianapolis Star* October 30, 2015.

(<http://www.indystar.com/story/news/2014/01/25/the-dispossession-of-latoya-ammons/4892553/>) See the report of Fr. Michael Maginot, S.T.L., J.C.L. of the Diocese of Gary in—“Report Seeking Permission of Bishop for Exorcism,” May 21, 2012--<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1005721-report-to-bishop.html>. See also the interview with Fr. Maginot in Patty Armstrong 2014 “Parish Priest Aids Family in Fight Against Demons,” *National Catholic Register*, February 11, 2014.

<http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/parish-priest-aids-family-in-fight-against-demons>

³³ Matt Baglio 2010 *The Rite: The Making of a Modern Exorcist* (New York: Doubleday). Baglio recounts seven exorcisms witnessed by or connected to Father Gary Thomas – an unnamed woman in Rome in 2007 (pp. 2-5), Doug (235-242), Giovanna (pp. 180-85, 188), Maria (pp. 231-234), Silvia (pp. 192-193), Sister Janica (pp. 125, 126-133, 146-147, 167, 174, 193), and Stephanie (pp. 223-227, 228-229). Baglio also recounts several other exorcisms performed by Father Carmine DeFilippis – the instructor of Father Gary Thomas – pp. 90-185.

There are other less contemporary well-documented cases of exorcism—including the detailed narrative of the exorcism of Anna Ecklund in 1928—by Fr. Carl Vogl entitled *Begone Satan!* (based on a diary by Fr. Theophilus Riesinger--chief exorcist).³⁴ Another volume by Leon Cristiani *Evidence of Satan in the Modern World* details multiple exorcisms in France and Italy prior to 1940.³⁵

III.A The Case of Julia

We may now proceed to the case of Julia which took place in 2007. This case was witnessed and reported by psychiatrist, Dr. Richard E. Gallagher, and recounted in *The New Oxford Review* (Feb., 2008).³⁶ Richard E. Gallagher, M.D., is a board-certified psychiatrist in private practice in Hawthorne, New York, and Associate Professor of Clinical Psychiatry at New York Medical College. He is also on the faculties of the Columbia University Psychoanalytic Institute. He is a graduate of Princeton University, and trained in Psychiatry at the Yale University School of Medicine.

Dr. Gallagher agreed to anonymity, and so very little incidental material that could lead to the identification of “Julia” was provided. Given the date of the article (February 2008) and the fact that Dr. Gallagher is a Board psychiatrist in New York, it might be inferred that the exorcism took place somewhere in New York in 2007, though this cannot be verified. Dr. Gallagher notes that the team members of the exorcism were both credible and reliable, including several qualified mental-health personnel, at least four Catholic priests, a deacon and his wife, two nuns (both nurses, one psychiatric), and several lay volunteers.³⁷ The name of the Catholic exorcist is not mentioned for the same reason of anonymity.

Background of the case. “Julia” (a pseudonym) was a former Catholic who apparently disavowed her religion and became a prominent Satanist throughout “a long disturbing history of involvement with explicitly Satanic groups.”³⁸ Her Satanic practice brought her extraordinary psychic powers, but also possession by a demonic spirit who would put her into trances in which the demon became the dominant personality. The presence of virtually all signs of demonic possession (see above Section II) distinguished these states from Dissociative Identity Disorder (what used to be called Multiple Personality Disorder). When Julia was not in this trance state in

³⁴ This detailed account of the two series of exorcism of Anna—one in 1912 and the other in 1928—both of which were successful shows many of the same paranormal and demonic activities mentioned in the case of Julia and Robbie Mannheim (given below). See Carl Vogl 2010 *Begone Satan! A True Account of an Exorcism in Earling, Iowa in 1928* (Charlotte, NC: Tan Books). The exorcism was also documented in newspapers at the time.

³⁵ Leon Cristiani 1961 *Evidence of Satan in the Modern World* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc.) pp. 74-91 (the case of Antoine Gay – 1837), pp. 92-95 (the case of a possessed woman exorcised by Saint Jean Vianney – 1850), pp. 96-104 (the case of Thiebaud and Joseph Burner – Illfurth, France – 1864-1869), pp. 104-107 (The Case of Helene Poirier – Coullons, France -- 1914), pp. 106-107 (Claire-Germaine Cele – Natal, Africa – 1906-1907), and pp. 109-123 (The bewitched woman of Piacenza, Italy 1920). Cristiani relates other cases beyond these five – especially those performed by Saint Jean Vianney.

³⁶ Richard Gallagher 2008 “Among the Many Counterfeits, a Case of Demonic Possession” in *New Oxford Review* V. 75, No. 2, February 2008. <http://www.newoxfordreview.org/article.jsp?did=0308-gallagher>.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

which the demonic presence became dominant, she had no memory of what she said and did in the trance. Furthermore, she was logical, articulate, and friendly, and did not manifest any signs of psychosis. Nevertheless, she intuited the presence of the demon because of its oppressive manifestations, and so she very uncharacteristically sought the help of an exorcist in the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church agreed to examine Julia, and retained Dr. Gallagher as a psychiatric consultant – at which point he became intimately familiar with the case. After psychiatric causes of Julia's condition had been ruled out because of the presence of paranormal activities which have no causative basis in psychiatry or the known laws of physics, an exorcist was assigned to the case. Because of the complexity of the case, the many team members mentioned above, including Dr. Gallagher, were present at the rites of exorcism, along with the exorcist.

Manifestations of paranormal and demonic activity. There were several manifestations of paranormal and demonic activity arising out of Julia, both during the times of trances, and also between trance-states:

- Julia went into a trancelike state during which another intelligent and evil personality would become manifest. This personality exemplified hatred for God and an extreme reticence to leave Julia, cursing and threatening those who tried to do so. This is a universal sign of a possessed person when it is accompanied by paranormal activity such as those recounted below.
- On one occasion in front of all the team members, Julia levitated one-half foot off her bed for 30 minutes.
- Psychokinetic activity (objects flying through the air without known physical cause) occurred several times, particularly when Julia was in a trancelike state.
- Julia was uttering intelligible phrases in both Latin and Spanish – languages with which she was completely unfamiliar.
- Julia was aware of the thoughts of various team members and when the demonic personality was dominant, could recount facts about the clothes team members were wearing away from the site of the exorcism, the characteristics as well as the place and time of death of team member's relatives and friends, and also unrevealed facts about team members personal or family history.
- On one occasion, Julia was aware of conference calls among the team members -- to which she was not privy – and on one occasion actually inserted her demonic voice into one of those conference calls without the benefit of a phone.
- Julia displayed enormous strength beyond any natural capacity, which the nuns and other team members were frequently unable to resist or restrain.
- She had an extreme aversion to religious objects, was able to distinguish between holy water and unblessed water, and when her demonic voice was dominant, she would curse and utter blasphemies. She would also groan, growl, and make other animal sounds, which most team members did not believe could be made by a human being.

As a psychiatrist who has acted as a consultant to other possible cases of demonic possession, Richard Gallagher is probably one of the world's best experts in distinguishing true demonic possession from psychiatric conditions that look like possession – but in reality are explicable through recognizable DSM disorders.³⁹ Gallagher elucidates three kinds of psychological disorders which may be mistaken for demonic possession⁴⁰ (which will be discussed again in Section III.B):

1. Chronic psychotic disorders (such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorders) or brief psychotic conditions or episodes). These conditions are frequently accompanied by hallucinations – visual, auditory (voices) and gustatory – and frequently include a conviction of the presence of and possession by an angelic or demonic personality.
2. Personality or character disorders in which patients believe themselves to have a strong interior disposition toward evil. Sometimes this inner sense or feelings leads to the conviction that there is a devil or demonic spirit distinct from them, but present in them.
3. Severely histrionic or dissociative individuals. These conditions, particularly Dissociative Identity Disorder (formerly called Multiple Personality Disorder), give rise to alternate personalities, some of whom manifest aggressive, hateful, evil, and psychotic dimensions (as Mr. Hyde was to Dr. Jekyll). These alternate personalities can be so hateful and aggressive that they fool people into believing that a devil or demonic spirit is really present.

Dr. Gallagher ruled out all three of the psychiatric conditions for Julia, first because of the manifest paranormal and demonic activities which cannot be explained whether by purely mental states or the known laws of physics. Furthermore, each of the above 3 psychiatric conditions has accompanying features that Julia did not possess when she was not in a trancelike state. Psychosis is a highly unlikely diagnosis for Julia because she manifested logic, prudence, good judgment, friendliness, and restrained behaviors between trances. This would not be the case for psychotics. Furthermore, Julia did not consistently manifest the full range of behaviors associated with personality disorders, character disorders, hysteria, or Dissociative Identity Disorder. In view of this, it seems likely that Julia's other personality – that manifested itself with a low guttural voice accompanied by animal growls and sounds – was in fact a demonic spirit that had taken over her body, and could at will induce a trancelike state in which its evil, dark, and blasphemous character could emerge.

The cause of Julia's possession is quite clear – her frequent participation in Satanist practices and rituals over many years. Dr. Gallagher later revealed that she was a high priestess in a satanic cult.⁴¹ Though these practices apparently gave her great psychic capacities, they

³⁹ See Richard Gallagher, 2015 “True & False Possessions, Revisited” in *New Oxford Review* (May 2015); <http://www.newoxfordreview.org/article.jsp?did=0515-gallagher>.

The psychiatric profession recognizes a standard set of mental disorders which are classified in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. The classification of these disorders changes from time to time, and so the manual has gone through five editions. The latest edition is American Psychiatric Association 2013 *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* Fifth Edition (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ See ‘Richard Gallagher 2015 “True & False Possessions, Revisited.”

opened her to possession by a strong demonic spirit which ultimately scared her into asking for an exorcism from the Catholic Church.

III.B **The Case of Robbie Mannheim (1949)**

This case of the possession and exorcism of a young man with the pseudonym “Robbie Mannheim” or “Roland Doe” took place in Georgetown University Hospital (first failed exorcism) and the Alexian Brothers Retreat House in St. Louis, Missouri (second series of exorcisms). The successful exorcism was performed by Fr. William Bowdern, S.J., (an associate pastor of College Church at St. Louis University) and was assisted by Fr. Raymond J. Bishop, S.J. (who kept an extensive diary), and a Jesuit seminarian Walter H. Halloran (who provided later testimony). This exorcism formed the basis for the well-known book and movie entitled *The Exorcist* (1973) by William Peter Blatty.

There are two primary sources for the facts surrounding the possession and second exorcism--a diary kept by Fr. Raymond J. Bishop, S.J., who was present at events after March 9, 1949⁴² and an interview with former seminarian Walter H. Halloran, S.J., by Thomas B. Allen for his book *Possessed*—a much more accurate portrayal of the St. Louis exorcism than Blatty’s fictionalized account.⁴³ Allen’s account of both exorcisms is very well researched and documented, and those interested in a much more detailed account of them - than the very brief one given here - will want to read this volume. The updated edition of this book (2000) by iUniverse.com, Inc.) has the complete diary of Fr. Raymond Bishop of the second exorcism.⁴⁴

There are two other primary sources for the possession and exorcism which are not available to the public:

1. Fr. William Bowdern’s report to the provincial of the Missouri Province of the Jesuits (and to the Archdiocese of St. Louis).
2. Fr. Walter Halloran’s witness report also given to the Missouri Jesuit Provincial and to the St. Louis Archdiocese.

These reports have been read by officials who indicated to Thomas Allen that they cited forty witnesses to the possession and second exorcism.⁴⁵ The diary itself which recounts events after March 9, 1949 mentions fourteen witnesses to them.⁴⁶

⁴² The entire diary is available online. See Raymond J. Bishop 1949 “Diary and Case Study of Robbie Mannheim” http://archive.ksdk.com/assetpool/documents/121026010134_SLU-exorcism-case-study.pdf

⁴³ Thomas B. Allen 2000. *Possessed: The True Story of an Exorcism*: (Lincoln NE: iUniverse.com, Inc.)

⁴⁴ See Thomas Allen 2000, *Possessed* pp. 243-291. As noted above, this diary is available on the following URL: http://archive.ksdk.com/assetpool/documents/121026010134_SLU-exorcism-case-study.pdf

⁴⁵ Thomas Allen 2000, *Possessed* p. 300

⁴⁶ See Ibid and also and Raymond J. Bishop “Diary and Case Study.”

Prior to March 9, 1949, there was a first exorcism performed on Robbie by Fr. E. Albert Hughes in Mt. Rainier, Maryland—which did not end successfully. There are three sources for this exorcism which Thomas Allen was able to procure and summarize:

1. An interview by Thomas Allen with Fr. Frank Bober who was told about the first exorcism by Fr. E. Albert Hughes.⁴⁷
2. Notes taken by Fr. Reppetti (Georgetown University Archivist) of a lecture given by E. Albert Hughes at Georgetown University (in the Georgetown University Archives).⁴⁸
3. An interview with Fr. John J. Nicola who had access to some of the secret archives, but was discreet about giving information on the Mannheim exorcism.⁴⁹

There is an important secondary source concerned with distinguishing the paranormal and spiritual causes from the psychoanalytical and psychiatric causes of Robbie's behavior—Cooper's and Epperson's *Evil: Satan, Sin and Psychology*.⁵⁰

The possession and exorcism of Robbie Mannheim is one of the most detailed accounts of a full possession available to the public. Though Richard Gallagher's account of Julia has the advantage of being witnessed by very credible psychiatrists and other scientific professionals, Gallagher's promise of confidentiality about Julia's case prevented him from relating the kinds of details explicitly mentioned in Fr. Bishop's diary and the other sources of Robbie's possession and two exorcisms, the latter of which included 30 recitations of the full Roman Ritual. There can be little doubt that the substantial paranormal and demonic phenomena—exhausting virtually every indicator of demonic possession mentioned in Section II above—indicates a demonic spiritual cause of Robbie's acute condition. The following brief summary will make this clear.

The description of the events surrounding Robbie Mannheim's possession may be divided into two parts:

1. The paranormal and demonic phenomena manifested before the beginning of the second series of exorcisms (March 16, 1949). These include events that took place in Robbie's home (Cottage City, Maryland), the first failed exorcism at Georgetown University Hospital by Fr. E. Alfred Hughes, the move to St. Louis, and the phenomena manifested in St. Louis at the homes of Robbie's Lutheran and Catholic relatives.
2. The series of 30 exorcisms beginning March 16, 1949 including events that took place at Robbie's relatives' home, the rectory at College Church at Saint Louis University, the move back to Maryland, and the move to the Alexian brother's hospital in St. Louis where the exorcism was successfully completed.

Though most of the events described in Part One (leading up to the exorcisms starting on March 16, 1949) are described in pages 1-7 of Fr. Bishop's diary, I have relied heavily on Thomas Allen's book *Possessed* which fills out the details of these events with material he gleaned from

⁴⁷ Thomas Allen 2000, *Possessed* p. 302

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 309 and p. 309

⁴⁹ Ibid p. 302

⁵⁰ Terry Cooper and Cindy Epperson 2008. *Evil: Satan, Sin, and Psychology* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press).

four additional sources mentioned above. The material from Part Two (the exorcisms after March 16, 1949) is taken mostly from the diary kept by Fr. Bishop (pp. 7-29). It should be noted that though Fr. Bishop was the author of the diary, he referred to himself in the third person throughout it.

III.B.1

Paranormal and Demonic Phenomena Manifested in and around Robbie Mannheim prior to March 16, 1949

Robbie Mannheim (a pseudonym), born June 1, 1935, was the only child of a Lutheran couple residing in Cottage City, Maryland.⁵¹ Robbie grew close to his Aunt Harriet who was a spiritualist, and regularly tried to make contact with the dead through a ouija board and other occult means. Since Robbie was an only child who was not inclined toward sports and other activities outside the home, he associated regularly with his aunt who taught him how to use the ouija board during her frequent visits to the home. Robbie became proficient at using the ouija board and began to make contact with spirits on his own.

The ouija board is an occult tool used to communicate with spirits of the dead, but also can mediate demonic spirits. The objective of the people using the board is to make themselves mediums of these spirits, who would then enter the consciousness and body of the participants who placed their fingers on the board. The board has the letters of the alphabet, the numerals 0-9, and the words “yes” and “no” on it, and the movement of a planchette spells words and responses to questions asked of the spirits conjured in the game.⁵²

Though this may seem to be a harmless child’s game, it is not. In order to play the game, one must actively conjure spirits whose identities may be supposed, but are really unknown to the participants. Moreover, one must open oneself to being a medium for the spirits – which is an invitation to an elementary form of possession! Even if people use the ouija board as if they are playing a game – not even certain about the reality of spirits – they still open themselves up to this form of temporary possession – which could become, as we shall see, far worse.

There is good reason why the Bible prohibits the use of mediums, séances, and other means of conjuring spirits – if you want to make use of occult powers, you must also subject yourself to them! The Book of Deuteronomy makes this absolute prohibition clear:

Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD (Deut 18:9-12).⁵³

This prohibition is presumed by Jesus and the Apostolic Church.

⁵¹ Thomas Allen 2000, *Possessed*, p. 9

⁵² Ibid. p. 11.

⁵³ See also the prohibition in Leviticus: “Don’t dabble in the occult or traffic with mediums; you’ll pollute your souls. I am God, your God” (Lev 19:31).

Countless numbers of house infestations, oppressions, and even rare cases of possession have begun by making recourse to these seemingly harmless unseen spiritual powers through occult means like the ouija board, and in today's world "the game "Charlie, Charlie."⁵⁴ These games are not to be trifled with. Subjugation to dark or evil powers is not only dangerous to the individuals opening themselves to such powers, but also the family, household, and friends of those individuals. Furthermore, it is an endangerment to one's eternal salvation – and may even entail pledging allegiance to the dark lord – Satan himself. All forms of mediumship should be avoided – no matter how "harmless" their proponents make these practices seem. The proponents of them have already, wittingly or unwittingly, subjected themselves to the power of unknown spirits who can be deceitful and incredibly evil.

The consequences of Robbie's and his Aunt Harriet's use of the ouija board were worse than anyone could have imagined. They had released the power of an evil spirit within Robbie's house. On January 15, 1949 (when Robbie was 13 years old), paranormal activity began to manifest itself in the Mannheim household. Dripping sounds could be heard without any known source. Scratching and tapping beneath the floorboards led Robbie's father to believe that there were rats in the house – yet none could be found. A picture of Jesus on the wall started shaking – almost as if it the wall behind it were being pounded from the back causing it to jump off the wall. The family was perplexed and was becoming alarmed.⁵⁵

On January 26th, 1949, Aunt Harriet died, devastating Robbie. In order to make contact with her, he used his ouija board, which caused the poltergeist activity to intensify. It also seems to have led to the spirit (or spirits) initial invasion of Robbie's body. First, squeaky shoes could be heard walking and marching next to his bed, the furniture began moving on its own, then a Bible, a pear, and an orange flew through the air. One day in the midst of friends, Robbie's heavy living room chair rolled up on one side and tipped over causing Robbie to fall out of it tumbling onto the floor. All the adults tried to imitate this but could not – and then a vase levitated – moved across the room and shattered against the wall.⁵⁶

These phenomena were not limited to the Mannheim household. The spirit seemed to follow Robbie to school and elsewhere. Several times, Robbie's desk would "lurch into the aisle and begin skittering about, banging into other desks and causing schoolroom uproar."⁵⁷ Once when the family took a day off to visit with friends away from the infested home – the spirit again followed Robbie. During a conversation in the living room with family and friends, his rocking chair began to spin around like a top -- with his legs in the air – not propelled by any known physical force.⁵⁸ All these incidents – including the shaking and moving of Robbie's bed – caused his parents to consult their Lutheran minister, then a pediatrician, and then a psychiatrist at the University of Maryland. Though their minister thought that something was highly unusual, he had difficulty believing that it could be a demonic spirit. The pediatrician and

⁵⁴ See Matt Baglio 2009 *The Rite* pp. 15-16 and 59-60. See also Cristiani 1961 *Evidence of Satan* pp. 182-183.

⁵⁵ See Thomas Allen 2000, *Possessed* pp. 11-15.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p. 18.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p. 16.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 18.

psychologist did not see the phenomena for themselves – and flat out disbelieved any of the reports from Robbie and his parents. The psychiatrist declared Robbie to be “normal.”⁵⁹

The spirit then began to invade Robbie himself. At first it would cause his bed to shake, his dresser to move across the room with all the drawers moving in and out. Robbie would go into a trance and be cursing his parents and grandmother with incredible profanity – words they were sure he did not even know.⁶⁰ Scratches began to appear on Robbie’s body on his arms, legs, and chest – at first long scratches, but eventually, they began to spell out coherent words, like “hell.”

Finally out of desperation, Robbie’s parents appealed once again to their minister, Rev Luther Schulze, who decided he could help Robbie by inviting him into his house. This would enable him to see the phenomena for himself, and to determine what kind of treatment might help the disturbed boy. He slept in another bed next to Robbie’s in a guest room, and soon Robbie’s bed began to shake; so Schulze got up and offered Robbie a cup of cocoa, after which they returned to the room. Schulze had Robbie sit in a heavy chair instead of lying in bed, but the chair also began to shake, then move across the floor to the wall, and then topple over – throwing Robbie out of the chair onto the floor. Schulze tried to imitate the feat, but because of the chair’s weight and low center of gravity, was unable to do so. He then decided that Robbie should sleep on the floor on some blankets between the beds. At 3 in the morning the blankets with Robbie on them – as one unit – began to glide across the floor. When the minister shouted, “Stop that,” Robbie and the blankets moved under the bed, and then began to move up and down, propelling Robbie’s head into the springs under the bed, causing him to be cut. At this juncture, Schulze began to think that Robbie’s behavior was not nearly psychokinetic, but perhaps demonic possession.⁶¹

Schulze had no acquaintance with demonic possession, and could only think of one church where Robbie might be able to get some relief – if indeed a demon was really present. He told Robbie’s parents, “You have to see a Catholic priest. The Catholics know about things like this.”⁶² In late February, Robbie’s father called St. James Parish in Mount Rainier Maryland (a short distance from Washington, D.C.), and spoke with Fr. E. Albert Hughes, a young inexperienced priest who had little knowledge of possession and exorcism. Robbie’s father asked Hughes if he, Robbie, and his mother could come to the rectory as Protestants -- and Hughes agreed to see them. According to Hughes, during the meeting, the room turned cold, Robbie began to curse him, and the phone on Hughes’ desk, began to move. Hughes gave a bottle of holy water and two blessed candles to the Mannheim’s to take home with them for blessing and protection.⁶³ When the Mannheim’s returned home, Robbie’s mother sprinkled the house with holy water, and then lit one of the candles – at which point the flame shot up nearly hitting the ceiling, causing her to extinguish it before it set the house on fire. During the night, the holy water bottle was picked up, moved across the room, and smashed into the wall. Robbie’s mother

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 18

⁶⁰ Ibid. pp. 21-22.

⁶¹ See Ibid. pp. 28-29.

⁶² Ibid. p. 30/

⁶³ See Ibid. pp. 34-35.

called Fr. Hughes, and while on the phone with him, the table under the phone lifted off the ground and smashed into a hundred pieces – at which point Father Hughes decided to come to the Mannheim home to see the phenomena for himself.⁶⁴

Hughes visited the house, and according to one of his accounts, Robbie spoke fluent Latin to him (a language with which Robbie was not familiar) saying, “O sacerdos Christi, tu scis me esse diabolum. Cur me derogas?” – “O priest of Christ, you know that I am the devil. Why do you keep bothering me?”⁶⁵ As a result, Hughes decided to ask Archbishop O’Boyle for permission to do an exorcism on Robbie.

O’Boyle granted permission to Hughes to do the exorcism, asking him to keep the details secret. Though Hughes had very little knowledge of exorcism, he decided that it had to be done in a hospital where Robbie was under restraints. In March of 1949, he and the Mannheim family entered Georgetown University Hospital where Robbie was placed in a special room in a bed with restraints. As Hughes began the exorcism, the bed moved across the room on its own and slammed into the wall – in full view of the nuns who were present, and scratchings began to appear on Robbie’s body and he began to curse Hughes. Hughes, kneeling down by the side of the bed, did not notice that Robbie had slipped one of his hands outside of the restraints down the side of the bed and unhinged a piece of the spring supporting the bed. As Hughes continued to pray, Robbie took the spring and slashed Hughes’s arm from shoulder to wrist – his blood saturated the cassock and surplus.

Hughes discontinued the exorcism and required 140 stitches to close the wound in his arm. He suffered a breakdown, but then resumed pastoral duties – never fully regaining use of his arm.⁶⁶ Robbie’s first exorcism had ended disastrously.

When the Mannheim’s went back to their home, rumors abounded about Robbie – and the extraordinary phenomena at the house became well-known, scaring the neighbors. Robbie’s mother who was from St. Louis, considered moving there to get away from the neighbors and to look into another course of action. Soon after, Robbie screamed out from his bedroom, and when they rushed in, they saw the word “Louis” scratched into his chest. So the Mannheim’s left Maryland and went to St. Louis.⁶⁷

While in St. Louis, the Mannheim’s stayed at the home of Lutheran relatives who decided – along with the consent and participation of their Lutheran minister – to help Robbie by using a ouija board to connect with Aunt Harriet! They received the message that Aunt Harriet was present in Robbie and the home. This confirmation was followed by more shaking of the bed, loud rapping’s, and violent disturbances to confirm Aunt Harriet’s presence. These were witnessed by the Mannheim’s relatives.

⁶⁴ See Ibid. pp. 35-36.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 35.

⁶⁶ See Ibid. pp. 42-43.

⁶⁷ See Ibid. p. 45.

It should be noted here that evil spirits – particularly Satan, the head of all evil spirits – are deceivers. The idea that the family could make recourse to a ouija board (an occult practice open to the intervention of evil spirits) to find the truth could not possibly be more absurd. If it would behoove evil spirits to identify themselves falsely as Aunt Harriet, they would not hesitate to do so. Furthermore, the idea that one could appeal to the spirits tormenting Robbie to make a confirmation of “the truth” they found by using the ouija board doubles the absurdity. If evil spirits are willing to deceive the first time, then they are willing to deceive a second time. In any case, it seems that the Lutheran minister who participated in these activities became scared, and surmised that he had taken the wrong path to finding “the truth.” At that juncture, he recommended that the family see a Catholic priest.

The Mannheim’s then moved to the home of their Catholic relatives on March 8, 1949. While there, Robbie experienced some temporary peace which caused his mother to think that the affair might be over. She discussed with her relatives the possibility of sending Robbie back to school. Immediately after which Robbie screamed out in pain, and showed them his chest which had the words scratched into it, “No school.” That evening the Mannheim’s decided to put Robbie in a room with his cousin Marty (who was about the same age) because they got along so well. During the night, scratching noises could be heard in the mattress and throughout the room. The mattress began to flop violently with both boys lying on it in a trance. This convinced the Mannheim’s that a priest should be consulted.⁶⁸

Robbie had an older cousin, Elizabeth who was attending St. Louis University – a Jesuit university. She contacted her professor, Fr. Raymond Bishop (who kept the diary throughout the second set of 30 exorcisms) to talk about Robbie’s condition. Bishop was the head of the Department of Education at St. Louis University, and a very logical, scientific, yet spiritually sensitive man. He heard Elizabeth’s story, and suspected demonic possession – though he wanted to verify it. He consulted broadly with the Jesuit community who had several resources, and then questioned the Mannheim family about all of the incidents that occurred prior to contacting him. He asked about the number of witnesses for each of the paranormal events which he indicated totaled 14 witnesses.⁶⁹

Bishop then went to the Mannheim house to interview Robbie. During the interview Robbie seemed to be normal, and Bishop blessed all the rooms in the house, giving a special blessing to the room in which Robbie was staying. Robbie went to bed, and Bishop went down to consult with his parents. As he was about to leave, Robbie screamed, and he went back upstairs with the family members to see Robbie’s mattress moving – and scratches welling up from underneath his skin. At this juncture, he had seen for himself that Robbie’s parents’ account of the paranormal and demonic happenings were true.⁷⁰

Fr. Bishop then enlisted the support of Fr. Bowdern (described below), and on March 11, 1949, Bowdern accompanied Bishop to the house to do a special blessing of Robbie with some relics from the College Church. Bowdern then became a witness to the paranormal phenomena.

⁶⁸ See Ibid. pp. 48-50.

⁶⁹ See Ibid. pp.55-59.

⁷⁰ See Ibid. pp. 60-61.

A relic of St. Margaret Mary was launched from Robbie's pillow into a mirror in the room, scratches of a cross appeared on Robbie's arm, violent shaking of the mattress without any physical cause, a bookcase (weighing approximately 50 pounds) was turned around and moved into the entrance of Robbie's room, a bottle of St. Ignatius holy water was thrown from a table two feet from Robbie's room. At this point Fr. Bowdern was convinced – some kind of evil spiritual power was working in and around Robbie.⁷¹

On Saturday, March 12, Frs. Bishop and Bowdern returned at 11:45 p.m. to the house. While there, the bookcase moved from the wall in an arc of about 5 ft. toward the side of Robbie's bed. The priests stayed praying the rosary until 3:00 a.m. Between March 12th and March 16th events at the house were relatively calm with intermittent movement of the stool in Robbie's room, launching of the relic of St. Margaret Mary, shaking of the bed, and some other usual phenomenon.

The fathers of the Jesuit community believed they were morally responsible for helping Robbie, and so petitioned Archbishop Ritter for permission to begin an exorcism. Ritter granted the permission on March 15, 1949, selecting Fr. William Bowdern to be the exorcist, because Bowdern seemed to be a very well-grounded, spiritual man. Prior to becoming pastor of St. Louis University's College Church, Bowdern had been principal of 3 Jesuit high schools, and was a remarkably strong, pastorally sensitive man. Fr. Bowdern was to be assisted by Fr. Raymond Bishop, Mr. Walter Halloran (a seminarian), and Fr. William Van Roo. Other Jesuits assisted Bowdern intermittently throughout the 30 exorcisms that concluded on April 18th, 1949 around 10:45 p.m.⁷²

III.B.2

The 30 Exorcisms of Robbie Mannheim Commencing March 16, 1949

The following details of the exorcisms of Robbie Mannheim beginning at the home of his relatives in St. Louis, Missouri, are taken directly from the diary of Fr. Raymond Bishop – now available in the second edition of Thomas Allen's *Possessed* and also online at KSDK.com (broadcasting station NBC affiliate).⁷³ I reference Thomas Allen occasionally when he presents material from sources other than the diary. Since much of the diary is repetitive, I summarized the events taking place in the four settings where the exorcism took place:

1. Robbie's relatives' home in St. Louis.
2. The rectory of College Church at St. Louis University.
3. The rectory at Cottage City, Maryland (when Robbie and his family returned there temporarily), and
4. The fifth floor of the Alexian Brothers Hospital in St. Louis.

⁷¹ Raymond Bishop 1949 "Diary and Case Study of Robbie Manheim"

http://archive.ksdk.com/assetpool/documents/121026010134_SLU-exorcism-case-study.pdf p. 6.

⁷² See Thomas Allen 2000 *Possessed*, pp. 58-63.

⁷³ See Thomas Allen 2000, *Possessed* pp. 243-291. As noted above, this diary is available on the following URL: http://archive.ksdk.com/assetpool/documents/121026010134_SLU-exorcism-case-study.pdf

Robbie's relatives' home in St. Louis (commencing March 16, 1949)

The exorcism began at 10:45 p.m. with Frs. Bowdern and Bishop and Mr. Halloran. Almost immediately paranormal activity began. Mr. Halloran, S.J., described it as follows:

The first night I was there I was kneeling at the bed on which the boy was lying and the bed started going up and down [eight inches] and then I just about got hit with a holy water bottle that was sitting on the dresser and came flying across the room and just missed me by an inch or two.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, Fr. Bowdern helped Robbie examine his conscience and make an act of contrition. Other family members came up and made acts of faith, hope, love, and contrition. When Fr. Bowdern spoke the first Praecipio (command or order to the demon to identify himself), there was immediate action. Scratch lines started forming all over Robbie's body – arms, legs, and chest – and then a red figure of the devil with arms stretched above his head and webbed like a bat. The word "hell" emerged on Robbie's chest, and everyone agreed that the figure of the devil and the word "hell" could be no other word or figure. These scratch marks and brands hurt Robbie and were obviously not caused by him (he was in full view of the exorcists and the family). By the time he fell asleep, more than 25 different marks were made on his body, including the word "GO" above his groin.⁷⁵

As the prayers continued, Robbie alternated between a state of fighting and wrestling (which he indicated was a fight with a large red demon who was holding him in a pit) and then breaking into song in a very high pitched voice when he seemed to relax. He alternated back and forth until he finally fell asleep. Over the next three days, Robbie went into combat with the devil. It took several men to hold him down. The liberal use of holy water and the presence of the Blessed Sacrament subdued the dark power within him. On Friday, March 18th, Robbie stood up in bed and seemed to be lifting the darkness out of himself. He claimed that a dark cloud was leaving him – and in the cloud there was a black hooded figure and other smaller demons. At one point he declared that the demon had left him. He was his old self again – put on his bathrobe, spoke with the priests, and thanked them as they left. It was about 1:30 a.m.

About 2:00 a.m., after the priests had left, Robbie began to scream out that the demons were coming back. The priests returned to the house about 3:00 a.m. and resumed the rite of exorcism.

Events proceeded along the same line for the next few days. Every time the prayers of exorcism started, Robbie became exceedingly animated. As time progressed, he began to show real animosity toward the exorcists – screaming every imaginable obscenity at them. He would also break into song showing a proficiency and knowledge of music that he did not have. In fact, Robbie was incapable of holding a tune, but he would sing the melody of the Blue Danube

⁷⁴ Michael Brown "An Interview With the Priest Involved in the Case Behind *The Exorcist*" *Spirit Daily* <http://www.spiritdaily.net/Halloran.htm>

⁷⁵ See Raymond Bishop 1949 "Diary and Case Study of Robbie Mannheim" pp. 7-8.

waltz and other classics perfectly. When awake, and out of his trance, he had no knowledge of the songs he was singing.⁷⁶

The rectory of College Church at St. Louis University (Wed. March 23, 1949)

Since the health of Robbie's mother was being affected, Fr. Bowdern decided to move the exorcism into the Rectory of College Church (at St. Louis University). As the exorcism continued, Robbie's violence increased significantly. He broke Mr. Halloran's nose, and gave Father Van Roo a bloody nose. His language became more foul and more deviantly sexual. He claimed to see some of the priests in hell (8 years from the time of the exorcism), barked and howled like a dog, then began to sing, and then curse the exorcists. He would tear off his clothes and make obscene gestures – and then break into very uncharacteristic sarcastic expressions – “You like to stay with me. Well, I like it too.”⁷⁷

After five days, Robbie was moved back to the relatives' house. Again Robbie would go into trances, tantrums, vulgarity, and snide remarks. Nevertheless, when he was out of his trances, Fr. McMahon was giving him instruction in Catholic faith (since March 23rd). Robbie seemed to be accepting this, but when the Exorcism Rite began, he would go into his rages and obscenities.

Robbie began a curious new practice when he was in his trances. He would be reading from something like a blackboard which responded to information asked by the priests at earlier moments. He indicated that he would leave (the devil) in ten days and that his name was Satan himself. He also made threats concerning his salvation and that of the priests.⁷⁸

Robbie asked to be baptized Catholic (when he was not in his trance), and his parents decided to let him be baptized in the religion of his choice. As he was being driven by his relatives to College Church—where he was to be baptized and receive Holy Communion—Robbie fell into a trance and became unmanageable. He started by saying, “So, you are going to baptize me! Ha! Ha!—And you think you will drive me out with Holy Communion! Ha! Ha!” At this point Robbie's behavior became quite violent. He had to be held down by two men in the back seat, while his aunt drove. At one point, he leaped up and seized his aunt who was driving. The struggle persisted so that it was impossible to bring him into the Church. It was decided to bring him to the third floor of the rectory. He resisted so violently that the men were almost unable to get him there.

The Baptism was not an easy matter. Every time Robbie was asked to say the Creed, he would go into a trance. Fr. Bowdern found a short form of the Creed and Robbie was able to say this at one point when he remained normal. When he was asked to renounce Satan, he would go into a trance. Finally, Fr. Bowdern found an opening of normalcy to which Robbie stated, “I do renounce him.” Prior to the Baptism proper, Robbie erupted with the greatest

⁷⁶ See Ibid. pp. 9-13.

⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 14.

⁷⁸ See Ibid. pp. 15-16

violence ever. Every time Bowdern began the Rite—“Ego te baptizo in nomine Patris” -- Robbie would fall into a trance, but eventually Fr. Bowdern was able to accomplish it.

The priests resumed the Rite of Exorcism to which Robbie responded with his usual violent rages and cursing.

On April 2nd, Robbie exhibited enough normalcy to go through a conditional confession after which the priests decided to give him his first Holy Communion. A particle of the host was placed on his tongue but he spat it out five times, over two hours. Finally they decided to pray a rosary⁷⁹ to Our Lady of Fatima, after which Robbie finally swallowed the particle of Holy Communion.

Fr. Bowdern was now joined by Fr. O’Flaherty—and they drove Robbie back to his relatives’ home. Though there were three men in the back with Robbie, he was in a state of rage and fighting throughout the trip. Once home, Robbie came downstairs and when asked to return to his room rushed toward the cross and reliquary to do damage to them, but Fr. O’Flaherty caught him in time. The violence began again, and Robbie fell into a trance. Fr. Bowdern asked in Latin “Dicas mihi nomen tuum, et horam exitus tui finalis.” [“Tell me your name and the hour you will finally exit.”] Robbie seemed to understand the Latin, and each time he was asked, he responded with a curse, “No!” or by a laugh of ridicule.⁸⁰ Eventually, the word “GO” appeared above Robbie’s groin as it did on the first night of the exorcism. Then as Fr. Bowdern persisted “Tell me the time of your exit,” three parallel scratches appeared on Robbie’s right thigh, and then the words “at horam” [“at the hour”] and then an “X” was branded.

The next day, Robbie had some intermittent moments of peace, but when he fell into a trance, his violent tantrums and cursing would continue – with attempts to destroy religious objects, the light in the room, etc. Since Robbie’s father had missed so much work and the strain on Robbie’s St. Louis relatives was becoming arduous, it was decided that the family would return to Maryland – along with Frs. Bowdern and Van Roo to continue the rite of exorcism there. Fr. Bishop made special note of the nine Jesuits who were official witnesses to paranormal activity and Robbie’s possession: Rev George Bischofberger, Rev Raymond J. Bishop, Rev Joseph Boland, Rev William S. Bowdern, Rev Edmund Burke, Rev John O’Flaherty, Rev William Van Roo, Mr. Walter Halloran, and Brother Albert Schell.

The rectory at Cottage City, Maryland (April 4, 1949)

Robbie was normal on the train going to Maryland. When the group arrived, Fr. Bowdern contacted Fr. E. Albert Hughes (a priest who started to perform the failed first exorcism). He was willing to help Frs. Bowdern and Van Roo, but could not offer a place at St. James Church for the exorcism due to lack of space. Fr. Bowdern did not want to return to Robbie’s home,

⁷⁹ See Ibid. pp. 17-18.

⁸⁰ See Ibid. p. 18.

and so contacted several hospitals, churches, and health institutes, but no one was willing to accept him given the extenuating circumstances of the exorcism so Robbie remained home.

After two days of relative peace, Robbie fell into a 5-hour trance on April 7th, 1949. 20 scratch marks and branding appeared all over Robbie's body – the number "4," a pitch fork, four scratch marks, and claw marks appeared on his belly and legs. Robbie went into violent tantrums with cursing, filthy talk about priests and nuns, and then would break into singing the "Ave Maria" – as if two personalities were fighting within him. This continued on the evening of April 8th, 1949.

Father Bowdern and others decided to return to St. Louis because the Alexian Brothers had graciously offered a place on the fifth floor of their hospital where the exorcism could proceed. There were accommodations for violent psychiatric patients in case Robbie should need them.

The Alexian Brothers Hospital (April 9, 1949)

The train ride from Maryland to St. Louis was quite peaceful, and so also was the check in to the Alexian Brothers Hospital. Robbie was at peace throughout the remainder of April 9th and 10th. On the evening of April 10th, Robbie received Holy Communion and sank back into his pillow in a state of peace. Robbie remained at peace throughout the day of April 11th, but at about 9:00 p.m. he felt a sting on his chest. This was followed by a much sharper pain and a branding on Robbie's chest spelling the word "EXIT." The word "EXIT" reappeared three different times on Robbie's body with an arrow pointing toward his groin. Robbie cried suffering from very painful urination, and severe pain in his kidneys.

At around midnight, the priests prepared Robbie to receive Holy Communion, but immediately Robbie resisted and the word "HELL" appeared on his chest and thigh. When the priest tried to give Robbie a particle of Holy Communion, he was taken off into a trance and the voice Satan said that he would not allow Robbie to receive it. The priest then tried to administer a spiritual communion (where a person who cannot receive the Holy Eucharist says, "Lord, I wish to receive you in Holy Communion"), but every time Robbie came to the word "Communion," he was stopped short, and could not pronounce it. This led to more violent thrashing, cursing, and foul language throughout the whole night. Robbie would wake to relatively peaceful mornings, but launched into his barking, swearing, spitting, thrashing, and foul language in the evening. This continued for two days with the voice of Satan saying, "I will not let him receive Holy Communion."

These events led to Holy Week (Holy Thursday, April 14th through Holy Saturday, April 16th). Robbie was quite peaceful during these days, received Holy Communion, and was able to watch the Easter Services on the Catholic television channel.⁸¹

⁸¹ See Ibid. p. 25.

On Easter Sunday (April 17th), events took a turn for the worse. When the hospital Chaplain came to give Robbie Holy Communion, he would not receive it. He then leaped out of bed, grabbed one of the Alexian brother's breviary and scapular (a monastic garment symbolizing the pledge to Christian life), and proceeded to trample the scapular underfoot in an Indian war dance. In the evening, Robbie again went into a trance and began to fight viciously. The devil tried to assert his power by showing he could make Robbie say various things. After the prayers of exorcism Robbie calmed down and the Fathers left.⁸²

Easter Monday was to be the final day of Robbie's possession – his liberation from the demons who had occupied his body. When Robbie awoke, he was in a fighting mood. He would not receive communion – not even spiritual communion. Satan spoke from within him saying that Robbie would have to receive communion 9 times before he would leave, but he (Satan) would never allow him to do it – and would never allow Robbie to say the word, “communion” (for spiritual communion). Robbie then leaped out of bed, threw a bottle of Holy Water at the wall, threw a plate of chipped beef and other objects at the brothers, and taunted the Alexian brothers.

Father Bowdern, Father Bishop, and Father O'Flaherty came in the evening and made some adjustments to the rite of exorcism. He decided to ask for the responses to be in English, and put a crucifix in Robbie's hands. As the exorcism proceeded, something very different began to happen. First, when Robbie came out of his trance states, he would revert immediately to prayer – and would recite the words “for spiritual communion” on his own. When he was forced back into a trance, he reported seeing light – as if at the end of a tunnel – as he went into the trance. With each later trance, Robbie reported seeing more light – and he became more reverent when he came out of the trance.

At 10:45 p.m., something truly extraordinary occurred. Robbie went into another seizure but remained calm. Fr. Bishop reported the following:

In clear commanding tones, and with dignity, a voice broke into the prayers. The following is an accurate quotation: ‘Satan! Satan! I am Saint Michael, and I command you, Satan, and the other evil spirits to leave the body in the name of Dominus, immediately. – Now! NOW! N O W!’ Then there were the most violent contortions of the entire period of exorcism, that is since March 16. Perhaps this was the fight to the finish.⁸³

In an interview with Father Walter Halloran (the Jesuit seminarian present at the exorcism), the exit of the demon was quite forceful:

I was taken off five days before the conclusion, but from what I understand there was a very loud sound, a boom – sort of like a sonic boom – and then the boy opened his eyes and said St. Michael came and that it was over. At the same time

⁸² See Ibid. p. 26.

⁸³ Ibid. p. 28.

this took place there were about six or seven priests over in the college church saying their office and there was a huge boom over there and the whole church was completely lit up. Father Bowdern, who was doing the exorcism, and the boy were at the rectory. There was a very, very bright light that lit up the whole church.⁸⁴

The following day Robbie was perfectly normal. He participated in mass for the first time since his possession (and also his conversion), received Holy Communion, and prayed ten rosaries in thanksgiving for his liberation from the devil. Several checks have been made by staff members of the exorcists, as well as Thomas Allen, who discovered that Robbie has grown up to be a very healthy, responsible family man. He has no recollection of anything that happened to him from January 15, 1949, to April 18th, 1949.

III.B.3

A Psychiatric Assessment of the Facts behind the Robbie Mannheim Case

Terry Cooper, Ph.D., a psychologist with doctorates from Vanderbilt University and Saint Louis University, and Cindy Epperson, a doctoral fellow at the University of Missouri, have done a thorough psychological review of the facts behind the Robbie Mannheim case, and concluded that they cannot be explained by psychological interpretation alone.⁸⁵ Aside from the large number of paranormal activities – ranging from levitation, dozens of cases of psychokinesis, the hundreds of scratches and brandings on Robbie’s body, and Robbie’s awareness of Latin – which have no known physical cause, Robbie’s behavior does not fit any known psychological disorder. Several psychological explanations have been offered, but Cooper and Epperson rule them out for a variety of reasons.

The first psychological explanation offered is Dissociative Identity Disorder (Multiple Personality Disorder) where an individual splits into several different personalities in order to cope with a traumatic experience.⁸⁶ Cooper and Epperson discount this explanation for three reasons:

1. The manifestation of Robbie’s second satanic personality completely disappeared when the exorcism was complete. This does not occur in MPD where the only solution appears to be long and tedious therapy to reintegrate the personality and cope with the trauma.⁸⁷
2. MPD is linked to ongoing abuse during childhood. Investigation into Robbie’s background indicates no such abuse.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Michael Brown “An Interview with the Priest Involved in the Case Behind *The Exorcist*” *Spirit Daily*. <http://www.spiritdaily.net/Halloran.htm>

⁸⁵ Terry Cooper and Cindy Epperson 2008 *Evil: Satan, Sin, and Psychology* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press).

⁸⁶ Cooper and Epperson 2008, *Evil: Satan, Sin, and Psychology* p. 28.

⁸⁷ See Ibid.

⁸⁸ See Ibid.

3. Prior to the possession beginning on January 16th, 1949, there was no evidence of other personalities manifest in Robbie's life – which would have been expected if he had MPD.⁸⁹

Another psychological explanation offered for Robbie's behavior is schizophrenia. As Cooper and Epperson indicate, schizophrenia is more of a shattered personality – instead of a split one. This shattering causes hallucinations, delusions, and other kinds of psychotic behavior. It is now thought to be a brain disorder which can be resolved by antipsychotic medication.⁹⁰ The important point, say Cooper and Epperson, is that schizophrenia cannot be resolved without antipsychotic medication – therapy alone will not resolve the disorder.⁹¹

There are 3 problems with diagnosing Robbie as a schizophrenic:

1. Robbie was 13 years old – too young for the onset of schizophrenia (which occurs between 17 and 25).
2. When Robbie was not in a trance state, he remained coherent, indicating that he did not have a break with reality (which occurs during schizophrenia).
3. Robbie was completely cured on April 18th, 1949 (after the exorcism) without antipsychotic drugs and/or psychotherapy.⁹²

A third psychological explanation suggested to describe Robbie's behavior is Tourette's syndrome – a psychological disorder in which a person manifests a tic as well as outbursts, cursing, and other inappropriate expressions. This explanation is also inadequate for two reasons:

1. Though Tourette's can explain Robbie's cursing and blasphemous outbursts, it cannot explain the violent rages, the repulsion to holy water and sacred objects, and the harmful acts done to Fr. E. Albert Hughes, the Alexian brother, Mr. Walter Halloran, etc. Furthermore, it cannot explain the paranormal activity mentioned above.
2. Tourette's syndrome does not simply go away – it is treated with counselling and medication.⁹³

A fourth psychological explanation for Robbie's behavior is sexual abuse by Robbie's Aunt Harriett. Aside from the fact that there is no evidence for this, Cooper and Epperson note, "Sexual abuse is unfortunately quite common in our society. How often do we see symptoms such as the ones displayed by Robbie?"⁹⁴

A fifth psychological explanation for Robbie's behavior is group hysteria, but as Cooper and Epperson note, there were 48 witnesses to the paranormal activity and violent rages of

⁸⁹ See Ibid. p. 29.

⁹⁰ See Ibid.

⁹¹ See Ibid.

⁹² See Ibid. pp 29-30.

⁹³ See Ibid. p. 30.

⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 30.

Robbie who were spread out in many places in Maryland and St. Louis. Were all of these groups collectively hysterical?⁹⁵

Other suggestions have been bipolar disorder and substance abuse disorder, but these suggestions do not describe Robbie's behaviors or frame of mind. In view of all this, it seems highly unlikely that Robbie's behavior – and the paranormal activity accompanying it, can be explained by psychological or psychiatric paradigms. In view of the paranormal activity and the evil manifest by the second personality, there is need to make recourse to a transphysical and trans-psychological explanation such as an evil spirit or an evil demon.

Craig Isaacs has provided a general set of norms to distinguish psychologically explicable phenomena from phenomena requiring a transphysical and trans-psychological explanation (i.e. a spiritual explanation).⁹⁶

IV.

What are the causes of possession and why does God allow it?

There are two main causes of possession—either opening oneself to the demonic or being cursed by someone who has opened himself to the demonic. Let us take each cause in turn. With respect to the first, how does one open one's soul to the demonic? By choosing to be in league with evil spirits or demonic powers (e.g., fallen angels) to obtain supernatural knowledge, power, and/or control of other people. With respect to supernatural knowledge people may make use of a ouija board, séance, medium, divination, automatic writing, or a spiritualist to obtain knowledge about the dead, future events and others' thoughts. Sometimes these practices are nothing more than parlor games or fraudulent practices. However, if these practices really attempt to make contact with the dead or to conjure spirits or demons, and they are repeated, they can open the door to an evil spirit or a demon appearing in three ways:

1. In a place (which could cause a haunting or infestation).
2. The oppression of a person or a group of people.
3. A possession—where a demon (or demons) enters into a person's body for the purpose of tormenting him and the people around him.

With respect to gaining supernatural (magical) power and control over other people, people may join satanic groups, engage in satanic rituals, sign a blood pact with the devil, and procure amulets and talismans from magicians for magical power.

The Christian Church does not distinguish between white and black magic, because consorting with spirits and supernatural powers for the purpose of gaining knowledge or power which God does not give us—or intend to give us—is dangerous. It leads us away from Him—and toward the source of illicit knowledge and power -- spiritual evil. We are given natural knowledge and power by God—and sometimes divinely inspired knowledge and power

⁹⁵ See Ibid. p. 31.

⁹⁶ Craig Isaacs 2009 *Revelations and Possession: Distinguishing Spiritual From Psychological Experiences* (Kearney, NE: Morris Publishing).

when God so ordains it, but when we try to obtain such knowledge and power on our own—independently of the will of God for the sake of aggrandizing ourselves and gaining control over others—we open ourselves to the demonic; for this is precisely what demonic beings do—seek power and knowledge independently of God, gain illicit dominion and power over others, and aggrandize themselves through means other than the ones given by God.

There is a price to pay for such illicit power and knowledge—one must subject oneself to the demonic power that bestows them. This is why all forms of magic and consorting with spirits who bestow magical power is unconditionally prohibited in the Bible (See Deuteronomy 18:10-12)—quoted above.

The first case given above—Julia—fits the above profile perfectly. She voluntarily entered into satanic rituals for the sake of magical knowledge and power, which she used. She ultimately became possessed by the demons who bestowed these powers on her. The case of Robbie Mannheim is more difficult to understand because his Aunt Harriet introduced him to the ouija board—and its magical powers. When she died, Robbie—almost innocently used the ouija board to contact her. There can be no doubt that Robbie used occult means to gain knowledge from and connection to spirits of the dead—which opened the door to the demonic. But why did God allow an innocent use of this occult practice to take control over a thirteen year old boy? I will attempt to answer this after looking at the second cause of demonic possession—being cursed by someone who has opened himself to the demonic.

Several of the demonic possessions mentioned (but not fully described) above, were the result of being cursed by a person who consorted with spirits and demons—such as LaToya Ammons, Anna Ecklund, and several of the cases mentioned in Matt Baglio's *The Rite*. First, it should be mentioned that cursing an individual—or asking a witch or warlock to do so—opens the person asking for the curse to demonic oppression and even possession. The first to be cursed is the one who curses—or asks others to do so. All rituals used to make a curse invite demonic power into one's own life as well as the person who is cursed.

Yet it must be asked why God would allow a person to curse another person with demonic oppression or possession. After all, if God did not allow it, demonic oppression and possession would be impossible even for Satan. The simple answer is—free will. Inasmuch as God wants human beings to love one another voluntarily (not because of a predetermined program), He has to allow us to initiate actions which are unloving—even hateful and evil. Thus, God allows Hitler and Stalin to cause incredible evil and suffering to millions of individuals—for without this possibility, we would never be able to love one another freely—our love would not come from our initiative or will, but only from God's. If we cannot choose to do anything other than love, our love is not our own.

The fact is—the price of love is the *possibility* of doing evil—not just individual evil, but mass murder, mass torture (e.g., the concentration camps) and yes, cursing someone to be oppressed by an evil spirit. We can cause torments of similar magnitude by using purely natural means. Thus, the only difference between tormenting a person by natural means or cursing them with possession or oppression is that the latter uses supernatural power.

It is very important to note here that possession that comes from being cursed does not result in sin—because cursed persons are blameless for the evil cast upon them. Thus oppression and possession (coming from a curse) cannot endanger the soul of the victim. A demon can only take possession of a person’s body—not his soul. It can manifest itself through that body, and block the manifestation of a person’s true soul and personality, but it cannot invade the soul, undermine it or destroy it. Thus, cursing cannot affect the soul or the salvation of another any more than a whip or a cross.

It is also important to note here that when a demon is not manifest, the normal personality of the victim emerges—showing forth the same soul that was present prior to the possession. In virtually all cases of possession, the victim does not remember anything about what happened to him during the time the demon was manifest. For example, Robbie Mannheim remembered nothing about his long ordeal with the demon and the exorcism. He went on to develop into a mature adult, raised a family and is now living peacefully on his own. Similarly, the children of LaToya Ammons, many of the victims recounted in Matt Baglio’s *The Rite*, and in Leon Cristiani’s *Evidence of Satan in the Modern World* had virtually no recollection of what they had said and done when the demon manifested itself. Evidently, God protects the victims of possession and oppression from memories of the torments they and their families had to endure.

So why does God allow a person to be possessed or oppressed through the curse of another? Because we have free will—and as such, we can misuse that free will to bring evil upon others by natural or supernatural means. This is the price we must pay for free will and true love.

We are transphysical and supernatural beings—through the grace of God—and as such we can be divinely inspired and led—as well as make recourse to supernatural evil. If we choose the latter, we must remember that we subject ourselves to the evil we use to torment another. If a person opens himself to evil or even Satan—in order to curse another- he is responsible for the evil done to himself and the other, and unlike the victim of the curse, his actions are sinful and gravely endanger his soul. If he becomes possessed, his exorcism will be more difficult than that of an innocent victim because he has cooperated with evil—while an innocent victim has not. Inasmuch as exorcists use the will of a victim to help break the spell of an evil spirit, an innocent victim will cooperate with the exorcist completely—while one who has cooperated with evil will have a mixed state of consciousness. This mixed state makes exorcism a more difficult and daunting endeavor.

Let us now return to the case of Robbie Mannheim who seemingly became possessed by innocently following the lead of his Aunt Harriet. Robbie’s possession arose out of the free action of his Aunt Harriet to teach him spiritualism. She herself must have felt the presence of evil and oppression in her spiritualistic practice, but persisted in it anyway—presumably because of the power and knowledge it gave her. When she taught Robbie how to conjure spiritual entities and use spiritual powers, she must have known that she would create a devotee of spiritualism, which would also subject him to its ominous and dark side. Why would she have done this? To have a companion in spiritualism? To have a companion after she died? It is hard

to say. She may not have intended Robbie to be subjugated by a demonic power (to be cursed) but she initiated the possibility of this by introducing him to a practice which had this potentiality.

God created us as supernatural beings with free will. Inasmuch as we have free will and we are spiritual (supernatural) beings, God gives us the capacity to connect ourselves to either supernatural good or supernatural evil—and even to cause supernatural good or supernatural evil to others. Thus, He allows us to consort with evil so that we might freely choose Him—He allows us to dedicate ourselves to evil so that we might freely choose to dedicate ourselves to Him; He even allows us to curse another with evil so that we might freely choose to bless others with His grace. The price of choosing love, blessing and goodness is allowing us to choose their opposites.

Even if a person tries to do spiritual harm to another through a curse, he cannot. God will not allow a demon to invade anyone's soul—only the body. Furthermore, after exorcism, God protects the victim by taking away recollection of what occurred during the possession. When a formerly possessed person dies—and even when a possessed person (whose possession was not his fault) dies—God will take that person to Himself if he calls upon the mercy of God with sincerity of heart.

Can any good come out of oppression and possession (beyond the necessary consequence of God creating us as spiritual—supernatural—beings with free will)? Absolutely. In the case of Robbie Mannheim, Robbie converted to Catholicism and became a fervent believer through his ordeal. Ultimately, so did his parents. The people around Robbie—including the two Lutheran ministers, Fr. Hughes, and the eight Jesuits--were challenged to deepen their faith to deal with Robbie's crisis. Finally, it must be acknowledged that the publication of the diary of the exorcism—and even William Peter Blatty's rendition of it in *The Exorcist* movie (though partially undermined by the Hollywood glitz) has done some good. It has made people aware of the presence, nature, and tactics of spiritual evil, and has caused some of them—who are aware of the real incidents underlying Blatty's fictionalized account—to consider seriously the need for deeper prayer and virtue, to counsel others about the dangers of occultism, and to engage on the side of God against cosmic evil. There is an enormous good which comes out of oppression and possession. They always seem to galvanize individuals and groups to connect more closely with God and to join Him in creating a world of deeper and more authentic love—which will endure throughout His unconditionally loving eternity.

V.

How Does Possession Take Place?

We can now answer the remaining question --“Why can't a demon possess the soul of a human being?” In brief, a demonic spirit or angel cannot take possession of our transphysical soul because it is the domain in which God makes His home within us—the domain in which He makes His sacred presence felt. We experience this sacred presence as empathetic, mysterious, and inviting (see Otto's numinous experience in Section I, and Eliade's intuition of the sacred in

Section II). We inferred from this that the soul is the domain in which God makes contact with us – the place where He resides within us. Hence, He will not allow any evil spirit to coexist with Him in His sacred place. Moreover, evil spirits would find His sacred place quite repulsive. The soul is a sacred sanctuary – and evil is prohibited from entering it by the mere fact of God’s presence, goodness, and love.

Self-consciousness is intrinsic to our transphysical soul. Since demons are prevented from entering the soul, and self-consciousness is intrinsic to the soul, demons are also prevented from entering or possessing our self-consciousness (though they can block our self-consciousness temporarily when they manifest themselves). Furthermore, God protects our self-consciousness so that we might remain free to choose good or evil, love or unlove, worship of Him or worship of ourselves. Since this freedom is essential to our self-definition and eternal destiny, God protects its source – our self-consciousness.

So where does possession take place—if it cannot occur in our soul or self-consciousness? It must take place in our bodies—that is, our physical brain—and the sensorial systems to which it is attached. It can also take place in those areas of our psyche that are not directly affected by our soul or self-consciousness -- the *unconscious* dimension of our psyche.

The psyche is the arena in which emotion, desire, and imagination interrelate. Some desires—and their associated feelings-- are generated by the body (e.g. desires for food, shelter, procreation and nurturing) while other desires—and their associated feelings-- are generated within the transphysical soul by God (e.g. feelings of and desires for the transcendent, the spiritual, the sacred, as well as for perfect truth, love, justice, goodness, beauty and home).

The psyche has a conscious and an unconscious dimension. The conscious dimension is aware of being influenced by various desires, feelings, and images, but the unconscious dimension is not aware of them. Instead, the psyche assigns symbolic status to them (either learned symbols or innate archetypal symbols⁹⁷). The unconscious psyche presents and projects these symbols and symbolic narratives to the conscious mind through nocturnal dreams – and sometimes daydreams.⁹⁸ These dreams can be interpreted by standard techniques of dream analysis.⁹⁹

As noted above, demons cannot take possession of our self-consciousness – and therefore cannot take possession of the conscious part of our psyche. Hence, they can only take possession

⁹⁷ This archetypal theory – which is manifest by the use of a set of common archetypes and symbols by children throughout the world in their dreams and unconscious projections (e.g. imaginary playmates and boogey men) was first articulated by Carl Jung as a response to Freudian dream analysis. See C.G. Jung 1981 *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (Collected Works of C.G. Jung Vol.9 Part 1).

⁹⁸ See Craig Isaacs 2009 *Revelations and Possession*, pp. 96-97.

⁹⁹ See Ann Faraday. *The Dream Game*. p. 3

See also Jean Dalby Clift and Wallace Clift (1984). *Symbols of Transformation in Dreams*. The Crossroad Publishing Company.

of the unconscious part of our psyche (as well as our body – physical brain). This explains why the vast majority of possessed people go into deep trances when a demon manifests itself.

Demons can influence the unconscious part of the psyche through the desires and feelings generated by the body—and also through non-sacred symbols and archetypes (e.g. archetypes of the devil, the shadow, the monster, and the trickster—and other archetypes of domination, darkness and sexual power).¹⁰⁰

In order to make the distinction between psychological illness and demonic possession, it will be useful to understand the source of psychological illness. It so happens, that psychological illness also has its origins in the same domain as demonic temptation, suggestion, oppression and possession. It comes from the brain--particularly from the images, desires and feelings arising out of our embodiment—and also, from the unconscious part of our psyche which makes use of bodily images, desires, feelings, as well as innate archetypes, some of which are counterpoised to the sacred and the good (e.g. archetypes of the devil, the shadow, the monster, and the trickster).

For Isaacs, the ego (self-consciousness) and the special powers of the soul—that recognize truth, goodness, and love in their ideal form from God hold the key to distinguishing between psychological illness and demonic obsession and possession. They also hold the key to distinguishing between authentic revelations of God (say, from a mystic) and psychological illness.

VI. Conclusion

The power of spiritual evil is not the end of the story—indeed it is not even the beginning of the story. It is an aberration of God’s plan that poses a significant threat to us and our free will, but it is not an overwhelming threat. Let us return to the beginning of this article where we discussed three major ways in which God manifests Himself and acts in our lives:

- God’s *interior* presence to us in the numinous experience, the intuition of the sacred, conscience, and the five transcendental desires
- The power, guidance, inspiration and protection of the *Holy Spirit* given by Jesus to the Church and each baptized person
- God’s *extraordinary* presence to us in visions, mysticism, acute consolations, and even “stabs of joy.”

Though spiritual evil can make itself felt, God makes Himself more fundamentally and acutely present and felt – and He will never be outdone unless we reject Him to seek the powers of evil or the seven deadly sins. Furthermore, Satan and his demons have been defeated by Jesus in the temptations in the desert, His ministry of exorcisms, and definitively in His passion, death, and resurrection.

¹⁰⁰ See Carl Jung. 1981. *The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious* (Collected Works of C.G. Jung Vol.9 Part 1), trans. R.F.C. Hull. (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Yes – Satan is still active, because God allows him to interact with us through our free will—and He will never prevent Satan from interacting with us because He leaves it to our free choice to pursue temptations and deadly sins, to reject them, or, if we fail, to turn back to Him by praying in trust for His mercy and compassion. The Lord will not allow Satan to overwhelm us. Even though He allows Satan to oppress or even possess some people who intentionally pursue him or the occult, He has provided His apostles and disciples with the power to cast him out, and to erase from our memories every trace of this possession. As noted above, Satan can never possess our soul, or our self-consciousness—he can only try to block it temporarily—because God will not allow it. Yet, even if he does subject people to this form of possession, he has no ultimate power to maintain it—for if the possessed person (or his family) desires it, even Satan himself can be exorcised from the most egregious Satanist. In the end, Satan will be completely banished from the world and the blessed will be protected from him in God’s heavenly kingdom for all eternity. Satan has no hope of winning – and no hope of overwhelming a person of faith.

This does not mean that we should not take the malicious intentions and actions of Satan seriously. He has considerable power and experience to tempt, seduce, deceive, and depress—and his best work is done when he combines all of these things. Thus, we will want to first familiarize ourselves with how he works—his temptations, seductions, deceptions and depressions -- then familiarize ourselves with the seven deadly sins that corrupt both our senses and our spirit.