

Investigating the Practice of Christian Exorcism and the Methods Used to Cast out Demons

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Abstract: C.S. Lewis wrote, “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them” (Lewis 1962, 7). Some Christians focus too much on evil instead of keeping the focus on Jesus Christ. Many other Christians pretend evil beings do not exist or have no contact or influence with believers. Due to the influence of the enlightenment, Western Christians not only tend to do away with evil things, but also devalue the ministry of exorcism. For a healthy balance between these two great dangers in the church today, we need to better understand the function of exorcists. This study will investigate the topic of Christian exorcism and how Christian exorcism is practiced in North America today.

Review of Literature

Warfare perspective

There are numerous passages in the bible that may lead Christians to subscribe to a warfare perspective. Perhaps nowhere is the warfare perspective more clear than in Ephesians 6:12, where Paul states “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”. Paul instructs us to put on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-11). Specifically, God instructs Christians to use a specific set of armor and weapons. Ephesians 6:14-18 reads:

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with the truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit...”

Quite possibly the clearest example of spiritual warfare in the bible can be found in Daniel 10. The prophet Daniel had been praying and fasting for three weeks as he sought understanding from God. When an angel finally came to Daniel to deliver a message from the Lord, the angel explained that he had been dispatched the very first day that Daniel began to pray, but that the “prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days” (Daniel 10:13). The angel explained that Michael the Archangel then came and overpowered the prince of Persia [a demon], thus allowing the messenger angel to make contact with Daniel.

Numerous other instances in the bible also allude to a warfare perspective. For instance, the Holy Spirit came upon the Virgin Mary to conceive the baby Jesus (Matt. 1). Angels appeared to both Mary and Joseph (Matt. 1; Luke 1). Herod tried to kill baby Jesus (Matt. 2). Jesus was baptized, then tempted by the devil in the wilderness “until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13; Matt. 3-4; Mark 1:9-13; Luke 3:21-22; 4:1-13). Peter’s confession that Jesus was the Messiah was revealed to Peter by God (Matt. 16:16; Mark 8:27-29; Luke 9:18-20) and was immediately followed by satanic attack. When Jesus rebuked Peter for wishing to prevent his crucifixion he declared “Get behind me, Satan!” (Matt. 16:23). In the Lord’s prayer, Jesus teaches

us to pray “Deliver us from the evil one” (Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4). Further, Jesus prayed to the Father, “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them [the believers] from the evil one” (John 17:15). 1 Peter 5:8 says “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour”. In other instances in the bible, an angel freed Peter from jail (Acts 12:5-10). God protected Paul and the crew during a shipwreck at sea (Acts 27: 13-44). God protected Paul from poisonous snakebites (Acts 28:1-6). Jesus got angry and cleansed the temple reminding the people that the purpose of the temple was to be a house of prayer (Matt. 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-48; John 2:13-22). Of course, the aforementioned examples are not exhaustive as there are many more instances of spiritual warfare in the bible as well, yet these examples give credence to the warfare perspective of the bible.

Brief Overview of Demonization and Spiritual Warfare

What do demon possession and demonization mean? The problem today with the King James translation for the particular word that was translated as demon possession is that in today’s English language possession implies ownership. Demon possession implies total ownership. Many Christians believe this is not the case for Christians, as 1 John 4:4 says “You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world”. Christian scholars today prefer to use the word demonization, as Christian demonization is a matter of control, not presence or ownership. To have demons inhabit a believer does not necessarily mean total possession or ownership. The present tense of the root *daimonizomenos* means continuous, ongoing control of a

person by a demon. Various degrees of demon possession have been described as influence, oppression (outside the body), and possession.

God created all beings, but some created beings no longer serve God. Lucifer, perhaps God's top creation, rebelled due to jealousy of the newly created humans and in his pride wanted these beings to worship him. Lucifer, now called Satan or the devil, is still trying to destroy God's prized creation, human beings. Throughout the gospels, Satan is pictured as a supernatural evil spirit at the head of a host of inferior evil spirits called demons (Ladd 1993, 46).

In the epistles, Paul writes of being saved and already saved. In the gospels, the kingdom of God is already here but not yet fully present. Dickason presents biblical evidence against and for the demonization of Christians based on the "already/not yet" reality of God's reign (Dickason 1987, 6-7, 81-127). Scripture reveals a defeated Satan (John 12:31; 16:11; Rev. 20:1-3; Heb. 2:14-15; Col. 1:13; 2:14-15; Acts 26:18) and reveals an active demonic army with the goal of destroying humanity (2 Cor. 4:3-4; 1 John 4:1-4; 2 Pet. 2:1-22; 1 Cor. 2:11; 1 Tim. 2:26; 3:6-7; 4:1; Eph. 4:26-27; 6:10-18; 1 Pet. 5:6-8). Biblical examples show believers influenced and demonized by evil (Num. 22-24; 1 Sam. 10:6-12; 18:10-11; 19:9-10; Matt. 8:16; Luke 13:10-17; Acts 5:1-3; 8:9-24; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 10:14-22; 12:2-3; 2 Cor. 11:3-4; 12:7-8). Jesus already won the victory; therefore, believers are victorious in a legal and positional sense "in Christ". However, this is not a license to sin. Victorious holy living depends on walking "in obedience to the Word and to keep one's self from being led astray through demonic deception" (Boyd 1997, 86).

The remaining battles are trying to bring the "already/not yet" kingdom to completion where no being opposes Jesus Christ's lordship. Acts of evil will reign

on earth as long as God allows created beings with free will to choose sin and reject God. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). Jesus did not become a slave to sin (John 8:34). The kingdom of God arrived in Jesus to preach, heal, free captives, recover sight, and free the oppressed (Luke 4:17-21). Jesus commissioned the disciples to do the same (Mark 3:14-15). The general principle from Cain and Abel to the present is that we are our brother's keeper and are morally responsible for one another (Gen. 4:9).

God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and the power to do good deeds and heal all who were oppressed by the devil (Acts 10:38). Jesus did not use his own God-power on earth. He did everything through the Father and the Holy Spirit. He regained what he had been emptied of after his resurrection. Believers also may do even greater things than Jesus did on earth and participate in God's battle against evil (John 14:12). For the warfare worldview, the purpose of prayer and faith is to affect and extend God's kingdom. When disciples take responsibility, pray, and have faith, no demonic obstacle to the kingdom, however formidable, can stand in their way (Matt. 21:21-22). The resurrection of Jesus was a cosmic defeat of the archenemy Satan that also provided reconciliation. Now, God uses freed captives to continue setting captives free. In the biblical warfare worldview, Jesus and his followers were actively engaged in the battle against evil.

Pathways for Demonization

As mentioned previously, demonization consists of either influence, oppression (outside the body), and/or possession. Jessie Penn-Lewis wrote about believer possession in *War on the Saints*, first published in 1916 and rediscovered in

the 1970s. She wrote, “True fully surrendered children of God can be deceived, and then up to the degree of deception ‘possessed’ by deceiving spirits” (Penn-Lewis 1973, 68). She developed a concept of “legal ground” where demons must have a legal right to be present in the life of a believer. Ground is given to deceiving spirits “through accepting their counterfeits of the Divine workings, and cultivating passivity, and non-use of the faculties; and this through the misconceptions of the spiritual laws which govern the Christian life” (Penn-Lewis 1973, 69). Penn-Lewis believed the primary cause of deception and possession was passivity. Because of free will, God requires cooperation. Humans can choose not to work with the Holy Spirit and therefore sin, which separates them from God. Lewis reminds us, “There is sin without evil spirit possession; sin which opens the door to possession; and sin which is unmistakably the result of satanic possession (John 13:2) is beyond question” (Penn-Lewis 1973, 94).

A growing number of contemporary writers are recognizing that the biblical, historical, and present reality is that believers can be “possessed to a degree” or “inhabited” by demons (Koch 1970, 67; Unger 1977, 137; Bubeck 1975, 87-88; White 1990, 43; Murphy 1992, 429-436; Dickason 1987, 37). Believers receive one hundred percent of the Holy Spirit at conversion but do not necessarily surrender one hundred percent of the old self to Christ’s control at conversion. Failing to give complete surrender to Christ can open doors for demonic involvement.

Murphy elaborates on how generational sin, child abuse, anger, bitterness, rage, rejection and rebellion, sexual sins, curses, and occult practices can lead to demonization (Murphy 1992, 437-456). Kraft compares it to garbage, which attracts rats (Kraft 1992, 139). The demonic strength of attachment depends on the amount

of garbage believers have in their lives (Kraft 1994, 101). A measurement to determine if a sin also involves the demonic is this simple question: Is free will hindered?

Defining Exorcism

Exorcism, sometimes called “deliverance ministry”, is an integral part of biblical healing and wholeness. Some Christian groups today reject the term “exorcism” because it is not a biblical word. Many use the term “deliverance” instead, as they argue Jesus was a deliverer and believers who cast out demons are deliverance ministers. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* defines an exorcist as “anyone who exorcises or professes to exorcise demons” (Catholic Encyclopedia 2011). Exorcism is defined in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* as “the act of driving out, or warding off, demons, or evil spirits, from persons, places, or things, which are believed to be, possessed or infested by them, or are liable to become victims or instruments of their malice” (Catholic Encyclopedia 2011). For the present study, we will use the terms exorcists and exorcism because deliverance is too broad an area and may or may not mean the casting out of demons.

Role and Examples of Exorcism in the Ministry of Jesus

In contrast to exorcists of his day, Jesus had a new teaching with authority so that he commanded unclean spirits and they obeyed (Mark 1:27). Jesus boldly proclaimed that if it is by the Spirit of God or finger of God that he cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has arrived (Matt. 12:28; Luke 11:20). Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). In Capernaum unclean spirits obeyed

Jesus and said “Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did you come to destroy us? We know who you are – the Holy One of God!” Jesus rebuked them (Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37). Also in Capernaum Jesus healed many people, silencing demons and casting them out (Mark 1:34; Luke 4:40-41). Throughout Galilee Jesus preached and cast out demons (Mark 1:39; Luke 4: 42-44). Jesus freed several women of demons who then served him out of gratefulness (Luke 8:2-3).

Just as Jesus rebuked demons, he rebuked a storm and calmed and controlled the sea and weather (Matt. 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25). Immediately after rebuking the storm at sea in the region of Gadara/Gerasa, Jesus dealt with two demonized men (Matt. 8:28-34). A group of unclean spirits, called “Legion”, were allowed to go into a group of pigs upon leaving a man at Jesus’ command (Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39).

Jesus healed a demonized man who was both blind and mute (Matt. 12:22; Luke 11:14). Because of this healing Pharisees accused him of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, the ruler of demons. Jesus responded that a house cannot be divided and stand (Matt. 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15). He also responded that one cannot plunder the strong man’s house without first binding up the strong man (Matt. 12:29; Mark 3:27; Luke 11:22). Jesus said that one stronger than the strong man has overcome the strong man and takes from him all his armor. Jesus then said in reference to the strong man that if you are not with me, you are against me (Luke 11:17-23). Immediately after Jesus explained about the strong man, Jesus said that if an unclean spirit goes out of a man and returns with seven others, the person is worse than before (Matt. 12:43-45; Luke 11:24-27). Jesus identified the strong man

two chapters later in Luke when he healed on the Sabbath again. Jesus restored a woman's deformed body whom Satan had bound for eighteen years (Luke 13:10-17).

Jesus gave the twelve disciples power over unclean spirits, to cast them out and to heal all kinds of sickness and disease. They healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, raised the dead, and cast out demons (Matt. 10: 5-15; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6). Jesus also had seventy disciples go out to cast out demons. The seventy returned with joy saying "Lord even the demons are subject to us in your name" (Luke 10:17). Jesus said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:18-19). More than the twelve apostles cast out demons in the power of Jesus' name (Matt. 9:37-38; 10:7-16; 11:20-24; Luke 10:1-24). Mark 9:38 and Luke 9:49-50 mentions the disciples observed and reported to Jesus that other people were also casting out demons using his name.

The Bible reports a couple instances where exorcisms were a bit more problematic than usual. The first occurred when the disciples encountered a demon so entrenched that it did not leave on command. The father pleaded with Jesus to have mercy upon his demonized mute and epileptic son. Often the demon had attempted to destroy the boy through fire and water. Jesus rebuked the demon which left, not instantly, but within the same hour. When asked, Jesus said this kind of demon required faith as well as prayer and fasting (Matt. 17:14-21; Mark 9:18-29; Luke 9:37-42). A second instance occurred after Jesus' resurrection and Pentecost, seven sons of Sceva, probably false Jewish exorcists attempting to make some money, tried and failed in an exorcism using Jesus' name because they were non-believers (Acts 19:11-20).

Summary of Jesus' Methods of Exorcism

What method of exorcism did Jesus use? The *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* outlined Jesus' methods of dealing with demons (Green, McKnight, and Marshall 1992, 166-168). Jesus' mere presence confronted demons who then would identify him. He used two basic commands: "be quiet" or "be bound and come out". To deal with a more difficult group of demons, Jesus asked for the demon's name (Mark 8:22-26). Jesus used another technique of asking for the history of the illness (Mark 9:21-22). He followed up the exorcism with a command for the demon not to return (Luke 11:24-26; Matt. 12:43-45). When demons requested, Jesus transferred them to a group of pigs. On another occasion, Jesus performed the exorcism from a distance (Mark 7:24-30). Jesus' exorcisms sometimes happened violently (Mark 5:11-13; Mark 9:26). He did not use any mechanical devices common to exorcists of his day. He did not pray or invoke any power authority when he performed an exorcism. Jesus was the power authority and did not use the common exorcism *horkizo* command. *Horkizo* means to charge, adjure, or bind someone by another being, usually a superior power, in order to carry out the wishes of the exorcist (Mark 5:7; Acts 19:13; 1 Thes. 5:27).

In particular, Jesus did speak to and command demons (Mark 8:22-26; Luke 11:24-26; Matt. 12:43-45). Jesus cast out demons by the spoken word. Scripture never states that Jesus touched a demonized person in order to cast demons out. When people asked for physical healing themselves, sometimes touch played a role (Matt. 8:3-4; 9:20-22; 20:29-34; Mark 1:41-44; 5:25-34; 7:31-37; 8:25-26; 10:46-52; Luke 5:12-14; 8:43-48; 17:11-19; 18:35-43). On occasion in Jesus' ministry of exorcism,

demons did not leave instantaneously (Matt. 17:14-21; Mark 9:18-29; Luke 9:37-42).

Unlike the Jewish exorcists of his day, he did not appeal to the authority of any other spiritual power or use blessed items. Jesus himself was the authority and the power that demons recognized.

Role and Examples of Exorcism in the Ancient Church

Just as Jesus and the earliest disciples operated within a warfare worldview (Boyd 1997, 238), the early church continued to fight the kingdom of Satan. Jesus came to “destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8) and crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). Jesus commanded the disciples to continue this work by making disciples, healing, and casting out demons. The early church did as Jesus instructed. The war continued against evil. Even before and after Jesus’ life on earth, exorcism was a common Jewish practice. Josephus wrote of Solomon that God enabled him to learn that skill which expels evil spirits (demons), to the benefit and healing of people (Woolley 1932, 8). Josephus observed his contemporary Eleazar curiously releasing people possessed of devils (Woolley 1932, 9). Both Justin Martyr and Origen recognize the Jewish practice of magic and evil spirits sometimes being subject to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Woolley 1932, 9). In the time of Jesus and during the first centuries of Christianity, the question was not whether exorcisms happened, but what was unique about Christian exorcisms.

Clement of Alexandria noted that holy music drove some demons away referring to King Saul and David’s music (Clement of Alexandria 1957, 172).

Tertullian wrote that as to your demons, we have been “in the habit of exorcising them, not of swearing by them” (Tertullian 1957, “Apology”, 43). First Jesus, the one

stronger than the strong man, had to bind the devil, the strong man (Irenaus 1957, 421, 456). Both Justin and Origen noted that Jews called on the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the exorcising of demons (Justin 1957, 241; Origen 1957, 511-512). Jewish exorcists made use of fumigations and incantations during exorcisms (Justin 1957, 241), and fasting was necessary to exorcise more direful spirits (Tertullian 1957, "VIII. On Fasting", 107).

By the time of Origen, no order of exorcists officially existed. However, "the possessor of the gift is already known as an exorcist, and there are some signs of a recognized service" (Woolley 1932, 23). Eusebius cites a Roman Bishop named Cornelius (c. A.D. 250) who says that there were fifty-two exorcists serving in the church at his time. Eusebius gives similar testimony to the presence of exorcists in the churches of eastern Asia Minor and Syria during the time of the emperor Diocletian (c. A.D. 284-305).

The church began to move toward limiting the laity and placing more ministry into the hands of the clergy to protect the church from heresy. It was then that only ordained individuals in the church were considered appropriate for performing exorcisms. The Western Church prescribed the rite of ordination where the bishop gives the exorcist the book containing the formulae for exorcism. In the West, the independent office of exorcists ceased to exist and was assumed by priests. In 1972, Pope Paul VI dropped the minor order of exorcist (MacNutt 1995, 137). Today, Roman Catholic bishops appoint exorcists who use the same exorcism manual as the early church.

Sometimes baptism immediately followed healing exorcisms. Citing Old Testament practices as well as Talmud charm uses, Woolley shows oil as almost a

universal remedy for all manner of sickness (Woolley 1932, 7). Woolley cited the Acts of Thomas where healing occurred by sanctified water (Woolley 1932, 18). Sanctified water and oil, blessed through Christ, grants power “to restore health, drive away disease, banish demons, and disperse all snares” (Constitutions 1957, 494). Sometimes, exorcism is accomplished by the laying of hands (Woolley 1932, 19). Tertullian wrote of using the sign of the cross, breathing away anything unclean and rebuking the unclean spirit (Woolley 1932, 20).

Current Models of Exorcism

There are three primary models used in most exorcisms today: Word, Sacramental, and Spirit models. In the Protestant tradition, Christ is present in the preached word and administered sacraments (Newbigin 1954, 47). Faith is the foundation block of the congregation, and the message based on the Word is the primary vehicle to introduce people to faith in Christ. Jesus is the Word made flesh. A Word-oriented model of exorcism emphasizes the role of Scripture and the authoritatively spoken word.

The Sacramental model is rooted in the Roman Catholic tradition and essentially states “We are made incorporate in Christ primarily and essentially by sacramental incorporation into the life of His Church” (Newbigin 1954, 61). Scripture is important for the Catholics. Order and continuity allow the transmission of Jesus’ authority from the original twelve disciples who were chosen, trained, and sent forth as a fellowship representing Christ on earth (Newbigin 1954, 76). Catholics are a sacramental fellowship. A Sacramental model of exorcism emphasizes the role of oil, water, and the use of rituals.

The Spirit model is predominant in the Pentecostal congregations, as “its central element is the conviction that the Christian life is a matter of the experienced power and presence of the Holy Spirit” (Newbigin 1954, 95). This model focuses on the role of the Holy Spirit in leading the exorcist. These three models are merely three categories for comparative use in this study and are not mutually exclusive. In the practice of many exorcists, they overlap. Yet these models provide useful categories for making distinctions among exorcism methods today. Additionally, most exorcisms seem to share a number of common elements. These include prayer, commands, love, preparation for the exorcism team, preparation for the person needing the exorcism, and follow-up.

Purpose

Again, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the topic of Christian exorcism and determine how Christian exorcism is practiced in North America today. The following section will discuss the methodology used in this research. This includes how the survey instrument was developed, information about the sample of participants, data collection procedures, and the measurement analysis technique employed.

Methodology

Sample

A significant challenge of this research was identifying a large sample of exorcists in North America. Primarily, snowball sampling techniques were used.

Numerous Christian leaders were contacted and provided contact information for exorcists they knew. Additionally, known exorcism authors were contacted to acquire additional names of people performing exorcisms. Further, several internet posts were made to reach out to others who practice exorcisms, but were not identified by way of snowball sampling. In total, 316 unique exorcists were identified in the United States and Canada and each were mailed a questionnaire. Of the 316 persons invited to participate in the study, 170 returned questionnaires. This resulted in a response rate of 53.8%.

Of the subjects, 72% were male (122 male, 46 female, and 2 unknown). Concerning whether the subject had international experience performing exorcisms, 87 persons did not have international experience, 70 persons did, and 13 persons left the question blank. The range of experience of the subjects was from one to forty years. The sample included persons from most of the major denominations and other independent churches or groups (see Table 1). The majority of subjects had set demonized people free in a range between 11 to 1,000 times.

Subjects were also asked if they would be willing to participate in an interview. A total of 140 of the 170 exorcists agreed to an interview. Of the 140 potential interviewees, 15 were selected at random and subsequently interviewed.

Table 1.
Church Affiliation of Sample (n = 170)

| Church Affiliation | n | % |
|---|----|------|
| Non-denominational, interdenominational, or independent | 68 | 40.0 |
| None | 15 | 8.8 |
| Assembly of God | 11 | 6.5 |
| Baptist | 11 | 6.5 |
| Charismatic | 9 | 5.3 |
| Christian and Missionary Alliance | 8 | 4.7 |

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-----|
| United Methodist | 6 | 3.5 |
| Full Gospel | 6 | 3.5 |
| Nazarene | 5 | 2.9 |
| Pentecostal | 5 | 2.9 |
| Presbyterian | 5 | 2.9 |
| Roman Catholic | 4 | 2.3 |
| Mennonite | 4 | 2.3 |
| Vineyard Christian Fellowship | 3 | 1.8 |
| Congregational | 2 | 1.1 |
| Episcopalian | 2 | 1.1 |
| Church of God | 1 | .1 |
| Church of Christ | 1 | .1 |
| Free Methodist | 1 | .1 |
| Lutheran | 1 | .1 |
| Messianic Jew | 1 | .1 |
| Wesleyan Church | 1 | .1 |

Instrumentation

The questionnaire was developed based on a review of relevant literature, namely how Jesus practiced exorcism according to the Bible, how the early church practiced exorcism, and how contemporary writers today practice exorcism. Some statements are also reflective of the three models of exorcism (Word, Sacramental, and Spirit) mentioned previously. A total of 50 items were generated, with the first 37 items pertaining to issues of frequency, and items 38-50 pertaining to issues of agreement. Two different rating scales were provided. The frequency scale contained the response options: *never, almost never, occasionally, frequently, almost always, and always*. The agreement scale contained the response options: *strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, and strongly agree*.

Analysis

A powerful psychometric model, namely the Rasch Rating Scale Model (Andrich 1978) was used to analyze survey data. Rasch models, considered a form

of item response theory, are particularly advantageous for survey research because they overcome many assumptions of traditional statistical methods (e.g., erroneously treating ordinal scales as interval, erroneously treating raw scores as measures, assuming “circular dependence”, assuming items are of equal importance, etc.). Rasch (and other IRT) models are so highly regarded that they are the primary method of data analysis in most high-stakes testing scenarios (Royal 2010). These models provide a great deal of information that cannot be gleaned from traditional statistical methods, and convert data to truly interval-scaled measures. Standard errors are also calculated for each person and item in a dataset to indicate the extent to which scores are stable and reproducible. Unlike traditional statistical models where a model is fitted upon the data, Rasch models require data fit the model. With adequate fit (as determined by various fit statistics), researchers can evaluate the extent to which the measures are truly linear and measuring a unidimensional construct. A principal components analysis of residual correlations also tests dimensionality, as it is desirable to measure only one latent trait at a time. Through a series of quality control checks, researchers can evaluate the quality of virtually every aspect of the analysis, including the quality of survey items, person measures, reproducibility of measures, rating scale quality/functioning, and so on. For an in-depth discussion of Rasch models in survey research readers are encouraged to see Bond and Fox 2007; Royal 2010; and Smith and Smith 2004.

Specific to the present study, because two different rating scales were used in the survey two separate analyses had to be performed with the RRSN, as combining the two into a single analysis would be a violation of the methodology. The first

analysis focused solely on the first 37 items, the second analysis investigated only items 38-50. Results of the Rasch analyses are presented in the following section.

Results

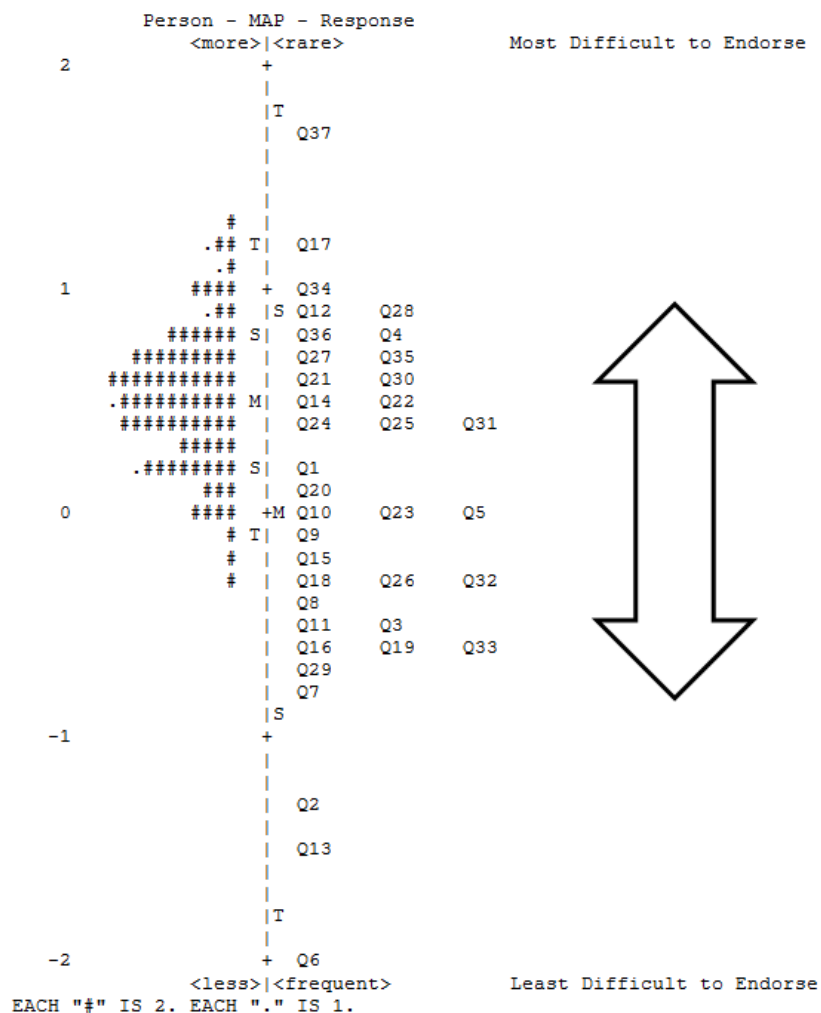
Survey Items of Frequency (1-37)

Infit and Outfit mean square fit statistics indicated the data fit the model quite well, 1.04 and 1.02. Reliability estimates were .83 for person measures and .98 for item measures. A principal components analysis of residual correlations indicated 49.9% of the variance was explained by the data. A hint of a secondary dimension was present, as evidenced by an eigenvalue of 2.5, indicating strength of about 3 items. For all intents and purposes, sufficient evidence existed to assert the data were primarily unidimensional. A list of survey items with relevant item statistics is presented in Table 2. Based on the item statistics, logit calibrations for item difficulty estimates (D_i) range from -3.65 to 1.67, indicating a wide spread of responses. Standard errors (SE) were generally quite small as well, indicating rather stable measures. A graphical representation of the construct hierarchy results is presented in Figure 1.

Table 2.
Survey Items (1-37) with Item Statistics

| <i>Item #</i> | <i>Item</i> | <i>Di</i> | <i>SE</i> |
|---------------|---|-----------|-----------|
| Q1 | People seek me to cast out demons | .21 | .06 |
| Q2 | I am involved in a church | -1.33 | .14 |
| Q3 | My church leaders/colleagues support me in my ministry of casting out demons | -.50 | .08 |
| Q4 | My church believes that casting out demons may play a role in membership preparation | .77 | .06 |
| Q5 | I can tell when someone is demonized | .01 | .06 |
| Q6 | I use Jesus' name to cast out and/or bind demons | -3.65 | .57 |
| Q7 | I teach Scripture to the person who is demonized | -.84 | .10 |
| Q8 | Other believers pray during my sessions of casting out demons | -.35 | .07 |
| Q9 | I/we pray for specific details to happen | -.09 | .06 |
| Q10 | I/we ask God to send holy angels to assist | -.04 | .06 |
| Q11 | I remind demons of Jesus' cross and resurrection | -.49 | .08 |
| Q12 | I free baptized persons who are demonized primarily through confession and communion | .91 | .06 |
| Q13 | I/we realize that we are using the Holy Spirit's gifts of wisdom, words of knowledge, discernment, or healing | -1.52 | .16 |
| Q14 | I fast in preparation for casting out demons | .48 | .05 |
| Q15 | I have other believers with me during sessions | -.17 | .06 |
| Q16 | If I am ministering to a person of the opposite sex, I have a person of that sex present | -.62 | .08 |
| Q17 | I have the demonized person or guardian sign a consent form | 1.19 | .06 |
| Q18 | In preparation, I ask the person to reaffirm (or accept) Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior | -.33 | .07 |
| Q19 | My approach mirrors the methods of Jesus and the early church | -.60 | .08 |
| Q20 | I talk to the demons directly | .13 | .06 |
| Q21 | I try to find out the demon's name | .58 | .05 |
| Q22 | I lay hands on a person to cast out a demon from him or her | .46 | .05 |
| Q23 | I instruct the person to command the demons to leave by their authority in Christ | .04 | .06 |
| Q24 | If multiple demons are present, I bind all demons to the top one and deal with it first | .42 | .05 |
| Q25 | When casting out demons, I send them to a specific place | .37 | .05 |
| Q26 | I command demons to never return to the person | -.31 | .07 |
| Q27 | I have cast out demons remotely, as in from a distance | .72 | .05 |
| Q28 | I have successfully rebuked potential natural disasters and the danger ceased | .88 | .06 |

Figure 1. Results for Items 1-37 Along the Psychometric Ruler



The results of the analysis are presented in Figure 1. The left side of the map indicates individual persons and their response distribution. The right side of the map indicates individual item locations and their distribution. Items appearing at the top of the map are the most difficult to endorse (or agree with). Items appearing at the bottom of the map are the easiest to endorse. These results are scaled in such a way that it illustrates a “ruler” of person responses to each individual item. For instance, persons who fall at the mean measure (indicated by “M” on the left side of the map) have a 50/50 probability of endorsing items directly across on the map (in this case, items Q14 and Q22). The greater the person measure (further up the map), the greater the odds he/she would endorse a particular item. The lower the person measure (further down the map), the lesser the odds he/she would endorse a particular item. With the present map, results indicate that virtually every exorcist in the sample casts out demons in Jesus’ name (Q6). The second most common response was Q13, the realization that the Holy Spirit was guiding the process, and then Q2, an agreement that the exorcist belonged to a church. The most difficult item for the exorcists to endorse was Q37, serving communion during an exorcism. The second most difficult item to endorse was Q17, which says they require the demonized person (or guardian) to sign a consent form. The placement of the remaining items along the linear continuum illustrates the extent to which this sample of exorcists endorses each item.

Survey Items of Agreement (38-50)

Infit and Outfit mean square fit statistics indicated the data fit the model quite well, 1.03 and 1.00. Reliability estimates were .49 for person measures and .99 for

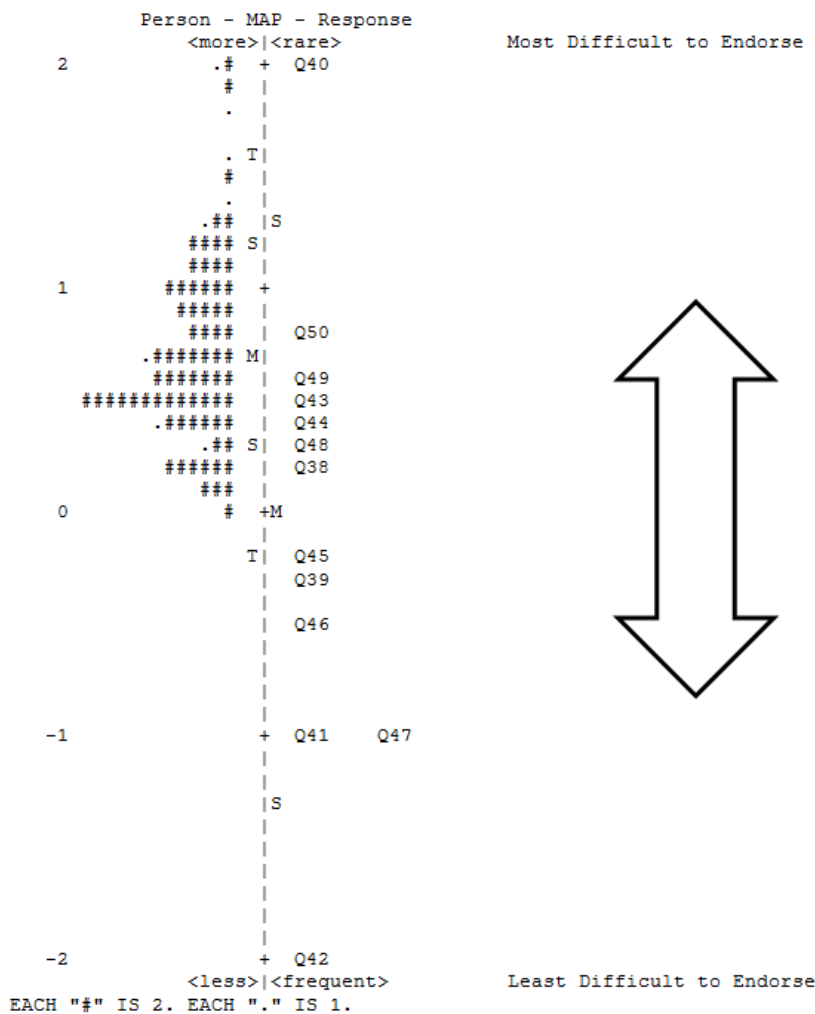
item measures. The low/moderate reliability of the person measures is likely due to a highly skewed response pattern. A principal components analysis of residual correlations indicated 53.3% of the variance was explained by the data. No other hints of secondary dimensions were discernable. Sufficient evidence existed to assert the data were primarily unidimensional. A list of survey items with relevant item statistics is available in Table 3. Based on the item statistics, logit calibrations for item difficulty estimates (Di) range from -2.74 to 3.00, indicating a wide spread of responses. Standard errors (SE) were generally quite small as well, indicating rather stable measures. A graphical representation of the construct hierarchy results is presented in Figure 2.

Table 3.
Survey Items (38-50) with Item Statistics

| <i>Item #</i> | <i>Item</i> | <i>Di</i> | <i>SE</i> |
|---------------|---|-----------|-----------|
| Q38 | I may have the spiritual gift of healing (1 Cor. 12) | .18 | .07 |
| Q39 | If someone's free will is hindered, I suspect demons are involved | -.31 | .09 |
| Q40 | Baptism, communion, worship, and liturgy are more important than scripture or the work of the Holy Spirit in casting out demons | 3.00 | .18 |
| Q41 | Before I cast out demons, I seek to remove their reason for being there through renouncing or confessing past sin | -1.01 | .13 |
| Q42 | The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are my strength and power to cast out demons | -2.74 | .32 |
| Q43 | Sometimes demons leave one person and enter another | .47 | .07 |
| Q44 | The Holy Spirit's work in casting out demons is more important than Scripture or worship and liturgy in casting out demons | .42 | .07 |
| Q45 | I have noticed that a demonized person who has a strong relationship with Christ and who understands Biblical truths requires less preparation before casting out his or her demons | -.16 | .09 |
| Q46 | I have noticed a connection between demons returning and a lack of participation in a faith community/church; specifically worship attendance, holy music, Bible study, and holy living (obedience) | -.49 | .10 |
| Q47 | I believe that any mature Christian can command | -1.01 | .13 |

| | | | |
|-----|--|-----|-----|
| Q48 | demons in Jesus' name God calls and gives spiritual gifts to some believers to function as ones who cast out demons on behalf of the church | .25 | .07 |
| Q49 | The church should confirm and commission or ordain those who cast out demons | .62 | .07 |
| Q50 | The application of biblical truths is more important than worship and liturgy or the Holy Spirit's work in casting out demons. | .76 | .07 |

Figure 2. Results for Items 38-50 Along the Psychometric Ruler



The results of the analysis of items 38-50 are presented in Figure 1. The interpretation of the map is the same as that presented in Analysis #1 (above). With the present map, results indicate that nearly every exorcist in the sample relies on the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as their strength and power to cast out demons (Q42). The second most common responses were items Q41 which reads "Before I cast out demons, I seek to remove their reason for being there through renouncing or confessing past sin" and Q47 "I believe that any mature Christian can command demons in Jesus' name". By far the most difficult item for the exorcists to endorse was Q40, "Baptism, communion, worship, and liturgy are more important than scripture or the work of the Holy Spirit in casting out demons". The placement of the remaining items along the linear continuum illustrates the extent to which this sample of exorcists endorses each item.

Interview Findings

Interviews with the exorcists revealed a great deal of qualitative information, including a description of the exorcism process. Some notable findings of the interviews are presented in this section.

To begin, 11 interviewees stressed the importance of forgiving other people as a major key to deliverance. The exorcists believed unforgiveness and bitterness were extremely common causes for demonization. Twelve interviewees discussed the importance of binding and loosing. These interviewees based this on two passages: what you bind/loose on earth will be bound/loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:19), as well as loosing Lazarus from his grave clothes (John 11:44). Binding was also done to prevent harm or forbidden manifestations from Satan during the procedure. One

interviewee pointed out that “you do not need to bind a person that is already bound, you just loose them”.

All 15 interviewees mentioned casting out demons in Jesus’ name. Three of the interviewees specifically mentioned that they instruct the person receiving the deliverance ministry to verbally cast out demons in Jesus’ name as well. One interviewee said “You may confess your sin, repent of it, think it is gone, but unless you cast out those spirits that you opened your door to, you’re always going to be vulnerable to a possible return attack”. Fourteen interviewees said they specifically use the phrase “come out” during an exorcism.

Several interviewees mentioned the importance of discovering the history of the illness. One interviewee said “You need to find out if they’ve had any involvement with the occult, religious background sometimes, error and deception, that’s an open door”. Ten of the interviewees discussed the importance of confession and repentance, with regard to both salvation in Christ and renunciation of certain past thoughts, behaviors or occult practices.

Seven interviewees discussed the concept of legal grounds. The exorcists mentioned legal grounds for demonic attack including generational sin (sins committed by a caretaker, parent, guardian, etc.), persistent or habitual sins, sins that are particularly traumatic, rebellious behavior (linked to original sin), unforgiveness, occult practices, and curses.

All 15 exorcists mentioned commanding demons to never return to the person. Many of the exorcists mentioned casting out demons to a specific place. Three interviewees said while some exorcists command demons to go to the pit or the abyss, they instead send them to Jesus so that He can do with them what He

wants. Six interviewees specifically mentioned sending demons to Jesus' feet. One interviewee said this is because cultists know that exorcists send demons to the pit, so during indoctrination the cultist creates an internal phenomenological pit for the demon to obey the letter of the law, yet stay within the person.

For the most part, most Christian exorcists today do not use blessed items. The interviewees confirmed only occasional use. Three interviewees mentioned using oil only when led by the Holy Spirit to do so. However, most exorcists ask God to send holy angels to assist during the exorcism. The angels can assist in binding the demon and escorting it to Christ.

There was a consistent belief among the exorcists that deliverance cannot be maintained if one is not a Christian. Interviewees mentioned turning one's back on Christ has serious repercussions. To prevent demons from returning, four interviewees said they often teach demonized persons to claim authority in Christ to rebuke demons. Three interviewees stressed the importance of prayers and the filling of the Holy Spirit to forbid demons from manifesting and returning. Five interviewees mentioned the protection of the deliverance minister and laying down rules through a protection prayer before sessions begin for all involved. Two interviewees specifically mentioned that deliverance cannot be maintained for non-believers.

The beginning and ending prayers are important where deliverance ministers pronounce blessings on people in the place of spiritual vacuums. One interviewee said "Rejection leaves a hole in the person's soul that humans tend to fill with what the world has to offer". When a session is finished, the exorcist asks the Holy Spirit to refill with good things every place that has been vacated. Follow-up with

demonized persons is critical as well. Although follow-up is not always possible, most every exorcist encourages the demonized to attend a local church, establish an accountability partner/group, and otherwise continue to study the Word and improve upon one's walk with Christ.

With regard to what specifically exorcists need to do with regard to personal preparation, several interviewees discussed the importance of fasting and being patient and humble. One interviewee said "Satan has no equipment to fight humility". Additionally, exorcists mentioned Luke 10:17-18, where the seventy returned after having successfully cast out demons and told Jesus "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name!", and Jesus responded by saying "Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven". Three interviewees stressed that the basis for deliverance ministry is God's love, real genuine love that demon's cannot understand. Eight exorcists specifically connected removing demons to discipleship and said Christian exorcism is all about making disciples. One person said "Teach people relevant Scripture to their problem area. This is sanctification".

Figure 3 presents a flow chart of the exorcism process. Certain ideas and practices that were predominant among the Christian exorcists are presented under the "Standard" heading. Ideas and practices that often varied among individuals or were not practiced quite as often are presented under the "Varied" heading.

Figure 3. Flow Chart of Exorcism Process.

| Prerequisite | Diagnosis | Preparation | Removal | Follow-Up |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| Standard | Standard | Standard | Standard | Standard |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accept/Reaffirm Jesus - Receive the Holy Spirit - Believers are praying for the person to be free - Person wants to be free | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-diagnosed - Discerned in counseling - Discovery possible causes of demonization from a checklist - Physical or other unnatural manifestations - Ask history of the illness or problem - Discover generational sins - Use spiritual gifts of knowledge & discernment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teach applicable Scripture - Warning of possible return - Repent sin (confess and change behavior) - Remove legal reason for demonic presence such as unhealed trauma, idolatry, generational/habitual sins - Renounce curses - Renounce any idolatry (like occult) - Practice Christian disciplines - Prayer of protection and setting rules - Use of spiritual gifts of knowledge & discernment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rely on Spirit's leadership - Ask permission to test possibility - Ask, spirit of (function), are you there? - In Jesus' name, cast our demon - Remove further discovered legal reasons - Bind up manifestations - Discover if multiple demons present - The person consents with his/her whole being - Person shares thoughts and feelings - Explain a degree (not total) deliverance - Send demon to Jesus - Fill void left with blessing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage joining a faith community/worship regularly - Have accountability group/partner - Daily prayer and reading of Scripture - Listen to music with holy lyrics |
| Varied | Varied | Varied | Varied | Varied |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speaks in tongues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rely solely on discernment - Rely solely on knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have the person fast - Have the exorcist fast | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Serve communion - Bind demons to top demon - Allow manifestations - Send demon to specific place - Find out demon's name - Use blessed items - Lay on hands - Person and/or exorcist commands demon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Link sessions |

Discussion

Results indicate that God has believers serving as exorcists throughout North America. In particular, results indicate that believers within all major denominations and many non-denominations serve as exorcists. Although denominational preferences may vary, there are no major differences in the way exorcism is practiced across denominational lines. Christian exorcists from all denominations seldom use consent forms, communion or blessed items when doing an exorcism. Instead, they primarily use Jesus' name to command demons (Col. 3:17) and rely heavily on the Holy Spirit's gifts of discerning spirits, words of knowledge, wisdom, insights, and healings. Christian exorcists consistently teach Scripture to demonized persons. For the most part, today's Christian exorcists are

doing what Jesus and the early church did with the exception of the use of exorcism in relation to baptism. Further, based on the three models of church (Word, Sacramental, and Spirit), exorcists tend to function mainly with some combination of the Word and Spirit models.

The sample of exorcists believes exorcism is only for believing, practicing Christians, and only those who believe in Jesus have the authority to successfully cast out demons. This is because of Jesus' sinless life, death on the cross, and resurrection which claimed victory over Satan and evil spirits. The exorcists also believe that any mature Christian has the authority to cast out demons and can perform exorcisms on people, places, or things that are believed to be possessed or otherwise influenced by demons.

The topic of exorcism is very controversial and many movies have created a cultural fear of exorcism. In most movies, demons are seen as uncompromising predators who overcome a person and exorcists fight with all their might to release the evil spirit from the demonized person. Needless to say, for the most part this image of an exorcism is significantly dramatized. Most Christian exorcisms happen without incident, as demons must surrender to commands in Jesus' name. Jesus said "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18) so believers who are "in Christ" also have authority over demons (Luke 10:18-19). To further evidence the point, it is important to remember that Satan is not on the same level as Christ. Satan and his demons are created beings. Satan, the most powerful of the evil spirits, is no contest for Christ. In fact, in Revelation 12:7 it is Michael the Archangel who is leading the battle against Satan and defeats his demonic army. It

could be argued that Michael is more powerful than Satan, and is perhaps his best example of a counterpart.

Another interesting point made by interviewees was how the exorcism ministry is regularly attacked by evil spirits trying to prevent deliverances. 1 Tim 4:1 reads “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons”. As such, it is possible that the enemy tries to make the notion of exorcism appear to be an extreme and unpopular method of deliverance that only sometimes produces positive results, so as to preserve his foothold on those demonized. Further, the notion that only the most righteous of individuals, or that only select individuals, can perform an exorcism or cast out evil spirits is another lie from the enemy that he uses to maintain his foothold in the world. This sample of exorcists believes any mature Christian can cast out demons when invoking Jesus’ name. Interestingly, most exorcists can cite examples of how individuals who were previously demonized can have a deeper walk with God as a result of the experience. Romans 8:28 essentially states that all things work together for God. It is possible that many come to know Christ as a result of demonic attack and subsequent Christian deliverance ministry.

Implications

This study shows that although exorcism is not recognized by many in the church, it is going on much more than people think across denominational lines. Not only is exorcism a common practice, this study shows the number of commonalities among practitioners indicates that it is a fairly well-developed art. Christian exorcists in North America do have much in common in their practice.

This study also shows that exorcism is a valid ministry and an extension of the ministry of Jesus. The results of this study give credence to commissioning or ordaining those believers who have this calling and gifting. The post-Apostolic church has an order of exorcists. God calls exorcists. If Christians believe that demonic activity is only going to increase as we approach the End Days (1 Tim 4:1), is now the time for the church to confirm the ministry of exorcism with such an order?

Another major implication of this work is that worldview matters. Because the bible presents so many examples of spiritual warfare, one might argue that Christians simply cannot afford to have a worldview that rules out the supernatural. Such views could have devastating consequences and prevent believers from maximizing “good fruits” (John 15) on earth or otherwise serving God to their fullest capacity.

Limitations

This study poses several significant limitations and challenges. Due to the controversial nature of demonic attacks against Christians and non-believers and a cultural fear of exorcism, the findings of this study may or may not be heard. Additionally, if one believes there are indeed evil spirits working against the kingdom of God, a work of this nature may be very susceptible to extreme scrutiny, or perhaps even muted, by the enemy. From a social scientific perspective, this study is limited by not knowing how many Christian exorcists serve in North America. Also, most of the subjects were Protestant or Pentecostal/Charismatic. The generalizability of this study depends on whether the obtained sample

represents that of the larger population of exorcists in North America. Of course, this information remains almost impossible to know at the present time.

Applications to Ministry

Because many Christians across denominational lines are already practicing exorcisms, an office of exorcist could be created in some churches where those called and knowledgeable would be commissioned to teach, train, and conduct exorcisms. Currently, demonized persons may have some difficulty finding a Christian to provide a deliverance ministry, as the controversial topic is often a mystery even for believers. A greater acknowledgement of exorcisms and services to assist those who are demonized could provide a great benefit to ministry. Further, seminary curriculum may wish to include a class on Christian exorcism. Such courses could dispel popular culture myths and otherwise teach ministers how to perform an exorcism on demonized persons, places, and things. Finally, pastoral counseling classes could, at the very least, mention the possibility of demonization and how to recognize and handle the situation without traumatizing the person. Instead of pretending spiritual sicknesses are always psychological in nature, considering the possibility of demonization and offering deliverance ministry may potentially benefit a number of demonized persons.

Conclusions

The present study investigated survey results obtained from 170 Christian exorcists, and interview findings from 15 Christian exorcists who were selected at

random. For the most part, Christian exorcists use similar methods of exorcism, despite differing denominational preferences. Today's Christian exorcists are generally doing what Jesus and the early church did with the exception of connecting exorcism with baptism. Christian exorcists tend to use a combination of the Word, Sacramental, and Spirit models. All Christian exorcists command demons to leave in Jesus' name; rarely are water, oil, crucifixes, and other objects used, unless otherwise directed by the Holy Spirit. Unlike popular culture and television depictions of exorcisms, most Christian exorcisms do not involve an intense battle with the devil or other evil spirits. Instead, demons typically obey the command of the exorcist when Jesus' name is used. Further, popular culture also leads many to believe that only the most pious individuals can perform exorcisms, and even then there are intense struggles. These Christian exorcists believe any believer in Christ has the authority to cast out demons, and any mature Christian can perform an exorcism and cast out spirits from people, places, and things.

The authors contend that this study is among the first of its kind to empirically investigate the practice of Christian exorcism in North America. The authors believe this work will be of particular value to Christian ministers, church leaders, and others who want to learn more about exorcisms and how they are practiced today. Furthermore, this work may be of particular value for both persons seeking deliverance from demonization and those seeking to cast out demons.

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