

THE DEVIL & EXCORCISM BY FR. ELIAS VELLA ofm. conv.

Introduction

It has become the fashion nowadays to talk about the devil. Some do this to deny his existence. There are amongst them some theologians like HAAG, KASPER, FRANZONI and others, who, subsequent to the Vatican Council, placed in doubt the 2000-years-old belief of the Church.

Then, there are those who talk about him with a certain sense of fear, convinced in their belief that the devil exists everywhere and see his hand in all things, blaming him for all that happens to them declaring him to have had a hand in their misfortunes.

There are also those who speak about the devil with a certain amount of enthusiasm to a point where they are prepared to adore him and work hand-in-hand with him to establish his reign on earth. These are the Satanists.

Finally, there are those who prefer to ignore him, not only because they are not interested in the subject but also because they feel that topics of this nature belonged to the middle ages rather than the world of to-day - the age of space-travel and computers.

I do not wish to place myself in any of these categories. In this book, I will only try and give a brief outline and an explanation of the teaching of the Church regarding its doctrine on the devil, as given in the Holy Scripture and in the Magisterium of the Church.

This would be Part I of the book.

In the second part, we then discuss those experiences related to the devil amongst us, with particular reference to exorcism and to persons possessed by the devil.

1

The Devil Exists

'Then there was war in heaven; Michael and the angels under his command fought the Dragon and his hosts of fallen angels. And the Dragon lost the battle and was forced from heaven. This Great Dragon - the ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, the one deceiving the whole world - was thrown down on to the earth with all his army.

Then I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens, 'It has happened at last! God's salvation and the power and the rule, and the authority of his Christ are finally here!'" (Revelations 12: 7-10)

Also if the scholars of to-day prefer to apply this text rather for the present and the future, this does not mean we cannot apply it also for the past - as correctly stated by ZHRINGER - more so when this can be confirmed by other texts. (See Luke 10:18; John 8:44; 2 Pi 2:4).

We are not sure we know the real reason for the downfall of Lucifer. It was probably due to pride which incited those angels to rebel against God, wishing themselves His equal. Some of the Holy Fathers {St. Justin, Tertullian, St. Cyprian, St. Irenaeus, St. Gregory of Nissa} think

that they became jealous of Man whom they hated for having been created in God's image. Some others think that the rebellion arose exactly because they became jealous and generated hate within themselves when the WORD decided to become human. The devils' rebellion brought with it eternal damnation (*Matth. 25:41*)

ORIGIN thought that there would be a time when the devil would be released from hell; his idea, however, was condemned by the Synod of Constantinople in the year 543.

The devil is pure hate. He prefers to stick to his pride rather than humble himself before God.

Many of the theologians agree that their number is great, countable in thousands, running, perhaps into millions. However they are unable to give exact figures.

We do not know whether there exists amongst them a hierarchy, although all scholars think that there probably is such a thing because of the fact that they do not have an equal level of intelligence and because they possess different abilities. True enough, they do not all react in the same manner and not all of them attack in the same way. There is one thing that unites them: it is their hate against God and Man. As for the rest, they are divided within themselves and hate each other.

The most frequent names we find for the devil in the New Testament are: EVIL SPIRIT (76 times), DEMON (63 times) SATAN and DEVIL (36 times each).

The Devil's existence

Human intelligence cannot prove the devil's existence or otherwise. Those who declare his **inexistence** simply because science cannot prove he exists offer but a superficial argument. Science approves that which it can see. All it can say in this matter is: 'this is not a question that can be answered through science'.

The devil's existence can only be proved through Revelation. It is God who told us, through the Holy Scripture, that the devil exists. And God cannot deceive us. To believe is not to agree or to disagree. One believes because God revealed it to us. During these 2000 years of Christianity, all the Holy Fathers and Theologians (except some of our times) have always asserted the existence of the devil. To declare otherwise will necessitate the tearing up of several pages from the Holy Scripture!

Not many texts about the devil are found in the Old Testament. That Moses did not speak of him to the Jews was intentional on his part because, had he done so, they would surely have made of him another god. One must not forget that the Jews were very superstitious and so they could have taken up, possibly, **satanic** worship.

It is in the book of JOB where we find an interesting account of the devil's attempt to alienate man from God (*Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7*). Another interesting text is also to be found in **ZECHARIAH** 2-3:1-2: *Then the Angel showed me (in my vision) Joshua the High Priest standing before the Angel of the Lord: and Satan was there too, at the Angel's right hand, accusing Joshua of many things. And the Lord said to Satan, "I reject your accusations, Satan."*

In the New Testament the devil is mentioned about 300 times, thus showing that our Lord Jesus Christ was completely victorious over him.

Jesus spoke of the devil several times, warning us against him and to guard ourselves from him, even though he has been defeated and destroyed (see *Matthew 4:1-11; 5:37; 6:13; 13:19 and 39; Luke 22:53; 8:12; John 16:11* etc.)

Jesus dwelt amongst us for the express purpose of breaking the satanic kingdom (*1 John 3:8*). He came on earth to establish His Reign in place of that of the devil (See *Matthew 3:2; John 3:5; Romans 14:17*).

Christ's total victory over Satan was principally and finally sealed through his death for us (*John 12:31-32; see 14:30*).

"And in dying removed the power of the devil who had the power of death" (Hebrews 2:14).

The very **casting-off** of the devil from those who came to him to be freed from being possessed by God's greatest enemy is a clear proof of Christ's triumph over him, nullifying his power. (*Matthew 12:28; Luke 11:20; Mark 3:27; Luke 10:18*).

The same devil recognizes Jesus as the Messiah (*Mark 1:24 and 34; Luke 4:34*). Jesus then passed on this power to the Apostles and his disciples (see *Matthew 10:1; Mark 6:7; Luke 9:1*) so that even before these, the devil must bow his head (*Mark 7:22; 9: 38-39*).

It is a fact: The devil has been defeated; but his wrath is, none the less as before and he thus continues in his efforts to destroy man. "*Be careful - watch out for attacks from Satan, your great enemy. He prowls like a hungry, roaring lion, looking for some victim to tear apart. Stand firm when he attacks...*" (1 Peter 5:8-9).

The Scripture is more than clear. The devil's existence is more than true!

The Church's Teaching

Throughout the years, the Church has consistently maintained its stance that the devil really exists. It is indeed difficult to find any - not even one - amongst the Holy Fathers who had nothing to say regarding the devil.

On its part, the Church always taught the doctrine of the devil's existence and fought against those who put him on a pedestal with the aim of elevating him in a position making him equal to God (e.g. the sect known as **Manicheians**).

We take special note that in the Second Vatican Council the devil is mentioned 18 times (17 times in the texts and once in one of the notes); these are: one text in the document regarding the Liturgy (Sac. *Concilium*); seven texts in the Constitution regarding the Church (*Lumen Gentium*); one text in the Declaration regarding the Freedom of Religion (*Dignitatis Humanae*); four texts in the Decree regarding the Missions (*Ad Gentes*) and five texts in the Constitution of the Church in the world of to-day (*Gaudium et Spes*).

We add to this the constant teachings of Pope Paul VI and those of John Paul II, some of whose teaching is motivated by the drift of certain theologians of modern times who are putting the devil's existence in doubt.

Mistaken Assertions

C. Balducci- one of the **greatest** exponents of **demonology** of to-day - declares that it is easier to prove the existence of the devil from the texts of the Scripture and from the teaching of the Church itself than to prove the existence of the Holy Spirit; because the former are more abundant.

And yet, in our days, there has cropped up some theologians who are putting this matter in doubt. Amongst these, there are: **Herbert Haag**, Professor at the University of **Tubingen**, **B.I/an Jersel**, **A.R. Bastiaensen**, **J. Quintan**, **P. Schoonenberg**, **Henry Ansgar Kelly**, **Walter Kasper**, all the authors who contributed to the Review *Concilium n.3* of 1975 and others.

These theologians have felt the need to discuss the question of the devil's existence because of the exaggerated assertions made over the centuries, whereby claims have been made (and are still being made) that the devil's hand is seen everywhere and in all things.

It is to be admitted that such **exaggerations** did exist and it is therefore important for us to make a wider use - as we declare later on - of the medical sciences (psychiatry and parapsychology) so that those cases classified under these headings are not attributed to the supernatural.

But to deny the devil's existence in the possessed or in other circumstances does not logically lead one to declare that the devil does not exist. This is a totally different matter.

These theologians declare that EVIL is the Devil. This constitutes confused thinking: the Devil is evil, but we go over the limit when we declare that the devil does not exist as a being but that it is the evil which is all around us which we call the Devil. These theologians admit that in the Scripture, especially in the New Testament, there are various (in fact many) texts which admit the existence of the devil as a being. None of the Synods doubted this; and St. Paul - and to this **HAAG** agrees - who often spoke of the devil, could not have possibly ever thought that the devil did not actually exist. Not only that, but **KERTELGE** (another theologian who places in doubt the devil's existence) went on to say that Jesus himself spoke of the devil as if he really did exist.

Since this is so, how can we have any doubts? Haag bases his assertion on a text from St. Paul which says: "don't give the devil a foothold" (Eph.: 4:27) which he goes on to interpret as "do not permit yourselves to believe in him".

This is an arbitrary conclusion!

The Prevailing Influence

These theologians declare that the Synods suffered from the cultural influence which prevailed at the time they were convened. In a similar manner, Jesus - who lived in a specified period - had no interest in going contrary to the culture then prevailing; since the Jewish culture admitted of and believed in the existence of the devil, Jesus likewise taught and preached without thinking of going against or correcting this mentality.

But how can we ever believe that the Man "who is full of loving forgiveness and truth" (John 1:24), "the Way, yes, and the Truth and the Life" (John 14:6), "the One who is the True Light who arrived to shine on everyone coming into the world" (John 1:9) was going to let his listeners remain in error without correcting them (as He did on so many other occasions) or to retain a mistaken belief on a religious truth?

Adjustments are made only to satisfy certain instances when some scientific retelling becomes obviously necessary. In St. Matthew for example it is said that the Father gives his sunlight to the just and the evil ones, for *the sun goes up* for the two. The sun does *not go up*. This is a scientific matter which does not personally involve Jesus because - as St. Augustine declares - Jesus wanted to change his listeners into good religious people and not into scientists or mathematicians.

But this adaptation cannot be applied when the subject matter concerns a religious truth or belief, such as the existence of the devil.

The Possessed in the Gospels

In the Gospels we find many instances where Jesus cast out the devil from people. Can these cases be ascribed to the sciences: medicine, psychiatry and parapsychology?

Of this, we shall speak later on. Let us say for now that Jesus came on earth to destroy the work of the devil (1 John: 3:8). We can never imagine how Jesus could have spoken to the devil in the ones possessed if he did not really exist. How can we ever imagine that Jesus could deceive us in such a manner? It ought to be borne in mind that Jesus even corrected some superstitious beliefs of lesser importance than that of the devil's existence, such as, for example when he spoke so clearly on the outward appearance in the observance of the law by the Scribes and the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (see *Matthew 15:1-14; 22:18-23; 1-33; Mark 7: 1-13; 12:38; Luke 11:38; 12:1; 13:14:17; 16: 15-20:46,47*).

The same Jesus spoke clearly when he banished the idea the Jews had that an ailment was the result of a personal sin committed by the individual. He would have had to speak much more strongly if He had to correct the erroneous religious belief they had regarding the devil, had it been so. On the contrary, He was very clear that He was casting out the devil from the possessed in the name of God (see *Matthew 1: 22-32; Mark 3: 20-30; Luke 11: 14-26*).

In the Gospels there are many instances where Jesus, besides healing the sick also cast out the devil from persons.

How can we distinguish between a simple healing or another which is psychiatric? The following are some instances where Jesus cast out the devil: *Matthew 8:16-32; 9:33; 10:1-8; 12:24,26,27; 17:18-19; Mark 1: 25,26,34,39; 3: 22-23; 5:8,10,12,13; 6:13; 7:26,29,30; 9:18,25,26,28; 16:9-17; Luke 4:35,36; 8:29-30; 9:40; 11:14-20; 13:32; Acts 8:7; 16:18; 19:12*.

When Jesus bestowed upon the Apostles and his disciples the power to cast out the devil, He distinguished between *healing the sick* and *casting out the devil* (see *Matthew 10:8; Mark 6:13; 16:17-18; Acts 8:7-8; 19:12*).

However, we shall speak in greater detail on the subject of exorcism and of those possessed by the devil further on in this book.

No Definition of the Church!

Some theologians are satisfied by the fact that the Church has never classified the devil's existence as dogma.

That the Church has not done so, is true. On the other hand, it should be noted that the Church has refrained from so doing because there is no doubt on this matter; it is simply because it has not found it necessary to do so because this belief has always been universally held by all - the Bible, the Holy Fathers and the **Magisterium** of the Church. What need was there for this to be defined as dogma? Although the Church has not made a direct definition regarding this matter, various Church Councils, such as the *Fourth Lateran Council* (in the decree **Firmiter**) the *Councils of Florence*, of *Trent* and *First Vatican Council* made mention of the devil thus making it an indirect definition. As we said, the devil is mentioned many times in the *Second Vatican Council* also.

To say, therefore, that the Church has never declared the devil's existence a truth, is in itself an empty argument - an insinuation that the Church could have had, at some time or another, some doubt regarding his existence.

2 **The Devil's Presence**

*"Last of all I want to remind you that your strength must come from the Lord's mighty power within you. Put on all of God's armour so that you will be able to stand safe against the strategies and tricks of Satan. For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood • but against persons without bodies - the evil rulers of the unseen world, those mighty **satanic** beings and great evil princes of darkness who rule this world; and against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world." (Eph. 6: 10-12).*

"Be careful - watch out for attacks from Satan, your great enemy. He prowls around like a hungry, roaring lion, looking for some victim to tear apart. Stand firm when he attacks. Trust the Lord...." (1 Pt. 5:8-9).

"It is not only a failing, but an action, a living spiritual being who is ruined and seeks to ruin. A terrible reality, mysterious and frightening." (Paul VI - 15.11.72).

This shows that the devil is always with us, continuously seeking to hamper us and to distance us from God. This he does on account of his hate and his consistent jealousy of God.

The Temptation

This may be said to be the *ordinary activity of the devil*. He pushes us into temptation and deceives us into sinning. His scope is to distance us from that which is good and leads into evil. There is no doubt that not every temptation emanates from him: we could be our own tempters, through our own nature, our character and our temperament, our formation and our environment, our families, our education and our friends, through different situations and our mentality and through other factors.

Although the devil, in several instances, is not directly the instigator of the temptation, he seizes however, every opportunity to profit from the state in which we find ourselves and pushes us into chaos.

The Lord permits temptations - both the ones generated by the evil one and by those which we create ourselves - for it is through these that Christians find strength; it is through prayers that they confirm their allegiance to God, advance in the spiritual ways through the merits acquired as a result.

This is where the battle is formed: we shall either lean towards the Spirit of the Lord or give

ears to the call of the devil. That is why we are warned in the Scripture (1 Peter 5: 8-9) to remain alert.

The devil tempts each one of us (perhaps the good ones more than the others who are already in his grasp). It is necessary for us not to leave any windows open through which he is able to reach us. These could be:

refusal to heed the call of the Lord, the way we silence our conscience, step by step; religious indifference, and, sometimes, in the way we make fun of religion, the Church and its ministers; when we distance ourselves from the sacraments; lack of praying and other things. All these give the devil an opening through which he can get at us.

Let us recall St. Augustine's words on this: *'The devil can bark but he is unable to bite us, as long as we do not, of our own volition, go near him and allow ourselves to be bitten!'*

It is not easy to discover whether the temptation starts from within us or from the devil. It would possibly originate from him when it comes to us when we least expect it, all of a sudden and in a violent manner.

But of this we can never be certain.

In the end, it is unimportant for us to know the source of the temptation as long as we do not go along with it.

Pope Paul VI (15.11.72) also referred to a temptation which is termed "collective". This is when the devil confuses politicians, disrupts the economy of a country and fosters hatred among men to generate wars and other troubles. It is very difficult, here, to declare where the devil really stands, although this is not the case with regard to certain dictators, such as Hitler, Stalin, Saddam, etc. During Hitler's days the slogan was: *In the next decade it will be: Christ is great but Hitler is greater!*"

There is no doubt - such statements are **satanic**.

Extraordinary activities

The devil uses every method at his disposal to tempt man as long as he sees him worried and mixed up within himself. He does it all so that in the end, man, in his **perturbance** distances himself from God. Besides these ordinary activities (temptation) he also adopts extraordinary tactics which can be grouped under three headings. These are: *localised occurrences, personal troubles and diabolic possessions*.

Falling under the first group are those cases (some actual, others imagined) where the devil directs his attacks either against the property or the animals or the fields of an individual, thereby disturbing the person. We hear of haunted houses in which people have a sense of oppression and are constantly persecuted. Sometimes, we come upon instances where a tree suddenly wilts and dies or where animals sicken and wither away. All these cases fall under the first category - occurrences where nature seems to have been impeded and hampered in its natural course by some inexplicable force.

S. Conti, a **parapsychologist**, explains that these localised infestations must not be confused with the other phenomenon caused by a 'poltergeist' - a German name for a noisy, **mischievous** and often humorous spirit. This is a case where we have a presence of a spirit, often a young one, who follows a person, even though this person changes his place of living. In the case of a local infestation, the phenomenon is confined to the same locality. To these we may add several instances where trees, fields, animals, etc., are affected, resulting in fear, upsets and anxieties. To treat such cases, we have to call in the psychiatrist or the parapsychologist and seek advice from that source.

It will be a mistake to assume that the devil is at work in every case of this nature. As stated earlier, the devil does avail himself of every opportunity to profit by certain situations; but it is a fact he is not involved in the majority of cases. However, there is nothing contrary in believing that in several instances he takes a hand and acts direct. We should be neither sectarian and declare that the devil is not concerned nor yet **superficially** assert that he is at the back of every case. I will try and give at a later stage, some more clear indications how these cases are dealt with.

Personal Disturbances

Personal disturbances - *infestations* - are those events created by the devil and directed

against an individual for the purpose of scaring him off and stopping him from continuing the activity in which he happens to be engaged. Victims of sorcery also fall under this category. The type of trouble created by the devil does not impair the victim's intelligence nor yet restrain his liberty and his intelligence; the victim does not become mentally conditioned, not radically at least.

It is worth remembering that since the devil himself is a created being, as such, his power to damage a person is limited in its capacity; it follows, therefore, that in all the things he does to hurt man, he remains subject to the will of God who only permits his actions so that God's glory becomes greater and the devil's failures and weaknesses become all the more apparent. When the victim puts up, with all the troubles fomented against his trust in God, man always wins, God is glorified and the devil humiliated.

St. Paul tells us that God never permits that we are tempted beyond our powers of endurance. {1 Cor. 10:13} "Had the devil been able to act the way he wants to, - *St. Augustine* declares - there would not be one single human being left on the surface of this earth". *St. Bonaventure* continues to state: 'The devil's hatred is so intense, he would continually seek to engulf us, had it not been for God's protection over us".)

It is necessary for this to be stated so that we realize that man has not been cast into a sea of turmoil without the possibility of salvation.

Naturally, the good ones are the devil's first targets. They often find themselves in temptations which confront them when least expected - besieged by impure fantasies, victims of anger and deep depression unto despair, some even experiencing, at times, foul smells and noises and hear foul and blasphemous words in their ears. The devil does his best to stop the good from the pursuance of their righteousness.

Some of the saints had to face great troubles, instigated by the evil one; they had to endure physical hardships and torments, such as, their faces slapped, their body scratched, deprivation of sleep and other torments. They had to put up with experiences classified as phenomenal - *levitation* (of self or other objects) *telekinesis* (movement of a body distant from them which remain unexplained).

It is a fact - and this should not be forgotten - that these phenomena can be explained through psychiatry or parapsychology; however, we must not exclude the fact that in certain instances, these can be diabolically created for the purpose of tripping up a holy person.

Let us mention but a few of the saints who were thus severely tempted: *St. Anthony the Abbot* who lived in the desert; and, more recently, *St. Catherine of Siena* (1347-1380), *St. Francis Xavier* (1506-1552), *St. Tereza d'Avila* (1515-1582), *St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi* (1566-1607), *St. John M. Vianney* (1786-1859), *St. John Bosco* (1815-1888) and *St. Gemma Galgani* (1878-1903).

It is interesting to note that *St. Gemma* was a victim of a diabolical possession.

Other persons who are often hindered and tormented by the devil are the exorcists (obviously: their labour is directed against him and against those involved in witchcraft).

There is more to be said about these, although the majority of cases can be solved through psychiatric or *parapsychological* treatment.

The Diabolical Possession

Topping the list of *Extraordinary Activities*, and the one which is the gravest and the most serious of all is the Diabolical Possession. This is when the devil takes possession of the body, the mind and the will of an individual and makes him an instrument of his own.

For example, when *Saint Gemma* was under the devil's possession, she was violent, squirmed on the ground in fits, aggressive when she met people and destroyed all venerated objects, spitting at the crucifix and the image of the Mother of God; on one occasion, she grabbed her confessor's rosary beads and tore them apart.

What happened to *Saint Gemma Galgani* goes to illustrate the fact how absolute the devil's possession of a person can be.

To-day, the word 'possession' has become a part of the theological vocabulary. The new Canon Law of the Church speaks of 'obsessions' (Canon 1172) whilst in the document issued by the Congregation for the Safeguarding of the Faith (29.09.85) reference is made to *diabolical possession* referring, at the same time, to Canon 1172.

The person infested by the devil is said to be *possessed*, *bedeviled* or *demoniac* because

the person has become the devil's victim. Because the devil takes over the control of the intellect and the will of the individual at certain times, the afflicted person is, therefore, not morally held to blame for his actions, even though at times, these happen to be virulent and most abhorrent. It must not be forgotten that the devil's presence is that of a spirit, free of space, time and date. Spirits are not tied down by matter, weight, measure, color, smell and sounds; they do not become exhausted and they require no rest; they have no need for food and drink, they do not have to reproduce, suffer no disease and consequent extinction.

This means they possess possibilities so great, they are inconceivable to us. For example, a person can be possessed by a number of devils whilst the same devil is able to possess others at one and the same time.

The Possession: does it really exist?

"Possession" is not a sin but a physical and moral disturbance permitted by God - although this is a rare occurrence - for a scope and for reasons which are inexplicable to us.

Man, therefore is unable to impede it.

It is a fact, when God permits it to happen; it is for His glorification and for man's spiritual enhancement, humiliating the devil in the process.

Then, there are instances where a person, through his actions and his behaviour invites the devil to take him under his possession. The following can all lead to such a possession: *violence, hatred, drug addiction, drunkenness, prostitution, etc.* This does not mean that a person steeped in any of these vices is automatically possessed (if not in its broad interpretation) by the devil. However, these vices are considered as openings through which the devil is enabled to gain access.

In the Gospels we find various references to the Possessed; (see *Matthew 4:24; 8:16; Mark 1:32-34; 1-39; 6:12-13; Luke 4:40-41; 6:17-18; 7-21; 10:17*).

We then find episodes of persons possessed by the devil:

- The dumb with a demon inside him (see *Matthew 9:32-33*)
- ~ The possessed who was blind and dumb (of which case, the Pharisees accused Jesus he was casting out the devil with the help of Beelzebub: see *Matthew 12:22-32; Mark 3:20-30; Luke 11:14-26*)
- The case of Mary Magdalene from whom Jesus cast out seven demons (see *Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2*)
- The man possessed by a demon from **Capharnaum** (see *Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37*)

- The possessed from **Gerasa** (see *Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-29*)
- The daughter of the woman from Canaan (see *Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30*)
- The boy who was suffering from a mental disorder or epilepsy (see *Matthew 17:14-20; Mark 9:13-28; Luke 9:37-43*)

But, are these cases of actual diabolical possession or instances which could be defined by psychiatry? Some theologians, in fact, prefer to classify these sufferers as neurotics and psychopaths, persons who are psychologically abnormal and not possessed.

There is no doubt that we have a lot and a lot to learn from psychiatry; and one will be far too superficial to hastily judge a person "possessed" when in fact that person may happen to be mentally sick. However, it should be noted that psychiatry does not always provide a ready answer for all the phenomena displayed by a person who is "possessed"; it only becomes superficial when and if psychiatry tries and provides an answer to those phenomena which exceed the limit of its competency.

It is certainly not the case where one may think that Jesus could have been deceived when he declared a person to be possessed when in fact the person was a victim of a psychiatric illness. Nor can we accept the theory of those who assert that Jesus simply adopted a stance which suited the culture and mentality prevailing at the time regarding the devil and the possessed. Such a reasoning only fits a thematic scientific argument and not a religious one.

The one who came to bring truth to the world (See John 18:36) would certainly not leave his listeners in such errors. After all, as stated already, Christ's specific mission on earth was to destroy the work of the devil (see 1 John 3:8; 12:31}'; since Jesus came to challenge the enemy direct, the possessed became more numerous than before the coming of the Messiah who came to cast out Satan (John 12:31).

We should also bear in mind that the devil, from time immemorial, tried to emulate God, seeking to gain glory. A possession for him is another form of 'incarnation'. This is the prince of deceit and father of lies; so he, himself, becomes a deceit and a lie. The fight which started between Jesus and the devil had to be extended to the Church. In fact, Jesus bequeathed his powers to cast out demons to his apostles and his disciples (see *Matthew 10: 1-8; Mark 3: 14-15; 6:7; Luke 9:1; 10: 17-20*) and then to those who believed in him (*Mark 16:17*). It would have been senseless to bequeath such powers knowing there was no reason for using them. In fact, this power was used by the Apostles and his disciples (see *Acts 5:14-16; 8:5-8; 16:16-18;19:11-16* which provide evidence of their use).

Why is a person possessed?

The first motive is to be found in the devil himself for he finds satisfaction in tempting and tormenting man, in leading him astray and to wreck havoc on him. This he does to vent his hate for Jesus and all that is sacred, using Man as a means of attaining his goal. In possessing man he finds satisfaction in showing his powers, his pique and his ire; the devil thinks that by so doing he earns the admiration of the others, feeding his pride and conceit; fuelling his hatred, urging him to possess man.

As already stated, it is often the case where man himself opens the way for this possession. It must be made amply clear that a 'possessed' person does not in any way mean that that person is a sinner for such a person is already in his grasp (the devil prefers a man sinning than possessed); the more a person is a sinner the more intimate his attachment to the devil becomes and because of this the possibility might arise whereby the devil finds in that person a suitable abode - such as Mary Magdalene who was, in all probability, a suitable subject before her conversion.

Ultimately, we ought to bear in mind that every possession by the devil takes place with the *permission of Jesus*. Had it been within his power, the devil would play havoc with man. But God does not permit such a thing and when it is permitted (and this but rarely) it is to illustrate the greatness and glory of God and his triumph over the devil.

It is stated once again that in itself a 'possession' is not a sin but only a physical disturbance. Sin itself is much more a **grievous** thing than a possession because sin makes of man a slave to the devil whilst 'in possession' man in no way is held culpable for any of the acts instigated by the devil.

How is the possessed recognised?

It is an undisputed fact. both in the mystical state as well as in possession, we experience phenomena which are identical to those we meet with in psychiatry and parapsychology.

If we disagree with those who systematically exclude the possibility of a possession, similarly we disagree with the others who, seeing something not previously encountered in their entrenched experience, **superficially** conclude that a person is possessed.

These two extremes have to be avoided.

It is difficult to reach quickly the conclusion whether a person is possessed or otherwise. For example, one of the signs can be a manifestation of hatred for anything which is sacred. We are not speaking of those who in their disbelief ridicule anything sacred to a point that they even become aggressive in the process; we are referring to those who normally believe in them, persons who are good in their heart but, at certain moments, when in prayers with others, become violent and aggressive towards the crucifix, the image of the Holy Mary and the saints, the holy water and the oils of unction.

In short, we are referring to those people whose personality changes completely.

Naturally, this is not a sure sign of possession but it is one which can initiate the test and investigation. When these manifestations diminish, one therefore excludes the possibility of possession.

Other criteria which prompt a more thorough investigation are instances when a person begins to speak and understand a language never studied or spoken before (particularly Latin); when the person knows of things distant from him or of subjects which are extremely

difficult or normally hidden from him; when he uses forces and strengths over and above his normal capacity.

And then, it is repeated once again, these manifestations do not completely add to proof. It remains that psychiatry and parapsychology cannot be excluded in deciding if a person is possessed or otherwise.

The Scientists' help

Because the possessed acts under the influence and under the power of a malign spirit who dominates the intellect, the will and the liberty of the person, it is therefore easy for the spirit to manifest in him the same symptoms and phenomena of a **schizophreniac**. In fact, those who are so mentally disturbed exhibit the same abnormal manifestations.

The difference is that, whereas in the mentally ill these manifestations point to the type of his affliction, in the possessed they are, generally, always connected to sacred matters and in despise of all things religious.

In many instances, the body of the possessed becomes very stiff and rigid; or else so completely limp as to lead one into thinking the person is dead. There are times when they shout and act in a most provocative manner, utter threats, blasphemies and sacrilegious words and commits foul deeds. Then the attitude changes and the person reacts with passive docility.

This happens mostly when the afflicted person asks to kiss the crucifix, to repeat the prayer for the casting out of the devil and calls the name of Jesus when asked to join in prayers.

There are cases where the strange actions of the diseased attract the attention of the **parapsychologist** who helps the exorcist to determine the nature of the affliction. One often meets instances where a person performs an act never done before, such as painting, playing of instruments, speaks in a language completely alien to him, recognises things never seen before, experiences personal **levitation** and moves objects without touching them, opens and closes windows and doors seemingly on their own accord whilst pictures fall from walls all by themselves.

Many of these cases can be solved through parapsychology; on the other hand, the possessed also shows these manifestations making it all the more difficult for the exorcist to make a complete and accurate discernment.

How do we finally reach a discernment?

The first thing we have to make clear is this: each and every case must be thoroughly examined independently and on its own merit. The signs exhibited, or the type of phenomena encountered, could well be the first steps to attract the attention of the exorcist. However, these, in themselves, do not lead him to reach the conclusion that the person is possessed.

For a just and proper discernment to be made, the psychiatrist and the parapsychologist have to work hand in hand with the exorcist.

One must not resort to the preternatural when it is possible to find natural explanation for that which occurs around him. It is both unrealistic and unsound to see the devil when he is not present, for in so doing we boost his ego rather than fight against him.

It is also to be noted that at times certain happenings we encounter in some individuals are neither of a psychic nor of a **Para psychological** nature but arise from a pathological state which troubles a sick person; this is where psychiatry helps. In some cases, certain phenomena occur with individuals whose natural attributes are more pronounced than in others, such as those who possess powers of telepathy or who possess a sixth sense or some other special ability.

This is said because it must be clearly understood that psychiatry and parapsychology are two sciences which are completely different from each other. The case under examination can be purely psychic, psychiatric or Para psychological or else a case of possession.

It is here that one must seek to determine, fairly and squarely and without prejudice, the nature of the case.

Generally speaking, one may conclude or prove, at least, that a person is possessed if the reactions shown are different from those which are exhibited and studied in **Para psychiatric**

and Para psychological cases.

In brief, the stage is reached where both the psychiatrist and the parapsychologist conclude that the case under investigation does not fall within their sphere because science is unable to provide an explanation with regard to some of the phenomena encountered.

We ought to note here that whereas psychiatry has rapidly advanced to a point where it is able to reach a definite conclusion, in many cases, parapsychology is still in its early stages and, because of this it has to remain silent rather than furnish a lame explanation or reach a biased conclusion.

All this makes the task of the exorcist more difficult. He must also possess, in addition to these sciences, a thorough knowledge of theological science to help him recognize the tactics employed by the devil.

For example, in a genuine case of possession it is easier for the possessed to kneel down in front of the Blessed Sacrament rather than kiss the image of the Blessed Virgin. At first, this appears to be very strange; but on reflecting it will be soon realized that it is more humiliating for the devil to venerate a created person than to adore the One who made him. That is also the reason why he finds it so difficult to obey a man in holy orders - a person whom he inordinately hates, knowing that he has been given divine powers by God.

The Roman Ritual

It is to be noted that the Roman Ritual which the exorcist follows in the prayers for the possessed was first published in 1614. Another edition with minor changes was published in 1952. This means that the revision of the ritual for exorcism has never taken place. The writer feels that this delay in reviewing it is detrimental to all the exorcists of today, when the **satanic** cult is fast spreading and has again reached a high level - a fact making this task urgent.

The same ritual decrees however that the person who is disturbed by such experiences is treated with great prudence and that the healer must know how to reach a distinct decision whether it is a question of a possession by the devil or merely an illness on the part of the afflicted.

3. Sorcery and the Occult

In part III some information is given on the subject of Sorcery and the Occult, both of which can serve as a suitable ingress for the devil and enables him to confuse, tempt and cause man to fall into temptation thereby emerging victorious.

We interpret "sorcery" to mean an act or words aimed at magically affecting persons or things by evil spirits, through the intervention of the devil, thereby causing man harm.

It is a fact that, before now, it was easy to attribute to the devil anything malign experienced by man. We know to-day, through parapsychology, that in many cases this is not so. Very often, a person inflicts evil on another not through the devil's intervention but through a mental power he possesses. Through psychiatry we can also ascertain that in many cases (as shown later on) a person is able of causing himself injuries. This does not exclude the fact that the devil does not try to intervene and contribute his devilry, more so when the affliction is caused on the behest of another.

It is then true that a person can cause you harm through sorcery; but this could also be caused by mental power (parapsychology) or because a person believes it to be so, self-inflicting the evil as a result (psychiatry) or through **satanic** intervention (person infestation or vexation).

Many people use the term OBSESSION; but a certain amount of confusion may arise because this is also a psychiatric term. Today, the term **psychobolic** is used in parapsychology - a word coined by the Greek expert **Angelo Tanagras** (1929) - to mean the influence of the mind by one over another. This word used in parapsychology substitutes those more in common use: witchcraft, accursed, the evil eye.

What is Sorcery and how it is made

Sorcery is defined as something made (fabricated, *envoutrement*) because it is made by using prepared articles (pins, herbs, incense, etc.) and through the use of rituals handed down to us through the ages (with due changes made according to the culture prevailing at the time).

These rituals can at times be simply magic words which express the will of the sorcerer and imposed over a person at the behest of another who wish him harm. In the same way Jesus wanted to integrate Grace with the Sacraments through the use of symbols and materials, so does the devil, seeking to imitate Him, tries to integrate in like manner 'evil' with signs, rites and incantations, all of which are harmless in themselves unless used in honour of Satan of whom the result is asked for.

Most certainly, this does not mean that the evil solicited will in fact befall, more so when the targeted person happens to be spiritually protected. Let us be clearer on this point: when a person asks us to pray for him, and we do so with fervour, God hears us. What's the good of praying otherwise? Not only so, but God finds pleasure when we present others to him to bless and to give them grace. Naturally, God's blessing results and materializes when this is done, depending, naturally, on the frankness and the readiness of the person on whose behalf it is asked. But when the door is closed to this because of sin it is then returned to God.

The same happens when sorcery is wished on an individual.

The devil finds satisfaction in inflicting curses on man in the same way God is pleased to bestow his blessings on him. The devil hears the request made and uses all his energy and seeks ways and means to inflict the evil sought of him. Not quite: because God's permission is needed for this to happen. If God's assent is given, the sorcery is fulfilled but if the door is closed against witchcraft (because the person is protected through the sacraments, prayers and other graces) then the curse is thwarted and fails to act on the intended person.

In some cases, it is with God's permission that sorcery affects those who are in grace; this rarely happens, however, and, when it does happen it is only for the glory of God and for the affected person who, thereafter, finds himself in closer union with God (as in the case of Job); the devil is also humiliated in the process.

To simplify matters we can speak of:

Emotional Sorcery which happens when in formulating the act of sorcery it is requested that a person is alienated or distanced from another (such as the one which breaks up the relationship between two engaged couples, two friends or a married couple) or otherwise aimed at creating an attraction for another particular person.

Sorcery of Vengeance where the devil is asked to cause sickness and/or damage to a person or his belongings, including his property.

This can be achieved by one of these methods, direct or indirect.

By *direct methodic* mean that which is so made as to bring into direct personal contact with the intended victim *material/s* prepared for the purpose (such as blood, excrement, urine or a special species of black toads). The material so prepared can be mixed either with the food or drink normally taken by the victim or else placed on his wearing apparel or placed in his bed.

The important thing is that a direct contact is established with the person concerned or with some other who is personally attached to the victim.

The choice of the material used and the manner in its making largely depends on what the sorcerer plans to achieve following its application or its administration. The sorcery, in this case is regulated by the principle of analogy or *omniopathy*, i.e., that it produces in the victim suffering analogous to that intended to produce by the items used in the making up of the witchcraft prepared for the victim

Naturally, all the materials used here, when mixed with food and drink, almost always affect the victim adversely by the very nature of the materials chosen - all dirty and sickening and full of harmful germs. Sometimes, poisonous herbs (even those which contain a minimal amount of poison) are mixed with the potion adding their own contribution to the victim's discomfort.

Then we have a method of sorcery which is made by means of an *indirect method*. This is so termed because it is applied to something which belongs to the victim, using such things as hair, nail clippings, wearing apparel (particularly underwear), including leftovers from the victim's dinner plate.

At other times, this can be obtained through the transference of material by using an animal

(such as a cat or a frog) an image (such as a photograph, a wax effigy or a **rag doll**) or the heart of an animal (such as a pig or a chicken) or even a candle or fruit over which an incantation and/or imprecations are recited in the hope that the substance of the words said are **transferred** on to the intended victim.

To give a clearer picture of this, the witchcraft used in the indirect method can be one of the following:

- by stabbing the doll or waxen image by pins or nails;
- by analogous application letting the doll or fruit which represent the victim to deteriorate and rot away (often burying it in the soil after magical incantation has been recited over it) thereby soliciting that the same fate befalls the victim. There are times when the victim becomes very ill beyond account to a point that he dies.
- Sometimes, by burning an item which once belonged to the victim, this is hoped to produce on the victim the same suffering, particularly by burning it slowly to destruction thus causing him eventual death.
- Another method of transference is that when knots are made on the item representing the victim, using for this purpose hair, rags and lengths of string etc. with the aim of causing diverse impediments and obstacles in the life of the victim. This is the significance of making knots.

Sorcery thus used impedes the victim from following his spiritual **wellbeing** and obstructs his social activities personally and in family matters. In some indirect methods, use is made of sacred objects, such as the crucifix, holy medals and even the consecrated host. This is the **lowest and the most evil form of witchcraft** because it employs rituals of the basest type accompanied by blasphemous words. This is done to show the allegiance of the sorcerer to the devil so as to gain from him all he asks for.

But does sorcery exist?

No one can deny the fact that there exist those (especially the ones who practice black magic) who are full of Satanic hatred and who profiting by their freedom, they try and inflict evil on others.

On his part, the devil finds great satisfaction in harming man of whom he is inordinately jealous. Nor it is to be wondered that the devil enjoys the symbolic rituals performed in a manner of a cult through which he spreads hate and hindrance and casts curses on humanity. God can also permit the fulfillment of such acts of sorcery in the same way he permits so many other temptations which emanate from the same source. Unfortunately, man abuses the greatest gift God gave man: his liberty. It is this which occasions so many wars amongst nations; of so many deaths from hunger caused by other persons' avarice; of the many accidents caused through abuses and carelessness; of so many heartbreaks and of so much disruption of family life; of infidelity, so common-spread and so much in evidence, causing millions of abortions.

All these are caused because liberty is abused so much. Cain killed his brother Abel. That is yesterday's history and to-day's history is that of tomorrow!

It should be noted that a person can put a halt to the effects of an act of sorcery through measures described later on and through receiving the sacraments and through praying.

It should also be noted that the devil himself does not always maintain his promises and that, after having satisfied himself of the ritual made by the sorcerer he then leaves the victim unmolested. This is not because he takes pity of the victim but for reasons best known to him.

G. Van Noort states that because the devil is not omnipresent (he is not found everywhere like God is) it is easy for him to remain unaware of some of the rituals offered to him. Not only this but due to the fact that these rituals and other associated ceremonies are not infallible (unlike the Sacraments) and because they are by their very nature full of falsehood and evil the sorcerer fails to summon the devil, thus ridiculing the very sorcerer who is making the act of witchcraft.

No one can deny the existence of witchcraft because there exist so many different types of rituals, so many, they can fill a number of books; and it is not always possible to conclude a

case through psychiatry or parapsychology.

It is interesting to note that the Codes of **Hannurabi** of Assyria (2000 BC) impose the death penalty on those who practice witchcraft against innocent people. Unfortunately, the number of those doing it now is on the increase, possibly because of the increase in the intense hate people have against each other and also because of the faith many people place in superstitions and **satanic** rites.

Who makes Witchcraft?

Those who practice witchcraft are called *sorcerers, fortune-tellers, magicians, witches and wizards*.

However, not all of them perform witchcraft because many of them are cunning people who earn themselves a fortune by resorting to certain rituals to impress their simple and credulous customers who easily believe in anything. Through experience, they learn how to attract their customers and how to treat them. Sometimes they possess the awareness of the sixth sense and use it to

make them seem desirous of wanting to help their customers and other people.

There are others who possess a good knowledge of herbal remedies, of those which contain good medicinal properties and of the ones which can produce an adverse effect otherwise. They earn considerable sums of money by giving herbs to those who seek recourse to the devil to procure his assistance to make the sorcery effective, particularly when asked to inflict suffering on others.

Naturally, when this is done, the sorcerer demands a big fee for his service - sometimes a huge one indeed.

To these we might add those who possess the evil eye - people who, by their very presence cause misfortune. Many believe that these persons really exist; this is not uncommon because one often hears accounts of incidents in which they were prominently involved to a point which give rise to the question:

But does the Church believe in the Evil Eye?

The belief in its existence goes back over the centuries and this is not only in Malta but practically everywhere else in the world. In Italy, there is a place, **COLOBRARA** (near **Matera**) where the people believe that the very place itself is the source of the evil eye!

It is the author's belief that often there is no truth in this. Several times, when one believes himself to be a victim of the evil eye, the mechanics related to the subconscious' **suggestibility** automatically leads to circumstances where that which you do not want to happen actually happens.

Whatever it might be, many times, such belief borders on the ridiculous and constitute in itself a superstition, and as such cannot be admitted. Nor is one permitted to wear and carry on him charms and amulets to ward off the evil eye, such as the eye, the horn, the red horn and other superstitious ornaments of that nature. We do not wear them because any protection required is given by Jesus and not through such articles which are tied to superstition.

Sorcery: does it actually work?

Those who are in close contact with the occult and have experienced its function are bound to have come across and still meet people who were victims of witchcraft. But does it really have any effect on the victim? And when, and if it does, does it do so as a result of the devil's intervention? This is where the two sciences, psychiatry and parapsychology, are able to provide an answer to this question. On the other hand, parapsychology can find itself confused when faced with some of the cases. A **parapsychologist** worthy of his profession knows that it is not always possible for this science to furnish a plausible scientific explanation to every case. As already stated, in many instances, the more it is believed that an act of witchcraft has been directed against an individual, that person is all the more open, psychologically speaking, to feel the harm which can befall him. The thought installed into him in itself attracts disasters. The more one believes the more subject he becomes to witchcraft. This is also applicable to medical cases; the thought of having a headache leads to having one, for it seems that the body follows the dictates of the mind in such matters and turns fiction into reality. So it happens when a person believes himself to be a victim of witchcraft.

Thus when a person is physically weak and full of fear, he becomes predisposed to accepting and to experience the very thing he dreads. This happens through autosuggestion, even though this happens subconsciously.

Lately, with the advancement of **psychomatic** science, more light can be shed on witchcraft and its effect on victims and also on the belief in superstitions and the other forms of magic. However, even here, we are still distant from obtaining a satisfactory and a complete answer for every case.

The psychomatic science involves itself with studying how psyche can affect the body and therefore it also includes studying how the brain causes the body to experience those effects of which it is afraid.

All this has to be taken in consideration and borne in mind when it comes to decide whether the witchcraft is working through the agency of the devil or not. In many cases, even witchcraft can find an explanation through psychiatry, parapsychology or psychopathy. But here again, it is a true fact that several times these sciences are unable to account for those victims of witchcraft which has them under its control and in which the devil plays his part in obtaining so much satisfaction in inflicting harm on humans.

The Occult: An opening for the devil

By the word "occult" we understand that activity which concerns the study of those mysterious subjects, in secret, which extend beyond the normal sphere of man's normal knowledge. Gathered under this heading are: *horoscope, astrology, superstitions, foretelling the future by means of cards, crystal ball, palmistry, coffee remains, Ouija Boards, spiritual séances, etc.* All these activities provide an opening for the devil because they are all to his liking. The reason is clear enough: man abandons God and begins to put his trust in the hands of humans, in the ceremonies and rituals he performs and in the charms the sorcerer gives as *talismans*.

To incite man to be *like* Goof is an old **satanic** temptation. It is man's thirst for power which urges man to seek it through magic. In fact, from the very beginning, God made it clear to his people: *"I am God your Lord who liberated you from your slavery in Egypt. You may worship no other God than me". (Exodus 20: 2-3)*

During Moses' time, there were stringent laws which were applied against those who practiced the occult. In *Leviticus, 20:27* it is written: *"A medium or a wizard -whether man or woman - shall surely be stoned to death. They have caused their own doom".* Not only that, but the Lord prohibits all forms of occult. For example, any Israeli who presents his child to be burned to death as a sacrifice to heathen gods must be killed. No Israeli may practise black magic, or call on the evil spirits for aid, or be a fortune teller, or be a serpent charmer, medium or wizard, or call up the spirits of the dead. Anyone doing these things is an object of horror and disgust to the Lord, and *"it is because the nations do these things that the Lord your God will displace them. You must walk blamelessly before the Lord your God. The nations you replace all do these evil things but the Lord your God will not permit you to do such things". (See Deut. 18: 10-14)*

Many wizards claim that they practice the occult to help their neighbours and also claim they do this by virtue of having been blessed by a gift given to them by God himself. This is a deceit, because on this point God says: *"I have despised them because of their evil deeds, because they practised witchcraft and performed evil rites" (Wisdom 12:4)*

Ezekiel was angered by those who sought remedies or tried to have their future foretold through rites and the use of veil strips tied to their body: *"Son of dust, speak out against the women prophets too who pretend the Lord has given them his messages. Tell them the Lord God says: Woe to these women who are damning the souls of my people, of both young and old alike, by tying magic charms on their wrists and furnishing them with magic veils and selling them indulgences. They refuse even to offer help unless they get a profit from it." (Ezek. 13:17-18)*

The Bible does not only speak out against those who practise witchcraft and the occult but also against those who seek their service: *"Do not defile yourselves by consulting mediums and wizards, for I am **Jahweh** your God". (Lev. 19:13). "I will set my face against anyone who consults mediums and wizards instead of me and I will cut that person off from his people". (Lev. 20:6)*

Several people believe in fortune-telling through the stars, the **Tarot** Cards and palmistry. Others seek to know the future by means of the pendulum, the crystal globe, the coffee

remains in the coffee-cup and through other means. All this is wrong and forbidden by God. Let us continue to reveal what the Scripture has to say about it.

St. Paul relates the following incident: *"One day we were going down to the place of prayer beside the river, we met a demon-possessed slave girl who was a fortuneteller, and earned much money for her masters. She followed along behind us shouting 'These men are servants of God and they have come to tell you how to have your sins forgiven'. This went on day after day until Paul, in great distress, turned and spoke to the demon within her, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her,'" he said. And instantly it left her. (Acts 16: 16-18)*

It is quite clear, the Bible condemns divinations, i.e. fortune telling (see [Levit. 20:27](#); [Deut. 18:10-14](#)). It also condemns all forms of witchcraft: *"Call out the demon hordes you've worshipped all these years. Call on them to help you strike deep terror into many hearts again" (Isaiah 47:12)*. It is clear, God ridicules and rebukes, at the same time, those who practice witchcraft (see [Acts 13:6-11](#); [Deut 18:10-14](#); [Numbers 23,23](#))

All forms of spiritism is also condemned in the Scripture:

"So why are you trying to find out the future by consulting witches and mediums? Don't listen to their whisperings and mutterings. Can the living find out the future from the dead? Check these witches' words against the Word of God. 'If their messages are different from mine, it is because I have not sent them; for they have no light or truth in them'." (Isaiah 8: 19-20)

This makes it clear that those who speak to or who try to communicate with the dead (in séances, when a person acts as a medium or when a witch works through the intervention of a deceased), they will be transgressing against the Lord ([Deut. 18:10-14](#)). This is also confirmed in several texts, especially in Leviticus (see [20/27](#); [19:31](#); [20:6-7](#)).

There are several people who claim they are able to foretell the future through horoscopes. This goes back in years, so much so that *Isaiah* ridicules and condemns this practice: *"You have advisers by the ton - your astrologers and stargazers, who try to tell you what the future holds. But they are as useless as dried grass burning in the fire. They cannot even deliver themselves! You'll get no help from them at all. Theirs is no fire to sit beside to make you warm!" (Isaiah 47: 13-4).*

Those who write horoscopes would do well to look up this passage in the Bible as would also do those who read horoscopes and believe in them. This also applies to people who seek the services of a witch to have their future foretold through the stars.

Regarding the talisman itself, the passage from *Deuteronomy (18:11)* is again repeated: *"No Israeli may practise black magic or call on the evil spirits for aid, or be a fortune-teller or a serpent charmer, medium or wizard, or call up the spirits of the dead."*

Many people are scared of witches; but this should not be so, for God is always victorious. This is evident in the case of Jacob whom he protects and assures him that no amount of witchcraft performed against him would succeed ([Numbers 23:23](#)). The way God triumphed over the magicians can be seen when Joseph explained to the Pharaoh the significance of the dreams he had, something the magicians had failed to do ([Genesis 41](#)). Moses likewise emerged victorious over the Egyptian witches ([Exodus 7,8](#)) and so did the prophet *Daniel* over the witches of [Chaldea \(2,4,5 and 14\)](#).

It is necessary for us to fight against the false [Christ](#)s and false prophets who, in spite of their assertions that they speak for Christ they, in fact do exactly that which God forbids ([Matthew 24:24](#)).

The Teaching of the Church

From time immemorial, the Church has always been against the teaching of the occult and against all forms of magic. *Hippolytus of Rome*, in his book *Apostolic Traditions*, writes that before a person is selected for its preparation for baptism, it is necessary to examine the environment *where* the person lives. He made a complete list of the factors which are contrary to Christian beliefs and which precludes the baptism of those who practice them. Some of the points mentioned are:

- a person who keeps a brothel or who permits this to happen;
- a person who is a priest or a guardian of false gods or who so functions;
- he who makes witchcraft;
- the astrologer, he who interprets dreams and he who foretells the future.

Wizards and sorcerers are not accepted for examination. (see *Apostolic Traditions*, Chap. 16)

ST. JUSTIN, in his dialogue with Trifonis, stated that the devil sought to deceive the people through the wizards of Egypt (P.G. 6.636).

TERTULLIAN makes this quite clear when he said that the wizards function through the power of Satan (P.L. 1,404).

ORIGIN stated that the wizards who trafficked with spirits and called them up according to the rules of magic, succeeded to do this only in the absence of the name of God and his Power (*Contra Celsum* 1,1).

ST. CYPRIAN claimed that the evil spirits hid themselves inside the statues of false gods and that it was those same spirits who inspired fortune-tellers (PL 4,574).

ST. AUGUSTINE maintained that if we deny the existence of magic and declare it to be harmless, we go against the Truth of the Bible.

The devil is attracted by man's least leaning *out-of-truth* in the same way an animal is attracted by food (PL 41,716).

To these words of the Holy Fathers, we also add some of the declarations which the Church has made over the years.

The Decree of Graziano takes a clear stance against magic (Chapter 26:c 5,12).

The Bull of INNOCENT VI, SUMMIS DESIDERANTES AFFECTIBUS (5 Dec. 1484) states that the Pope is conscious of the fact that magic leads to a direct contact with the devil and he considers it to be a grave sin (*Bull. Sacr. Pont. V. Aug. Taur.* 1860.296).

LEO X wrote two Bulls against witchcraft (*Supernae* 5 May 1514; 14 Febr. 1521).

SISTUS V wrote the Bull *COELI ET TERRA* (5 May 1586).

GREGORY XV wrote the Bull *OMNIPOTENTIS DEI* (20 March 1623).

URBAN VIII wrote the Bull *INSCRUTABILIS* (1 March 1631).

Church Councils in which witchcraft was discussed were those of ELVIRA (305), that of PADERBORN (785) and that of PRAGUE (1346). The Council of Toledo declares outright that the person who believes in astrology becomes *anatema* (excommunicated).

The Holy Office (the Congregation established to safeguard the Faith), on 30th March, 1868, prohibited the faithful from attending séances (*Analecta Eccl.* 6,1898, 187).

Not only that, but the Church, to safeguard prudence and to avoid any possible scandal which may subsequently arise, prohibits all clergymen and religious from involving themselves in matters of personal nature through the use of *radiestesy* (the pendulum) and by means of divination (*Holy Office Decree*, 1st May 1942, *AAS* 34 1942, 148).

The same Holy Office, on 24th April, 1917, declared itself against the employment of mediums in séances, against those attending them, those who communicate with the dead or other spirits and listen to the replies they make or to be present at these meetings even though they declare in their hearts they will have nothing to do with them.

This declaration was subsequently confirmed by BENEDICT XV on 26th April, 1917.

It is therefore quite clear, that the Church, both patristic and hierarchical, is categorically against the occult because of its consequent perils that follow and also because it provides an opening and a gateway for the devil's ingress, direct and indirect, finding the ground ready made for his operations (both because of sin as well as through the spiritual hindrances which may lead to a diabolical possession).

It is a fact that several people practise magic (especially *white magic*) as an adventure or to raise money. It does not follow that these people have any direct contact with the devil (I am not *referring* to those who practise *black magic*). However, even if they are not sinning against religion, (for they are not denying God's existence), they are gravely sinning, because of the scandal they give, against the sense of justice (because they deceive their audiences) and for disobeying God.

4

Satan and the Satanists

But why has Lucifer, the ANGEL OF LIGHT, become Satan, God's enemy and antagonist?

Satan is Defeated

The universe created by God was perfect. Everything was going according to plan. God was surrounded by millions of angels, all happy and ready to do his bidding. Of all things created, Lucifer was the most beautiful. It is certain that God left the management of this universe for him to administer and care for. But his power and his brilliance deceived him and led him to envy God himself. He wanted to usurp his throne. From that moment he became Satan, God's antagonist and his enemy. The rebel angels turned into devils and the world was plunged into chaos and disorder.

God then offered the administration of this world to Man, leaving it to him to bring back law and order which had previously prevailed. He offered him sovereignty over the world. But also man was deceived and rebelled against God. So the Father decided to send the WORD, the firstborn, to don man's garb, not only that but to become MAN and thus steer the creation to its original state. Now, he had been suffering the aftermath of pain a long time.

The devil, after causing the downfall of man, now also attempts to do the same with Christ himself. But Christ emerges victorious: *"Get out of here, Satan"*, (see *Gen. 3:1-8; Math: 4:1-11*). Jesus paid for his victory; He paid for our redemption and for the entire universe by his blood.

The devil is defeated: *"But if I am casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has arrived among you"* (*Matthew 12:28*).

Christ won. This, the devil knows; but his hatred for us, redeemed by Christ, is so big that the fight has not ended yet. On the contrary, it is still being fought relentlessly. *"He prowls around like a hungry, roaring lion, ready for some victim to tear apart"*. (*1 Peter 5: 6-9*).

His victims are those who are out of the kingdom of Christ (because they are in sin and are therefore in Satan's grasp) as well as those who are in Christ's kingdom (in grace) against whom he focuses his full anger. He tries to take possession of their hearts as he did with Judas (*John 13:2*) or Ananias and *Saphira* (*Acts 5:3*). As a result of his hatred we develop attacks of hatred ourselves, anger and doubts.... This is the battle for our hearts - the battle between Christ and the devil. He continually tries to hinder us from following the ways of our Saviour - as in the case of Paul against *Elymas* the sorcerer (*Acts 13: 9-10*). His work is to confuse theologians, ministers of God, confute the doctrine of the Church, other organizations, etc. Over and above everything else, he sows seeds of pride, conceit and self-esteem, as in the case of Simon the sorcerer (*Acts 8: 18-23*). The devil has lost the battle but he tries to lessen Christ's victory as much as possible. It is for this reason that he involves himself in politics, international crisis, wars, racism, hunger and famines, criminality, drug addiction, prostitutions, Mafia and other secret organizations, poverty and epidemics. He does his best to create divisions within the Church itself and actively takes a negative stance in the life of the individual. He creates and builds up emotional confusion, physical and mental, causing people to stumble and in so doing take off their eyes from Christ and go on to incite them to rebel against him in the same way the wicked robber did when Jesus died on the Cross.

It is a fact: God is always more powerful (*1 John 4:4*) and the devil is terrified of Him (*Mark 1: 23-24*) but all the same he doesn't lose heart and so he goes on fighting to the end.

The Satanic Cult

Satan continues to wage his war against God by employing the other devil-companions and all humans who join forces with him.

It is of these last mentioned that the *Satanists* emerge. These are people who in life choose Satan and who promote evil in their lifetime. The Satanists believe in the existence of God; but they believe that Satan is also god and that he also had a hand in the Creation.

They believe that God was unjust when He deprived Lucifer of all his power and his authority and then went on to deprive him of his throne and cast him into hell. They think that God simply won because of his superiority in the number of angels which sided with Him as against those who followed Lucifer.

Satan is continuing his war against God to recruit more followers so that he will be able to dethrone God and then rise above him.

What do Satanists believe?

This line of thinking goes back to antiquity. In fact, in the third century after Christ, a Sect was formed, the *Manicheians* (*Mani* being their founder) who believed that two principalities

existed: both eternal, but opposed to each other. This thesis goes against the Council of NICENE, 325 A.D. (DS 125) and that of CONSTANTINOPLE 381 A.D. (DS 150), both of which confirm that it is GOD who created all that which exist, both that which is visible and that which is invisible.

Mani's idea immediately provoked a reaction from the Greek Holy Fathers (St. Athanasius, St. Basil, Didimus of Alexandria and Epiphanius, amongst others). St. Augustine himself was, in his younger days, a follower of Mani. Then, after his conversion, he diligently fought against Mani's idea.

It is a mistake for us to believe in two principalities - two gods - in opposition to each other. St. Paul teaches that God created all things (See Col. 1:16). A condemnation of the cult of Mani is to be found in the Council of Prague (551-561) wherein those who followed this belief were excommunicated (DS 457).

The mistake made by the Manicheians was later repeated by the CATHARIES in the 12th century in Western Europe and by the BOGOMILIES in Eastern Europe. These two sects were condemned by the IV Lateran Council (DS 800).

It is on the basis of this that the Satanists build their cult. The devil poses for and accepts the homage due to God and seeks to be adored in the same way which only merits the living God.

It was probably TERTULLIAN who first called the devil *monkey*, he called him so because of his ardent wish to imitate God in all things and it is probably this that makes him personify himself in false gods to receive the adoration accorded to them by those who believed in their existence.

Amongst these gods we find BAAL - god of nature, of the mountains, god of the Cananeans (see Deut 12:2-3; Judges 6:25; 1 Kings 16:31-33). It is to be noted that even to this day, Baal is adored and venerated in Satanic temples.

ASTORET, a goddess of the Cananeans, goddess of fertility, is also worshipped to-day, especially in sex orgies (Judges 2:12-13).

DAGON - god of the Philistines. Samson was dragged into his temple. Also the Ark, when it was captured, was taken to the temple of Dagon; but the idol Dagon was found fallen with his face to the ground before the Ark of God (see 1 Sam 5: 1-6).

MOLOC, to whom infants were offered in sacrifice, was the god of fear (see Ezek. 23: 37-39). Today, human lives are also offered as sacrifices to the devil.

The Satanists

Many of those who follow the devil do so because they expect as a prize for their cult, riches and popularity, power, money and sexual pleasure. Those recruited are mostly from the younger generation (because of their desire for adventure) and from the professions (because of their thirst for power, popularity or for riches). Their scope is to go direct against Christ and for this they are prepared to go all the way: sexual orgies, human sacrifice, corruption, drug-taking, black mass (where they use consecrated hosts), obscene rites and sing hymns to Satan. They use the satanic Bible which directs them in their blasphemous scope. There are also temples dedicated to Satan.

Many of their ceremonies take place on Fridays (the day of our salvation when Christ died on the Cross for us) and on Sundays (the day of the Lord). Many of the rites are performed at night to lend them the atmosphere of darkness, of evil and of fear; also because, during the night there are less people praying to God and therefore less opposition to their cult. They also love the full moon in contrast to the sun, this as a symbol of darkness.

Satanism is the worst form of perversity man assumes against God. It is evil codified.

5.

The Fight against the Devil

"Last of all I want to remind you that your strength must come from the Lord's mighty power within you. Put on all of God's armour so that you will be able to stand safe against the strategies and tricks of Satan. For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against persons without bodies - the evil rulers of the unseen world, those mighty satanic

beings and great evil princes of darkness who rule this world; and against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world.

So use every piece of God's armour to resist the enemy whenever he attacks, and when it is all over, you will still be standing up.

But to do this, you will need the strong belt of truth and the breastplate of God's approval. Wear shoes that are able to speed you on as you preach the Good News of peace with God. In every battle you will need Faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan. And you will need the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit - which is the Word of God". (Eph. 6: 10-17).

The Strategies of the Christian

We have here a full program which shows us how to wage the battle against the devil: our armour consists of truth, justice, great zeal for the Gospel, faith and devotion of the Holy Spirit.

Armed with all these, the Christian is armed well enough to defeat the devil. To follow the life of a true Christian is to provide the guarantee of emerging victorious.

However, we wish to go into more details on this by listing the things from which the devil shrinks back in horror:

The sacrament of Reconciliation: through confession, our heart and mind become purified and strengthened (see 1 John 3:21-22). A good confession uncovers the devil's deceit, exposes him to the open and distances him from the victim.

The Holy Eucharist the devil is terrified of the Holy Eucharist, a symbol of humility, of love, of a tremendous power and strength. It is the medium through which man finds the power to sustain himself and triumphs over Satan (see 1 John 3:8).

The sign of the Cross: It is the cross on which Christ defeated the devil (see Col. 2:14-15). It is no wonder then that he is so scared of it and against which he becomes so angry that he cannot face it. Keeping a cross on us is a good thing and worthy of commendation.

The name of Jesus: God the Father gave Jesus a great name, one which is above all and in front of Him all powers on earth bow their heads and genuflect as all the powers in heaven and on earth all do (see Phil. 2:9-10).

Prayers: we are bathed by the blood of Jesus through praying (see Col. 2:13-15). Prayer creates the means of communicating with God, something which the devil continuously seeks to block. Prayers chase him away in horror.

The Word of God: especially as found in the Holy Bible (see Eph. 6:17): the devil is scared of the Holy Scripture because he knows that its wording is special and authoritative and given to man by God himself. One of the devil's great satisfaction is when the Bible, in satanic rituals, is thrown on the fire.

The Holy Spirit: "Take up the sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17). Full of the Holy Spirit, when we allow ourselves to be guided by his direction, we can confront the devil and repel his attacks against us.

The Immaculate Mary. the devil greatly hates Mary. He can never face the fact that a created being emerged victorious over him. He is scared of her because she, together with her son, they strike him on his head (see Genesis 3:15). Also here, to carry on us a medal of the Holy Virgin is commendable indeed.

Holy Objects: these objects, blessed by the Church, acquire a certain amount of power over the enemy. It is not the actual objects themselves which acquire this power, but the prayer said when they are blessed in the name of the Church which gives them this. We have to be careful not to reduce these things to magic talismans. They are sacramentals to the extent that their power depends on the disposition of the person using them together with the Church's prayer associated thereto. Those which are of special value are: the holy water, the candle, oils of unction and the rosary beads.

The Saints' Relics: this is due, in the first instance, to God's plan, in that He wants to show his predilection towards these good souls, and also because the devil is so angry against them for their victory over him for having acquired the glory of their salvation. They are the souls

who have escaped his snares.

St. Michael the Archangel: he is the victorious prince, who together with the other angels, defeated Lucifer (see *Rev. 12 7:9*). Pope Leo XIII personally composed a prayer dedicated to Saint Michael and instructed the faithful to recite it, together with the celebrant priest after each mass. When the liturgy was reformed by Paul VI, the prayer was deleted. The present Pope visited the sanctuary of St. Michael the Archangel at Monte Sant'Angelo (in the province of Foggia) on 24th May 1987 to show that it is necessary for the world of today to unite in its fight against Satan. In truth, the devil has every reason to fear St. Michael.

Prayers of Exorcism

Exorcism means the offering of prayers made so that the devil lets the person live in peace (see *Act 19:13*). This is always done in the name of Jesus. There are some exorcisms which are related to a place or made over objects where prayers are recited to free them from the devil's interference. In fact, the Church has special prayers which are said over fields, houses, shops etc. Prayers are recited to protect persons from the devil (one beautiful prayer is that said in the past when the water and the salt were blessed and afterwards used against the wiles of the enemy and against his attacks). Then there are prayers which are recited to free a person from the devils which possess it (diabolical possession).

Exorcism is said to be public, official and solemn when performed by a priest, authorised by the Bishop, and using rites and prayers established by the Church.

There is then that which is *private*. This is different to a public exorcism.

The official prayers recited for an exorcism is to be found in the *Roman Ritual* which was first issued in 1614 under the pontificate of Paul V. A more recent edition is that of 1952. (The author is convinced that a more up-to-date edition is now due).

Exorcism falls under the category of "sacramentals" (see C.I.C. 1166) and this means that the prayers purposely composed by the Church have all the power because they are said in the name of the Church. Although this prayer is particularly effective, it is not infallible however, in that there is no certainty that the devil obeys and departs.

The Church's power over the devil is not absolute but is subordinate to the will of God according to each case. This does not mean that the prayer said by the priest for the devil to leave is not effective. He has to obey, but then it depends whether God wants him to do so at that moment or not. Most certainly, in an exorcism the spiritual depth and disposition of the exorcist count a lot. That is why the Church insists that he is a person who leads a rather perfect good life.

But from where does the exorcist derive this power? He does so from three heads:

1. Either because the person is officially authorised to exorcise by the Church;
2. Or through the words of Jesus who gives this authority to all those who believe they have the power over the devils;
3. Or because God gives special charismatic qualities to that person.

Naturally, this applies to exorcism in the broad sense of the word: both that which is official and that which is private.

In the first centuries of the Church, this power, given to the Apostles and to his disciples by Jesus in person (see *Mt 10:1-8; Mk. 3:14-15; 6:7; Lk. 9:1; 10:17-20*) and then to all those who believed in the devil (*Mark 16:17*), was used by the ordinary Christians. The Holy Fathers cited this power to cast out the devils, as an argument in their favour to prove the truth and their faith in Christianity.

In time, however, the Christians ceased to use this power given to them and therefore it became natural that those who required this service had to apply to those persons who were looked upon as *charismatically* inclined to act as exorcists and, in the end it was the bishops who appointed those who were authorised to act as exorcists.

Later on, the Church felt the need to restrict the activities of this ministry, firstly because the incidence of diabolic possessions decreased and also because it was felt necessary to use greater prudence in the administration of this ministry due to its delicate nature and its importance. Thus, the number of officials in this ministry dwindled in numbers.

By the year 416, through a letter written by Pope Innocent to [Decentius](#), Bishop of [Gubbio](#), it resulted that exorcism was entrusted to the ordained and to the deacons as appointed by their bishop (PL 20, 557-558). By this, the ministry of the exorcist became a step in the preparation of the seminarist for the priesthood. When given the power of the exorcist he is given the power to cast out demons but he was not given the authority to act as an exorcist. This minor order was suppressed in 1972 by the [Moto Proprio MINISTERIA QUAE DAM](#) (see [AAS 1972](#), 259:534).

Today the Church decrees ([CIC 1172](#)) that no one can act as an exorcist without the express permission of the bishop; and then this is only given to those who lead a good life, who are wise, prudent and of an unblemished character. (25th January 1983).

There are many to-day who believe that they are contaminated by a diabolical influence, and therefore it is advisable for the bishop to appoint a number of "EXORCISTS" in the diocese. This does not imply that the number of those who are possessed is great, but it means that the faithful ought to have every chance to discuss their situation and for them to pray together with the exorcist to be protected from the devil's attacks and possibly freed from any witchcraft which had been directed against them.

This also involves the pastoral work, the follow-up, amongst those converted from the [satanic](#) cult and who need the special attention of those priests who are experts in this ministry. In this case, the exorcist applies his therapeutic ministry with the person and not as an exorcist.

Prayers of Liberation

The *prayers for liberation* described here refer to those prayers directed against the devil and his attacks by Christians endowed with special charismatic qualities through a power given to them by Christ himself (see [Mark 16:17](#)) to cast out demons.

This prayer is called 'private' because it is not the official prayer of the Church (it is not 'sacramental') but it is efficacious because it is made in the name of Jesus.

There is nothing wrong if a priest, even though he is not specifically authorised, or even the laity, direct private prayers against the devil not to disturb people nor to [accuse](#) property or animals. The war against this prince of evil is [world-wide](#) (see [John 12:31](#)) and it cannot be waged only by the few ministers duly appointed and authorized to fight against him. After all it is a good thing to ask to be freed from the devil. It is what we pray for every time we recite the Lord's Prayer.

It is to be noted that on 29th September 1985, the Congregation for the Safeguarding of the Faith issued instructions to restrict the abuses which were taking place in some of the meetings organized by some modern spiritual movements. The Congregation declares that in meetings of this nature, when prayers are made for casting out the devil and the protection of God himself is sought, the form of the prayers offered must not be those officially used in exorcisms, as published by Pope Leo XIII nor are they allowed to use the rites of a public exorcism which can only be conducted by a duly authorized minister. In these prayers, no one must address the devil direct and ask him questions nor seek to discover his identity.

The Congregation, reasonably enough, is not seeking to stop prayer for the liberation of the devil but that such prayers do not become an official exorcism. We repeat, this can only be performed by a duly authorized minister.

Not only that, but one has to be very careful that no gatherings take place, where direct orders are given to Satan to release those held in bondage by him. Meetings of this nature may well end up with scenes of shouting, fits and other fearsome displays. In many instances these prove to be psychiatric disturbances in weak persons who are predisposed to act in such a manner in the belief of the devil's presence. These are [demonopsychic](#) crisis which do no good. The prayers for freeing a person from evil should be held in private, with the person involved in the matter and possibly with a small group of intercessors and always with those who are suitable to be present.

We have to be very careful not to create a belief in the actual presence of the devil when the case is one which is simply psychiatric.

Conclusion

The devil is not a fantasy: he is a reality. Possibly, this is his hour. His greatest deceit is when he succeeds to hide his hand and goes on working quietly to succeed in his quest.

It is a pity to see so many people, always on the increase, who dedicate themselves to him, and then, those who are supposed to fight him, bury their heads in the sand and declare it all to be a fantasy because the devil does not exist.

We pray that the Holy Spirit descends upon us once again (see *Acts 4:29-31*) and under his power we don the armour of God to be able to stand up to the temptations preferred by the devil (see *Eph. 6:11*).

THE END