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Jesus the Angry Exorcist: On the Connection Between Healing and Strong Emotions in the Gospels

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Exorcism

Exorcism has been defined by Twelftree as “forcing an unwanted spiritual entity to leave its host.”¹ Normally it is by addressing the spiritual entity in question and by appealing to stronger powers that the unwanted spiritual entities are driven out.² Exorcistic utterances are a form of performative speech; they are equivalent to incantations in other religious systems.³ The words used in exorcism are thought to be able to effect a change. Exorcism is a drama with one visible character (the exorcist) and at least one invisible character (the demon), and the possessed person himself as the stage. Some form of speech is normally required to allow the audience to follow the course of events.⁴ In some cases both the exorcist and the possessing demon speak. In other cases only the exorcist speaks.

Of the four Gospels, Mark gives greatest space to exorcisms. Mark records four accounts of exorcism: the man with an unclean spirit in the synagogue (1:21–28); the Gerasene demoniac (5:1–20); the Syrophenician woman’s daughter (7:24–30); and the healing of boy with unclean spirit (9:14–29). He also mentions an exorcist who, although he was not one of the disciples, cast out demons in Jesus’ name (9:38–41). He also makes other references to Jesus or his disciples casting out demons (1:34, 39;

¹ Twelftree 2011, 48–49. Thanks to my colleague Jonas Svensson and to Thomas Kazen, Rikard Roitto and others at the Nordic New Testament Conference in Aarhus 2015 for valuable feedback.

² Compare Dauntton-Fear’s summary of exorcistic procedure in the Greek Magic papyri (2011, 73).

³ As the incantations in the magical papyri show, the two genres are closely connected (Twelftree 2011, 49).

⁴ Witmer (2012, 111) notes: “in virtually all the Gospel accounts connected with exorcism, crowds are present.”

3:15, 22). Matthew gives less space to exorcism in general than did Mark.⁵ There is no parallel to Mark 1:21–26 in Matthew, and Matthew’s account of the Gerasene demoniac (Matt 8:28–34) is abbreviated (here Jesus does not ask the demon to identify himself, for example). Matthew’s account of the healing of the boy with an unclean spirit is abridged (Matt 17:14–20), and he does not include the passage about the anonymous exorcist. For Matthew, exorcism may have been problematic.⁶ Luke 4:33–36 provides a parallel to Mark 1:21–26, and he includes the story of the Gerasene demoniac (Luke 8:26–39), and an abridged version of the healing of the boy with an unclean spirit (Luke 9:37–43), but he does not include a parallel to the healing of the Syrophenician woman’s daughter. John notably does not include any references to Jesus performing exorcisms. The exorcistic accounts in Mark are generally longer and in them Jesus shows more emotion than in the other Gospels, and it is on them I will focus.

Anger in Connection with Exorcisms

Three of the exorcisms that Mark tells of are rather dramatic, while in the fourth one the departure of the demon occurs off stage (Mark 7:24–30). Mark notes that Jesus generally forbade the demons to speak (3:11–12), which suggests that they usually attempted to speak. Two of the exorcism reports tell of battles of words between Jesus and the demon, namely the account of the man with the unclean spirit in the synagogue (1:21–28) and the story of the Gerasene demoniac (5:1–20).

In the beginning of his Gospel Mark relates Jesus’ encounter in a synagogue with a man with an unclean spirit. The man cries out,

“What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” But Jesus rebuked (ἐπετίμησεν) him, saying, “Be silent and come out of him!” And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. (Mark 1:24–26, NRSV)

⁵ Twelftree (1993, 60): “Matthew ... is decidedly reticent about the exorcism stories of Jesus” and “prunes the Markan accounts.”

⁶ Koskenniemi (2013, 93–97) suggests that Matthew did not want his readers to practice exorcism and removed many of the details regarding how they were performed. Twelftree (2011, 62–63) suggests, “it seems that ... Matthew considered that peripatetic ecstatic Christians, whose ministry involved exorcism, were ‘savaging’ his community (Matt 7:15).” On exorcists who claimed to follow Jesus but are rejected at judgment day, see Matt 7:21–23. See Witmer 2012.

Mark does not specify that Jesus was angry. But his anger is readily inferred; when we hear that the unclean spirit talked back, we naturally imagine that Jesus was forceful in his reply, as may be implied by the verb ἐπετίμησεν, “rebuked” in Mark 1:25, which is also used of Jesus’ rebuking Peter (Mark 8:33). Significantly Jesus addresses the spirit the same way he addresses the man he had healed from leprosy a little later that same chapter, forbidding him from talking and sending him out (ἐξέβαλεν) (Mark 1:43). I will return to this point.

The most dramatic exorcism in Mark is the story of the Gerasene demoniac. Here Jesus engages in a debate or an “exorcistic contest” with the demoniac’s demon.⁷ After Jesus has said, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit,”⁸ the demoniac shouts, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me!” (Mark 5:7, NRSV). The verb translated “adjure,” ὀρκίζω, is also used in Acts 19:13, in the context of an exorcism; “I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims” (NRSV). Gundry remarks regarding the Markan passage, “Here the unclean spirit tries, so to speak, to exorcise Jesus out of exorcising it.”⁹ Judging by what he says and how he says it (shouting at the top of his voice), the possessed man (or his unclean spirit) is clearly angry. Mark does not specify whether Jesus’ responses were delivered in normal conversational tone, but in my reading they sound authoritative, at the very least.

Mark’s account of a man asking Jesus to help them exorcise a mute spirit from his son is intriguing (9:14–29). This account does not include a verbal battle; considering that the unclean spirit in question is described as a mute spirit that is understandable. The spirit is nevertheless portrayed as an agent. The father of the boy with a mute spirit speaks of the spirit throwing him into fire or water “to destroy him” (Mark 9:22); in the view of the father at least, the spirit has evil intentions. In this account Jesus comes across as angry, even before he has addressed the spirit. (Jesus answered them “You faithless generation, how much longer must I be

⁷ The drama of exorcism is even more apparent in the account of the unsuccessful exorcism performed by the sons of Sceva (Acts 19:11–20). There are other examples of exorcistic dialogue from this period, for example in the Testament of Solomon, quoted in Yarbro Collins 2007, 168, and in *PGM* 8:13 (Twelftree 1993, 66). Gundry uses the phrase “exorcistic contest.”

⁸ Fitzmyer (1981, 738) argues that the imperfect is used as an inceptive aorist; he translates the corresponding passage in Luke 8:29, “Jesus was about to charge the unclean spirit ...”

⁹ Gundry 1993, 250. See also ἐξορκίζω (Matt 26:63).

among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me”—Mark 9:19.) Jesus’ anger sounds excessive,¹⁰ and commentators do not agree on who its target is—the scribes (9:14), the crowd in general, Jesus’ disciples, or the father.¹¹ Jesus’ reply to the desperate father’s plea, “if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us!” comes across as highly insensitive given the circumstances: “If you are able!—All things can be done for the one who believes” (Mark 9:23). Matthew and Luke tune down Jesus’ anger. In their accounts of the healing of the boy with the mute spirit, both Matthew and Luke record Jesus’ angry words “You faithless and perverse generation” (adding the adjective “perverse”: Luke 9:41, Matt 17:17), but the father’s second plea and Jesus’ seemingly rude answer are dropped; there is no counterpart to Mark 9:23 in Matthew and Luke.

I suggest in regard to the accounts of the healing of the boy with an unclean spirit that Mark records the dialogue and its circumstances in a way that might more accurately reflect what actually happened than the later evangelists. I think it possible that this rudeness that Jesus exhibits comes from the emotional charge that he is building up (consciously or not) in anticipation of the exorcism. I suggest that Jesus in fact usually came across as angry during exorcisms. If Jesus actually showed as strong emotions as he is said to have done in these passages, it is something that those present are likely to have remembered—and it may have made these events especially memorable.¹² Anger in connection to exorcisms is not unique to Jesus. In the single exorcism recorded in Acts, Paul is “very much annoyed” (*διαπονηθείς*) when he turns to the spirit and says, “I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her” (Acts 16:18). Whether he is angry at the girl or the prophetic spirit is not specified, but once again we see that anger coupled with personal address is a recurring ingredient in exorcism.

Exorcisms are dramatic performances. The possessed person often behaves aggressively in a way that arouses fear among onlookers while the exorcist mirrors and externalizes the emotions or feelings of the possessed person. At the completion of an exorcism, the patient is typically marked-

¹⁰ The phrase “you faithless generation” may be an allusion to Deut 32:20.

¹¹ Yarbro Collins 2007, 437. In Gundry’s view (1993, 489), the term “unbelieving generation” “does not take in the disciples.” Writing of the parallel passage in Luke (9:41), Green (1997, 388) is of the opinion that Jesus’ words are directed at his disciples who had been unsuccessful at driving out the evil spirit.

¹² Cf. Whitehouse 2004 regarding “episodic memories” or “flashbulb memories.”

ly calm.¹³ Sometimes additional steps are taken to show that the exorcism was successful. In his account of Eleazar the exorcist, Josephus writes, “Then, wishing to convince the bystanders and prove to them that he had this power, Eleazar placed a cup or foot-basin full of water a little way off and commanded the demon, as it went out of the man, to overturn it and make known to the spectators that he had left the man.”¹⁴

We encounter similar drama in exorcisms today. Austnaberg describes exorcism as practiced in a Lutheran congregation in Madagascar thus:

The atmosphere during expulsion of demons is very tense. All the shepherds walk around shouting to the evil spirits with a loud voice. They are gesticulating all the time, as though they are chasing an invisible enemy. The invisible powers in the room are the spirits of darkness and their leaders, which may cause fear since nobody knows where they will strike next. Sometimes the patients scream and shout loudly and some act erratically. They may stand up, but the shepherds hold them tight and make them sit down again. Sometimes this looks like a real fight and it is difficult for the congregation not to watch carefully.¹⁵

In some Russian Pentecostal and Orthodox circles, the exorcistic contexts with which I am most familiar, the exorcist likewise comes across as angry. In fact, writing about exorcism in his handbook *The Orthodox Pastor*, Russian Orthodox Archbishop John Shahovskoy specifies that anger is necessary for a successful exorcism: “An exorcism pronounced firmly, courageously, from the heart, with complete faith and righteous indignation against the demons, *always* has effect ...”¹⁶ While this Orthodox practice is surely based in part on the New Testament texts, I think it also reflects a wider practice and can be used to explain those texts. Successful exorcism hinges on the emotional involvement of the exorcist;¹⁷ the stronger the emotions shown, the more engaged the healer’s spirit.¹⁸

¹³ Cf. Davis 1977, 215: “Whatever else, exorcism releases emotion.” For a vivid description of the exorcism of a Bedouin man, see Al-Krenawi & Graham 1997, 217.

¹⁴ Josephus *Ant.* 8.45–48 (also quoted in Witmer 2012, 45–46; Yarbrow Collins 2007, 166).

¹⁵ Austnaberg 2008, 127.

¹⁶ Shahovskoy 2008, 78.

¹⁷ In describing the practice of exorcism in the Church of England, Milner (2000, 267) notes “passion is required, especially in major exorcisms.”

¹⁸ On the expectation of the Holy Spirit speaking spontaneously through people in extraordinary situations, see also Mark 13:11: “When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that

In the New Testament, the one doing the exorcising allows the Holy Spirit to work through him—it is by the Holy Spirit that demons are cast out, not by force of the disciples’ personality; perhaps the anger that some find so uncharacteristic of Jesus was interpreted as the expression of the Holy Spirit within him. Davies characterizes exorcism as “a drama played by two alter-personae, each recognizing the alter-persona state of the other.”¹⁹ The healer is possessed by the Holy Spirit, the one in need of deliverance is possessed by a demon.

In light of the view that demons were malevolent agents, Jesus’ anger in the context of performing exorcisms is understandable. Jesus comes across as angry in other connections as well, however. Many interpreters assume that for Jesus to be angry he must always have a concrete object for his anger. On this basis some have suggested that malevolent moral agents were thought to lie behind all phenomena against which Jesus expressed anger. Thus, some argue that not only possession but also diseases and storms were thought to be demonic in origin. I will examine some of these passages now.

Anger in Connection with Healings

The Gospels do not always make a clear distinction between exorcism and healing. Mark gives the impression that Jesus showed anger in connection with healings just as he did in connection with exorcisms. In a passage in Mark’s Gospel, telling of Jesus healing a leper, manuscripts differ as to whether he was moved by anger or pity (Mark 1:41), and members of the UBS editorial committee disagreed as to which is the original reading. While the reading saying that Jesus was compassionate (σπλαγγισθείς) is much better attested, the one saying he was angry (ὀργισθείς) is the more difficult reading, and therefore judged by many to be original.²⁰ On the

time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.” This is exemplified in Stephen’s speech in Acts 7.

¹⁹ Davies 1995, 99.

²⁰ σπλαγγισθείς (8, A, B, C ...), ὀργισθείς (D, it) (Metzger 1998, 65). In the parallel texts in Matthew (8:3) and Luke (5:13) Jesus’ emotional state is not described at all. If the Marcan text on which Matthew and Luke based their accounts specified that Jesus was angry, they may have dropped this participle because they found it offensive (Ehrman 2006, 125); an early copyist of Mark would have replaced the same word with σπλαγγισθείς for the same reason. For a listing of commentators favoring the reading ὀργισθείς see Williams

other hand, some have found it difficult to believe that Mark could have written that Jesus was angry, as there is no obvious target for his anger. It is hard to believe he was angry at the leper.²¹ Some have suggested he was angry at the demon that caused the leprosy. Gundry rejects this interpretation arguing, “we can hardly think of the emotionally charged exorcism of a leprous demon”²² and opts for the better attested reading *σπλαγχνισθείς* (“taking compassion”). But we do not have to imagine that Jesus’ anger was directed at a demon. It could equally well have been directed at the leprosy itself. I suggest strong emotions were necessary to effect the healing, regardless of whether its cause was thought to be demonic or not.²³

It has been noted that the language a couple verses later in the same story has an exorcistic flavour, even though the exorcism itself has been completed: “After sternly warning him (*ἐμβριμησάμηνος*) he sent him away (*ἐξέβαλεν*) at once, saying to him, ‘See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them’” (Mark 1:43–44). The verb translated “sternly warning” may also be rendered “upbraiding” (so Yarbro Collins), and expresses anger, an emotion also encountered in connection with Jesus’ healings in John’s Gospel (see below), while the verb translated “sent him away” is more literally “threw him out,” and is also used of driving out spirits in the context of exorcisms.²⁴ Bonner argues that the participle *ἐμβριμησάμηνος* is appropriate for describing the emotional state before conducting an exorcism, and “has been brought into vs. 43 [from verse 41] by some textual confusion.”²⁵ This explanation is rather convoluted and seems not to have won favor.²⁶ I agree with commentators who feel that a healer ought to focus his anger on the disease, not on the patient, but for Mark Jesus’ anger may not have been problematic.

(2012, 1). Williams argues in support of the reading *σπλαγχνισθείς* on the basis of a supposed graphic similarity between the two words; I am not persuaded.

²¹ Voorwinde (2011, 72) argues that Jesus is angry because he knows that the man will disobey him. I think this is reading too much into the text.

²² Gundry 1993, 103.

²³ Other explanations for Jesus’ anger have been given. Ehrman (2006, 138) argues, “Jesus is angered when anyone questions his authority or ability or heal – or his desire to heal.” So too Spencer (2014, 107): “the leper chiefly provokes Jesus’ ire by belittling his *desire* or *will* to heal.”

²⁴ Bonner 1927; Ehrman 2006, 133.

²⁵ Bonner 1927, 181.

²⁶ Yarbro Collins (2007, 179) argues that “the pneumatic excitement of the healer should play a role before or during the healing, not afterward” and rejects Bonner’s thesis.

Jesus often comes across as angry or irritated in Mark's Gospel and as Ehrman has noted it is almost always in connection with a healing of some kind.²⁷ There is no reason to assume that Jesus' heightened emotion must have the same cause each time,²⁸ but in connection with exorcisms and healings his anger seems readily explainable, as we shall see.

On his way to healing Jairus's daughter, a woman believing she would be healed of hemorrhages if she could but touch Jesus' cloak, does so, and is healed. "Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him," Jesus asks, "Who touched my clothes?" (Mark 5:30) and again, "Who touched me?" (Mark 5:31). The woman who was healed "came in fear and trembling" and fell down before Jesus (Mark 5:33), evidently afraid. I suggest she is afraid not because she had been considered ritually impure and was afraid she would be charged with spreading impurity (an explanation rejected by Shaye Cohen),²⁹ but because Jesus was obviously powerful and he came across as angry. I suggest he came across as angry not because his willingness or ability to heal had been questioned—that was precisely not the case here—but because he was caught up in the emotional build-up needed for the successful healing of Jairus's daughter.

One of the more curious displays of anger in Mark's Gospel is the account in which Jesus rebuked (ἐπετίμησεν) a storm (Mark 4:39) in the same way as he rebuked Peter (Mark 8:33), and told the sea to be silent (σιώπα), in the same way the blind Bartimaeus had been told to be quiet (Mark 10:48). We need not read too much into Jesus' addressing the wind and sea; we do not have to conclude that he considered the storm a moral agent.³⁰ Nor did he see it as a supernatural being.³¹ The disciples did marvel that even the wind and the sea obeyed him (Mark 4:41) but this does

²⁷ Ehrman (2006, 130): "Jesus gets angry on several occasions in Mark's Gospel; what is most interesting to note is that each account involves Jesus' ability to perform miraculous deeds of healing."

²⁸ Mark 3:5 it is specified that Jesus is angry at the Pharisees because of their hardness of heart.

²⁹ Yarbro Collins 2007, 284.

³⁰ But see Twelftree 2011, 53: "Jesus does not rebuke sickness, reserving exorcistic language and technique for the removal of demons, nor does he show any interest in exorcising buildings or places."

³¹ Contrary to Yarbro Collins 2007, 261: "The reason why the wind and sea are treated like demons is that demons or evil spirits were thought to be responsible for inclement weather." The fact that the Greek word πνεῦμα can mean both wind and spirit is not relevant, contra Kee (1968, 244), as we cannot assume that the two meanings normally co-occur (John 3:8 is an exceptional word play). And more to the point, the word πνεῦμα is not used in this passage in Mark.

not have to mean that the wind and sea were normally seen as person-like entities by Jews in Jesus' time, contrary to Malina and Rohrbaugh.³² As Gundry writes, "Jesus' personification of the wind and the sea need not demonize them any more than his personification of the barren fig tree [Mark 11:14] will demonize it."³³ I am not aware of any compelling evidence that Jews in Jesus' time believed that forces of nature were animate.³⁴ In fact, had the wind and sea normally been seen as person-like entities, the disciples would presumably have wondered less at Jesus' ability to command them to silence. The passage is saying something about the power of Jesus' word, not about the animacy of nature.³⁵ It is comparable to the first creation account in Genesis: The conviction that God spoke the world into being says more about the power of God's word than about the previously non-existent world's ability to listen. This passage in Mark clearly echoes Psalm 106:7–9 where a sea is also rebuked:³⁶

Our ancestors, when they were in Egypt, did not consider your wonderful works; they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love, but rebelled against the Most High at the Red Sea. Yet he saved them for his name's sake, so that he might make known his mighty power. He rebuked [LXX: ἐπετίμησεν] the Red Sea, and it became dry ...

The point is that like God saved the Israelites, so too Jesus saves those who call out to him. The point is not that the sea is demonic, but that there is something divine about Jesus.

Jesus' anger is tuned down some in the other Gospels, but we find traces of it in connection with healings there too. In Luke's Gospel Jesus rebukes (ἐπετίμησεν) the fever that troubled Simon's mother-in-law (Luke

³² Malina (1999, 359): "as Malina and Rohrbaugh note (1998), the sea is an animate being, essentially different entity from water ... In the world of Jesus, the wind and the sea, fevers and unclean spirits, were person-like entities who could be spoken to and who might obey or not." Cf. Boyd (1997, 207): "Behind this storm Jesus perceived a demonic power."

³³ Gundry 1993, 240.

³⁴ The examples given in commentaries refer to angels, not the forces of nature per se. Cf. Gundry 1993, 240. In addition to references from Greek sources, Yarbrow Collins (2007, 261) refers to Jewish texts including Jub. 2:2, "The angels of the spirit of the winds"; 1 En. 69:22; 60:16, "the wind of the sea is male and strong." She also notes the reference to a sea spirit in the Testament of Solomon.

³⁵ So also Calvin on Matt 8:26 and parallels: "Mark relates also the words of Christ, by which addressing the sea, he enjoins silence, that is stillness, not that the lake had any perception, but to show that the power of his voice reached the elements, which were devoid of feeling."

³⁶ So also Yarbrow Collins 2007, 262.

4:39). In Mark's account of this healing, Jesus simply took Simon's mother-in-law "by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her" (Mark 1:31). Matthew likewise says nothing about Jesus rebuking the fever (Matt 8:14–16). Thomas finds it likely that Luke considered the fever "demonically induced,"³⁷ but that is not a necessary conclusion. Twelftree suggests more cautiously that "Luke is blurring the distinction between demon possession and other kinds of sickness, suggesting that all sickness has a demonic dimension or is evil, even though not thought to be caused by a demon."³⁸

In John's Gospel, when Jesus hears that his friend Lazarus has died he is also described as speaking in anger (ἐνεβριμήσατο τῷ πνεύματι, 11:33; ἐμβριμώμενος ἐν ἑαυτῷ, 11:38), although many translations choose other expressions (NIV: "deeply moved," NRSV: "greatly disturbed in spirit").³⁹ The same verb is used in Mark 1:43 (see discussion above) and in Mark 14:5, of the disciples rebuking a woman for wasting ointment. Morris notes regarding the verb used in John 11:33 "when used of people it usually denotes anger," but he rejects this translation here because, "before we can accept anger as the meaning we must have some indication of the object of the anger and so far this does not seem to be forthcoming."⁴⁰ It is questionable whether other translations are in fact possible, however. Schnackenburg writes, "The word ἐμβριμᾶσθαι ... indicates an outburst of anger, and any attempt to reinterpret it in terms of an internal emotional upset caused by grief, pain or sympathy is illegitimate."⁴¹ Jesus' anger does not have to present an insurmountable problem, however, if heightened emotional states were considered normal in conducting healings and exorcisms. We do not have to suppose that Jesus was angry at Lazarus, his sisters, their neighbors, a demon, or death itself. He was angry because he was getting ready for spiritual conflict. Warfield writes, "his soul is held

³⁷ Thomas 2010, 299.

³⁸ Twelftree 2011, 61–62. See also Green 1997, 225 writing about this verse: "Even if 'fever is often regarded as a demon' (Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 86), Luke does not seem to think along these lines. After all, it is not only here but throughout his narrative that 'healing' is cast in terms of release from oppression of the devil."

³⁹ Bonner 1927, 176 translates John 11:33: "The Spirit set him in a frenzy and he threw himself into disorder." Danker (2000, 322) lists three meanings: "1) to insist on someth[ing] sternly ...; 2) ... scold, censure; 3) to feel strongly about someth[ing], be deeply moved."

⁴⁰ Morris 1995, 493. Brown (1975, 435): "he was angry because he found himself face to face with the realm of Satan which, in this instance, was represented by death."

⁴¹ Schnackenburg 1980, 335. See also Beasley-Murray 1987, 192–94, and Lindars 1992.

by rage: and he advances to the tomb, in Calvin's words ... 'as a champion who prepares for conflict'.⁴² Bonner is on the right track when he writes of the verbs βριμιάομαι and ἐμβριμιάομαι, "when used of the behavior of a prophet, magician, or wonder-worker, there is a strong presumption that they imply frenzy or raving." He explains, "The narrator doubtless considered such a manifestation of seizure by the Spirit as a natural preliminary to so portentous a miracle."⁴³ Bonner's suggestion seems not to have won favor, perhaps because interpreters do not wish to think of Jesus behaving in this manner.

One way for the healer to give the Holy Spirit easier access to himself or herself is by entering a state of heightened emotion. I suggested that this is what Jesus did in connection with exorcism and healings, and this is one reason he often came across as angry in these situations. Mark may thus be historically accurate in describing Jesus as seemingly harsh in sending away the leper he had healed. Perhaps Jesus was in such a heightened emotional state during the healing that he could not turn off his feelings immediately after the healing; he was still affected by the adrenalin rush. I have found clearest support for my contention that exorcisms are emotional affairs in ethnographical descriptions of exorcism from our time rather than from New Testament times. If we look at accounts of exorcisms and healings from around the time that the New Testament was written, the evidence is not as good. Josephus offers the only Jewish account of an exorcism from this time, that of the Jewish exorcist Eleazar referred to above. Although the exorcism has theatrical elements, Josephus makes no reference to the emotional state of the exorcist (*Ant.* 8.45–48). This does not mean that strong emotions were not a part of the exorcism, however. There is reason to believe that Josephus has chosen not to mention more emotional parts of Eleazar's procedure as he felt that they would give his readers a negative view of Jews. We know that elsewhere Josephus removed references to strong emotions that may seem unbecoming for a respectable person. In his retelling of the prophet's deeds, Josephus removes references to Elisha's anger and rudeness; this suggests that he has been colored by values of the Hellenistic learned classes and found such behavior inappropriate for someone supposed to be exemplary.⁴⁴

⁴² Warfield 1912, 61.

⁴³ Bonner 1927, 176.

⁴⁴ Cf. Feldman 1994, 12–13.

As was mentioned, Matthew and Luke tend to downplay Jesus' anger. Perhaps they shared Josephus' feeling that excessive emotion was unbecoming of an exemplary leader. One may ask why Mark included references to Jesus' strong emotions in his account; why did he not consider it problematic? Mark in general shows greater interest in the details of the exorcisms than the other evangelists, and might have included the description of Jesus' emotions for this reason. But Mark probably also found that Jesus' seeming rudeness served to identify him more closely as a prophet in the spirit of Elisha; the author of 2 Kings portrays Elisha as being rude and expressing strong emotions such as anger in several parts of his narrative (2 Kgs 2:23–24; 3:13; 5:27, 13:15–19). Mark patterns Jesus on Elisha in other respects as well; compare for example the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6:34–44) and Elisha's miraculous multiplication of food (2 Kgs 4:42–44). Similarly in John's Gospel Jesus' seemingly rude response to his mother (John 2:4) is patterned on 2 Kgs 3:13.⁴⁵ In Mark, Jesus' anger identifies him as the heir to Elisha.

Conclusion

I suggest that in portraying Jesus as being rude or angry in connection with exorcisms and healings the Gospels may be historically accurate; for an exorcism to be successful the exorcist was expected to be emotionally involved. This need not mean that the exorcist believed malevolent agents were always involved in the maladies addressed. While Matthew and Luke downplay Jesus' strong emotions in these accounts, they serve to make the picture of Jesus as a prophet like Elisha clearer in Mark's Gospel.

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⁴⁵ Klink 2005.

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