

Psychiatrist Documents Case of Demonic Possession

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Staff Writer

(March 14, 2008) A board certified psychiatrist from Hawthorne, New York has published an account of his experience treating a woman who he has determined to be a case of authentic demonic possession.

Richard E. Gallagher, M.D., published a detailed article of his encounters with a woman known only by the pseudonym “Julia” in the February, 2008 issue of *New Oxford Review*. Describing her as a middle-aged, self-supporting Caucasian woman who lives in the United States, she was a former Catholic who had a long history of involvement with Satanic groups.

“Julia was not the typical type of individual who frequently importunes the Church for help but who is really in need of psychiatric or other medical intervention,” Dr. Gallagher wrote. “She was in no way psychotic; in fact, she was consistently logical, highly intelligent, and even quite engaging at times, despite her obvious turmoil.”

Even though she had long ago disassociated herself with the Church, she approached local clergy after becoming convinced that she was being attacked by a demon or Satan. The priest referred her to an official priest-exorcist. During a lengthy and thorough evaluation, she was eventually referred to Dr. Gallagher for further analysis.

Dr. Gallagher, who is an Associate Professor of Clinical Psychiatry at New York Medical College, is a magna cum laude graduate of Princeton University who trained in psychiatry at Yale University School of Medicine. He is the only American psychiatrist to have been a consistent U.S. delegate to the International Association of Exorcists.

In his opinion, what makes Julia’s case so convincing, is that she “not only exhibited, in a highly dramatic fashion, the classic signs of possession, but, having been an avowed and prominent Satanist in her life, also seemed to display ‘special occult powers’ even outside her trance states . . . in a quite open manner to anyone who came in close contact with her.”

This psychic ability involved the phenomenon of objects sometimes flying off shelves in rooms where she was present. She also had a knowledge of facts and beyond what was humanly possible for her to know.

For instance, in one case, she knew the personality and precise manner of death - from a specific form of cancer - of a relative of a member of the treatment team that she could never have conceivably guessed. She was also able to describe in precise detail the state of mind of a priest-member of the team when he was not present at the time. She could name his exact location and even what clothes he was wearing at a given time.

She would often go into trance-states during her sessions with him and he found her behavior during these trances to be very convincing. “Mentally troubled individuals often ‘dissociate,’ but

Julia's trances were accompanied by an unusual phenomenon," Dr. Gallagher wrote. "Out of her mouth would come various threats, taunts, and obscene language, phrases like 'Leave her alone, you idiot,' 'She's ours,' 'Leave, you imbecile priest.'

"The tone of this voice differed markedly from Julia's own, and it varied, sometimes sounding guttural and vaguely masculine, at other points high pitched. Most of her comments during these comments during these 'trances,' or at the subsequent exorcisms, displayed a marked contempt for anything religious or sacred."

When Julia came out of the trances, she remembered nothing.

Because of the complexity of the case, Dr. Gallagher assembled a team of experts including mental-health professional, four Catholic priests, two nuns (both nurses) and several lay volunteers. Once, while the team was teleconferencing without Julia present, her "other" voice actually broke into the phone line and interrupted their conversations, saying "Leave her alone!" and "Get away from her!"

At Julia's request, two series of lengthy exorcism rituals were performed, with the first one beginning on a warm day in June.

"Despite the weather, the room where the rite was being conducted grew distinctly cold," Dr. Gallagher wrote. "Later, however, as the entity in Julia began to spout vitriol and make strange noises, members of the team felt themselves profusely sweating due to a stifling emanation of heat."

After the prayers of the Roman Ritual had been going on for awhile, Julia began to utter multiple voices, loud growls and animal-like noises which seemed impossible for any human to mimic. At one point, the voices spoke in foreign languages, including Spanish and Latin, although Julia herself knows only English.

"The voices were noticeably attacking in nature, and often insolent, blasphemous, and highly scatological [obscenities concerning excrement]," Dr. Gallagher said. "They cursed and insulted the participants in the crudest way. They were frequently threatening - trying, it appeared, to fight back - 'Leave her alone,' 'Stop, you whores' (to the nuns), 'You'll be sorry,' and the like.

Julia also exhibited enormous strength. "Despite the religious sisters and three others holding her down with all their might, they struggled to restrain her. Remarkably, for about 30 minutes, she actually levitated about half a foot in the air."

The entity possessing her was also able to distinguish between holy water and regular water. "She would scream in pain when the blessed water was sprinkled upon her, but have no reaction to clandestine use of unblessed water."

Julia's case illustrates a number of the classic signs of possession such as hidden knowledge, the ability to speak in unknown languages, abnormal physical strength, hatred of anything sacred,

blasphemous language, the ability to discern blessed objects, the phenomenon of levitation and the appearance of an independent, intelligent entity (or entities) during trance-like states.

“Many of these individual features, let alone the full constellation of this overall ‘syndrome’ are, to state the obvious, simply inexplicable on psychiatric or medical grounds,” Dr. Gallagher concluded.

“Therefore, we clearly felt, in this instance, that we were indeed dealing with a genuinely possession individual, albeit one complicated even further by her Satanist history and ‘psychic’ abilities presumed consequent to her cultic involvement and/or her possessed state.”

Although the exorcisms were helpful, they have not yet resolved the matter of the woman’s possession, Dr. Gallagher says, and may or may not be repeated in the future.

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