

Confession as Spiritual Warfare

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I. A Protestant Pastor who wanted to C _____; because it is a biblical D _____:

A. James 5:14: Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; 15 and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects.

B. Some of the problems of group confession alone:

1. S _____
2. B _____ C _____

C. Some other Scriptures I didn't ponder:

1. John 20:19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." 20 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."
2. Acts 19:11 And God did extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. 13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to pronounce the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." 14 Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. 15 But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" 16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, mastered all of them, and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 And this became known to all residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks; and fear fell upon them all; and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. 18 Many also of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. 19 And a number of those who practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned

them in the sight of all; and they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20 So the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily.

Here we see the connection between C _____ and
V _____ in spiritual warfare.

3. Rev. 9:21 nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries (*pharmakon*) or their immorality or their thefts.
Gal. 5:20 [The works of the flesh are:] idolatry, sorcery (*pharmakeia*), enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit ...
Two evils are often tied to satanic rites: the legalization of abortion and the spread of illegal drugs. (Gabrielle Amorth, *An Exorcist: More Stories* [Ignatius, 2002], 13)

II. The Reality of the Demonic

- A. Matt. 8:28 And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demoniacs met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. 29 And behold, they cried out, “What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?” 30 Now a herd of many swine was feeding at some distance from them. 31 And the demons begged him, “If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of swine.” 32 And he said to them, “Go.” So they came out and went into the swine; and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and perished in the waters.

Supernatural s _____, presence of other v _____ and p _____ speaking “through” the persons body, etc.

- B. Luigi Sartori, Italian theologian: “It is probable that some of Jesus’ healings involved individuals affected by nervous disorders rather than by true demonic possession.”
But consider:
Matt. 4:23 And he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people. 24 So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. *They knew the difference between illness and the demonic.*
- C. The Catechism: CCC §414 Satan or the devil and the other demons are fallen angels who have freely refused to serve God and his plan. (See CCC §391-395) CCC §328 The existence of ... angels is a truth of faith ...
- D. Papal Teaching:

1. “May prayer strengthen us for the spiritual battle that the Letter to the Ephesians speaks of: ‘Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might’ (Ephesians 6:10). The Book of Revelation refers to this same battle, recalling before our eyes the image of St Michael the Archangel (cf. Revelation 12:7). Pope Leo XIII certainly had this picture in mind when, at the end of the last century, he brought in, throughout the Church, a special prayer to St Michael: ‘Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil...’ Although this prayer is no longer recited at the end of Mass, I ask everyone not to forget it and to recite it to obtain help in the battle against the forces of darkness and against the spirit of this world.”[3] (John Paul II, *Regina Coeli* address of 24 April 1994)
2. Pope Paul VI: “Anyone who refuses to acknowledge this terrible reality [of the demonic] *departs from the truth of biblical and ecclesiastical teaching....* The Gospel is full of—I would almost say it is populated with—the presence of the demon. (General Audience, Nov. 15, 1972)
3. World-renowned Psychiatrist, M. Scott Peck, M.D.:

“Five years ago when I began work on this book I could no longer avoid the issue of the demonic I was left facing an obvious intellectual question: Is there such a thing as evil spirit? Namely, the devil. I thought not. In common with 99 percent of psychiatrists and the majority of clergy, I did not think the devil existed. Still ... it occurred to me that if I could see one good old-fashioned case of possession I might change my mind. [...] So I decided to go out and look for a case.... The first two cases turned out to be suffering from standard psychiatric disorders ... The third case turned out to be the real thing.

The reader will be naturally disappointed ... that I am not going to describe ... these cases in depth I might be tempted to do so were it not for the fact that there is a book that describes quite well five cases of possession—Malachi Martin’s *Hostage to the Devil* (Bantam Books, 1977). All of my experience confirms the accuracy and depth of understanding of Martin’s work” (M. Scott Peck, M.D., *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil* [New York: Touchstone/Simon & Schuster, 1983], 182-84).

E. St Paul:

Eph. 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to

withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand...

This statement of St. Paul indicates that our the struggle against the demonic is not U _____ or limited to E _____ phenomena, but is a daily R _____ of the Christian life.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One (ASV and other translations of Matt 5:37)

III. Confession is a powerful tool of spiritual warfare:

- A. My experiences in spiritual warfare during urban ministry—the non-Catholic deliverance minister was employing a form of non-sacramental G _____ C _____ as more effective than so-called “P _____ E _____”
- B. Years later I was _____ by the following quotes:
1. “Many times I have written that Satan is much more enraged when we take souls away from him through confession than when we take away bodies through exorcism.” (Fr. Gabrielle Amorth, *An Exorcist Tells His Story*, Ignatius Press, 1990, p. 67)
 2. “Q. *My pastor claims the best exorcism is confession.* A. He is right. It is the most direct means to fight Satan, because it is the sacrament that tears souls from the demon’s grasp, strengthens against sin, unites us more closely to God, and helps conform our souls increasingly to the divine will. I advise frequent confession, possibly weekly, to all victims of evil activities.” (Amorth, *Exorcist: More Stories*, 195)
 3. “In my experience, a good general confession—which I always recommend as a starting point—in conjunction with an intense life of prayer and grace, is sufficient to end the afflictions. Without prayer and grace, exorcisms are ineffective.” (Amorth, *Exorcist: More Stories*, 79)
- C. Theological Reflection: What does it mean to confess? What are we “confessing”?
1. The Greek word *exomologeō* is used to describe both “confessing” S _____ and “confessing” the F _____.
 2. To confess is ultimately to admit *the T* _____ ...
 3. “You will know the _____, and the _____ will make you free.” (John 8:32)
 4. You are of your father the devil... He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the T _____, because there is no truth in him. When he L _____, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a L _____ and the father of L _____. (John 8:44)

5. Confession is a great moment of T _____ which drives out the F _____ that the demonic uses to gain control of us.
6. In confession, we *manifest* (i.e. demonstrate by our words and actions) our own desire to be healed of E _____.
M. Scott Peck: “Even God cannot heal a person who does not want to be healed. At the moment of expulsion both these patients voluntarily took the crucifix, held it to their chests, and prayed for deliverance ...” (*People of the Lie*, 197).

D. Some Practical Recommendations:

1. Confession is a powerful assistance for us in spiritual warfare, and in attaining spiritual freedom.
2. Many habitual sins or addictions have a spiritual warfare _____ to them, a kind of spiritual “bondage” in a certain area.
3. F _____ confession can be very helpful in making spiritual progress. St. Josemaría Escrivá practiced and recommended weekly confession.
4. A good _____ confession can help break a pattern of sin/spiritual defeat. Make an appointment with a holy priest, or do this while on a retreat.

St. Ignatius of Loyola on a General Confession:

Whoever, of his own accord, wants to make a General Confession, will, among many other advantages, find three in making it here. First: Though whoever goes to Confession every year is not obliged to make a General Confession, by making it there is greater profit and merit, because of the greater actual sorrow for all the sins and wickedness of his whole life. Second: In the Spiritual Exercises, sins and their malice are understood more intimately, than in the time when one was not so giving himself to interior things. Gaining now more knowledge of and sorrow for them, he will have greater profit and merit than he had before. Third: In consequence, having made a better Confession and being better disposed, one finds himself in condition and prepared to receive the Blessed Sacrament: the reception of which is an aid not only not to fall into sin, but also to preserve the increase of grace.
(from the *Spiritual Exercises*)

5. Renewing our baptismal r _____ of the Devil in confession can be helpful, in particular confessing and renouncing specific past sins that began a certain pattern of sin that we continue to struggle with (e.g. initial dabbling in the occult, abuse of substances, sexuality, pornography, etc.)
6. S _____, c _____ confession of sins (although not belabored) disposes us to grace and breaks our attachments better than vague, general admissions of guilt.