

“The Diabolical Demonic Obsession of Martin Luther”

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Religion 399

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May 10, 2009

Introduction

Martin Luther is one of the most historically influential Christians ever; the reformation in his name has permanently changed the face of Western Christianity. From 95 theses to theology and politics to popes Martin Luther's life has the ingredients as one of the most rebellious yet inspirational stories ever told. But one could ask; what inspired him to do this? Through the illumination of his glory people have failed to see the darkness that has been the cornerstone to Martin Luther's development as a human being. What is the real reason behind Martin Luther's actions?

Martin Luther's apostasy and reformation was due to his diabolic demonic obsession. Demonic obsession is a less severe form of demonic possession.¹ In any case, Martin Luther was afflicted spiritual, mentally and physically by the prods of demonic influence. In analyzing the life of Martin Luther I will introduce the spiritual realm, give accounts of the spiritual world explaining possession through examples and then outlining diabolical obsession with comparison to other spiritual affliction. In the second section of my thesis I will break Martin Luther's life down into events that would surround the idea of demonic infiltration. I will title the sections as; Luther's influences, childhood superstition, first mass, thunderstorm, fit in the choir, *Anfechtung* and monastery, one against God, later years, and their personality.

¹ "To be possessed can mean that Satan has gained mastery over the will so devastatingly that sinfulness passes beyond ordinary depravity of the world, and its cause must be sought in a power above the order of nature. Possibly this was true in the case of 'Mary who is called Magdalene, out of whom seven devils were gone forth.'"* Or more certainly in Judas who Jesus called a devil**, into whose heart Satan put the thought to betray the Master***. Or as St. Paul testifies: 'And they may recover themselves from the snares of the devil, by whom they are held captive at his will****.'"#

The Spirit

To understand demonic possession we must first investigate the idea of *spirituality*. To understand the demonic realm we must have a secure foundation in the belief of the spiritual world. The spiritual realm can relate to many ideas; ghosts, angels, demons and in some ways become confused with the nonphysical world of scientific institutions as in anti or dark matter. So what is spirituality in the context of demonic possession and where can we look for this answer? Before we examine the source for spirituality first we must identify what we are trying to bring into perspective, which are “evil spirits.”

What is an evil spirit? According to the Roman Ritual an evil spirit is a spiritual being that operates apart from God and has fallen into the realm of Lucifer, the Devil. According to Malachi Martin² the “Evil spirit is personal, and it is intelligent, it is preternatural, in the sense that it is not *of* this material world, but it is *in* this material world. And Evil spirit as well as good advances along the lines of our daily lives. In very normal ways spirit uses and influences our daily thoughts, actions, and customs and, indeed, all the strands that make up the fabric of life in whatever time or place. Contemporary life is no exception.”³ The spirit has an impact on us one

*Luke 8:2

**John 6:71

***John 13:2

****2 Tim. 2:26

Weller, Fr Phillip T. *Roman Ritual (Christian Burial and Office for the Dead, Exorcism, Blessings Reserved to Religious or to Certain Places, Volume 2)*, (New York: Preserving Christian Publications, 2007), 162

² a Roman Catholic Jesuit priest; who gained notoriety as an author and speaker upon topics such as exorcisms, Satanism, Liberation Theology, the Tridentine liturgy, Catholic dogma and the geopolitical importance of The Pope and also author of *Hostage to the Devil*.

³ Martin, Malachi. *Hostage to the Devil: The Possession and Exorcism of Five Contemporary Americans*. (New York: Harperone, 1992), 9

we cannot see but an impact in which we can feel. There is no way of saying how much of our activity is influenced spiritually but in the matter of possession and other forms of demon activity we can say there must be a finite portion of life influenced by the spiritual realm. Spirituality as derived from the Roman Ritual follows the general idea of both these definitions. The Ritual presents spiritual beings as having intelligence and a realm to exist in.

The *spiritual realm* is where the spirit exists. This realm exists here on earth. According to Catholic theology we are in the middle of a spiritual battle. “Woe to the earth, and to the sea, because the Devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but short time.”⁴ So we understand a spirit has a being and a domain: The “being,” either as pure good or as pure evil acting as the will of God or Satan and the domain as either Heaven or Earth. We will center on the spiritual realm of Earth.

What are the characteristics of this spiritual domain? I compare the spiritual realm to scientific doctrines such as gravity, magnetism and other invisible forces. We only recognize them when in action or being acted upon. The spiritual realm is only recognized when one is miraculously and unexplainably saved from death, or when one is amidst exorcism and the carpets become torn to the ceiling and the doors become knocked from their hinges. The forces driving these actions are invisible but the actions in themselves are completely apparent and most importantly conclusive evidence of the spiritual realm.

How can we understand the spiritual realm in the sense of time? First, we must acknowledge the creation of this domain as a product of God. In doing this I must make a theological claim that God is within and without time. Thus the spiritual realm must exist within

⁴ Fr. Phillip T. Weller. *Roman Ritual (Christian Burial and Office for the Dead, Exorcism, Blessings Reserved to Religious or to Certain Places, Volume 2)*. (New York: Preserving Christian Publications, 2007), 161

our consciousness but not be bound to the same construct as our perceived time, allowing spirits to be omniscient and omnipresent with limits not exceeding those of the creator. This would coincide with the idea of the spiritual realm *in* our world but not *of* it.

So now how can we define spirituality? Spirituality is the belief in a nonphysical yet interactive realm in which there is existence of intelligent, purposeful being's governed by the creator of all or God. Spirituality recognizes the mind-body dichotomy, or separation of mind and body, typically the mind having a connection with the spiritual realm. In defining spirituality I have provided a context in which to examine demonic possession. We understand the spirit has a domain and a being now we must demonstrate its existence. In the next section we will focus on the possession of a person, in seeking the purpose of the "evil" spirit it will make the purpose of the "good" spirit apparent. I will also re-contextualize our findings of the spiritual realm and apply them to the Catholic criteria.

Possession and Obsession

What is the demons purpose under the context of Catholicism? It is important to do this because this is the context I will be using through-out this examination.⁵

How does one become possessed? According to Father Fortea demonic involvement seems to be an empirical process or a process in which the demon depends on each prior step to advance its involvement. The chief causes he lists are, "making a pact with the Devil, taking part in spiritualist sessions, satanic cults or esoteric rites, offering one's child to Satan, or becoming a

⁵ To help with answering questions of these matters I bring attention to Fr. Jose Antonio Fortea's; he is a priest of the Diocese of Alcala de Henares (Madrid), Spain and an acclaimed expert in the field of demonology. I will be abstracting his ideas from his interview conducted by himself in the manner of question and answer. These ideas are the ideas of the Catholic Church.

victim of witch craft (i.e. spells).”⁶ When we discuss Luther we may ask if he had been exposed to witch craft and other forms of magic.

So why would a demon want to possess a human being, what are its goals? Fortea would state, “To cause suffering.” Furthermore, “a demon cannot resist temptation, one needs virtue, and we cannot expect a demon to be virtuous. He [it] always seeks the benefits in the here and now; he is a slave of his own passions and impulses”⁷, which would be to make mankind suffer. If the Demon suffers from arguably the most destructive sin... pride, and God has given His grace and favor to us the Demon will be overwhelmingly vindictive to humanity. His passion there for is to simply terrorize humanity in hope to separate us from God. How many times have you heard people ask, Why is God doing this to me? In this question alone the Demon has won because you are blaming God for the Devil’s work. This may also be exhibited in the reception of what you may think are gifts from God such as prophecy, healing and other psychic abilities.

With all of this being said, why would God allow this to happen? Fortea answers this question with four ideas, “possession demonstrates the truth of the Catholic faith, possession punishes sinners who seek a relationship with evil, possession can be a spiritual benefit and possession can produce wholesome teachings for humanity.”⁸ Possessions existence demonstrates the truth of the Catholic Church because possession can be healed by the Catholic Church with great efficacy. Possession is self inflicted a punishment for letting your spirituality run astray. Out of this your spirituality can be realigned, as well as produce a wholesome example for others.

⁶ Jose Antonio Fortea. *Interview With an Exorcist: An Insider's Look at the Devil, Demonic Possession, and the Path to Deliverance*. (West Chester: Ascension Press, 2006), 82

⁷ Fortea, 82

⁸ Ibid., 85

Finally, what kinds of demons do the possessing? Demons have different classifications and it is important to understand their behavior so we can understand the events surrounding Luther's possible demonic infiltration. There are two kinds of demons, the *clausi* and *aperti*. From the group of *clausi* we have two more distinctions, the *mutos* and the *speakers*. "A *clausus* demon causes the possessed to close his eyes (with them rolled back) when entering into a trance. An *apertus* demon causes the possessed to keep his eyes open while in a trance, giving looks of anger and rage, and speaking a great deal. The *aperti* are loquacious and violent, and a possessed person often needs to be held down during the exorcism; some *clausi* will speak after some time of prayer, always without opening their eyes, but others are completely mute."⁹ The last kind of demon I would like to introduce you to is the culprit plagued I argue that Martin Luther, the *abdi*. The *abdi* is not a distinct demon but a demon that inherits the characteristics of complete discreetness and remains as hidden as possible. Once they are exposed which may never occur they take on characteristics of the above listed demons.

6 Elements of Demonic Activity

Gabrielle Amorth, renowned chief exorcist of Rome, argues there are "6 elements of demonic activity." The six elements were constructed by him through decades of countless exorcisms and have been clearly examined and documented as legitimate and clear description of the elements of demonic activity. They are; 1) External physical pain caused by Satan, 2) Demonic possession, 3) Diabolical oppression, 4) Diabolic obsession, 5) Diabolic infestation and 6) Diabolical subjugation, or dependence.

⁹ Jose Antonio Fortea. *Interview with an Exorcist: An Insider's Look at the Devil, Demonic Possession, and the Path to Deliverance*. (West Chester: Ascension Press, 2006), 88

External physical pain caused by Satan's characteristics is just the physical torture from the harassment from demons. Amorth gives us the example of St. Paul of the Cross and his accounts of being flogged by demons. The cure for this is prayer over time. Diabolical oppression is just the suffering of hardship caused by the Devil. A classical example Amorth gives would be Job, whose account is in the Old Testament. The cure for this attack would be prayer or a full blown exorcism. Demonic Possession is the overtaking of the body but never the soul by an opposing demon. There are no definite characteristics because so many symptoms have been observed but the true cure for a full blown possession would be an exorcism performed from the Roman Ritual. Diabolical infestation is the possession of the home, things or even animals. One can use haunted houses, ancient or cursed texts and even the case of "legion" in which Jesus exorcized into the pigs. Last, Diabolical subjugation, or dependence or when we fall voluntarily into Satan's grip by offering ourselves or children to him in order to receive spiritual or physical compensation.

Martin Luther may have been subjected to diabolical obsession. Gabrielle Amorth defines this as,

Symptoms include sudden attacks, at times ongoing, of obsessive thoughts, sometimes even rationally absurd, but of such nature that the victim is unable to free himself. Therefore the obsessed person lives in a perpetual state of prostration, desperation, and attempts at suicide. Almost always obsession influences dreams. Some people will say that this is evidence of mental illness, requiring the services of a psychiatrist or a psychologist. The same could be said of all other forms of demonic phenomena. Some symptoms, however, are so inconsistent with known illnesses that they point with certainty to their evil origins. Only an expert and well-trained eye can identify the crucial differences.¹⁰

¹⁰ Gabriele Amorth. *An Exorcist Tells His Story*. San Francisco: (Ignatius Press, 1999) 33-35

It has been said that Martin Luther was demonically possessed by his adversaries. I only argue that Martin suffered from diabolical obsession, an affliction less severe than full blown possession. We will notice in our examination that Martin did display many but not all, the symptoms of diabolical obsession. There is no clear evidence that he attempted to commit suicide but his symptoms did lack the identification of a “well trained eye.”

Why does one become obsessed? From a Christian perspective the purpose is to carry out the will of the Devil in a manner to deter your attention from Christ. The Roman ritual states possession to mean the idea of Christ diversion, “That Satan has beclouded the intellect, so that the light of faith cannot illuminate.”¹¹ It further quotes the bible in saying, “In whom the god of this world [the Devil] hath blinded the minds of the unbelievers that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine unto them.”¹² As to say the Devil afflicts us with the pains of possession to separate our connection to God. Knowing that Satan can only possess our body and not our soul there can never be a full separation influenced demonically. The goal of the demonic is to cloud the intellect to the point in which God’s light may feel as if it is overpowered by darkness.¹³

Now that we have a being, a realm and a purpose we need proof of this realm in action. The gospels investigate the driving out of evil spirits by Jesus and his apostles. However we will

¹¹ Fr. Phillip T. Weller. *Roman Ritual (Christian Burial and Office for the Dead, Exorcism, Blessings Reserved to Religious or to Certain Places, Volume 2)*. (New York: Preserving Christian Publications, 2007), 163

¹² Ibid.*

*2Cor. 4:4

¹³ Keep in mind during the analysis of Anfechtung of Martin Luther; we will develop a complete sense of this idea.

focus on more contemporary sources. First I will begin with evidence from Catholic theologian, Malachi Martin.

The Accounts

Martin provides accounts of possession in five separate cases. I will focus on these two separate cases because they will help to provide a reference point for Luther's diabolical obsession. A qualified psychologist Carl, with a degree in physics, had an interest in the scientific study of parapsychology, which focused on non-ordinary states of the human consciousness. He began to dabble in the ancient arts of séances and trances to tap into his subconscious. Séances and other practices of the occult as noted above are deemed practices that encourage the demonic realm's influence. While on an educational trip with his associates and students Carl began having episodes of anger and, he became "erratic at this point, and his again mirrored anger together with confusion and contempt,"¹⁴ noted above as possible symptoms of demonic obsession. He began reciting the words *aquae viv... immortalis...* but when he approached the words *Chrsitum*, he could only mutter in a spotty fashion *Christ* repeatedly. Next, Carl began to foam at the mouth and his body temperature began to drop to a frozen touch. He would continue to mutter the word "Christ" throughout this episode. As we will see in a later

¹⁴ Martin, Malachi. *Hostage to the Devil: The Possession and Exorcism of Five Contemporary Americans*. (New York: Harperone, 1992), 327

depiction of Luther's experience of Monastery there will be similarities in his in—ability to mutter “Christ” as well as his body temperature failing to a severe low.

When he arrived home he returned to a state of child-like vulnerability. On occasion Carl was able to levitate, his body lifted from the couch he rested on “ever so slightly.” This event had even been videotaped and documented. After another happening, occurring on midnight a few weeks later Carl's Father was compelled to call a priest. After three weeks of pre-exorcism tests and evaluations Carl was deemed possessed. It is important to notice that Carl was not a full believer in possession himself, “At the time it seemed to arouse very little interest in Carl's mind. He brushed the topic aside into the back of his mind.”¹⁵

The reason behind testing the subject is to prove the possession authentic. The evaluation is conducted by scientists, priests and psychiatrists. Only 1 out of 5,000 cases is deemed authentic by the Vatican. If and only if there is no other explanation other than possession is there an exorcism preformed. The Roman Catholic Churches criteria for possession is extremely strict as well as the evaluation.

In the presence of four psychological assistants, an assistant priest and his best friend Hearty, a priest who conducts the exorcism, Carl's exorcism begins. After the opening dialogue Carl's body begins to take different shape, it begins to diminish or shrink; it was documented as “caving in on its self.” The skin on Carl's face appeared to become completely flat and tight as to show skeletal detail and the curls in his hair flatten. Next, every book on the shelf around them flies off the shelf and all the pages are moved through by an unexplainable invisible entity. A similar event startles Luther when in the Monastery when he hears books fall from their shelves and it startles him to the point to commence his studies for the night.

¹⁵ Ibid., 346

The dialogue continues Carl shouting blasphemies to God and the human race. During the exorcism Carl recites facts of the past that he could have never known, he also uses voices impossible for him to make. All these events taking place at once; voice change... neither male or female, levitation, telekinesis (the book shelf), facial and bodily distortions of severe magnitude, intimate knowledge and other symptoms provided are substantial evidence for the evil spiritual being. The demon even provided a justifiable reason for its presence. "The Lord of Knowledge must be adored... with knowledge one can be sure... Surety only comes from clear vision... clear vision comes from clear thought... Feelings and beliefs are a travesty... The Lord of Knowledge gives possession of the earth... the earth is all one, all one being..."¹⁶ The idea is to confuse you into diverting your attention from Christ, make you believe full knowledge is obtainable from the world. The fact that all this material is documented, recorded and video-taped provides even more substantiation.

Next is the account of a Catholic, apostasy¹⁷ and demonic possession with similarities to Martin Luther's. Father Jonathan, born Yves L. in Manchester, New Hampshire who was excommunicated by the Catholic Church for his own apostasy, first showed signs of demonic attachment in his early seminary days. During an oral examination Father Jonathan was asked about the nature of the seven sacraments. Father Yves answered the question by insisting that the value in the sacraments were nothing more than an expression of "man's natural unity with the world."¹⁸ According to Catholic doctrine this is extremely heretical. He continued to insist that Jesus' destination after the cross was to return back to nature. This teaching shows that the

¹⁶ Martin, Malachi. *Hostage to the Devil: The Possession and Exorcism of Five Contemporary Americans*. (New York: Harperone, 1992), 385

¹⁷ the act of abandoning a party for cause

¹⁸ Martin, Malachi. *Hostage to the Devil*, 109

emphasis is not on Jesus return to heaven but into the world. This in turn diverts attention from the heavenly authority Jesus may have and it may suggest a more pagan mode of worship when viewing the world.

After Seminary there, his first public signs of possession came when he administered sacraments, especially of marriage. After several episodes Father Jonathan was moved to a different Church, although called “A grand young priest.” He began to ever so slightly reform the sacraments to fulfill his demonic needs. He began to mix in elements of poetry into his vows. In Yves free time he dabbled in poetry, writing and painting, it may have seemed as if the art was his connection to the demon taking a foothold in his life. While painting Yves would find that “his memory of past things reviving and lighting up like a panel, pouring assonances and shadings into his imagination. And his general effort suddenly expanded and became richer as he tried to reproduce the new form his experience had taken,”¹⁹ he began to accept his thoughts and this new found motivation; it was a form of pleasure to him. Later we see Luther mixing in ideas of unsanctioned philosophy into his Catholic theological ideas as well as a somewhat reformation of sacraments and Jonathan did.

The distinct event of his possession was when Yves was on the side of the road pulled over in his car. The possession took place when Yves gave into a push he felt in his mind, he felt an unbearable weight in such a dramatic event that he alone had to give in. As soon as he gave in and after this conscious dialogue between spiritual and physical he felt full of inspiration again. Reflecting back Father Jonathan said, at that time he was “accepting some ‘remote’ or ‘alien’ control—he was suddenly inundated.”²⁰ When reading the account of Luther’s thunderstorm incident you will see similarities.

¹⁹ Martin, Malachi. *Hostage to the Devil*, 111

What the demon inside this man enjoyed doing through Father Jonathan was put an earthly perception on Christ. Father Jonathan all of a sudden assigned an earthly role to Jesus when speaking to people in private. Jonathan also began to change the sacraments slightly enough to make them heretical but still enough for the average person to understand them as doctrine. After this when he was asked to perform priestly acts such as solemnizing marriage, confessions or even dinner invitations he found a voice inside himself telling him to find a way out.

Next, is an important incident surrounding Yves possession because it is eerily similar to an incident pertaining to Martin Luther's First Mass:

In 1963, Yves' situation became critical for him... The servers and the people found that he began to take a longer time to say Mass. Peculiarly enough; it was only one part of the Mass that took the additional time. It was the most solemn section immediately preceding the Consecration that begins when the priest extends his hands, palms downward, fingers together, over the chalice and the bread, the ceremonial calls for complete silence, broken only by the tinkling of the Mass bell. Yves would now remain for abnormal lengths of time, with his hands outstretched—at first only three minutes, then ten, then fifteen, once thirty agonizing additional minutes, with congregation and attendants waiting and watching. The he would take abnormally long time to utter the actual words of consecration. At an ordinary pace, all these ceremonial actions take no more than five minutes.²¹

What happened during this incident is something typical of priestly possession. It is said that Latin has the most efficacy when driving out the demonic spirit. Also, No "man" does the driving out, it is Jesus himself that is called upon to remove the demonic force. During the consecration, depending on Catholic theology, there is not just the allegorical

²⁰ Ibid., 113

²¹ Martin, Malachi. *Hostage to the Devil*, 116

sense of the body and blood of Christ. There is literally transubstantiation. When the demon is among the Latin words for this consecration and then before the literal body and blood it begins to tremble as anyone would in the face of a greater enemy. This would explain Martin Luther and Yves erratic behavior during the Mass. Also, Yves started to alter the Mass by making subtle changes for example changing the words “saving” or “salvation” to “winning” or “triumph”, love to pride, death to returned home, sacrifice to defiance and so on.

In addition, Father Jonathan began to feel tormented and sick, he began to suffer his own *Anfechtung* (Darkness of his soul), a term also described and resembled by Martin Luther. He was having psychological and physical pain surrounding his whole self, he began to hear voices and whispers and heretical thoughts of lunacy surrounded him. He began to uncontrollably reform the sacraments as he saw fit. He recalled hearing a voice inside of him stating, “All is gathered into Mr. Natural.”²² Another sign of this is that Father Jonathan became known as the self proclaimed “founder of a new religion.”²³ Later on he displayed several more signs of his apostasy and his demonic infiltration through other acts of reforming the Catholic doctrine and theology and conveying it back out to his followers. The incidents surrounding Martin Luther’s First Mass and Later years will soon reflect the same feelings as these experiences.

After an incident occurred during a Mass that entailed everyone fleeing and Father Jonathan restrained he immediately admitted that his Mother was epileptic and that this psychological disorder is the reason for his actions. This self diagnosis is peculiar considering it references the definition of diabolic obsession and the demons power to hide its self behind

²² Martin, Malachi. *Hostage to the Devil*, 118

²³ *Ibid.*, 125

psychological sickness. Only until looking into Father Jonathan's eyes would you believe this. One of the Pastors in attendance said, "In his eyes, Father Yves must be possessed."²⁴ The incident overwhelmingly resembled the incident that you will soon read about marked the "First Mass."

Remember, in this case of Father Jonathan we are dealing with full blown possession. What we will see in the case of Martin Luther is a very well hidden demonic infiltration, only subtle acts of the demonic in compassion to Father Jonathan. In the upcoming sections there will be an introduction to who Martin Luther was, as well as specification of his motives for his actions. It will be important to study what he did as well as what he said. Questions to keep in mind are; do these actions/words imply any demonic undertones, and are these symptoms comparable to the examples given above?

Luther Section Introduction

Martin Luther was born in 1483, November in Eisleben, Germany. From 1498—1505 Luther studied Latin, arts and law. July 2, 1505 was his famous thunderstorm incident which will be key to my argument. Two years later in early April of 1507 Luther was ordained at the Cathedral Church of St. Mary. Between 1510 and 1520 Martin Luther was sent to Rome because of the observant controversy then transfers to Wittenberg and received his degree of doctor of theology which led him to become a professor of theology. Luther also gave his first lectures on Psalms (*Dictata super Psalterium*), Epistles to Romans and his disputation against scholastic theology. October 31 of the year 1517 Luther posted his 95 theses at the Castle Church of Wittenberg and he demanded that the archbishop Albrecht of Mainz put an end to the abuse of indulgences; the

²⁴ Ibid., 121

theses are later taken as a direct public attack on the Pope. In 1521 after several events including “burning of the bull” and the condemnation of his theology, Luther was finally excommunicated by Pope Leo X on January third. After Luther’s excommunication he spent roughly twenty years giving sermons, lectures and disputations. During this time his most popular writings were published such as *Dass Jesus ein gebornern Jude sei*, *Von weltlicher Obrigkeit*, and *Brief an die Fursten zu Sachsen von dem aufruhrerischen Geist*. “Dass Jesus...” translates into, That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew. It gathered attention because following these writings Martin Luther published works that convict and speak out heavily against the Jews. In 1526, June 7 Martin Luther fathers a son while simultaneously becoming ill. A year later he was diagnosed with severe illness and depression as well as fathering a daughter. In 1528 his daughter Elisabeth died but then Magdalena was born a year later. February 22, 1546 after a life of reformation, translation and excommunication Luther passed away. His funeral was held at the Castle Church of Wittenberg.²⁵

Next will be an in depth profile of Luther’s personality and a breakdown of certain occurrences and episodes of his life that will provide evidence for diabolic obsession.

I lay captured by the Devil
 I was lost in death
 My sinfulness tormented me night and day
 In which I was born
 I also fell ever deeper into it
 There was nothing good about my life
 Sin had taken possession of me
 My good works were good for nothing
 They were all worthless

²⁵ Chronological outline provided by: Heiko A. Oberman. *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 355

The free will hated God's Judgment
 It was dead to what was good
 Fear drove me to despair
 So nothing was left to me but dying
 I had to sink to Hell.²⁶

The author of this poem seems to be someone who feels they may be attached to certain darkness. They may feel as if they have been victim of a demonic plague that has been tormenting them physically, mentally and even spiritually. The author of this poem is Martin Luther.

Who were Martin Luther's influences and why? Why was he attracted to these ideas and were these ideas deemed as heretical? Was Martin Luther led astray from the Church and the Churches way of thought? If Martin Luther was uninvolved with the separate entity he may not have had the temptation to indulge in these different ways and dangerous ways of thinking, especially at the time he studied theology.

Luther's Influences

Upon Luther's 18th birthday he is enrolled in Erfurt studying music, art, law and philosophy. He is quoted saying, "I belong to the Occamist party." We all should be aware that William of Ockham was nicknamed the "first protestant."

In his controversial writings William of Ockham appears as the advocate of secular absolutism. He denies the right of the popes to exercise temporal power, or to interfere in any way whatever in the affairs of the Empire. ... Thus, in the process of simplification he denied the existence of intentional species, rejected the distinction between essence and existence, and protested against the Thomistic doctrine of active and passive intellect. His skepticism appears in his

²⁶ Oberman, Heiko A. *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*, 319

doctrine that human reason can prove neither the immortality of the soul nor the existence, unity, and infinity of God. These truths, he teaches, are known to us by Revelation alone. In ethics he is a voluntarist, maintaining that all distinction between right and wrong depends on the will of God.²⁷

These teachings have been deemed heretical by the Catholic Church and Luther knows this, yet he still gravitates to these philosophies. For example Ockham's advocating of "secular absolutism" was also shared by Marx and Hitler, his idea of "intentional species" was heavily argued by St. Thomas Aquinas and his apparent skepticism could be translated into a general confrontation with God outside of denomination. This reflects the ideas Father Jonathan incorporated into his philosophies although not as obvious. Furthermore:

Ockham's attitude towards the established order in the Church and towards the recognized system of philosophy in the academic world of his day was one of protest. He has, indeed, been called "the first Protestant". Nevertheless, he recognized in his polemical writings the authority of the Church in spiritual matters, and did not diminish that authority in any respect. Similarly, although he rejected the rational demonstration of several truths which are fundamental in the Christian system of theology, he held firmly to the same truths as matters of faith. His effort to simplify Scholasticism was no doubt well-intentioned, and the fact that simplification was the fashion in those days would seem to indicate that a reform was needed.²⁸

The most important statement in this section on Ockham is "he rejected the rational demonstration of several truths which are fundamental in the Christian system of theology."

²⁷ William Turner. "William of Ockham." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 15. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912. 6 May 2009 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15636a.htm>>.

²⁸ William Turner. "William of Ockham." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 15. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912. 6 May 2009 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15636a.htm>>.

Then why did Luther take this man's ideas into such high regard when they question even fundamental Christian thought processes? Whatever may have been tempting him to indulgence in these philosophical ideas must have been aware of the negative power these suggestions may have with-in the Church.

Luther continued to give credit to Occam's theories and held them in high regard, when taking up matters of doctrine and Catholic theology he would also have a subtle stance supported by Occam's principles. As we saw in the case of full blown possession, Fr. Jonathan also having this subtle misdirection can be a simple form of a demonic counterpart distracting from Christian truth. These symptoms are quite comparable to the Fr. Jonathan. They both tried to incorporate separate non-Church sanctioned philosophy into their teachings. Luther should have known to leave institutions of man where they are and above all only take into consideration the Church's teaching as well as scripture. Luther is also documented as someone who became absorbed in classical poetry, this may not be a direct sign by any means of diabolic obsession but it holds consistent to the story of Fr. Jonathan.

Diabolical Obsession (reminder)

Just a brief reminder of what diabolical obsession is;

Symptoms include sudden attacks, at times ongoing, of obsessive thoughts, sometimes even rationally absurd, but of such nature that the victim is unable to free himself Therefore the obsessed person lives in a perpetual state of prostration, desperation, and attempts at suicide. Almost always obsession influences dreams. Some people will say that this is evidence of mental illness, requiring the services of a psychiatrist or a psychologist. The same could be said of all other forms of demonic phenomena. Some symptoms, however, are so

inconsistent with known illnesses that they point with certainty to their evil origins. Only an expert and well-trained eye can identify the crucial differences.

With this in mind we begin to closely examine the life of Martin Luther breaking it down into nine different sections; childhood superstition, first mass, thunderstorm, fit in the choir, Anfechtung and monastery, one against God, later years, Luther's influences and their personality. With these different sections we will be able to look at different monuments in Luther's life that appear to have demonic affiliation.

Childhood Superstition

The first evidence leading to Luther's diabolic obsession is from a demonically typical source. Luther grew up in an extremely superstitious medieval period and there were open gates allowing the demonic into his life all around him. "Luther's home was not free from superstitions of the time. Later on in life Luther still seemed too affected by superstition although in a different way. He suffered from the savage's fear of a malevolent deity, the enemy of men, capricious, easily and unwittingly offended if sacred places be violated of magical formulas mispronounced."²⁹ There are accounts of Men and women who have invited superstition into their house in forms of the occult and other black magic. They have tragically suffered from the afflictions of the demonic for years after and some not seeking a cure have died from the insanity it has caused. Luther's family was among the ideas of demons and devils. Luther's father was once called to the deathbed of a Mansfeld miner who showed him his back and said, 'That's how the Devil beat me in the shaft.' Luther tells us that this event so disturbed his father that he

²⁹ Roland H. Bainton. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther (Hendrickson Classic Biographies)*. (Peabody Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 41

almost died.”³⁰ Both Luther and his Mother believed too, “The reformer still believed in changelings and monsters. His mother thought that one of their neighbors was a witch who cursed children so that they cried to death,”³¹ also, “[Martin’s mother Margarethe] felt the spells of the evil spirits, and their terror long lingered with the boy Martin.”³² 9The statement made of his Mother is very self explanatory. Because of the terrors of superstition and questionable beliefs as a child Martin may have had an evil entity linger with him throughout his life. Such were his childhood influences.

These continued throughout his life, “And Martin, having almost literally absorbed such superstitions with his mother’s milk...Even a few days before his death, Luther saw the Devil sitting on a rain pipe outside of his window, exposing his behind to him.”³³ Martin Luther’s Obsession may have stemmed from superstitions of his time period. Even until his last days Luther would spot demons and Devils that plagued his whole life, this absolutely could give away to the idea of a taunting nemesis. It was extremely common for occult practices and spells to be performed out of malice on one another and Luther’s mother had a firm belief and even a possible practice in it. Luther was a man who was afraid of the demonic world and has even been witnessed stating that the Devil and his counterparts were tightly entwined within the magical realm. “Rather late in his life, Luther could say, ‘many of the regions are inhabited by Devils; Prussia is full of them’... The fact is that Luther, like all children of his time, was deeply imbued with the idea of universal presence of spirits on that social frontier on which he grew up... In his

³⁰ Ibid., 43

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Erik H. Erikson. *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (Austen Riggs Monograph, No 4). (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993), 59

childhood, strange noises made by wind and water, and strange sights seen in the traitorous twilight and in the dark, were a matter of course taken as evidence of that population of demons sent by sorcerers and witches...”³⁴ Knowing this, Luther still was part of the superstition that enveloped his time period and opened up many gates for a diabolical host. He also exhibited signs such as auditory and visual that could complete the idea that he was experiencing the demonic.

The next event leads us to, what I believe, to be the most important moment of Martin Luther’s demonic obsession. The night he prayed to St. Anna to spare his life and he would become a monk.

Thunderstorm

In 1505, during Luther’s travels a severe thunderstorm took place. This seems to be the moment, as compared to Jonathan’s roadside incident where Luther came into accepting his demonic influence and raised the bar to a diabolic obsession. As Roland Bainton, a leading specialist in reformation history said, “There was a God and there was the Devil. And the Devil could disguise himself as an angel of light. Had Luther, then, been right to follow a vision which might after all have been of the arch fiend?”³⁵ During the thunderstorm out of sheer terror and agony Luther called upon the protection of St. Anne, patron Saint of miners. Out of panic he cried out, “St. Anne, help me! I will become a monk!”³⁶ He says later on “I did not become a monk of my own free will and desire, still less to gain any gratification of the flesh, but... I was walled in by

³⁴ Erik H. Erikson. *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (Austen Riggs Monograph, No 4). (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993), 59

³⁵ Roland H. Bainton. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Hendrickson Classic Biographies). (Peabody Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 44

³⁶ Ibid., 54

terror and the agony of sudden death and forced by necessity to take the vow.”³⁷ These feelings demonstrate the same feelings one would feel when overtaken by an enemy or when one knows they have become spiritually irresponsible. If Luther’s vow was against his will and cause extreme terror why did he continue to satisfy it? These feelings precisely match Father Jonathan’s and many other possession victims’ testimony when it comes to dealing with the demonic.

We see these beginnings as the first symptoms of Martin Luther’s *Anfechtung*.

“The term *Anfechtung* (plural = *Anfechtungen*) occurs repeatedly in Luther studies and cannot adequately be translated by means of one English word. While the conventional definition is ‘temptation,’ with Luther it refers much more to a severe torment of the inner spirit and conscience...”³⁸

We will soon focus on the *Anfechtung*, as of now we will understand it as “the dark night of the soul.” I would define it as spiritual depression brought on by the un-acknowledgement of psychological pressure inflicted by the spiritual realm.

Luther reflected on his decision later, “I am uncertain with what kind of an attitude I took my vow. I was more overpowered than drawn. God wanted it this way. I am afraid that I, too, may have taken my vow in an impious and sacrilegious way.”³⁹ Luther would continue on to tell the people who were skeptical of his decision that it was a calling and “God” wanted it so. These feelings of overpowerment and a higher calling which cannot be silenced would seem to be afflictions of one who is suffering the presence of a demonic force. Luther was also quoted in

³⁷ Ibid., 55

³⁸ Ibid., 54

³⁹ Roland H. Bainton. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, 56

von Loewenich's book stating that the vow he made was regretted, this statement is coming from July 16, 1539 Table Talk.

While dramatic, the thunderstorm is only the beginning of evidence for Martin Luther's demonic obsession. This next event has been dubbed the Fit in the Choir.

Fit in the Choir

The story has been preserved by Cochlaus in his *Kommentaren Uber die Taten und Schriften Luther*. "According to the story, Luther was once sitting in the choir during Mass when the Gospel was read about the expulsion of the demons from the man who was deaf and dumb. Luther is said to have broken down and shouted, 'It's not me! It's not me!'" Three original reporters of this story later on went to make a bold statement of Luther revealing his sign of demonic possession, the three reporters being Cochlaeus: a German humanist and controversialist, Dungersheim: German Catholic theologian and Oldecop: confessor of Luther and Franciscan Monastery priest; although opponents of Luther they still remain accurate and creditable sources.

The Dominican Heinrich Denifle, Sub-Archivar of the Holy See had only one explanation for the "fit in the choir"; it only had an inner cause. "With his [Denifle's] suspicion that Luther's whole career may have been inspired by the Devil, Denifle puts his finger on the sore spot in Luther's whole spiritual and psychological make-up. His days in the monastery were darkened by a suspicion, which Martin's father expressed loudly on the occasion of the

young priest's first Mass, that the thunderstorm had really been the voice of a *Gespensst*, a ghost; thus Luther's vow was on the borderline of both pathology and demonology."⁴⁰ Someone else is recognizing Luther's diabolical obsession. This could state a reason for his perceived insanity and gives a better perspective on the event of the first mass and of his thunderstorm incident. Dr. Paul J. Reiter, a committed student of Luther and a leading Danish psychiatrist believes that this event, the fit of the choir, is "a matter of severest psychopathology" and his "attacks cannot 'with the best of will' be conceived of as links 'in the chain of meaningful psychological development.'"⁴¹ An interpretation of this passage could simply state that Luther's afflictions have been noticed and characterized by others as being outside the realm of psychology due to their severity.

He continues on to say Luther was only "himself" rarely, that Luther did have inner destructive processes. It is almost as if we see a glimpse of Father Jonathan the charismatic priest lead astray, who would only offer glimpses of himself but then become swallowed in his possession.

"... and that he had strange fits of unconsciousness which, in one case, the fit in the choir, are suspected of having been accompanied by convulsions,"⁴² Again we have painted a picture of Father Jonathan. When Father Jonathan had his fit he immediately purposed the idea that he was epileptic. We find out after reading further that he was not. Demonic obsession does include in its definition the ability of demons to hide behind psychological symptoms. Of course epilepsy has the same characteristics displayed by Martin Luther on this day. So could it be merely epilepsy? Further evidence seems to suggest demonic obsession instead.

⁴⁰ Erik H. Erikson. *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History*, 26

⁴¹ Ibid., 27

⁴² Ibid., 148

The next section will be an analysis of Luther within the confines of the Monastery. This is the time period where Luther displayed the most profound symptoms considering this period gave birth to what he called the *Anfechtung* and what I show as the pinnacle of his diabolic obsession.

Monastery and the *Anfechtung*

In the Monastery Luther admits he suffered greatly from *Anfechtung*. As a reminder, it may be a test sent by God, it could also be an affliction by the Devil to destroy a man. The *Anfechtung* may be extremely spiritual in nature which is significant considering his *Anfechtung* reached its heights during the most spiritual time in his life, the monastery. “No sooner did one little *Anfechtung* of death or sin appear, than I collapsed and found neither Baptism nor monasticism of any help. On such occasions I was the most miserable person on the earth. My days and nights were so filled with weeping and doubt that no one could put up with me. Bathed and Baptized in monkery, I had reason to sweat, for I did not know Christ other than as a severe judge from whom I desperately wished to flee but from whom I was never able to escape.”⁴³

Could it be possible that what was inside of Martin Luther was beginning to take hold of him? Could this intelligent, evil being hide behind the harshness of Monastic life? It is as if the being surrounding Martin Luther uses the traditional aesthetic practices conducted by the Monastery to hide its own methods of self degradation to make Luther suffer.

⁴³ Walther Von Loewenich. *Martin Luther: The Man and His Work*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Pub, 1986), 76

Luther also exhibited other symptoms while in Monastery. “In consequence the most frightful insecurities beset him. Panic invaded his spirit. The conscience became so disquieted as to start and tremble at the stirring of a wind—blown leaf. The horror of the nightmare gripping the soul, the dread of one waking in the dusk to look into the eyes of him who has come to take his life... These were the torments which Luther repeatedly testified were far worse than any physical ailment that he had ever endured.”⁴⁴ This develops a picture of the demon that is plaguing Martin. We begin to gain a sense of what Martin is so afraid of. This quote also gives shape to the entity taking it from the allegorical realm into the practical realm. Another piece that is striking is the part in which Martin testifies what he endures is worse than any physical ailment. Martin himself could be linking the afflictions to the spiritual realm.

“[Luther] had often been tempted by Satan’s arguments, he recalled— Luther’s way of describing the inner voice that tormented him with various kinds of doubt. Often Satan struck him with such force that he did not know whether God existed or not—a not surprising notion for one obsessed with death. His solution was to call on the name of Christ... One day when he was sunk in depression Staupitz asked him gently, ‘why are you sad?’ Luther cried out in despair, ‘ah, how shall I escape this?’ Staupitz replied, ‘Ah, but you do not know what this is necessary for you; otherwise nothing good can come from you.’”⁴⁵

This quote delivers a critical depiction of how Martin Luther felt while in Monastery, it also helps to define his *Anfechtung* clearly. In his dialogue with Johann von Staupitz, Martin Luther’s supervisor as well as a Vicar General of the Augustinian order,⁴⁶ it is apparent that Martin Luther

⁴⁴ Roland H. Bainton. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, 56

⁴⁵ Marius, Richard. *Martin Luther: The Christian between God and Death*. (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2000), 75

⁴⁶ An order of monks that Luther belonged to, named after St. Augustine of Hippo.

is in such spiritual despair he wants a way out. Could this possibly coincide with the definition of diabolic obsession referencing to having suicidal tendencies?

Luther states “I was very pious in the Monastery, yet I was sad because I thought God was not gracious to me.”⁴⁷ At this time in his life Luther appears to have a grudge with God personally not just the Catholic doctrines. He may be attacking God through the Roman Catholic theology in order to seek some form of vengeance. This is a sign that Luther may in fact be seeking a means to weaken God’s kingdom through the division of his church. This feeling may very well be attributed to the driving force inside of him. From the same being that has fallen from God’s kingdom and would like to seek its own revenge.

In a following episode of *Anfechtung* Luther begins to hate God. “Luther was thrust into new *Anfechtung* as he read Augustine and bumped into the doctrine of predestination... He could no longer understand such a God; indeed, he actually began to hate God.”⁴⁸ There were instances of people telling Luther that he was angry with God not the other way around. This could be contradictory to his personal struggle with God. The idea of Luther’s personal vendetta against God will come in a following section.

We see Luther dissolving into a spiritual crisis and becoming an unrecognizable man. He notes blasphemy as one of the greatest sins in one moment then he commits it in the next. In the section title “One Against God” we will examine these blasphemies. Luther’s distress became so severe no aspects of his religious faith could heal him. Prayer held no efficacy against his tremors, all prayer did for him was invite the Tempter to question his reasons for prayer. Luther quotes the Devil in asking him, “Dear fellow, what are you praying for? Just see how quiet it is

⁴⁷ Walther Von Loewenich. *Martin Luther: The Man and His Work*, 73

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 78

about you here. Do you think that God hears your prayer and pays attention?”⁴⁹ During this period of overwhelming demonic activity surrounding Luther he said, “I was myself more than once driven to the very abyss of despair so that I wished I had never been created. Love God? I hated him!”⁵⁰ Once again we see a Luther compelled to conjure up his own personal attacks against God and not the Catholic Church, this would be quite typical of demonic action. This section, if not such a great representation of Luther’s time in Monastery, would also fit in the following section of Luther’s personal attacks on God.

At the same time, Luther also felt as if he was a sinner. A letter that intrigues my curiosity to Luther’s pastoral confidant and counselor, Johann von Staupitz read, “Oh my sin, my sin, my sin!”⁵¹ This was refuted by his confidant stating the fact that Luther had not committed any real sin at all. Why then did Luther feel compelled to reveal his sin? May he have been referring to the pure sin that dwells within him? This is a speculative thought though it is a valid explanation. A monk who feels this compelled to admit sin remains in the monkery. One would have to assume Luther felt as if his sin was not his fault.

He was compulsive in his rituals such as in fasting, confession and excess prayer. He would even practice low grade asceticism such as refusing any blankets for warmth and freezing himself nearly to death. If we glance upwards at the story of Carl, he suffered from intense coldness, could Luther’s demon convince Luther to practice this form of asceticism to provide a reason for his extreme chill?

In a similar episode to Carl’s in which the books fell from his shelf, Luther hears a sound as if the demon has caused it, “as his report that one night the Devil made such a big noise that

⁴⁹ Roland H. Bainton. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, 58

⁵⁰ Ibid., 59

⁵¹ Walther Von Loewenich. *Martin Luther: The Man and His Work*, 81

Martin took his books and went to bed... Students of today might be glad if they had such a hallucinatory excuse to retire. But it seems certain, and is fully documented by his friends, that Luther in those years suffered from acute anxiety, and would wake up in a cold sweat (“the Devil’s bath,” as he called it); that he developed a phobia of the Devil which in the way of typical obsessive ambivalence gradually included the fear that...,”⁵² the quote concludes with an over dramatic conclusion that states that Luther was so confused with who was the Devil and who was Christ that he began to hate Christ. In this episode we can see how typical Luther’s afflictions were it is absolutely appalling they were not recognized.

When it came to the sacrament of confession Luther believed that if it wasn’t for his redundant, borderline insane manners in confession the Devil may have devoured him long ago. His habitual, compulsive confessing can be a symptom of pure possession, when one is in the state of being possessed one can become extremely prone to compulsive manners. I believe it is recognition of the force within the person and the unexplainable act is the result of the souls malfunction in connection to the physicality of the affliction.

During Luther’s famous story of his first mass we see someone haunted or plagued by something inside of him, whether it is his conscience, his fear or his demon there is much room for speculation, and may it be possible that the simplest answer of possession be possible? Next is the event of his first mass.

First Mass

Martin Luther’s first mass took place on May 2, 1507 in the cloister church. When Luther stood before the altar he became stricken with fear. The reason this was so, was said to be because the liturgy of the Mass was a complicated ritual in which not a signal word or gesture be

⁵² Erik H. Erikson. *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History*, 148

omitted or manipulated. Later Luther admitted to these extreme feelings of fear and said he could have “‘almost died’ from anxiety because he felt no faith.”⁵³ Luther tried to leave the altar during the offertory but the prior prevented him. During the pinnacle of the service, the consecration, he suddenly broke down with immense terror and overwhelming fear. There was a spectacle but it was controlled but substantiated by Luther’s own testimony. “The terror of the Holy, the horror of Infinitude, smote him like a new lightning bolt, and only through a fearful restraint could he hold himself at the altar to the end.”⁵⁴ “The terror of the Holy,” can be read in many contexts and I have especially notice the contexts’ in which to justify Luther’s actions. But there is not justifiable reason for a Priest with the acquired knowledge of God’s benevolence to ever be fearful or have anxiety to the point of requiring “fearful restraint.” The terror of the holy has been exemplified by the invasive demons of documented, past exorcisms extraction through the power of Christ.

What happened? In reading about this scene I didn’t get the sense of anxiety, nervousness or even embarrassment. There was an emphasis of fear. The word *fear* and *terrified* were the most meaningful words surrounding this story. Now how does one who studies of God’s compassion, love and forgiveness feel the most terrifying fear and state, they could have “died from fright.” Fear and terror are two emotions in which encompass the demonic realm when dealing with Christ. Demons have been quoted stating that they would rather die than suffer the spoken name of Christ, so how “terrified” must this demon have been in the presence of a consecration.

But how could this happen to Martin Luther, he is embraced by the church, wouldn’t this dissuade the demon from attacking him? “Since the primary motive of the evil is disguise, one of

⁵³ Roland H. Bainton. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, 139

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 41

the places evil people are most likely to be found is within the church. What better way to conceal one's evil from oneself as well as from others than to be a deacon or some highly visible for of Christian within our culture,"⁵⁵ in this case the demon chose the perfect place, all it had to do was endure the torment it would receive by being in the presence of Christ daily.

Perhaps this was the reason for its obsession rather than possession. The demon knew that in the case of fully possessing Luther it may not be able to withstand the constant ritual such as reconciliation (confession) and other practices affiliated with cleansing of the soul. The demon chose obsession simply to come and go as he pleased. A priest's response to Peck's statement, "of course the church is where you're most likely to find evil people. But what better and gentler place could there be for containment."⁵⁶

A priest's first mass was highly regarded as a unique graduation. In this case Luther's was extremely unique. It is documented that Luther wanted to leave the ceremony all together and was restrained by his superiors this took place after he read the words, *Te igitur clementissime Pater*, which in English means , " to the most merciful Father," as soon as Luther thought he was about to begin to speak with God himself he lost all control of himself. Following those words, *Per Jhesum Christum filium tuum Dominum nostrum supplices rogamus et petiamus*, "which refers to God's son as the transmitter of our supplications to His Father."⁵⁷ If we take the story of Carl into consideration we also see someone who tremble's at say Jesus Christ's name in Latin. Now he was severely possessed, we are only claiming that Luther was diabolically obsessed therefore the symptoms Luther exhibits are that much more amplified.

⁵⁵ Peck, M. Scott. *People of the Lie the Hope for Healing Human Evil*. (New York: A Touchstone Book, 1983), 30

⁵⁶ M. Scott Peck. *Glimpses of the Devil: A Psychiatrist's Personal Accounts of Possession, Exorcism, and Redemption*. (New York City: Free Press, 2005), 148

⁵⁷ Erik H. Erikson. *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History*, 139

What is even worse is that because he could not utter this phrase he chose to skip it. Next we will focus on Martin's psychology after leaving the Church. He stated in reflection that "I must have been a strange brother."⁵⁸

Previously I stated that in the following sections we will examine Luther's ongoing struggle with God outside of Catholicism. In this next section we will do exactly so and we will understand the importance to my argument of doing so.

One against God

In this section it is extremely important to look at the arguments Luther had directly with God and not the church. It would be quite typical of a demon to blaspheme God amidst trying to divide and conquer God's Church. By singling out these arguments we will be able to profile a man that was in fact inspired by an evil apparition.

A question posed by psychologist Erik Erikson helps us to begin this section with a very serious idea, the idea that Luther may be seeking revenge on God for some uncontrollable issue he may have. Erikson states, "This biographical problem overlaps a[n] historical one: Did Luther have a right to claim that his own fears, and feelings of being oppressed by the image of an avenging God, were shared by others?"⁵⁹ This thought that Luther may have felt that God may be oppressive and avenging is characteristic of how a demon may think.. If we take a look at this quote closely it begins to help us understand the demonic world. We may perceive a vengeful God of the Old Testament if you read the Bible with an untrained eye. With a trained eye we can acknowledge a just God.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 147

⁵⁹ Erik H. Erikson. *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History*, 74

Who may feel as if they have been the recipient of what may seem unjust? The answer, although not startling is simple, Lucifer and his Legions, they may feel as if they have been vengefully casted down to earth unjustifiable so due to the war they may have started in Heaven against God. This is why they have a personal battle with God. If Luther only made exclusive claims against the Church and did not spill his personal battle with God then I may not have much of an argument.

As previously stated in the section title, “Monastery and Anfechtung”... In a following episode of Anfechtung Luther begins to hate God. “Luther was thrust into new Anfechtung as he read Augustine and bumped into the doctrine of predestination... He could no longer understand such a God; indeed, he actually began to hate God.”⁶⁰ This quote which clearly makes my point, expresses the fact that if Luther did not understand a doctrine he was quick to hate God. “Dear Herr Doctor, our lord god does so horribly with people all around. How can we serve him when he smashes people so?”⁶¹ This is just another statement from Luther outlining his disobedience to God and then justifying it.

The demon knew exactly how to attack Martin’s ego. More importantly is the issue with Luther stating his hatred for God. We could understand a monk being feeling complex or unsympathetic to God’s plan but to hate him is unjustifiable unless you have felt convicted fervently by God.

Furthermore, it had even been quoted of someone telling Luther that he was angry with God not the other way around. Luther states further that, “When I dwell on these thoughts [about predestination], I forget everything else about God and Christ, and entertain the conclusion that

⁶⁰ Walther Von Loewenich. *Martin Luther: The Man and His Work*, 78

⁶¹ Marius, Richard. *Martin Luther: The Christian between God and Death*, 76

God is a villain.” Furthermore there is a fairly long quote that depicts Luther’s attitude towards God recalling his own experiences he says;

I myself ‘knew a man’ [Cor. 12:2] who claimed that he had often suffered these torments, in fact over a brief period of time. Yet they were so great and so much like hell that no tongue could adequately express them, no pen could describe them, and one who had himself experienced them could not believe them, and so great were they that, if they had been sustained or had lasted for half an hour, even for one tenth of an hour, he would have perished completely and all of his bones would have been reduced to ashes. At such a time God seems terribly angry, and with him the whole creation. At such a time there is no flight, no comfort, within or without, but all things accuse... In this moment... the soul cannot believe that it can ever be redeemed... All that remains is the stark—naked desire for help and a groaning, but it does not know where to turn for help. In this instance the person is stretched out with Christ so that all his bones may be counted, and every corner of the soul is filled with the great bitterness, dread, trembling, and sorrow in such a manner that all these last forever.⁶²

To interpret this Luther is just simply expressing his attitude towards God. Do you see anywhere where it states the Catholic God? This is an intentional representation of the God that has been perceived by Luther and Luther seems terribly angry with God as well as afraid of him. There is no reason for a man of Luther’s stature to have to face such an overwhelming darkness and fear when it comes to God, but as Richard Marius, reformation scholar would state, “Luther could not speak of God’s love without thinking of his wrath; he could not mention Christ without thinking of the dark side of God that lay behind or beyond Christ, the place in God’s being where all darkness is light.”

⁶² Walther Von Loewenich. *Martin Luther: The Man and His Work*, 78

Later Years

By now we have a thirty seven year old Martin Luther who is at the height of his influence. The only problem we now face is we cannot make out who or what he has become. Through his unjustified behaviors, erratic explosions and his anti—Semitic position or his sermons against Jews, we have come across not a man but an embodiment of psychological and morbid illness which is the result of the pure evil so deeply engrained in him that the only glimpse we receive of this demon is through Martin Luther's actions.

His later life is just filled with conflict subsequently following conflict, apology then more conflict we see here for example; Augsburg, Diet of Worms, Silvester Prierias, Johannes Ecks, Leipzig and with himself. "But once he had discovered the Gospel and recognized the targets of the Devil's attacks, Luther became less and less capable of distinguishing between adversaries and people who simply did not agree with him, between diabolical temptations and divergent opinion."⁶³ The demon seemed to continually cloud Luther's mind. Luther did serve a purpose to the Demon and it would be a disaster if Martin was able to recognize either good or evil. In his failed recognitions we slowly fall into a Luther who is "shooting from the hip."⁶⁴

Luther began to intelligently dodge his position and use language as a cunning being inside him would so insist. His speech was filled with "if I am not mistaken"—*ni fallor* and "certainly"—*immo*, in doing so he became not a reformist anymore but what he was now, a lawyer or in the sense of the New Testament, "lukewarm." Luther's demonic obsession appeared

⁶³ Heiko A Oberman. *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 300

⁶⁴ Luther had begun to admittedly lose his mind. The source I quote from is Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther the Man Between God and the Devil*. What it is suppose to do is take a non-bias stance on Luther's works and outline how, and I quote, "[Luther] stood alone with God and his adversary, the Devil," this is a neutral source only presenting the true facts of Luther.

to continually speak out of him using vaguaries and argumentative pieces that lead to further conflict but resolved with no theological answers. In Luther's dialogue with Erasmus⁶⁵ it became clear to colleagues that Luther had begun to lose all touch, there even became a compelling need for experts in historical reformation studies to defend Luther. Luther was theologically out of control, he was at the time making irrational claims and people were becoming weary of him. This would simply be the reason for so much criticism that followed Luther even until now. "Luther's visceral identification with Christ in his dispute with Erasmus shows, however, that where the Reformer suspected the Devil's involvement, he could no longer distinguish man and his opinions, or between error and lie."⁶⁶ This quote is an incident in which reformation historians have been trying to justify for centuries. Luther's battle between darkness and light became apparent to everyone who wanted to see it and it was only made worse by those who wanted to defend instead of help him.

In sync with the definition of "diabolic obsession" Luther's mental sanity started to diminish. What he began to experience is symptoms of the spirit not the body. "The Reformation movement cannot be separated from Luther the man, but it would be incorrect to see it as the consequence of his exposure to psychic pressures: Luther might be able to accept a diagnosis of *Paranoia reformatonica*, since "Reformation madness" includes the foolishness that is an intrinsic part of faith."⁶⁷ Psychic pressures would be the key phrase. In dealing with what is called psychic pressures we can gain a sense of a spiritual pressure on Luther that is affecting him to the point of illness, a simple question, would you believe this to be the work of the Holy Spirit, or

⁶⁵ Sympathizers of Luther although his approach was to morally reform the church from within by trimming its impurities, he is still credited a minor leader of the reformation.

⁶⁶ Oberman, Heiko A. *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*, 301

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 315

the work of the Devil, what would be the results of either and what one would seem more like the results of Luther's psyche?

This question posed only seems to lead to the answer that; a demon caused these psychic pressures which lead to Luther's suffering afflictions of diabolical demonic obsession. Let's revisit the definition of diabolic obsession: "...obsessive thoughts..." "...perpetual state of prostration, desperation..." "Some symptoms, however, are so inconsistent with known illnesses that they point with certainty to their evil origins..." "...evidence of mental illness, requiring the services of a psychiatrist or a psychologist." This definition absolutely coincides with the quote above explaining Martin Luther's psychological state.

In 1527 Luther's health became a failing entity. His symptoms, tightness of the chest or a "feeling of oppression in the heart area, accompanied by painful buzzing in his ears" have been in the past explained by exorcists such as Malachi Martin and Gabrielle Amorth as typical demonic possession symptoms, especially when the possession is at its pinnacle. Unfortunately we are only examining symptoms of a lesser demonic affliction but if you can argue possession then you can't rule out obsession.

Following this event Luther was entrapped within a violent depression with such circulatory disturbances. At eight in the morning the day of July 6, 1527, Luther complained of the most "agonizing" spiritual distress that he had ever had in his lifetime. The only reason I have included this statement is, if one would want to believe that Luther may have become a case of full blown possession, July 6, 1527 may have been the date. Remember the incident with Father Jonathan, "[Jonathan] gave into a push he felt in his mind, he felt an unbearable weight in such a dramatic event that he alone had to give in." Both symptoms characterize spiritual depression.

In analysis of Martin Luther's personality we see a clear picture of dual thought. In some instances we hear the Martin Luther we have grown to revere; in the next instance we hear the demon that had embodied him periodically. The section titled their personality will focus on what the demon had to offer.

Their Personality

This section will dedicate itself to the examination of Martin Luther's personality traits, what he said and may have done. It will further prove his demonic affliction. The question is... is whose personality is it anyways, his or the demon's?⁶⁸

Martin Luther was documented of having a conflict within himself, "[Theodule] Ribot (acclaimed scientific psychologist) points out that there is compelling evidence of 'successive contradictory characters' in the Reformer,"⁶⁹ what could this mean? This statement if taken in its simple form may suggest a possible case of schizophrenia or any kind of mania involving multiple personalities. Frankly what this statement suggests is the battle between good and evil inside of Martin. Luther as a man was a religious genius. His intellect was taken advantage of and was used to ultimately cause division among the church. The quote "successive contradictory characters" is still suggestive of demonic infiltration. That quote as well maintains the idea that what plagues Martin Luther successively got worse.

⁶⁸ In analysis of Vergilius Ferm's book, *Cross—Currents in the Personality of Martin Luther*, we will build an accurate psychological profile just based on his personality alone to help support the evidence of his demonic possession.

⁶⁹ Vergilius Ture Anselm Ferm. *Cross-currents in the personality of Martin Luther: A study in the psychology of religious genius*, (Boston: Christopher Pub. House, 1972), 37

Luther argued that, “Though I am well, I am compelled to be a sick man almost all the time, for Satan is harassing me and that keeps me from...”⁷⁰ Now this is an awkward quote to deal with because he may in fact just be overdramatic. But another quote to substantiate the idea that he is relating his ailments to spiritual presence is, “Somebody breaks a leg, another drowns, a third one commits murder - who sets up all such things? No one but the Devil. This we see before our own eyes and sense it. Yet we cling stubbornly to the notion that he is not there.”⁷¹ We see Luther as a strict believer in the Devil being the cause for all things evil. Would this entail Luther to believe that he himself was demonically possessed? Maybe. “The Devil teases and deceives people, makes a racket, and calls up specters before their eyes...,”⁷² The next quote brings our attention to the happenings in monastery. Luther himself had had auditory and visual hallucinations in Monastery and his *Anfechtung* may have been a way the Devil “teases” him.

Not only does the Devil harass but so do demons. “He [Martin Luther] wrestled hard with the Devil, at one time throwing ink-stand at the supposed satanic presence.”⁷³ An account of Luther states that he wrestled with Satan and was so enveloped by the sight of him he tossed an ink container at him. “Many demons are in the woods, the waters, in swamps and in deserts, in order to hurt men... But philosophers and scientists ascribe these phenomena to nature and I know now what causes.”⁷⁴ Luther also says that demons do exist and they do have intentions to

⁷⁰ Vergilius Ture Anselm Ferm. *Cross-currents in the personality of Martin Luther: A study in the psychology of religious genius*, 103

⁷¹ Bengt R. Hoffman. *Theology of the Heart: The Role of Mysticism in the Theology of Martin Luther*. (Minneapolis: Kirk House Publishers, 2003), 3

⁷² Ibid., 146

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 150

harm men. Could this statement be made from his own experience? If not then why would he say this?

Luther himself believes in the idea of demonic possession and, of religious faculty. “Friars are lice placed by the Devil on God’s Almighty’s fur coat, and Friar-preachers are the fleas of His shirt.—I believe the Franciscans to be possessed of the Devil, body and soul.”⁷⁵ This statement also is an example of his hostility towards the Church as well as his delusional and paranoid state. More importantly to convict all Franciscans to be possessed by the Devil is irrational and irresponsible for someone of his stature.

The next quote stating the sight of the crucifix being terrifying is great evidence. “The sight of the crucifix, he said, frightened him like a thunderbolt,”⁷⁶ Who else would fear the crucifix? During exorcisms there have been accounts of priests walking into the room with crucifixes in their pockets. The demon’s within have sensed this and have displayed characteristics of pure terror. Could this terror relate to the same terror Martin may have felt?

After analysis even Ferm, 1896 Compton Professor of Philosophy at the College of Wooster, examines a dark shadow running its course on Martin Luther hidden away. “But, as remarked, back of all his humor lay a deep shadow... for melancholy is that shadow appearing and re—appearing throughout the course of his life struggle.”⁷⁷ This also has great significance considering obsession is not a complete grip of the body but only one that fluctuates. “Appearing and re—appearing” does suggest this exact idea. Obviously during Luther’s *Anfechtung* we can acknowledge this shadowy figure even more, “I was for more than a whole week in death and

⁷⁵ Ibid., 73

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Vergilius Ture Anselm Ferm. *Cross-currents in the personality of Martin Luther: A study in the psychology of religious genius*, 99

hell (illness in 1527 and the spiritual depression which accompanied it), so that I was sick all over, and my limbs still tremble. I almost lost Christ in the waves and blasts of despair and blasphemy against God... We who are Christ's despised little flock that we are, have to suffer the public hatred of the world and evils enough of our own..."⁷⁸ This illness and spiritual depression as well as the direct emphasis he has on Christ in a negative fashion can be symptomatic of typical diabolical obsession. This could fit into the argument section that he has with God. "Satan himself rages with his whole might within me and the Lord has put me in his power like another Job... Truly—I suffer more in spirit from the attacks of the prince of this world [the Devil] himself"⁷⁹, another statement in great support of Martin Luther's obsession. It may seem if Martin is acknowledging the spiritual suppression he is having caused by the evil entity.

Some could argue that Luther's intentions were not to separate the Church and not to draw attention to himself but perhaps the prideful entity within him needed recognition. In a letter to his close friend and colleague Melancthon, Luther writes, "Nothing new or wonderful is happening here, except that the city is full of my name, and everybody desires to see the Herostratus who has kindled so great a fire."⁸⁰ In this quotation we see Luther depicted as displaying hostile intentions, "to kindle a great fire." He includes the fact that having the city full of his name is "new or wonderful." This maybe not the strongest example of diabolic obsession but what this example does, is exemplify the pride filled nature of the opposing entity.

Luther continues, "I do not wish to praise myself, but the work (the German translation of the Bible) speaks for itself. The German Bible is so good and precious that it surpasses all the

⁷⁸ Ibid., 100

⁷⁹ Ibid., 101

⁸⁰ Vergilius Ture Anselm Ferm. *Cross-currents in the personality of Martin Luther: A study in the psychology of religious genius*, 43

Greek and Latin versions...”⁸¹ In 1523 Dr. Emser, an opponent of Luther, made a claim that Luther’s German translation of the New Testament contained "a thousand grammatical and fourteen hundred heretical errors,” this may be an exaggeration, none-the-less Luther’s Bible that is, so good and precious that it surpasses all the Greek and Latin versions, did contain many errors and added in ideas to support his theological claims. This in fact is important for the case of possession considering it outlines the demons motives further, to divide the church. With the new translation appealing to the people Luther gained more of a foothold on them.

Conclusion

Was Martin Luther diabolically obsessed and why? The evidence provided may help you to reluctantly say yes. Amorth will tell you how and the Roman Ritual will tell you why.

Amorth would say, symptoms include “sudden attacks, at times ongoing,” we are presented with this at the First Mass. “Obsessive thoughts,” this criteria is outlined by the love hate contemplations with God and his reconciliation behavior. “Sometimes even rationally absurd, but of such nature that the victim is unable to free himself,” we gain a sense of this with his dialogue concerning the *Anfechtung* with Erasmus. “Therefore the obsessed person lives in a perpetual state of prostration⁸², desperation, and attempts at suicide.” Although we have no solid evidence supporting suicide we do have evidence supporting the other two criteria, although dialogue with Erasmus may suggest suicidal thought. “Almost always obsession influences dreams,” we have Luther documented as suffer from what he called the “devil’s bathe”

⁸¹ Ibid., 44

⁸² extreme mental or emotional depression or dejection

identifying that he did suffer this criteria. “Some people will say that this is evidence of mental illness, requiring the services of a psychiatrist or a psychologist.” I have presented psychological evidence substantiating the claim that Luther was psychologically afflicted, furthermore we have deduced that the psychological afflictions resemble those of demonic symptoms.

The Roman Ritual may offer an answer why. “They go forth unto the kings of the whole earth, to gather them to battle against the great day of the Almighty God”⁸³ There is a battle between good in evil, God and the Devil. What would “good” be without relativity to evil? Subsequently, the opposing forces have created motives against one another. Martin Luther’s gift and curse was that he was a charismatic leader as well as a genius. Unfortunately an evil got a hold of him and perverted his talents, it was never recognized. The implications his actions had was part of the earliest known war tactic, divide and conquer. The division of Protestantism and Catholicism did not add strength to Christianity; it further complicated it and encouraged conflict. In a sense we could understand his attacks on the Pope as “go forth unto the kings of the whole earth.” In no way am I advocating that the Catholic Church stood infallible but as Erasmus thought, the Church should have been reformed from within. The demonic world works with partial truths. When truth is diluted with the smallest conceivable increment of a lie it no longer remains the truth. The Devil found a way to dilute Luther... because of this Christianity has been diluted and is in need of a reunification.

⁸³ Weller, Fr Phillip T. *Roman Ritual Christian Burial and Office for the Dead, Exorcism, Blessings Reserved to Religious or to Certain Places*, 161

*Rev. 16:14

Bibliography

Amorth, Gabriele. *An Exorcist Tells His Story*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999.

As the Chief Exorcist of the Vatican Gabrielle Amorth's knowledge of Exorcism became instrumental in forming a foundation of the demonic realm as well as helping to identify what Luther suffered from. His demonology and theology helped to clearly outline motives of the demonic as well as trends behind spiritual attack. Amorth's actual confrontation and experience of the demonic through exorcisms proved invaluable to my argument.

Bainton, Roland H. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther (Hendrickson Classic Biographies)*. Peabody Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009.

Bainton's depiction of Luther was of a nonbiased perspective. His chronological outline of Luther's life and his overall analysis of the incidents surrounding his life were fundamental to my argument. Bainton's examination of Luther came from outside perspectives and his statements were a necessity because they just examined Luther's events objectively forming his opinion based solely upon fact.

Erikson, Erik H. *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History (Austen Riggs Monograph, No 4)*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993.

Erikson's work is another source proved to be invaluable to my argument. For centuries the idea of spiritual afflictions matching psychological symptoms has been compelling. If the psychological symptoms match what Luther felt spiritually then this can offer evidence enough that; even at the psychological level Luther displayed common symptoms the same as one would suffer from during demonic possession.

Ferm, Vergilius Ture Anselm. *Cross-currents in the personality of Martin Luther; A study in the psychology of religious genius*, Boston: Christopher Pub. House, 1972.

Ferm's cross-currents of Martin Luther was another source alike Erikson's. What was different is the contrast Ferm did within Luther's own personality. His work proved that Luther did suffer from different personalities. Because of this we have the ability to assume that if there are two different personalities then one of them may not be Martin. Ferm outlined an extremely dark side of Luther as well as a jovial charismatic side. We may be able to conclude that the dark side may belong to the demon within.

Fortea, Jose Antonio. *Interview with an Exorcist: An Insider's Look at the Devil, Demonic Possession, and the Path to Deliverance*. West Chester: Ascension Press, 2006.

With the perspective of the demonic realm that Fortea had to offer it made it much easier for there to be a compelling argument. Known for his sound demonology or satanic theology Fortea was able to provide answers that were clear and concise and would help one to understand the realm of spirituality. His analysis of demonic "species" made a clear picture of what could have possibly invaded Martin Luther.

Hoffman, Bengt R. *Theology of the Heart: The Role of Mysticism in the Theology of Martin Luther*. Minneapolis: Kirk House Publishers, 2003.

Loewenich, Walther Von. *Martin Luther: The Man and His Work*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Pub, 1986.

Alike Bainton, Lowenich provides a nonbiased interpretation of the events that defined Luther's Legacy.

The utilization of his material was extremely similar to that of Bainton's. His statement analysis of Luther was again objective and was not affiliated with any forms of Luther theology opposition. His sources

consisted of people advocating Luther as well as equally opposing (such as denefle) which when in the presence of one another provide a broad outlook on Luther's actions.

Marius, Richard. *Martin Luther: The Christian between God and Death*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2000.

Martin, Malachi. *Hostage to the Devil: The Possession and Exorcism of Five Contemporary Americans*. New York: Harperone, 1992.

Martin offers the best examples in the contemporary study of demonic possession of witness account and testimony that have been researched in the development of this argument. He clearly, with easily understood language presents the afflictions of possession. This source was monumental in providing account evidence to reference Luther's own symptoms to. In the study of Fr. Jonathan and Carl there was enough evidence to relate Luther to, which helped to present a strong comparative analysis.

Oberman, Heiko A. *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

As similar to Bainton and Lowenich, Oberman provides another biographical look into Luther's life. What sets this book apart is the focus on Martin Luther's overall struggle between the forces of good and evil. What other sources failed to do Oberman did by presenting Luther's personal attacks of the devil. With this Oberman helped to define Luther's ideas on the devil and how strongly of an influence he may have played on the spiritual struggle Luther had.

Peck, M. Scott. *Glimpses of the Devil: A Psychiatrist's Personal Accounts of Possession, Exorcism, and Redemption*. New York City: Free Press, 2005.

Peck, M. Scott. *People of the Lie the Hope for Healing Human Evil*. New York: A Touchstone Book, 1983.

Turner, William. "William of Ockham." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 15. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912. 6 May 2009 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15636a.htm>>.

This source was used primarily to identify one of Luther's greatest influences. It presented us with a factual nonbiased look at the life of William of Ockham. Because the source was factual and not opinioned it fit well as criteria for the argument of Luther's diabolic obsession. With the knowledge of Ockham as Luther's influence it was possible to depict possibly a diluted theology that Luther may have developed.

Weller, Fr Phillip T. *Roman Ritual (Christian Burial and Office for the Dead, Exorcism, Blessings Reserved to Religious or to Certain Places, Volume 2)*, New York: Preserving Christian Publications, 2007.

The Roman Ritual made it possible to include the proper Catholic theology in support of the spiritual realm, demonic purpose, demonic methods and demonic motives. Without this source there would be no possible criteria in which to convict Luther of his affliction. It was important to use this source because it provided a context to study Luther's demonic symptoms under. The Ritual also provided clear scripture in support of the thesis.

Wilkinson, Tracy. *The Vatican's Exorcists: Driving Out the Devil in the 21st Century*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2007.

