

HIST 1160 Poster Assignment

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JOHN DARELL: FAKE OR REAL EXORCIST

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INTRODUCTION

Before the new world, religion was the order of the day. People lived by and according to the doctrines of the church. But the church had an enemy, as everyone does, and this enemy came in the form of the devil, or Satan. Satan had his minions, demons, who also had some amount of power. Included in their powers, was the ability to enter into a human host and torment that host from the inside, taking over the body for its own use. This led to Exorcism, the spiritual practice of evicting demons from a human body. But, the practice was so significant that it could not be done by just anybody, but by recognized spiritual figures, Exorcists. Late in the 16th Decade, John Darell, a Puritan became known for his exorcisms, which caused nationwide controversies as England's religious division dragged on.



EXORCISMS IMPACT

Being a Puritan, Darrell used his exorcisms as a propaganda against the Catholics. The church of England had just changed to Protestantism and part of the mission of Darrell was to bring God closer to the people. His exorcisms usually involved prayer and fasting, the latter being a cornerstone for Puritan faith and its unscheduled use greatly opposed the Catholics. Under Darrell, exorcism was a political tool in the war between Puritans and Catholics.

THE NOTTINGHAM SHOW

In 1597, William Sommers, 14 years of age, was said to be possessed by a demon. The boy was a servant to a local musician and was unhappy under him. After trying to run away twice, the boy began showing symptoms of demonic possession that the whipping of a cane could not cure. So severe were his symptoms that he was then kept in a room away from any object he could hurt himself with. On November 5th, Darrell arrived at a crowd surrounding Sommers, and after some time, he confirmed the demonic possession. Two days later, he began his exorcism. Along with three ministers and a crowd of 150, Darrell led initial prayer and fasting while seven men of strength held the boy down to a couch. Unfortunately, the practice lasted till night, when people began crying to God to spare the boy's soul after Darrell had read the scripture. Lo and behold, Sommers let out one large cry, and afterward, the demon was out of his body. Despite having many witnesses, few disagreed whether or not the practice was successful and time did testify to those doubts.



BACKDROP OF NOTTINGHAM SHOW

Shortly after Exorcising William Sommers in 1597, the demon returned to the boy's body weeks after. Unyielding to Darrell's attempts, the boy was taken into custody, where he was tortured till he confessed to faking his possession, according to Darrell. The new minister of the church, Darrell, was publicly criticized and tagged as a manipulator. The case was taken to court, and upon seeing Darrell, the demon returned to the boy's body and proved Darrell right before the people. The boy and Darrell were let free, and not long after, Sommers' demon possessed his sister, Mary Cowper. Sommers then accused a lady of bewitching him, a lady whose relative was the justice of the peace in Nottingham. As expected, Sommers was thrown in prison again, and this time, Darrell was brought before the highest court of the land. He was subsequently thrown in prison, where he wrote a book called "An Apology, or Defense of the Possession of William Sommers." The book succeeded in being released and Darrell had a wide range of support. However, the case went against him. Sommers testified to being "Coached" by Darrell on the behavior of one possessed, and Katherine and Darling, his previous exorcised victims confessed to being frauds. Darrell and his partner George More were kept in prison.

References

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