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Crooked Spirits and Spiritual Identity Theft: A Keener Response to Crooks?

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Mark Crooks' article offers a new paradigm for exploration: namely, that many instances in the transcultural phenomenon of spirit possession reflect the activity of genuine and harmful spirits. Although subsequent research may refine a number of points, the activity of genuine spirits reflects the most common indigenous explanation and makes sense of a significant part of the data that is more difficult to explain on some other academic paradigms. Indigenous explanations do not always view all spirits as harmful, but they usually treat many spirits as harmful, and a case can be made that this is true of much other spirit activity as well. Crooks' explanatory model brings coherence to many points of data less well served by some competing models, and thus merits continuing exploration.

Keywords: spirits, spirit possession, demons, demonology

Anthropologists, sociologists, missiologists, psychologists and so forth approach spirit possession with competing interpretations derived from their varied disciplines, so that it is genuinely impossible to speak at present of any cross-disciplinary consensus. Such differences should leave room for another approach on the table, one ably proposed by Mark Crooks.

Crooks is brave to challenge a number of competing academic paradigms (such as psychoanalytic and deprivation hypotheses), and his challenges merit serious attention even from those who do not follow his alternative. Crooks is braver still to advance a thesis too often dismissed a priori, despite its fuller and simpler explanatory power on some of the matters in question.

In this response, I hope to highlight sympathetically some strengths of his argument and to probe respectfully what I view as some of its weaknesses. In so doing, I hope to take his model seriously enough to contribute to its refinement. Likewise, his critique may require revision in the models of some of the secondary sources I follow here, and thus ultimately of my own.

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At the outset, I should note that I defer to conventional usage in speaking of "possession," an imprecise label too often encompassing a diverse range of experiences and degrees (cf. Carter, 2000; Gildea, 1974; Johnson and Keller, 2006). ("Demonization" is closer to the typical New Testament designation, and spans a range of conditions. Arguing for degrees of demonization, see, e.g., Davies, 2008, pp. 25–28; Warner, 1988, pp. 84–86.) Although this may be largely a semantic issue, my usage in this response may differ somewhat from Crooks. By wider definitions, both voluntary and involuntary possession states may coexist, sometimes in the same culture (e.g., voluntary for the shaman and "hysterical" for the patient; Peters, 1981, pp. 147–148; see also Basso, 2006) or even the same person (Berenbaum, Kerns, and Raghavan, 2000, p. 30).

Crooks' Challenge to A Priori Assumptions

Enlightenment prejudice against the "supernatural" may be irrelevant to the question of actual spirits if the alleged entities in question are part of nature the way that humans as intelligent actors are. Although the intermediate category of "preternatural" declined in the West after Hume (Daston, 1991, pp. 100–113; cf. Hiebert, 1982, p. 43), it might prove helpful.

Semantics aside, how may spirit possession be explored academically? Replicability is an appropriate epistemic demand only in disciplines amenable to it (not, for example, in historiography or journalism). Nevertheless, and while I do not recommend the exercise, some participant–learner anthropologists have replicated spirit possession experiences with what some participants consider genuine spirits (cf. Goodman, 1988b; Turner, 1993, p. 9; 2006c, p. 203; Wilkie, 1994, pp. 137–140; Winkelman and Carr, 2006, pp. 177–178).

The Phenomenology of Spirit Possession

As Crooks notes, studies overwhelmingly confirm the existence of experiences indigenously interpreted as spirit possession by a vast range of cultures around the world.[1] Strikingly, these observations obtain even though a majority of Western scholars who study these experiences demur from the indigenous interpretation. (More recent studies tend to be more open to the indigenous interpretations; see Boddy, 1994, pp. 408, 410–414, 427; Bradnick, 2017; Keller, 2002, pp. 39–40.) One finds such observations even in nineteenth-century critics of indigenous interpretations of other paranormal activity, such as David Friedrich Strauss (Fabisiak, 2015). Nevertheless, while spirit possession shares some common transcultural

[1] See Boddy, 1994, p. 409; Bourguignon, 1965; 1973b, pp. 17–19; 1976b, pp. 18–21; Chandra shekar, 1989, p. 80; Firth, 1969, p. ix; Morsy, 1991, p. 189; Ward, 1989d, p. 126. For samples, see e.g., Boddy, 1994, pp. 428–434; Crapanzaro and Garrison, 1977; Goodman, 1988a, pp. 1–24, 126; Lewis, 1971.

traits, many of its features are expressed differently in different cultures (see Binsbergen, 1981, pp. 90–91; Bourguignon, 1976a, pp. 42–49; Keener, 2011, pp. 793–796). In at least some cases, people are socialized into the role of possession, structuring their behavior according to culturally prescribed expectations (see, e.g., some examples in Bourguignon, 1965, p. 48; Lee, 1989, pp. 251–252, 257; Spanos, 1989, pp. 103–108; Wikstrom, 1989, pp. 32–33).

Whether due to spirits or not, possession trance, though often culturally patterned, typically displays particular neurological patterns.[2] Neurophysiological studies do not demonstrate a particular cause, but they are clear as to some physiological effects (Goodman, 1988a, pp. 1–24, 126).[3] The presence of physiological elements in anomalous experience, as well as its frequency in a range of unrelated cultures, clearly shows that exclusively cultural explanations are often inadequate (McClenon and Nooney, 2002, p. 47).

Although Western observers have usually explained the behavior differently, Crooks' observations about spirits' self-claims are hardly idiosyncratic. Across many unrelated cultures, behavior and voice change drastically during possession, so that "sometimes it has been hard for the anthropologist to persuade himself [or herself] that it is really the same person as before whom he is watching or confronting" (Firth, 1969, p. x, also noting his own shock when he first witnessed spirit mediumship).[4] Possession normally displaces the previous personality (Mbiti, 1970, p. 106; Montilus, 2006, pp. 3–4; cf. Verger, 1969, pp. 50–51, 53). Often the possessed cannot recall the behavior they exhibited during possession trance.[5] The instances surrounding Jesus, noted by Crooks, do have both ancient and modern parallels (see Keener, 2010b; cf. 2010a; for views about spirits in Mediterranean antiquity, see Ferguson, 1984; Keener, 2011, pp. 769–787).

Most cases of possession do not produce superhuman strength, but, as Crooks notes, in some cases it does appear (see e.g., Chandra shekar, 1989, p. 89; Shoko,

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[2] See e.g., Benson, 1982; Benson and Stark, 1996, pp. 163–164; Bourguignon, 1973a, p. 337; Davies, 1995, pp. 141–142; Prince, 1968a, pp. 127–129; discussion in McClenon and Nooney, 2002, p. 48.

[3] For common features in altered states of consciousness through history and in diverse societies, see McClenon, 1994, pp. 36–56; 2002, p. 60; McClenon and Nooney, 2002, pp. 47–48; even animals can be susceptible to hypnotic experiences (McClenon and Nooney, 2002, p. 48).

[4] Emmons, 1982, p. 193; Evans–Pritchard, 1937, p. 165; Gelfand, 1962, p. 169; Greenfield, 2008, pp. 40, 83; Grof, 2010, p. 144; Instone–Brewer, 1996, p. 140; Ising, 2009, pp. 104–105, 168, 169, 171–172, 174–175, 178, 183; Mbiti, 1970, pp. 225–226; McClenon, 1994, pp. 134–135, 226; Midelfort, 1992, p. 127; Oesterreich, 1966, pp. 19–22, 97, 208; Scherberger, 2005, p. 62; Shorter, 1985, p. 177; Tippett, 1978, p. 162; Turner, 2006a, p. 50; Wilson, 2008, p. 275.

[5] E.g., Bellamy, 2008, p. 40; Betty, 2005, p. 14; Bourguignon, 1965, pp. 53, 56; Chandra shekar, 1989, p. 87; Field, 1969, pp. 3, 6; Gelfand, 1962, pp. 166, 169; Grof, 2010, p. 145; Horton, 1969, p. 23; Rosny, 1985, pp. 185–186; cf. Oesterreich, 1966, p. 13; Singleton, 1978, p. 477 ("posterior amnesia"); but contrast Shorter, 1970, p. 113. Some claim to know little about the spirits that possess them, claiming to be "powerless in their hands" (Shorter, 1980, p. 48). In some studies, hypnotic amnesia involves role playing rather than genuine neurological amnesia (see Spanos, 1989, pp. 101–102, persuasively; cf. 116–117).

2007, p. 125). Such strength can make it difficult or impossible to restrain the person (e.g., Betty, 2005, pp. 16, 20; Field, 1969, p. 5; Filson, 2006, p. 154; Kaplan and Johnson, 1964, p. 208; Murphy, 1964, p. 58; Oesterreich, 1966, pp. 22–23; cf. Edwards, 1989, p. 210; Ising, 2009, p. 174). It can lead to "violent thrashing" (Beauvoir, 2006, p. 129; Wilson, 2008, p. 275), destructiveness (Eliade, 1958, p. 71; Gelfand, 1962, pp. 165, 170; Kaplan and Johnson, 1964, p. 227; Obeyesekere, 1977, p. 251; Schmidt, 1964, p. 145) and self-harm (Katz, 1982, pp. 121–122; Lee, 1968, pp. 41–42, 47; Mbiti, 1970, p. 106), sometimes including, as in the account of the demonized man in Mark 5:5, self-laceration (Evans–Pritchard, 1937, p. 162; Fox, 1964, p. 185; Ising, 2009, pp. 174, 326–327; 1 Kings 18:28). In some settings possession trance yields immunity to pain (Jochim, 1986, p. 154; Mbiti, 1970, pp. 225–226) and even to burns (Beauvoir, 2006, p. 130; Bourguignon, 1976a, p. 12; Filson, 2006, p. 76), though not all cases are necessarily authentic or paranormal (Charpak and Broch, 2004, pp. 29–41); see discussion in McClenon, 1994, pp. 97–100, 115–126; 2002, pp. 71–76.

Benevolent Spirits or Spiritual Identity Theft?

Neutral or positive approaches to other cultures help guard observers against our own prejudices, though personal subjectivity renders elusive complete neutrality. Etic approaches provide crosscultural comparisons more easily than do emic ones, but our academic etic approaches are themselves shaped by particular cultural–philosophic frameworks.[6] Goulet and Young (1994, p. 325) question whether "any scientific experiment" can resolve whether spirits exist.

Nevertheless, academic rigor may allow evaluations from various vantage points, provided the vantage points are clearly stated, such as the evaluator's concern for social harmony, for longevity, for the honor of a particular deity, or the like. Various spiritual and religious traditions diversely evaluate other traditions, and a truly relativistic approach welcomes all these approaches to the table. From this pluralistic standpoint, Crooks' model represents one position among many, but as Crooks observes, at many points his model proves especially consistent with the data that it interprets.

Although the ancient monotheistic view of spirit possession was negative, many cultures regard some spirits as neutral or beneficial.[7] Some societies seek

[6] Worldviews provide introductory grids by which to arrange data, but they must be used heuristically, open to transformation; see Silverman, 1972, pp. 204, 228; on presuppositions in social sciences, see also Murphy, 2006, pp. 33–37.)

[7] See Beattie and Middleton, 1969a, pp. xxi–xxii, xxvii; Brand, 2002, p. 47; Field, 1969, p. 13; Lema, 1999, p. 47; Mbiti, 1970, p. 111; opposing traditional Christian approaches, see Grundmann, 2005, p. 66; Shorter, 1985, pp. 188–189; Stabell, 2010, pp. 462–463, 470. Krippner, 2002, surveys a variety of proposed models and data, including the traditional Christian model of shamans' "demon possession" (pp. 963–964; noting on page 964 that shamans sometimes make these claims about rival shamans), which he rejects, and the various attentional states of different kinds of shamans (p. 967).

possession whereas others seek deliverance from it (Bourguignon, 1965, pp. 42–43). In some (though not all) cultures, shamans seek possession trance (cf. Eliade, 1964, p. 6; Peters, 1981, pp. 10–11); some who invite possession do so to accomplish healing (Fuchs, 1964, pp. 135–137; Hien, 2008, p. 307; Licauco, 1988, p. 95; Southall, 1969, pp. 237–238; cf. Obeyesekere, 1970, p. 108). Anthropological literature includes many studies of shamanic healing (see e.g., Goulet and Young, 1994, pp. 326–327; Scherberger, 2005, pp. 59–64; Turner, 2006a, pp. 56–61; 2006b, pp. 103–140; cf. McClenon and Nooney, 2002), although again, extrinsic interpretations vary (see e.g., Young and Goulet, 1994b, pp. 9–10). Although most cultures view witchcraft and curses negatively, not all shamans are considered witches; further, Wicca, a modern Western creation, differs in design from traditional witchcraft models (see, e.g., Hayes, 1995, pp. 340–342; Hutton, 2007; Magliocco, 2000).[8]

Demanding associations specifically understood as harmful reduces the cases available for study. One may still treat most cases of spirit possession as occult if one broadens the definition of "occult" to include any sort of possession in spiritual contexts, though in this case many would prefer other terminology. Although I agree with Crooks' thesis that such spirit possession is negative, I do so especially based on my larger theological worldview.[9]

Still, studies may often overplay the social benefits that possession brings to the possessed while minimizing the problems it causes them (see Hayes, 2006); for at least some malevolent spirit activity, see e.g., Beattie, 1969, p. 169; Filson, 2006, p. 154; Lewis, 1969, p. 189; Peters, 1981, p. 61; Scherberger, 2005, pp. 57–59; further sources in Keener, 2011, pp. 804–808. Contesting the more relativistic approach thoroughly would require engagement with a vast literature, but Crooks' thesis on this point belongs on the table no less than do other perspectives.

Moreover, Crooks reevaluates many previous case studies, frequently highlighting negative social and personal effects of spirit possession that the approaches of Western observers themselves did not take into account. His observations are crucial; his thesis exposes an obvious blind spot of many competing approaches. (I myself had previously read many of these same studies, often without noticing the points that he raised; the culturally neutral stance of modern anthropology is enormously valuable, but also has vulnerabilities, given the interpreter's own assumptions.) His thesis about negative associations with possession offers a

[8] On traditional witchcraft and its intentions to harm, see e.g., Azenabor, 2006, pp. 30–31; Binsbergen, 1981, p. 243; Favret-Saada, 1988, pp. 123–127; Hair, 1998, p. 140; Hoare, 2004, pp. 127–128; Mayrargue, 2001, p. 286; McNaughton, 1988, p. 69; Obeyesekere, 1975; Reynolds, 1963, pp. 41–44; Scherberger, 2005, pp. 57–59; Shoko, 2007, p. 46; Shorter, 1985, p. 99; Wyk, 2004, pp. 1202–1204.

[9] Including, in addition to historic monotheistic considerations, what missiologists call power encounters (Keener, 2011, pp. 843–856). Some differences may be semantic matters of how different scholars use the designation "possession"; thus, e.g., Tibbs, 2016, uses language of possession for some New Testament Christian experience, qualifying and complementing my demurral.

prediction, which subsequent studies must follow up with further sifting of observations present in the anthropological, missiological, and historical literature in a way that Crooks' introductory study could not treat more fully (although some of the literature will miss correlations that the observers were not looking for).[10]

Despite diverse views regarding some spirits, most cultures regard at least some forms of spirit possession as hostile. Modern medical anthropology distinguishes between cultures that explain sickness exclusively due to material causes and those that often attribute illness to spirits or witchcraft; the latter may constitute a majority of societies.[11] (Murdock, 1980, p. 72, found it in more than 97 percent of the 139 societies studied.) Not only traditional Christian contexts[12] but also a wide variety of cultures use forms of exorcism, most often in various ritual contexts, to treat possession illness,[13] leading to debates among mental health professionals regarding the ethics of approving exorcisms (whether as genuine cures or placebos).[14] In some cultures, exorcists themselves experience trance and/or possession states to expel or manipulate other spirits (Beattie and Middleton, 1969a, p. xxv; Klutz, 2004, pp. 196–97; Peters, 1981, pp. 14–15).

A significant portion of Crooks' treatment of occultism comes from Christian sources, often popular ones, that are highly critical of occult experiences. Some do reflect genuine scholarly research (such as Kurt Koch; many essays in the volume edited by Montgomery; and Nevius); others appear more questionable, such as Hobart Freeman or Penn–Lewis. (I would include Freeman in those sources that Crooks earlier designated "kooky," although Crooks is correct that

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[10] He cites voodoo as an example; for possession in Haitian Vodun, see Bourguignon, 1976a, pp. 15–27 (esp. the ritual described in pp. 18–21); Douyon, 1968; Kiev, 1968; Perkinson 2001, pp. 574–575; Tippett, 1978, pp. 155–156. For voodoo deaths, see e.g., Cannon, 1942. For a different perspective, see Montilus, 2006.

[11] Foster, 1976 (noting exceptions on pp. 775–776); esp. Murdock, 1980, pp. 8-27. Brooke, 1991, p. 36, notes that some today accept both spiritual and material causes as complementary. For spirit or witchcraft causes, see e.g., Bourguignon, 1968, p. 17; 1976b, pp. 20–21; Murdock, 1980, pp. 72–76; Neyrey, 1999, pp. 30–31; and the more than forty sources in Keener, 2011, p. 803n99.

[12] E.g., Geleta, 2002; Greenfield, 2008, pp. 141–142; Klutz, 2004, p. 142; McClenon, 1994, pp. 144–145; 2002, p. 59; Mchami, 2001; Oosthuizen, 1989, pp. 79–80, 89; 1992, pp. 117–148; Sharma, 2001, p. 304. Sometimes it competes with local practice; see e.g., Bergunder, 2001, pp. 103–105; 2008, pp. 125–126, 155–158.

[13] Betty, 2005, pp. 14, 16; Garbett, 1969, p. 105; Goodman, 1988a, p. 125; Gray, 1969, p. 171; Kaplan and Johnson, 1964, p. 211; Lewis, 1969, pp. 199, 201, 213; Mbiti, 1970, p. 106; Nevius, 1894, pp. 53–54; Shoko, 2007, p. 97; Tippett, 1967, p. 14; E. Turner 1992a, p. 149; V.W. Turner, 1968, p. 204; for the effectiveness of exorcism in particular kinds of cases, see also Lagerwerf, 1987, pp. 55–56; Shorter, 1980, p. 51.

[14] E.g., Allison, 2000, pp. 116, 119; Bull, Ellason, and Ross 1998, p. 195; Castro–Blanco, 2005; Hexham, 1977; Heinze, 1988a, p. 14 (as a helpful fiction allowing the experience of multiple personality disorder to be objectified); Krippner, 2002, p. 972; Martínez–Taboas, 2005a, p. 18; 2005b; Shorter, 1985, pp. 184–185; Singleton, 1978, p. 478. Ivey, 2002, regards his psychoanalytic language as itself no less a "mythical" construct than the older demonic terminology (pp. 58–59); Pattison, 1992, p. 217, treats "psychoanalytic psychotherapy" as a secular form of "exorcism."

the observations in these sources may comport with and support more consistent ones.) Certainly much popular exorcism/deliverance today misdiagnoses and mistreats what are not demons (see Burgess, 2008, pp. 228–230; Collins, 2009).

Nevertheless, the connection does appear in some professional literature (some of it noted below). As Crooks observes, where genuine paranormal powers appear, the demonological approach provides a more parsimonious explanation than exclusively neurological approaches.

Various Western Academic Interpretations

The approaches of anthropologists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and indigenous interpreters vary considerably from one another, often leading to criticism of the others (e.g., Ward 1989b, p. 17; 1989c, p. 9; Wendl 1999, p. 120; for the range of interpretations, see also Keener 2010b, pp. 227–231). Certainly trance states, including some that are indigenously interpreted as possession, are not limited to the narrower sort of "possession" emphasized by Crooks, as Crooks recognizes (Lewis, 1971, pp. 39, 44–45, 64; Prince, 1968a, pp. 122–129). Thus even an induced collapse of an overloaded nervous system may sometimes relieve stresses and aid recovery (Prince, 1968a, pp. 129–130). Some exorcisms probably prove effective by correcting hysterical disorders, although this explanation proves inadequate for some of the phenomena recorded in the New Testament and other sources (see the analysis by Instone–Brewer, 1996, pp. 134–140).

Direct, genuine spirit possession seems unlikely in any cases where suggestion simulates exorcistic deliverance as a placebo; similarly, lack of suggestibility may render some versions of "possession" more difficult (cases in Last, 1991, pp. 52–53).[15] In general, the most hypnotizable 10 percent of people (those most prone to dissociative states) are six times more prone to anomalous experiences than the least hypnotizable 10 percent (Pekala and Cardeña, 2000, p. 71). Possession is more common in cultures that believe in it (Kemp, 1989, p. 75), and explanatory systems can affect the behavior (Bourguignon, 1968, p. 12). Still, these observations need not contest Crooks' view of demons supervening on some prior conditions or neurological states.

Not all explanations are mutually exclusive, and in some societies conditions of marginalization increase susceptibility. Even in societies that affirm spirit possession, stress can provide an obvious precipitating factor or trigger (Ward and Beaubrun, 1980, p. 206). Some anthropologists point out that incidents of possession (cf. Bourguignon, 1973a, p. 339; Nevius, 1894, p. 58; Prince, 1968b; Smith, 2001, pp. 452–453; Stoller, 1989; Wetering, 1983) and both witchcraft and

[15] On the placebo effect, cf. e.g., Beauregard and O'Leary, 2007, pp. 144–150; Droege, 1991, pp. 15–33; Frank, 1961, pp. 65–74; Gaztambide, 2010; Matthews and Clark, 1998, pp. 179–181; Remus, 1997, pp. 110–113.

anti-witchcraft movements (Li, 1996) often increase during dramatic changes in society. Increasing societal stratification (Bourguignon, 1976b, p. 22; Greenbaum, 1973a, p. 84; 1973b, p. 54), or at least status ambiguity (Wilson, 1967, p. 377), seems to increase the likelihood of more trance states.

Possession thus often appears among those marginalized from other means of power in their society (Lewis, 1969, 189–190; Sharp, 1999, p. 4), often especially women (Behrend and Luig, 1999, pp. xvii-xviii; Berger, 1999, pp. 41, 55; Colson, 1969, pp. 90–92, 99–100; Kenyon, 1999; Kessler, 1977, pp. 301–302; Lee, 1969, pp. 143–144, 150–151, 154; Sousa, 1999; Southall, 1969, p. 244; Stirrat, 1977, pp. 138, 151, 154; Walker and Dickerman, 1992). Possession behavior sometimes allows marginalized persons access to desired objects or expression of feelings otherwise inappropriate to express (e.g., Abdalla, 1991, p. 39; Bourguignon, 1965, pp. 50, 53; Chandra shekar, 1989, pp. 88, 91; Lewis, 1992, pp. 315–318; Modarressi, 1968, pp. 154–155; Obeyesekere, 1970, pp. 104–105; Wilson 1967, p. 370). Some societies are also more sympathetic to possession than to acknowledged mental illness (Chandra shekar, 1989, p. 92). In such cases, possession behavior may provide socially sanctioned outlets for feelings.

Although trance states may often perform a cathartic function, this approach does not account for societies where the healer rather than the patient "becomes dissociated" (Prince, 1977, p. xiii). Trance states are more common among the uneducated (Field, 1969, p. 4; Oesterreich, 1966, pp. 99, 121, 165, 203, 205), but urbanization and western education do not always displace possession and exorcism (cf. Behrend and Luig, 1999, pp. xiii–xiv; Emmons, 1982, p. 191; Jacobs, 1976, pp. 186–187; Makris and Al-Safi, 1991, p. 118; Shorter, 1985, p. 179).

There are, however, limitations to these observations, since they predict averages rather than individual case outcomes. Some challenge the ideological underpinnings of deprivation hypotheses regarding possession (Binsbergen, 1981, pp. 86–87; cf. 24–25, 77–86), viewing them as reductionist (cf. Hunt, 2010, pp. 183–184; McClenon, 2002, pp. 59–60; Miller and Yamamori, 2007, p. 156). Treating the spiritual experience of "underprivileged people" as "hallucinations" demeans them (Turner, 1992a, p. 3).

The data do not all reduce to a single consistent model, and correlation may sometimes reflect common factors rather than causation; but they might also reveal some conditions most conducive to possession states. Susceptibility does not necessarily explain etiology, and cases of socially generated possession need not rule out genuine demonic activity that originally informed cultural models.

Various Indigenous Interpretations

Cultures themselves vary widely in their frameworks for interpreting possession experiences (see e.g., Bourguignon, 1968, pp. 4–12; Lewis, 1971, p. 44; Pattison, 1992, pp. 205–206; Peters, 1981, pp. 11–16, 46–47, 50). Still, various

cultures' similar experiences generate some similar beliefs even in a number of very different societies (McClenon and Nooney, 2002, p. 47).

While Crooks' negative view of spirit possession is not dominant outside monotheistic traditions, his view that spirits are real is easily the most common view among cultures globally, especially among cultures most directly familiar with such experiences. Even in the United States, a majority of people believe in the reality of spirits. This belief declines somewhat, though only somewhat, with income and education (Baker, 2008, pp. 211–213), the latter itself often reflecting a form of enculturation.

One of the most widespread interpretations is possession or affliction by ancestor spirits or other deceased relatives, though in most cultures ancestors do not possess (Hammond–Tooke, 1989, pp. 55–56).[16] Some view these spirits favorably (see Garbett, 1969, p. 105; Last, 1991, p. 51; V.W. Turner, 1968, p. 14), but many deem them dangerous.[17] Religious or cultic contexts for possession behavior are common (Gray, 1969, p. 171; Tippett, 1978, pp. 148–151), for example in Haitian Vodun (Bourguignon, 1976a, pp. 15–27; Douyon, 1968; Kiev, 1968; Perkinson, 2001, pp. 574–575), Taoist rituals (Nevius, 1894, p. 47), Brazilian spiritism (Tippett, 1978, pp. 157–158; Pressel, 1973; 1977, pp. 333–335), in the *zar* cult (Modarressi, 1968) and in Sinhalese and Indo–Tibetan Buddhism (Ames, 1964, pp. 33, 40–41; Wayman, 1968). Cultic contexts often produce social pressure on particular persons to enter possession trance (Firth, 1969, p. xiii; Horton, 1969, pp. 24, 25, 35; Verger, 1969, p. 52).

Western Scholars and Actual Spirits

Crooks is not alone among Western scholars in arguing that actual spirits exist (e.g., Betty, 2005, and sources cited there; Isaacs, 1987; Johnson, 1982; Sall, 1976). While usually rejecting the reality of spirits, postmodernists are more open than were modernists (Goulet and Young, 1994, pp. 323–325; Hoffman and Kurzenberger, 2008, p. 84), and anthropologists have grown increasingly open to indigenous understandings (see Keller. 2002, pp. 39–40; Wilson, 1994, pp. 198–206). An increasing number of Western scholars have also begun recounting their own unexpected experiences with spirits (e.g., Kimball, 1972,

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[16] See Chandra shekar, 1989, p. 81; cf. Barrington–Ward, 1978, p. 456; Beattie and Middleton, 1969a, p. xxvii; Bourguignon, 1976a, pp. 24–27; Eliade, 1964, pp. 365–366; Emmons, 1982, pp. 171–172, 175–176; Field, 1969, p. 9; Hien, 2008, pp. 312, 316; Keller, 2002, pp. 131–132, 155; Jules–Rosette, 1981, pp. 133, 142; Lee, 1969, pp. 131–132; Oesterreich, 1966, pp. 26–27, 186, 209; Zempleni, 1977, p. 92.

[17] Beattie, 1969, p. 162; Colson, 1969, p. 71; Garbett, 1969, p. 123; Obeyesekere, 1977, p. 239; Reynolds, 1963, p. 62; Tenibemas, 1996, p. 23; Turner, 1992a, p. 182; W. Ma, 2002, p. 207; cf. Byaruhanga–Akiiki and Kealotswe, 1995, pp. 111–112; Horton, 1969, p. 15; Shoko, 2007, p. 45 (witches exploit spirits of the dead to steal for them); Southall, 1969, pp. 233 (spirits of deceased soldiers), 246–249, 255 (spirits of earlier chiefs); Welbourn, 1969, pp. 291–292 (on dangerous ghosts).

pp. 188–192; Steyne, 1990, pp. 14–19; Stoller, 1984, p. 110; Young, 1994, p. 174; earlier, Nevius, 1894, pp. ix, 9–13). Local scholars who have not embraced the dominant Western worldview speak even more freely (e.g., Mbiti, 1970, pp. 253–256; Mensah, 2008, p. 176).

Some scholars have experienced possession or the "paranormal" but explain their own experience as possibly merely subjective (McClenon, 1994, pp. 236–237; Peters, 1981, pp. 47, 50). Others go further and attribute their own experiences to actual spirits; most notable is Edith Turner, lecturer in anthropology at the University of Virginia and editor of *Anthropology and Humanism*. Now embracing a proshamanist perspective, she critiques her previous role as a skeptical, nonparticipant anthropological observer as cultural imperialism (Turner, 1992c, p. 28; 1997; cf. Swarz, 1994, p. 209), which she compares to the ethnocentrism of Christian missionaries (Turner, 1992c, p. 30). Turner's own experiential research began with her "experience of seeing a spirit" during a ritual in Zambia (Turner, 1996, pp. xxii–xxiii; cf. Turner, 1992a, pp. 149, 159; 1992b, p. 2; 1993, p. 9; 1994; 2005, p. 403; 2006a, p. 43; 2006b, pp. 1–23). She dismisses as ethnocentric the assumption that anthropological training qualifies one to "understand aspects of a culture better than field subjects" with their generations of cumulative experience (Turner, 1992a, p. 4; cf. 1992c, p. 30). Turner subsequently participated in her traditional Eskimo hosts' experiences with what she deems real spirits (Turner, 1992c, p. 29; 1996, p. 232). Some other anthropologists of religion respectfully include her voice (see Barnes, 2006, pp. 19–20).

Christian Experiences with Spirits

If a vocal minority of anthropologists have been concluding that real spirits exist, many monotheists have long accepted it because of evidence within their respective revelatory canons (especially the Gospels and the Qur'an) and traditions. Many others have also found it consistent with their cultures' experience. Ancient power encounters, or conflicts between opposing spiritual entities, appear in Scripture in Exodus 7:10–12 (cf. 12:12; Tucker, 2005, p. 378); Acts 8:9–13; 13:8–12; and 19:11–20.

Ancient Christians accepted the reality of spirits besides God but believed that, in any confrontation, their God would readily overcome all other spirits not submitted to him. In the second century, the Christian movement often spread through exorcisms; it was considered common knowledge that Christians could cast out demons (Barrett–Lennard, 1994, pp. 228–229; Lampe, 1965, pp. 215–217; MacMullen, 1984, pp. 27–28, 40–41, 60–61; Martin, 1988, pp. 49–50, 58–59; Sears, 1988, pp. 103–104; Young, 1988, pp. 107–108).

Tertullian (c. 155–c. 225) even challenged the church's persecutors to bring demonized people to Christian court hearings; the demon will always submit, he insisted, or if not, the court should feel free to execute the Christian as a fake

(*Apology* 23.4–6)! Tertullian lists prominent pagans whom Christians had cured from evil spirits (Tertullian *Ad Scapulam* 4, in Kelsey, 1973, pp. 136–137). In the fourth century, exorcisms and miracles are the most frequently listed reason for conversion to Christianity (MacMullen, 1984, pp. 61–62). Augustine reports affidavits attesting effective exorcisms (*City of God* 22.8; *Confessions* 9.7.16; Herum, 2009, pp. 63–65).

Still, a divide in cultural assumptions remains (see Acolatse, 2018; Mchami, 2001, p. 17). For example, residents of the Peruvian jungle, exposed for the first time to the Gospel of Mark, dismissed their Western translator's rejection of real demons, noting that it comported with their local reality (Escobar, 2002, p. 86).

Westerners have often changed their paradigms only after a struggle with significant cognitive dissonance (e.g., the doctor in Mullen, 1999, pp. 151–152). Many early Presbyterian missionaries to Korea had learned in seminary that spirits were not real, but most came to believe otherwise in the context of ministry alongside indigenous believers (Kim, 2011, pp. 270–273). My own experiences in Africa and those of my family (my wife is Congolese) have forced me to grapple with some hostile spiritual realities to which I would rather not have been exposed (Keener, 2011, pp. 852–856).

Psychiatric Evaluations

Some observers suggest that spirit possession will be more common in areas where people honor spirits (Berends, 1975, pp. 348–352, 364). This does not mean, however, that it is absent elsewhere. Unfashionable as the idea of real spirits is in Western intellectual discourse, some mental health professionals have become sufficiently convinced about the reality of harmful spirits that they have laid their reputations on the line and noted them openly. These include psychologists and psychiatrists noted in Isaacs 1987, pp. 265–266 (cf. also Johnson, 1982; McAll, 1975, 1976; White, 1988, p. 75). Cf. Grof, 2010, pp. 144–145, for a rare case that exceeded normal psychiatric (or human) bounds. William P. Wilson (1976, pp. 225–230; 2008), professor emeritus of psychiatry at Duke University Medical Center, provides some case studies. He views most popular cases of "demons" in the West as merely psychological problems, but claims to have encountered real cases, including a woman whose parents practiced the occult. Another psychiatrist, W. C. Johnson, explains most problems as emotional but notes that in his own psychiatric practice he has witnessed three clear cases of possession by a spirit, all of them in patients involved in the occult (Johnson, 1982, pp. 150–153).

David Van Gelder, then a professor of pastoral counseling at Erskine Theological Seminary, rejects most claims of possession (1987, p. 160), but encountered a case that he could explain no other way. When a young man involved with the occult began "snarling like an animal," nails attaching a crucifix to the wall melted, dropping the hot crucifix to the floor. A minister invited the young man

to declare, "Jesus Christ, son of God," but when he began to repeat this, the young man's voice and facial expressions suddenly changed. "You fools," he retorted, "he can't say that." Finally the group decided that he required exorcism, and calling on Jesus, managed to cast the spirit out (Van Gelder, 1987, pp. 151–154). Van Gelder observes that all the mental health professionals present agreed that the youth was not suffering from psychosis or other normal diagnoses (p. 158).

Perhaps the best-known spokesman for this view is psychiatrist Scott Peck, author of *People of the Lie*. He rejects as unfounded most claims of possession but reports that he has encountered rare cases for which he found this the only explanation (2005; see esp. pp. 237–238; cited also in e.g., Betty, 2005, p. 17; Borg, 2006, p. 322n9; Loewen, 1988, pp. 138–139). Peck nevertheless warns that, despite abundant empirical information, the entrenched explanatory models will not recognize demons' reality without a significant paradigm shift (2005, p. 249; on the struggles accompanying larger paradigm shifts, cf. Kuhn, 1970).

McAll's Accounts

Another psychiatrist, R. Kenneth McAll, offers many examples. He observes that only 4 percent of the cases he has treated have required exorcism, but mentions that about 280 of his cases did require exorcism. Consistent with Crooks' expectations, most of these involved the patients' or their familys' occult practices, such as ouija boards, witchcraft, horoscopes, etc. (1975, p. 296) He notes one case where a mother's successful deliverance from spirits proved simultaneous, unknown to them, of her son's instant healing from schizophrenia in a hospital 400 miles away, and the healing from tuberculosis of that son's wife (1975, pp. 296–297). Other cases include:

1. A patient instantly freed from schizophrenia through an exorcism that removed an occult group's curse.
2. The complete healing through an exorcism of a violent person in a padded cell who had previously not spoken for two years.
3. The instant healing of another person in a padded cell, when others far away and without her knowledge prayed for her; her aunt, a mental patient in another country, was cured simultaneously.
4. A six-year-old needed three adults to restrain him, but he was healed when his father repudiated Spiritualism.

McAll also offers a number of other examples of those healed when they or family members renounced occult connections.

Parasitic Demonomania?

Crooks suggests that demonomania is often parasitic on other conditions. This is an important observation, although it might also limit neurological or clinical

identification apart from occult connections (rendering the observed connection between the occult and "possession" circular to this degree). One pastoral/psychological concern for those who affirm genuine spirits in possession syndrome is that it not be used to the exclusion of more conventional modern diagnoses of disorders. Indeed, some earlier "possession" diagnoses may have contributed to the development of "secondary personality"; see Oesterreich, 1966, p. 127; 1974, pp. 111, 140. Some even suggest that, due to role-playing, psychiatric expectations may sometimes contribute to this disorder (Spanos, 1989, pp. 109–118).

It would appear quite difficult, given even healthy people's ability to assume different roles in different settings, to attribute all cases of multiple personality disorder/dissociative identity disorder to actual demons. (For comparison with MPD/DID, cf., e.g., Bourguignon, 1989; Field, 1969, p. 3; Firth, 1969, pp. ix–x, also noting suggestibility on p. xiii.) Possession sometimes offers a religiously meaningful shared cultural idiom for sorts of mental illness that might be helpful to the possessed person (Obeyesekere, 1970).

Invasive spirits could presumably cause other disorders, but they would not account for all cases. Many psychiatrists who acknowledge genuine cases of demonic possession in the West also view them as extremely rare (e.g., Peck), though the cases might also appear so rare because the observers minimalistically accept as genuinely demonic only those instances that cannot be explained otherwise.

Many cases of apparent possession do have more direct psychological explanations (see e.g., Gildea, 1974, pp. 296–298; Smucker and Hostetler, 1988). John White, whose experience with putatively real demons has been noted, treats psychosis as the result of chemical imbalance rather than demons (Loewen, 1988, pp. 137–138). If psychiatric problems may stem from material, emotional and/or spiritual causes, one can never assume the latter as an exclusive or necessarily even a direct contributing cause without compelling evidence. Preternatural phenomena provide one sort of evidence, but these do not appear in most cases. Walsh (2007, pp. 147–148) notes that different paradigms explain the evidence differently and allows that different cases may have different explanations.

Sall (1976) contends that demonization, in contrast to treatable conditions such as psychosis and hallucinations, can be healed only by exorcism or prayer (Bach, 1979, p. 25, questions Sall's criteria; Sall replies in Sall, 1979). An Ethiopian minister I interviewed reports that a hospital psychiatrist there treats psychiatric cases directly but refers genuine cases of possession to the minister and his colleagues (Keener 2011, p. 841). Isaacs (1987) notes cases referred by four Episcopal exorcists and screened for diagnosis by one psychiatrist and four psychologists; these are cases that do not fit other diagnoses. The article finds seven shared characteristics of possession cases, many of these overlapping with Crooks' list. They include experiencing "dark figures" and "audible and coherent voices" that otherwise seem a part of the real world; revulsion toward religious objects (note also Ising, 2009, pp. 171, 183, 326, 337; Woodard, 1955, p. 25); and, most unusually,

"odd phenomena" affecting those *near* the patient, such as "poltergeist-type phenomena and the feeling of suffocation while praying" (Isaacs, 1987, p. 270). A priori assumptions about what factors identify possession may have reduced the possible sample size and thus other possible characteristics. Although superhuman knowledge, strength, and so forth are more obvious signs of possession, psychological criteria are not always adequate for distinguishing natural psychopathology and its sometimes demonic exploitation (Monden, 1966, p. 163).

Power Encounters: Spiritual Confrontations

Some possessing spirits have shown hostility toward Christian conversion or the Christian God (e.g., Field, 1969, p. 8; Lema, 1999, pp. 55–56; Maddox, 1999, p. 156; Michel, 2006, p. 35; Sandgren, 1999, p. 176; Straight, 2007, p. 171). In cultures that emphasize spiritual power, however, rival displays of spiritual power have often led to church growth (Alexander, 2009, pp. 110–114; Johnson, 1970, pp. 54–58; De Wet, 1981, passim).

Power encounters also between missionaries and local spiritual powers persisted through history, for example with Patrick in Ireland (De Wet, 1981, p. 87; Latourette, 1975, p. 348; Neill, 1964, p. 75; Skarsaune and Engelsviken, 2002; Young, 1988, p. 112). Many Enlightenment figures discounted shifting voices as mere trickery (Schmidt, 1998, pp. 279–292), but Wesley treated them as real and cast out the spirits (Tomkins, 2003, p. 72), as did many of his followers (Rack, 1982, pp. 147–149).

An exorcism through nineteenth-century Lutheran pastor Johann Christian Blumhardt impacted the entire region (Ising, 2009, pp. 162–189; cf. Macchia, 1993, pp. 65–68). Christian theologian Karl Barth later used this exorcism as a model of Christ's triumph over evil (Kauffman, 1988, pp. 7–8). Power encounters appear in early twentieth-century indigenous African Christian prophetic movements (Hanciles, 2004, p. 170; Koschorke, Ludwig, and Delgado, 2007, pp. 223–224). They continue today where indigenous Christian preachers confront traditional religions (Itioka, 2002; Khai, 2003, pp. 143–144; Lees and Fiddes, 1997, p. 25; Yung, 2002). Many converts from traditional African religions have burned fetishes and abandoned witchcraft practices due to power encounters (Burgess, 2008, p. 151; Mayrargue, 2001, p. 286; Merz, 2008, p. 203). By addressing perceived local needs, power encounters have expanded Christian movements in, e.g., Haiti (Johnson, 1970, pp. 54–58), Nigeria (Burgess, 2008, p. 153, before subsequent abuses in exorcism ministries), South Asia (Daniel, 1978, pp. 158–159; Pothen, 1990, pp. 305–308), the Philippines (Cole, 2003, p. 264; Ma, 2000), and Indonesia (Wiyono, 2001, pp. 278–279, 282; York, 2003, pp. 250–251).[18]

[18] I have acquired various additional accounts by interviewing associates in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere (e.g., Albert Bissouessoue, interview, Dec. 17, 2009; Paul Mokake, interview, May 13, 2009; Rodney Ragwan, interview, Dec. 15, 2009).

Such displays of spiritual power have proved sufficiently compelling that even a number of shamans who previously claimed contact with spirits have switched allegiances to follow Christ, whom they decide is more powerful (Alexander, 2009, pp. 89, 110; De Wet, 1981, pp. 84–85, 91n2; Green, 2001, p. 108; Khai, 2005, p. 269; Pothen, 1990, p. 189). Thus, for example, a prominent Indonesian shaman had allegedly murdered a thousand people through curses (others also attesting her success); but she claims that she abandoned witchcraft to follow Jesus after experiencing a vision of him (Knapstad, 2005, pp. 83–85; cf. p. 89). An Indonesian doctoral graduate from my institution baptized 28 former witchcraft practitioners in 2011.[19] As illustrated in the accounts of materialistic Westerners converted to belief in spirits, however, the perspectival influence does not go only in a single direction.

Crooks' proposal of genuine, harmful spirits is probably not the best explanation for all claims of spirit possession, but in a number of cases it explains the data better than alternative proposals. It coheres with indigenous explanations and also provides a more economical explanation for data arising from some case studies.

Conclusion

Although any work that breaks new ground will require nuance, often significantly, Crooks' bold statement of a new paradigm (by restating an old one) demands serious attention. While typical psychiatric problems encountered in the West may involve other explanations, for some sorts of phenomena, especially those connected with preternatural phenomena, the activity of genuine, extrahuman spirits remains the simplest, most economical solution.

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Commentary on Mark Crooks's Essay, "On the Psychology of Demon Possession: The Occult Personality"

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The present short commentary on Crooks's essay focuses on Crooks's methodological distinction between proper empirical, scientific method and the so-called "religion of science." It argues that only when this distinction is maintained can one avoid a metaphysical positivism that makes impossible any scholarly evaluation of occult phenomena.

I am neither a psychologist nor a psychiatrist, but, on the basis of my books *Principalities and Powers: The World of the Occult* and *Demon Possession,* cited by Mark Crooks in his article under discussion, I have been asked to provide a brief comment concerning it. As a philosopher and professor of law, my remarks will necessarily focus on epistemology and standards of evidence, especially as applied to occult and allegedly supernatural phenomena.

In my view, the most important single contribution of Crooks's article lies in his preference for factual evidence over metaphysical opinion. He rightly holds that — at least since the eighteenth-century so-called Enlightenment — naturalistic worldviews have become a new orthodoxy. To admit anything beyond the naturalistically "normal" identifies one as a naïve obscurantist, deserving of ostracism from the scientific community. To accept any explanations beyond the naturalistic is a mark of political incorrectness and the kiss of academic death.

Crooks, on the other hand, understands the vital distinction between scientific method — relying on empirical, factual evidence no matter the consequences — and what has been termed "the religion of science": the metaphysical commitment to naturalistic explanations, even when the evidence does not offer sufficient support for them. Crooks is a serious empiricist. If the data require, or even favor, non-naturalistic explanations of occult phenomena, he prefers to go with the evidence rather than forcing the data to fit a preconceived naturalistic universe.

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Examples abound throughout the Crooks essay. His critiques of McNamara's "positive possession" and the views of Davies, of Randi, and of Carl Sagan are particularly telling. Let me reinforce the Sagan analysis by material from my most recent work, *Defending the Gospel in Legal Style*.[1]

I deal with Sagan's adage, "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof" — an assertion which, if correct, would justify limiting the analysis of occult phenomena such as demon possession to reductionistic naturalism regardless of the weight of the evidence for a non-naturalistic explanation of such occurrences. (In the following lengthy quotation, read "occult" for "religious" or "theological," and "veridical occult phenomenon" for "miracle.")

> When one passes into the realm of religious commitment, does one not face insuperable problems not to be found in the legal realm — since religious decisions are of an eternal dimension? Can the unbeliever not argue that it is simply impossible in principle for evidence — any evidence — to justify religious commitment?
>
> Historically, this style of argument has been presented in different guises. Going back to late classical times is the axiom, "the finite is not capable of the infinite":[2] the world is incapable of the presence of the absolute, so no amount of evidence could ever demonstrate the presence of the infinite in our finite world. The fallacy of this argument (applicable not only to a divine Incarnation and an infallible Bible, but also to the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist) is simply that, *qua* human beings, we have no idea what God is or is not capable of, so we have no business ruling out events *a priori*. It may well be that the reverse of the aphorism is true: *infinitum capax finiti*! Only a factual investigation of the world to see if God has entered it will ever answer the question.
>
> Then there is Lessing's "ditch": the claim that the accidental facts of history can never attain or justify the absolute truths of reason. Here, a serious category mistake has been made. If the "absolute truths of reason" are purely formal, lacking entirely in content, then they have nothing to do with Christian religious claims at all. If, however, they are factual in nature, then only factual investigation and probability reasoning could justify them. But this is exactly what historical proof consists of: probable evidence for historical occurrences. If, for example, God became man in Jesus Christ, that contention is as capable of historical investigation as are any other purported occurrences.
>
> David Hume argued that no miracle could ever be demonstrated, since (on the basis of "uniform experience") it would always be more miraculous that one claiming a miracle or providing evidence for it were not deceiving or deceived than that the miracle actually happened. Miracle arguments (such as the case for the resurrection of Christ) are therefore impossible from the outset. But Hume's position has been thoroughly refuted — and not just by Christian philosophers.[3] The intractable problem with the Humean argument is that it is perfectly circular: to be sure, if nature is completely uniform (i.e., if natural laws are never broken), miracles do

[1] Montgomery, J.W. (2017). *Defending the gospel in legal style* (pp. 26–30). Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft.

[2] Cf. Peter Bruns (1999). Finitum non capax infiniti: Ein antiochenisches Axiom in der Inkarnationslehre Babais des Grossen (nach 628). *Oriens Christianus, 83,* 46–71.

[3] Earman, J. (2000). *Hume's abject failure: The argument against miracles.* New York: Oxford University Press.

not occur. *But that is precisely the question requiring an answer!* And the only way properly to respond is by engaging in serious factual investigation of given miracle claims. One cannot short-circuit the miracles issue by a priori pontifications about the nature of the universe. Indeed, . . . in an Einsteinian, relativistic universe, no event can be excluded on principle: everything is subject to empirical investigation.

But the most influential current argument against the effectiveness of religious claims based on historical evidence is that represented by the adage, "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof" — a saying popularized by the late Carl Sagan but which apparently originated with sociologist Marcello Truzzi.[4] Does not this declaration constitute an obvious truth militating against all miracle claims — and in particular the resurrection of Christ? Since a miracle is maximally "extraordinary," would not the evidence required to demonstrate it have to be maximally extraordinary as well?

In a word, the answer is No! Why? In line with what we have noted above, the Truzzi–Sagan tag would have meaning if, and only if, one knew the fabric of the universe — its cosmic laws and what therefore can and cannot happen; but in Einsteinian, relativistic terms, no one has such knowledge, so no one can rationally determine the probabilities for or against a given event: only factual investigation permits one to conclude that event *x* did or event *y* did not occur. . . .

But what about the very concept of a "miracle"? Is not the notion in itself so extraordinary that no amount of evidence could properly count to prove it? Here we must distinguish *mechanism* from *factuality*. The mechanism of a miracle is indeed beyond our ken — but that is irrelevant to whether or not such an event occurs. As long ago as the 18th century, Thomas Sherlock, Master of London's Temple Church and pastor to barristers, noted that the case for the resurrection of Jesus Christ does not depend on our comprehension of how resurrections occur but squarely on whether there is sufficient evidence that Jesus died on the Cross and that following his death he showed himself physically alive to sound witnesses.[5] There is thus nothing "extraordinary" about determining that Jesus rose from the dead: one need only show (a) that he died and (b) that later he was physically alive — determinations which we make every day (though in reverse order).

Are we saying that miracle evidence should be accepted as readily as non-miracle evidence? The visions of Fatima and the appearance of the Angel Moroni to Joseph Smith on the same basis as Lincoln's assassination and Hitler's *Anschluss*? We are saying simply that the standard of proof does not depend on the frequency of the event (since all historical events are unique) nor on the characterisation of the event as "miraculous" or "non-miraculous." The standard of proof depends, in all instances, on the quality of the evidence in behalf of the claimed event — that and nothing more; that and nothing less. If one were to claim that a peach can be miraculously turned into a cumquat, he or she would have to show, by ordinary scientific means, that there is a peach present at the outset, and, then, afterwards, a cumquat. For a resurrection from the dead: the same kind of testimony is required as for any other historical event — in this instance, that the object of the miracle was in fact dead and then, afterwards, physically alive. The issue of proof

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[4] See Montgomery, J.W. (2011). Apologetics insights from the thought of I. J. Good. *Philosophia Christi, 13*, 203–212.

[5] Sherlock, T. (1729). *Tryal of the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus.* London: J. Roberts. Sherlock's book is photolithographically reproduced in the revised edition of Montgomery, J.W. (1980). *Jurisprudence: A Book of Readings.* Strasbourg: International Scholarly Publishers.

> is not in any way metaphysical: one relies on sound historical investigation of the testimony to miracle claims of past events (or sound contemporary scientific investigation, in the case of the peach). The nature of the claim determines the method of proof, and the standard will be that appropriate to parallel determinations in the same realm.

But let us conclude with the essence of Crooks's argument, in his own words:

> Realize that a worldview, positivist or otherwise, by its nature cannot be logically entailed by empirical data as such. There is also the complementary suggestion that otherwise successful naturalistic explanations do not receive such validation from their embedding worldview. Thus the post-Enlightenment interpretive paradigm, as such, that did away with "explanatory gremlins" (e.g., demons) has never been experimentally or theoretically established. The only reason it seems to have been so is that the success of naturalistic explanations in the physical sciences seems to necessitate a monopolistic reductionist scheme.

If psychologists, parapsychologists, psychiatrists, and historians of ideas were to pay just a modicum of attention to Crooks's seminal essay, those fields of scientific investigation would have the perspective essential for a return to a genuine empirical examination of reality. The result would be a wondrous turnabout, not merely in the investigation of occult phenomena and of the personalities of those suffering such deleterious experiences, but across the entire gamut of scientific endeavor.