

## THE EXORCISM

**The Revd. David D. Scott**

When I was a young, newly-qualified minister, I heard of another who was seriously involved in exorcising houses, rooms and even cupboards in his parish. I wondered what it was all about because I had never been asked to do such a thing and wondered how I should proceed. A few years later, the minister was translated to another charge and it was said locally that the malevolent spirits had been translated too!

I was glad that I had not been asked to exorcise someone's house. Perhaps that is the very reason no-one was drawn to ask me to fulfil such a request. Time past, a ministry past and looking back, there were only a handful of occasions where this happened. They were all concerning situations but the last lingers in my mind because it happened not long after the birth of a child.

Without disclosing any of the detail, let me say that some of the malevolence was directed towards the baby and this was the most alarming feature. Some of the things which happened could be explained in other ways but not everything. I visited the family and listened to their story. I made it clear that I did not have any power to exorcise only God could do that. I agreed to return to bless the house and pray for their well-being.

I was convinced of two things. Firstly, whatever was done in the house should be a corporate event in which the adults were invited to become active participants. This was not only a safeguard against associating me with any particular powers but to engage their participation in the purification of their own home, joining me as instruments of God's Holy Spirit.

Secondly, it should involve water and the sprinkling of water. It is one of the four primeval elements and has been incorporated into Christianity through the Sacrament of Baptism. Water cleanses, purifies and heals and is a symbol in our liturgy of new life, the dying to self and the rising with Christ, the drowning of the old and the emerging of the new.

It didn't take me long to see that the sprinkling of the water should accompany our journey through the house. I prepared the liturgy with a pattern of words which was adapted for every room we entered. I deliberately included a simple response which the participants could share. But I was unsure whether this would be welcome or not.

I chose to take with me a family quaich which had been given to me by the Kirk Session at Logie Kirk when I was translated to New Kilpatrick in 1999. Quaichs had a particular significance for this family and featured in their daily lives. I filled this symbol of friendship with water from their kitchen. But it was only as I sprinkled the water in the living-room that I realised that they should be sharing in this action too.

Tentatively, I asked the husband if he would like to sprinkle the water in the hall. It had been the location of unexplained activity. He took the quaich and began to sprinkle the water. Never was water sprinkled with so much energy and sincerity as it was in that hall and on those stairs. From then, the sprinkling action was passed from one to the other and the liturgy fulfilled as we journeyed on together.

I had resolved before I arrived at the house that I would not stay for refreshments after we had concluded the liturgy. We ended upstairs with some brief conversation. But when we came downstairs, I left. It seemed important to me to let the liturgy hang in the air and a silence ensue for the Holy Spirit to work its cure. I don't know whether he did or not. I was never invited to make a return visit and retired not long after.

## **BLESSING THE HOUSE**

### ***The Word of God***

In the Bible, the poet assures us that God is present with us at all times and in all places. He is here in this house, transforming it from a place of fearful uncertainty to a place of joy, love and peace.

Whither shall I go from your spirit?  
or whether shall I flee from your presence?  
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:

if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there.  
If I take the wings of the morning,  
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;  
Even there shall thy hand lead me,  
and thy right hand shall hold me.  
If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me;  
even the night shall be light about me.  
Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee;  
but the night shineth as the day:  
the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

### ***The Sprinkling of Water***

The quaich is a symbol of everlasting friendship. Through Jesus, we know that nothing can cut us off from the loving presence of God nor destroy the love which we enjoy as a family.

I have put some water into the quaich because it is a symbol of baptism, cleansing and new life. And so we sprinkle the house with water to remind us of the new life which God brings and the healing which his love effects within us.

In the sprinkling of water, we remember the Sacrament of Baptism, the gateway into the Church. Through Christ's dying and rising, nothing can separate us from the love of God.

In the sprinkling of water, we remember that water cleanses and we are spiritually cleansed of all the things we have done wrong through Jesus Christ who describes himself as living water.

In the sprinkling of water, we remember the living water which purifies and makes new – so that this house which has become a place of fear may be purified and become once again a place of peace.

### ***in the living-room***

In this place where N, M and O live together, we sprinkle the water of life that Your Spirit may cleanse and make new and this may be a place where life is lived to the full.

God be with us.  
God bless us.  
God give us peace.

***in the hall***

In this place where family, friend and stranger are welcomed into this house, we sprinkle the water of life that Your Spirit may cleanse and make new and this may be a place of human warmth and spontaneous kindness.

God be with us.  
God bless us.  
God give us peace.

***in the kitchen***

In this place where food is prepared and shared, we sprinkle the water of life that Your Spirit may cleanse and make new and this may be a place of hospitality and grace.

God be with us.  
God bless us.  
God give us peace.

***in the bedroom***

In this place of rest, we sprinkle the water of life that Your Spirit may cleanse and make new and this may be a place of refreshment where dreams are shared and peace is found in each others' arms.

God be with us.  
God bless us.  
God give us peace.

***in the spare room***

In this place where space is made for other things, we sprinkle the water of life that Your Spirit may cleanse and make new and this may be a useful space within this home.

God be with us.  
God bless us.  
God give us peace.

### ***Concluding Prayer***

#### ***Let us pray***

In our confusion and fear,  
bless this house  
that Your presence here may reassure us.

Bless this house  
that its disturbances may be transformed by Your love.

Bless this house  
that it may be restored to a place of peace and love.

Bless this house  
that we may befriend our memories  
through the ordinary things which fill our days.

Bless this house  
that the unusual things which have happened here  
may increase in us a deeper appreciation of the mystery  
hidden within the universe and Your loving heart.

Go with N, M and O  
as they continue their life together in this house  
that it may be purged of all sinister things  
and they may enjoy living here  
unafraid and undisturbed  
by what has happened,  
freed to live and love again  
through the grace of Him  
who suffered and died and rose again for us,  
even Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make his face to shine upon you  
and be gracious unto you.  
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you  
and give you peace,  
this day and for evermore – Amen

*David D Scott*

spent forty years working for the Church of Scotland mostly as a parish minister in Forth:St. Paul's, Logie Kirk, Stirling, New Kilpatrick, Bearsden and Traprain, East Lothian. After graduating in Pure Mathematics, he spent a year teaching mathematics as a commissioned missionary of the Church of Scotland in Ghana. He was an assessor and director at National Assessment Conference and is presently editor of 'The Record'.