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March 29, 2007

Hope and Confidence Destroys Those in the Exorcist.

The significance of religion, science and self-confidence varies among different people. For some, religion is a defining part of their lives. Their beliefs give meaning to their morality and hope for a brighter future. Scientists rely on logic and evidence to find comfort and truth in their lives. For some, their meaning is found in their own self-confidence. These people do not need reassurance from others to know that they are strong. In The Exorcist, the characters Kinderman, Karras, Merrin, and the demon find solace in religion, science, or self-confidence. These characters have placed a personal and emotional investment in one of these sources of meaning. In contrast, Chris does not seem to have invested herself in any of these matters. She is not religious, scientific or self-confident, yet in the end it is she who is rewarded with a happy ending while the other characters, which had hope and certainty in what they believed, are destroyed or dissatisfied. William Peter Blatty uses Chris MacNeil in The Exorcist as a symbol of the positive life one could have if one has no faith in religion, science or one's self.

Kinderman trusts that scientific investigation will lead him to the answers regarding Burke Dennings' murder. He moves through town conducting interviews and gathering more and more clues (321). Blatty emphasizes Kinderman's logical mind through the structure of his prose: by encapsulating Kinderman's thoughts into discrete paragraphs (often preceded by a precise time or the word "item:" (320)). Kinderman puts a lot of effort into compiling data to obtain the answer he is seeking and when his answers are refuted Kinderman becomes distant, quickly changing the subject (366). He is unsure about his answers and therefore leaves the case unsolved for fear of disappointment. Shortly after Karras' death, Kinderman compiles facts about the suicide and determines an answer based on his investigation. He is filled with contentment and pride for finding the answer to a mystery. Though he

believes he is correct, science has failed him once again because it has brought him to a false conclusion (380). He has invested himself in scientific and logical thought, yet it has brought him no closer to finding truthful answers to any of the mysteries that confront him. He is left disappointed and wondering (366). In contrast, Chris does not have faith in science. She does not have the propensity to thoroughly investigate the occurrences around her and find answers to her questions. After the death of her first child, Chris does not trust doctors (58). She does not believe that neither a doctor nor any man of science can solve her problems. Throughout the nightmare of Regan's possession, Chris is constantly disappointed with the lack of answers that science is able to provide. Chris feels as if she has "taken [Regan] to every ... doctor, psychiatrist in the world" (226) with no result. Even without faith in science, Chris is the one who finds all the answers. She does not look for evidence, compile clues or conduct heavy research, but she discovers that her daughter is possessed by a demon. Both Chris' and Kinderman's searches for answers were long, but Chris was the one who discovered the answers to her mystery.

Karras and Merrin have devoted their lives to religion. Each man has built a relationship with God. Merrin has the strongest connection to God; he has the most confidence in His existence and presence in human life (352). Though his past tells tales of doubt and self-righteousness, he is at present a strong symbol of faith. When Chris sees Merrin, she feels that his eyes shine "with intelligence and kindly understanding, with serenity that poured from them into her being ... whose source [is] both in him yet some how beyond him" (329). Merrin has more confidence in God than Karras. Karras is conflicted about his solidarity with God. He feels guilty about the negativity religion has caused between him and his mother. Memories of his mother fill him with pain and he feels "He should never have left her" (53). When he was with his mother "He avoided [her] eyes that were wells of sorrow, eyes that spent days staring out of the window" (53). But Karras is still seeking a connection with God and is passionate about reestablishing his faith. Karras inwardly cries out "*Ah, my God, let me see You! Let me know! Come in dreams!*" and "The yearning [to see God consumes] him" (53).

During the exorcism Karras regains his faith (342). Even though they are certain in the power of God, both Merrin and Karras are dead by the end of the novel. They had a strong belief in God yet their emotional investment did nothing to save them from physical destruction. Chris is “An atheist, she had never taught Regan religion. She thought it dishonest” (47). She only seeks the help of religion as a last resort, not because she believes in God wholeheartedly. Even though she has witnessed extraordinary events, “As far as God goes, [she is] a nonbeliever” (382). She even goes as far as to believe in, from a Christian view, the ultimate evil of the devil. She claims that “when it comes to the devil ... [she] could buy that” (382). Chris remains without belief in God. She does not have much faith that God will save her daughter like Merrin and Karras do. Despite her disbelief in God, Chris is rewarded with her daughter’s life while Karras and Merrin lose theirs.

The demon who posed Regan is very self-confident. It knows what it is capable of. Throughout the novel it constantly displays its pride. It does not fear Karras — it welcomes him: “the demon was watching him. It looked pleased. ‘So you’re back’ it crooked” (299). It shows the same impudent pride in front of Merrin when he arrives, “At last! At last you’ve come!” (339). The demon displays no fear. When confronted with its possible destruction it mocks the challenge, “what an excellent day for an exorcism” (263). The demon is very sure of its abilities to confuse and mentally torture those around it. It threatens the members of the house with Regan’s death. To shake his confidence, it tells Merrin “‘you will *lose*! She will *die*! She will *die*!’” (359). The demon’s confidence never wavers and this unyielding pride leads to its demise. When Karras presents it with the challenge of infesting a larger body, the demon accepts and enters Karras’ form (371). The demon’s confidence leads to overestimate its abilities and thereby brings it to its destruction as it is not able to overcome Karras’ will; it is destroyed when Karras sacrifices himself (372). The demon is able to affect Chris greatly because she has no self-confidence. Unlike Merrin or the demon, she is not sure of herself and is therefore an easy target for the demon. Merrin knows that “The demon is a liar. He will lie to confuse [them]; but he will also mix lies with the truth to attack [them]” (337). During the exorcism, he remains unaffected by the demons

insults and physical abuse (340). By matching the demon's self-confidence with confidence in God, Merrin is able to overpower the demon and order it to "*Be Silent!*" (340). Chris doubts herself and the ability of others, she is easily affected by the demon's words. In contrast to Merrin's confidence, Chris is often shaken and brought to tears when she is confronted with the being that has infested her daughter (350). "She [tries] desperately not to listen, not to look" (349) she does not trust in herself, "she [keeps] her head down as the demon [hurls] abuse" (349) at her. The entity that has entered her daughter is very sure that it will not be removed, this frightens Chris who has no hope that Regan can be saved. But Merrin knows that "the demon's target is not the possessed; it is [them]... the observers" (351) and refuses to believe the demon's verbal threats. Though Chris is weak and fragile and does not possess the steady faith of Merrin, she is victorious over the demon. The demon is destroyed and she receives her happy ending, "Chris and Regan, hand in hand" (383). Though Chris is resolved of her problems, those who helped her are dead.

The characters in The Exorcist who value science, religion, and self-confidence succumb to destruction or discontent. They are not rewarded for their beliefs, while Chris, who does not have belief in anything, is rewarded with a solution to her problems and a happy ending. Those that helped her had passion and devotion to what they had formed a belief in. While Chris remained defeated and hopeless, many characters kept fighting for her and her daughter. Though Chris was weak and feeble, she gets a happy ending while those who helped her have perished. In The Exorcist, Blatty seems to favor those who lack faith or confidence over those who possess it in abundance.