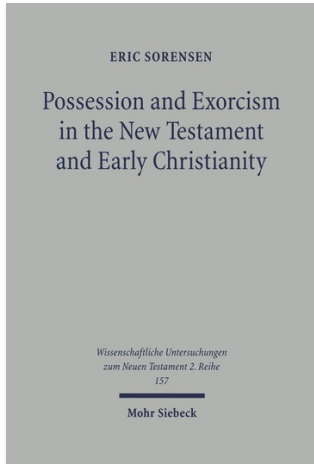


Eric Sorensen

Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament and Early Christianity

[Besessenheit und Exorzismus im Neuen Testament und im frühen Christentum. Von Eric Sorensen.]



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Eric Sorensen examines how religious tradition is maintained when in conflict with social convention. The author is specifically interested in how Christianity overcame stigmas of magic and superstition in its practice of exorcism as it extended into Greek and Roman areas of Christian mission. Using an historical-critical approach, he argues for three principal factors at work in confirming the exorcist's place in religious society: cultural adaptation (Near Eastern influences on Greek and Roman thought and practice), a tradition of exorcism founded upon authoritative scriptural example, and innovative theological interpretations applied to that tradition.

Eric Sorensen proposes that the exorcist's role was adapted in part by Christianity's interpretation of demonic possession relative to the concept of divine possession long familiar to Greco-Roman sensibilities. Early Christians found a suitable metaphor to express this correlation in the doctrine of the Two Ways, which itself had literary antecedents both in Greek literature and in Christianity's own scriptural tradition.

Eric Sorensen Born 1961; 1984 B.A. in English and Classics from Pacific Lutheran University; 1987 M.A. in Classics from the University of Washington; 1991 M.Div. in Scripture and Interpretation from Harvard Divinity School (Cambridge, MA); 2001 Ph.D. in Biblical Studies from the University of Chicago Divinity School.

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