

Heart of Darkness Over the Emerald Isle

by Kenneth Francis (March 2018)



The Temptation of St. Anthony, Matthias Grünewald, 15th C.

A renowned Irish exorcist has called upon his country's bishops to provide more backup in dealing with an "exponential" surge of evil. Father Pat Collins wrote an open letter to Church hierarchy in which he also reported seeing a parallel between the increase in evil activity with a growing apostasy within the Church, according to the Catholic website,

said: “Our objections, our questions, occur in an intellectual context after the movie has ended. During the movie there are no reservations, but only experiences. We feel shock, horror, nausea, fear, and some small measure of dogged hope.”

Released in 1973, this masterpiece film (unfortunately, with some dated special effects) is based on a best-selling 1971 novel by William Peter Blatty. The book was, in turn, based on an alleged true story that happened to a young boy in 1949, according to reports in local newspapers in Maryland, USA.

I cannot verify the authenticity of this story but, according to press reports and witnesses whose claims were documented during the 1940s, the person in question was born on June 1, 1935. He is identified under the pseudonyms of ‘Robbie Mannheim’ or ‘Roland Doe’. ‘Robbie’, aged 14, was an only child born into a Christian family in Cottage City, Maryland. He was your average boy and was close to his Aunt Harriet, who was a spiritualist and dabbled in the Ouija board. She introduced the board to ‘Robbie’ and he later started to dabble with it on his own.

However, on Saturday, January 15, 1949, ‘Robbie’s’ parents went out for the evening, while his grandmother minded him. The pair heard a constant dripping sound in the house but could not find the source. They also noticed that a painting of Christ hanging on the wall began to shake. When ‘Robbie’s’ parents arrived home, the dripping sounds stopped. But this was followed by the sound of rapping and scratches around the house.

To cut a long story short, the boy ended up in Georgetown University Hospital where he was successfully exorcised by priests. But back to the movie and William Peter Blatty's book: it is a 12-year-old girl called Regan who is possessed by a demon. She lives with her actress mother in a rented house on film location in Georgetown, Washington. After playing with a Ouija board, Regan's bubbly, playful personality changes radically to that of someone possessed. In response, her mother consults many doctors and psychiatrists but none of them can understand what's wrong with her daughter.

Sitting down in a hospital room with a team of doctors and psychiatrists, the clinic director tells her there is nothing else they can do for Regan. "Quite frankly, we don't know much about it except that it starts with some conflict or guilt that eventually leads to the patient's delusion that his body's been invaded by an alien intelligence; a spirit if you will," he says.

Chris tells the doctors she will not put her daughter into an asylum. Then one of the doctors asks her if she or Regan have any religious beliefs. When Chris tells them they don't have any, the doctor suggests an exorcism. He tells her, in a subtle sniggering tone, it is a stylized ritual in which rabbis or priests try to drive out the so-called invading spirit. In despair, Chris leaves the clinic to consider the ritual on her daughter. The story ends with her daughter being successfully exorcised by two priests, both losing their lives during and immediately after the ritual.

If evil spirits exist, then nothing comes close to the concept of demonic possession as this story illustrates. Think about

it: a disembodied evil spirit invading one's mind and taking over it in the vilest ways possible. Was all that happened to 'Robbie' (or the fictitious Regan) brought on by the use of the Ouija board? Today, in the secular West, many people wouldn't think twice of 'playing' with these boards.

But Christian opposition to them is still firm. Darren Gallagher, a spokesman for Ellel Ministries, which counts healing and deliverance among its activities, [told Christian Today](#) that Ouija boards were "an attempt for those who are living to contact the dead to gain an understanding of the future . . . The fact that people's intention is to contact the spiritual realm outside the blessings and parameters that God has set out could lead to them to connect with the evil spiritual realm," he said.

The 2011 movie [The Rite](#) is loosely based on Matt Baglio's [book The Rite: The Making of a Modern Exorcist](#), which in turn is based on real events as witnessed and recounted by the American then-exorcist-in-training, Father Gary Thomas. Fr Thomas speaks of the many who are moving away from traditional faiths and looking for alternative religions or spirituality.

Speaking to CNN, he