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## WITCHCRAFT AND THE MODERN ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-94875-3 — Witchcraft and the Modern Roman Catholic Church  
Francis Young  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
New Delhi – 110025, India  
103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

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[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108948753](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108948753)  
DOI: 10.1017/9781108953337

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First published 2022

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

ISBN 978-1-108-94875-3 Paperback  
ISSN 2732-4087 (online)  
ISSN 2732-4079 (print)

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## Witchcraft and the Modern Roman Catholic Church

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DOI: 10.1017/9781108953337  
First published online: January 2022

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**Abstract:** Witchcraft is rarely mentioned in official documents of the contemporary Roman Catholic Church, but ideas about the dangers of witchcraft and other forms of occultism underpin the recent revival of interest in exorcism in the church. This Element examines hierarchical and clerical understandings of witchcraft within the contemporary Roman Catholic Church. It considers the difficulties faced by clergy in parts of the developing world, where belief in witchcraft is so dominant that it has the potential to undermine the church's doctrine and authority. The Element also considers the revival of interest in witchcraft and cursing among Catholic demonologists and exorcists in the developed world. The Element explores whether it is possible for a global church to adopt any kind of coherent approach to a phenomenon appraised so differently across different cultures that the church's responses to witchcraft in one context are likely to seem irrelevant in another.

This Element also has a video abstract: [www.cambridge.org/witchcraft](http://www.cambridge.org/witchcraft)

**Keywords:** Roman Catholicism, witchcraft, sorcery, demonology, exorcism

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ISBNs: 9781108948753 (PB), 9781108953337 (OC)  
ISSNs: 2732-4087 (online), 2732-4079 (print)

## Contents

1 Introduction	1
2 Historical Background	3
3 Witchcraft in Modern Vatican Documents	13
4 Witchcraft and the Exorcists	20
5 Catholicism and Witchcraft in the Developing World	35
6 Conclusions	46
List of Abbreviations	51
References	52