

In the June issue of an ably conducted paper we are referred to an article "from which you may learn once for all what the Higher Criticism really is." May we venture to appropriate this language and apply it to the *Aids to the Devout Study of Criticism*? It is a book in which may certainly be seen the Higher Criticism in its best aspect—bold, keen, constructive, reverent, deeply religious. Every page testifies that the use of a strong light need not damage the eyes through which we see the beauty of holiness, that the habit of investigation need not deaden the feelings of humility and love. Can criticism be devout? This book is the answer to the question.

JOHN TAYLOR.

### SOME CASES OF POSSESSION.

1. *THE DEMONIAK IN THE SYNAGOGUE.*  
(MARK i. 23-27; LUKE iv. 33-36.)
2. *THE WOMAN WITH A SPIRIT OF INFIRMITY.*  
(LUKE xiii. 10-17.)
3. *THE MAN WITH A DEAF AND DUMB SPIRIT.*  
(MATT. ix. 32-34.)

WE have now reached the most disputed phenomenon in all the Gospel story, and to many reverent minds the most perplexing. It will be convenient to treat, along with the first example of demoniacal affliction, two very minor ones, and after examining the narratives, to consider the abstract question of what is called possession. In doing this it will be wise to observe closely what expressions are used in Scripture.

The first narrative is that which St. Mark has placed foremost of all the miracles in his Gospel. He tells us that the early teaching of Jesus impressed men above all else by its authority, strangely contrasting with the servile dependence of their scribes, not only on the written law, but on the

most whimsical inferences from the letters, and even from the shape of the letters which spelled the precept. And this impression was deepened when a demon was cast out with like authority, by a peremptory mandate, without invocation and without instrumentality. It will soon appear that the same contrast with ordinary methods existed in the authority which wrought the miracle as in that which gave energy to the discourse.

In the synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit (*ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ*, Mark i. 23), a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon (*ἔχων πνεῦμα διαμονίου ἀκαθάρτου*, Luke iv. 33). In the presence of incarnate Purity this hostile influence, hitherto not so refractory as to be excluded from the synagogue, became outrageous. His first word is rather a wild cry of remonstrance than a coherent utterance (*Ἐα* = "Ah," not spoken as a sigh, but indignantly). "Ah, what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God."

In these words there is already matter for much thought. The calm and elevating presence of Jesus works not as a lofty self-possession is wont to operate on frenzied brains, imparting some healing influence, restoring, at least for awhile, the disturbed reason. Here is something actively hostile, so that what melts the publicans and harlots, and wins the scoffer even on his cross, produces nothing but exasperation. It is some strange wickedness which thus resents the presence of goodness even in its most attractive form, wickedness worthy of him who said, Evil, be thou my good.

Moreover, he is strangely well-informed. How came a crazed vagrant in Capernaum, at so early a period that ordinary observers only said, What new doctrine is this?—to use an appellation so lofty that we do not meet with it again until the great confession in St. John, "We have believed, and we know that Thou art the Holy One of

God" (vi. 69)? It is indeed a remarkable confirmation of the Synoptics by St. John, that Jesus then remembered what impure lips had last made the avowal in which Judas now bore a part, and said, in manifest allusion to it, Have I not chosen you the Twelve, and one of you is a devil? There, however, He spoke of no common demon, but of Satan himself.

The very phrase bears out the narrative. The holiness of Jesus is what most of all torments the unclean spirit. And if, as our Lord taught, the powers of darkness are not divided among themselves, but act in a harmonious league, we can easily understand their widespread knowledge of impending doom, and their passionate outcries, as often as they recognised, in a Being of absolute and aggressive holiness, the conqueror of their champion in the desert. But this is perplexing indeed, when we are bidden to ascribe such penetrating insight to mere disorder of the brain.

Nor does Jesus act as if He had to do with any mere disease. The witness borne to Him is regarded as compromising and an intolerable insult. Never does He suffer the devils to speak because they know Him. In this case He orders the demon to be muzzled and come out from him (*Φιμώθητι καὶ ἔξελθε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ*), distinguishing the mischief-maker from the man in a way which no common phraseology made necessary, and which confirmed a superstition, if superstition it was; and substituting for the gentle compassion of the Prince of Grace the stern treatment of an opponent, treatment suited to a fierce animal to be restrained, or a convulsion of nature to be quelled (Mark iv. 39).

Nor is the result identical with what we have already seen of other diseases. They were obedient as soldiers under discipline: when bidden to go, they went. In these cases only is revealed an opposing will, overmatched but still asserting itself. The spirit came out indeed, as it was commanded, but it only just obeyed; and though muzzled,

yet with great outcry, and with convulsion. (*σπαράσσειν* is used of the tearing of a carcass by dogs, but as a term of medicine it does not of necessity imply the slightest actual rending.) Nothing like this occurs anywhere except with evil spirits, for the progress in the cure of the man born blind is not analogous, and has a deep significance of its own. But with them it is frequent, and in that malignant case which baffled the apostles, it seemed for awhile that the last struggles of the fiend had killed the child (Mark ix. 26). Surely this is the reverse of what myth or legend would have fancied, for ever concerned about the manifestation of power, and especially interested in exhibiting the helplessness of opposing angels. But the object of the gospel is to reveal their fierce hostile volition, eager to hurt even to the last, and the cruel usurpation from which Christ has rescued humanity.

We read that the people marvelled, and inferred the coming of a new doctrine from the authority and power with which He commanded even the unclean spirits.

It is sometimes doubted whether a demoniac could thus have been allowed entrance to the synagogue, or whether, being wild as those of Gerasa, he had burst in upon the congregation in his frenzy. But there is no room for dispute in the case of the woman with a spirit of infirmity (*πνεῦμα ἔχουσα ἀσθενείας*). No wild impulses drove her hither and thither. The physical expression of her spiritual thralldom was not convulsion but impotence, and a frame bent down, as base souls are, which look not on things above, but only upon things on the earth. "This is the same disease," said St. Augustine, "from which the Lord released that woman," and without going so far, we may affirm that in the spiritual world the fiends who torment some with convulsions, afflict more with palsy and a downward gaze. We are not told of any direct appeal made by her. But the indignation of

the ruler of the synagogue, who bade the people come on week-days and be healed, perhaps suggests that her presence there was a mute appeal, a special effort made in hope of meeting Christ the Healer. At all events, like every honest attendance in every synagogue, it was an appeal to heaven, and Jesus responded as if it were consciously addressed to Himself. Does any one suppose that no prayers are heeded but such as go up in orthodox form from lips which express exactly the relief that God will grant?

There is great beauty in the behaviour of Christ to women, whether it be the woman of Samaria, whose deep wound He probes so faithfully, yet with so light a touch; or the child of Jairus, to whom He speaks in her own dialect, holding her hand; or the widow of Nain, whom He bids not to weep; or she whose many sins were forgiven her, loving much; or Mary, for whose lavish gift He found so pathetic an apology, "She hath done it unto My burial." This woman He would not heal from a distance, as though an alms were being flung to her,—but neither was it for Him to attend upon her needlessly; such effort as she can yet put forth must be made, and so He calls her to Him, lays His hands upon her, speaks kind words that name not the humiliating cause of her complaint, and even when the adverse criticism of the ruler requires Him to say all, His only thought of her is sympathetic; to Him she is honourable as one of the holy race, and pitiful as, to its owner, a helpless creature that needs drink upon a Sabbath day. He will not refuse release and refreshment to His own. Satan had bound one who belonged by formal covenant to another, and Jesus dwelt with lingering pity on the long period of her thirst, whom He had led away to the watering. "This woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan bound, behold, eighteen years."

It is a beautiful and characteristic incident. But it does not add to our knowledge of the phenomena much more

than this, that Satanic influence lay behind other diseases than violent and outrageous ones, and experience coincided with theory, in affirming that there was gradation in the wickedness even of fiends, so that one could find seven others more wicked than himself.

Nor is there much to dwell upon in the third account. Jesus is on the road when a dumb man is brought to Him "possessed with a devil" (*δαιμονιζόμενον*). And when the demon was cast out, there followed not only tranquility, but the power to speak. And this thorough cure astonished the multitudes, who said, It was never so seen in Israel. It was, as Jesus elsewhere said, far beyond any tranquilizing effect produced by their "own sons." (Matt. xii. 27.)

In two cases therefore, out of three, we find a distinct recognition by the public of something which differentiated Christ's treatment of possession from anything known before. Surely this ought to be taken into account, when people pretend to explain His wonders by the superstitions of his time. Miracles were everywhere. It was impossible that He should escape the imputation of what was ascribed to every popular preacher. But in truth His miracles could not amaze the most critical and scientific age more perfectly than they amazed His own. Instead of saying, We are accustomed to see these inexplicable things, they are quite what we reckoned upon; they said, It was never so seen in Israel. Instead of confounding His treatment of demoniacs with the process which we find in Tobit or Josephus, with invocations, fumigations, mysterious roots, ejection of a fiend so violently as to upset a vessel at some distance, they inferred that a new doctrine had come, because evil spirits were being mastered more thoroughly, by dignified and spiritual methods, with new authority. Here then the attempt to discredit Christ's action by producing sinister analogies breaks down, exactly

as if we should discredit the most scientific treatment of insanity, because oriental physicians apply red-hot coins to the skulls of madmen. The analogy is an antithesis. And it is evident that ludicrous theories of possession cannot begin to disprove the existence of such a thing, until ludicrous theories (religious and irreligious equally) cease to take liberties with all things in heaven and earth.

Undue stress has been laid on the supposed fact that not only are the demons different from that one being who is called the devil, but that these somewhat paltry phenomena are attributed to his inferiors only. It is however plainly said that "Satan" (who is identified with the devil in Rev. xii. 9) bound the woman with a spirit of infirmity. So again, it is right to observe that the phrase "possessed by a devil" is entirely human, not only because the term *διάβολος* belongs to one evil spirit only, but because no expression of Scripture (the most frequent of which are *δαιμόνιον ἔχων* and *δαιμονιζόμενος*) implies any such absolute and permanent usurpation as to be "possessed" asserts. But Dr. Edersheim, for example, laid more stress upon this distinction than it is easy to justify. For it must be allowed that something very like hopeless subjugation is implied in the answer of Jesus to the charge of casting out demons by Beelzebub. If, He said, the chief of the devils is making war on his inferiors, their common dominion will be overturned. But if there is a mere capricious relaxation of their tyranny, this will quickly become evident in a relapse. For there is no power in the victim to bar the door behind his tyrant. A temporary amendment may be apparent, but the house that is swept and garnished is still at the mercy of the merciless, who will re-enter presently with seven demons more wicked than himself. It is hard to see what is involved in the phrase "possessed by a devil" beyond what our Lord sanctioned in the words, "I will return into my house whence I came out."

But what does this dreadful phrase imply? And what is involved in the remarkable fact, that the possessed are usually afflicted with diseases, for the most part of a nervous type, which the expulsion of their enemy removes? Certainly one or other of two inferences. Either the fiend causes the disease or he takes advantage of it. The latter is in some respects the more attractive theory. In the weakness of frames unstrung or unduly excited; in the lamentable reaction of the body on the spirit, so that we seldom discover the perfectly sound mind except in the sound body; in the morbid imaginings of habitual depression or of reaction from violent strain, in any extreme disturbance of "the electric chain wherewith we're darkly bound" the spiritual foes of men would seem to have discovered their opportunity. Every pastor of souls knows that certain diseases are commonly attended with religious depression, and a tendency to despair of grace. We are quite accustomed to instruct such sufferers that their salvation in no sense depends on their mood, and that genuine trust is consistent with extreme despondency, provided the will does not consent to relax its grasp on Christ. St. Paul himself recognised the possibility of spiritual assaults through the body, the innocent frame as distinguished from the lusts of the flesh, when he spoke of the thorn (or stake) in his body as being the messenger of Satan to buffet him.

This power of evil which is not our own, but is attacking us from outside, to use the body as its instrument, may at least illustrate the dread possibility of Satan usurping as his own tool and instrument the body of a man (or a child) in whom volition and energy, not to mention spirituality, had sunk below their proper standard. As a matter of abstract theory, there is no more unreason in believing that a human body may thus fall under a hateful and wicked usurpation, than in accepting what we know of slavery, of Roman Inquisitions, and of the horrible wrongs of woman.

But the matter is not argued only as one of abstract right: it is affirmed that we cannot believe in what we read about possession, because we never see it now. This is the familiar argument of the Persian prince who refused to believe in frost. It is an argument from analogy in circumstances which are essentially not analogous. Did not Jesus say that He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil? and is it rational to expect these works to be just as rampant as before? Even if we concede, what many wise and competent observers utterly deny, that no such phenomena are to be seen anywhere, even in heathen lands, did He not receive gifts for the rebellious also? and is He not the Saviour of all men, though in a higher sense of them only that believe (1 Tim. iv. 10). Surely it is more than credible that the victory over Satan, which is to be consummated when all men bow their wills to Christ, may have already been made good, so far as the human will is not in fault, but only the physical system entangled and enslaved.

What lies behind all these objections, and gives them force, is reluctance even to believe in the existence of the evil one and his followers.

Neither experience nor abstract reasoning appears to give much solid reason for this refusal to accept what is unquestionably the teaching of Scripture, *prima facie*. There is much in our common experience which confirms it. It is certain that we wrestle not (only) with flesh and blood: that evil is pertinacious in its craving even when the spirit condemns it and the flesh is not attracted: in particular, that the smallest concessions to evil are followed by an alarming accession to its urgency, not only when it has proved sweet, but even in spite of disillusion and pain, which ought to estrange mere appetite. It is certain also that men fall into abysses, not only when they throw themselves over, but by being urged and dragged, as really, and in the same sense, as by the most strenuous solicitation of

their fellow-men. Temptation by an unseen tempter, is an experience as familiar to every spiritually-observant man, as rescue by an unseen deliverer.

Nor is there any abstract reason why we should refuse credence to this evidence of our experience reinforcing the evidence of holy writ. All thinkers will agree that our mind is unable to comprehend the origin of evil, and this is no mean confirmation of the doctrine that it did not originate among beings of our rank but was imported to us from other spheres. If so, the question is at an end. And if *our* fall has been able to inflict calamity upon the whole creation which groaneth, why should this principle be confined to us? What abstract reason can be urged against the existence of Beelzebub which would not also disprove the possibility of Heliogabalus, Philip the Second, and the Napoleons? Evil, that is the portent, and not the existence of evil spirits any more than evil men.

And concerning the existence of evil one can only say that Christianity is no more responsible for it than theism, while atheism, the rival of both, can neither explain evil nor good, except by confounding them with the profitable and the injurious, sin with a bad accident, remorse with pain, the joy of an approving conscience with that of a good investment.

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### ST. PAUL'S FIRST JOURNEY IN ASIA MINOR.

#### III.

It is characteristic of the way in which the figure of Paul dwarfed that of Barnabas in the memory of later generations in Asia Minor, where the *Acta Theklæ* was written, that no reference to the latter occurs in these Acta. The companions of Paul are only the treacherous Hermogenes and Demas. I allude to this point because it suggests why