

DEVILS, DEMONS AND BIBLICAL TRUTH

by Malcolm Edwards

Edwards' study of what the Bible teaches about the devil, demons, and the realm of spiritual evil, examining the scriptural evidence and correcting common misconceptions about the demonic world.

3 Chapters

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01 - Mind Powers

1. MIND POWERS By Malcolm Edwards; The Australian Christadelphian Shield, December 1995. The Amazing Complexities of the Human Mind The human brain is one of nature's great marvels, easily surpassing the most advanced computers of modern technology. Whatever mankind invents in the audio-visual field of communications, the human brain already has it, and we are so accustomed to its achievements that we simply take it all for granted. Our brain permits us to behold full-colour moving pictures perfectly coordinated with hearing, speaking, smelling, and touching to a degree far beyond anything mankind can create. The human mind itself is a remarkable computer, capable of thinking, reasoning, imagining, retaining and recalling; yet at the same time controlling the whole body machine in movement, air supply, blood circulation, food digestion and also having a complete built-in maintenance and repair system. Yet there is nothing inside the human cranium which even remotely resembles the electronic gadgetry which we find in manufactured equipment. This invites the obvious question as to how it could all possibly work!

Unless one believes in an intelligent allwise creator, one is driven to the less convincing alternative view that the complex human mind was developed by totally unintelligent and random forces. It is not our current brief to discuss the source and origin of the human mind, but it seems very much easier to believe in an intelligent creator than blind chance. The Levels of the Human Mind

We are reliably informed that there are three different levels of the human mind: the Conscious mind that we employ daily in full awareness; the Sub-conscious mind that keeps the body working when we are unaware; and the Unconscious mind that is the level we are currently concerned with.

There are certain aspects of the unconscious mind which will be familiar to most of us: for example its uncanny ability to awaken a person in the morning at a predetermined time, the telepathic link that seems to exist between close relatives and sometimes man and wife, etc.

Two more interesting examples of collective mind-power are sometimes practised by groups as games and are worthy of mention. The first is where a subject is blindfolded and placed in the centre of a circle of people who have agreed on concentration of thought towards one particular person. The subject is asked to allow himself to fall as he feels inclined, and is said to usually fall towards the person chosen. The second is frequently practised by psychic research students, and consists of four people after serious thought preparation being able to quite easily lift up a seated subject by their fingertips, one under each armpit and one under each knee. There are also familiar stories of amazing feats of momentary strength in times of severe crisis such as a mother single-handedly lifting the rear of a car to release a trapped child. Since it can be demonstrated that the human unconscious mind is capable (under certain circumstances), of much greater source of energy than normal, then we are beginning to see a possible explanation for the more disturbing phenomena spoken of in earlier chapters.

Child Prodigies

Every so often, nature produces a child with incredible mental abilities, confirming again that in rare circumstances the human mind has extraordinary powers. Child prodigies are well documented, some live only a short time, others such as musical prodigies, survive to give the world the benefits of their unusual gifts. In 1510, a European boy named Zerah Colbur at the age of 6-7 was able to perform astonishing mathematical feats having had little or no tuition in that subject. Given the number 106, 929 and asked to extract its square root, he gave the correct number (327) in a matter of seconds. When asked what factors will produce 247, 483, he instantly replied 941 and 263, and when he was further asked to give the factors for 36, 083 he immediately replied correctly, that there were none. When asked how many minutes there are in 48 years he quickly gave the right answer of 25, 228, 800, and for good measure added that in the same period the number of seconds would be 1, 513, 728, 000. Similar stories can be related about youthful minds showing flashes of brilliance beyond normal capacity, contributing further to the suggestion that the unconscious mind is the suspected key to all paranormal phenomena.

Hypnosis

Most TV viewers will have witnessed the recent revival of hypnotism as music hall entertainment, where, contrary to many sceptical doubts, the subjects involved are most certainly hypnotized, and not simply acting. Usually they are made to look foolish, but are volunteers willing to cooperate with the hypnotist. It is sad that this remarkable phenomenon is demeaned by such entertainment, since it does have some quite beneficial advantages in medical fields as most people know.

Hypnosis occurs when the cooperating subject is placed in a trance by skilled and persistent suggestion of the operator. These trances may vary from light to profound, but it usually becomes possible to plant a suggestion in the unconscious mind of the subject which will cause a delayed response quite abnormal to their usual behaviour.

Under hypnosis, subjects may be made to feel pain simply by suggestion, or conversely, anesthetized. The subject may adopt the role of a young child, see and speak to an imaginary character, recall incidents in the life which have been long forgotten, simply at the suggestion of the hypnotist. I well remember as a boy a theatrical hypnotist placing a subject in a cataleptic trance in which the whole body, facing upwards and horizontal, became so rigid that it was able to support without harm two seated individuals, the neck and heels of the subject resting on chair backs. In modern psychic research, hypnotized subjects are able to perform feats of strength and endurance much beyond their normal ability, yet without fatigue or discomfort - once again emphasizing the power of the unconscious mind over the physical structure of the body.

Autohypnosis

It should be pointed out, that hypnosis is not imposed by the hypnotist; all hypnotism is actually self-induced, even though triggered by external suggestion. However, hypnosis does not depend upon outside suggestion, since certain individuals are able to place themselves in a trance by auto-suggestion. The results are very similar to those induced by a hypnotist in that such people in the trance state may be able to move around and communicate and even walk over hot coals, or pierce their flesh without feeling pain or suffering bruises or scars.

Self-hypnosis features prominently in the occult and spiritism, and in most cases of hallucination. In some cases the inducement is gradual, but in other cases almost instant. Hypnosis helps us to

understand how the releasing of the unconscious mind leads to a world of human phenomena which, though difficult to define, need not be attributed to outside intelligences such as demons etc. In his book, *Hypnosis: A Guide for Patients and Practitioners*, Dr David Waxman, a medical hypnotist for over 20 years, speaks of "the still unknown process of the unconscious mind." The experts are still a long way from knowing the capabilities and workings of the human mind, but most seem convinced that the remarkable manifestations induced by hypnosis are controlled from within the mind itself, and not from outside sources. AN EXPLANATION Drawing Threads Together

We have now considered sufficient examples of the power and versatility of the human unconscious mind to attempt a rational explanation of demonic possession, without the need to attribute such phenomena to evil spirits. All the phenomena cited, whether telepathic, hypnotic, psychokinetic, Geller-type, clairvoyant-type, voodoo-type, occult-type, and poltergeist-type, can be adequately explained as emanations from the human unconscious mind. The human brain itself never ceases to amaze us, and under certain circumstances it is obviously quite capable of much more than most people realize, and especially in the releasing of energy beyond normal capability and control. In the preface to his famous work, *The Law of Psychic Phenomena* published in 1892, Dr Thomas Jay Hudson says: "It has long been felt by the ablest of thinkers of our time, that manifestations of the human intellect, normal or abnormal, whether designated by the name mesmerism, hypnotism, somnambulism, trance, spiritualism, demonology, miracle, mental therapeutics, genius or insanity, are in some way related; and consequently that they are to be referred to some general principle of law."

Dr Hudson was himself a religious man, and a believer in the teachings of Jesus Christ, yet he found no difficulty in relating all such manifestations to the remarkable capacity of the mind, and not to any external spirit source.

Parapsychology has only in recent years become a serious consideration of scientists seeking to explore the strange ability of psychic individuals, and how this aspect of the mind operates. Already telepathy and psychokinesis are generally accepted psychic phenomena, and computer-aided researchers are beginning to make progress in these fields. In his work *Super Senses* (1975) Charles Panati comprehensively surveys work in progress throughout the world in the field of parapsychology and explores the potential people have for parasensory experience. He concludes that psychokinesis is the connecting bridge between the "insubstantial mind and the chemistry of the human brain giving good reason to expect that, before very long, scientists should be able to unravel the age-long mysteries of "mind over matter." Time will show whether he is right.

Demons Explained

Perhaps it can now be seen more clearly that the phenomena men have for so long called "demonic" are not caused by intelligent spirits inhabiting the body of tormented individuals, but are rather forms of hysteria in which subjects have a mental obsession on similar lines to that of a spiritist medium, except that the demoniac is convinced that the inhabiting spirit is not friendly, but hostile and evil.

It is worth repeating at this stage, that people must believe in the existence of demons to become demoniacs, for just as a person cannot be hypnotized unless they cooperate, so an unbeliever in demons cannot respond to concepts the mind does not accept. Because of his mental acceptance of evil spirits, the unconscious mind of the demoniac becomes programmed to his obsession. Such a person is generally likely to be psychic to some degree, and able to reach an involuntary state of self-hypnosis in which the distressing but characteristic manifestations take place. In other words, whatever such an individual thinks himself to be, so he eventually becomes.

Knowing what we do about the dangers of outside interference with a hypnotized person, other than the hypnotist, it can be understood why a well-meaning exorcist is immediately seen as a threat by the programmed mind of the demoniac and why he resists with all his might. The approach of the exorcist throws the unreasoning unconscious mind of the subject into a turmoil and crisis, as the two minds grapple for supremacy, causing mental stress to both parties, and often physical injury.

Since the demoniac can only act as 'programmed,' suppressed evil thoughts, obscenity and blasphemy often reach the surface and are hatefully directed at the exorcist, who is in fact seen as an enemy by the unreasoning unconscious mind. Such hostile response is sometimes coupled with violence and almost super-human strength. If the exorcist is successful (and in many instances he is not), the subject usually goes into a coma and rather like the hypnotized subject and the epileptic, has no recollection of what has taken place.

We have likened demonic manifestations to 'spiritist' phenomena, and we should also include poltergeist phenomena, since all three have strong similarities. All these manifestations produce telepathy and psychokinesis. However, if consistent reports of demonic exorcism producing levitation is true, then there is a further link with poltergeist phenomena in the reported lifting of heavy objects from the ground. In 1905, an Italian journal published a well-attested poltergeist account from the town of Ruvo in, Italy, which interestingly, combined several other manifestations which can now be seen to be closely linked. The happenings centred around a seven-year-old boy named Alfredo Pansini, and featured the usual disturbances such as pictures falling from walls, and heavy furniture sliding across the floor. The boy also developed demonic manifestations, coupled with familiar clairvoyant phenomena such as trance state, visions and catalepsy. The attacks lasted about four years, and were witnessed by a local judge, several churchmen, and also by a well-known physician, Dr J Laponi, who documented these, and other even more bizarre happenings. The state of trance indicates again, that self-hypnosis and the unconscious mind are the key to the explanation of the events, emphasizing once again the scope and power of the human unconscious mind under certain circumstances.

Since it has been sufficiently demonstrated that under rare circumstances, the human mind is capable of producing all the phenomena previously discussed, then, although not fully scientifically explainable, there is no reason to attribute them to intelligent evil spirits and the like.

God in Control The powers of the mind may seem unnecessarily complex and even incredible, but a believer in God and Creation has to remember that what may seem purposeless to us, has both meaning and purpose with God. We must be reminded that man is essentially a fallen being, an imperfect representation of the splendid human creation which first stood on planet Earth, created "after the image and likeness of God" and described as 'very good.' The human brain, as part of

that excellent creation can be no failure, and it is very likely that after the fall, the full potential of the human mind was restrained. But this will not always be the case, Scripture plainly promises that in the mercy and providence of The Almighty, mankind will once again manifest His glory when immortal saints will reign on earth as "kings and priests." Revelation 5:8-10. In his letter to the Php 3:20-21, the apostle Paul opens a prophetic window just wide enough to show us a future period when human bodies will be changed to an immortal condition exactly like the resurrected body of Christ himself, and in 1 Corinthians 2:9 he assures the reader that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love him." This passage not only gives a glimpse of the splendour to come, but perhaps helps us to appreciate the potential of the human mind, which though at the moment restrained, will then be released to fulfil, in immortal bodies, the splendid work The Almighty has purposed for it.

02 - Demons in the Bible

2. DEMONS IN THE BIBLE

Illnesses

It is most important at this juncture to isolate from our considerations afflictions which in biblical times were commonly attributed to evil spirits, but which today are medically classified. This would include deafness, blindness, dumbness, epilepsy and insanity. see Matthew 4:24 Matthew 17:15 Basically, any affliction which was not physical or visible was attributed to demons. Even modern exorcists would not consider such to be demoniacs. What remains is the syndrome we have been discussing, and which would be exactly the same in biblical times as today. The Miraculous Powers of Jesus and the Apostles

It may be smugly questioned by sceptics and also with concern by some students of Scripture, that by explaining demonic phenomena in terms of the human unconscious mind might not the miracles of Jesus and his apostles be simply an example of the same thing? The answer is a resounding No. A careful scrutiny of the miraculous events in both Old and New Testaments of the Bible will reveal many miracles which cannot be explained in terms of the human psyche. Miracles like rivers dividing, fig trees dying overnight, multitudes fed, blind and deaf instantly healed, and even the dead being raised etc.

Jesus of Nazareth had a great following, simply because his miracles were seen to be genuine compared with the so-called diviners and sorcerers of the day. Even Nicodemus, a notable Jewish elder, and of the sect of the Pharisees who were opposed to Jesus, was forced to admit, "no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him." John 3:2.

There were, of course, exorcists in those times, similar to those of today, who were able to 'cast out devils' with varying degrees of success. In Acts 19:14-15 an incident is recorded where the seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish priest, were attacked and injured by a demoniac they attempted to cure in the names of Jesus and Paul. Josephus, the Jewish historian, records the exorcising of a demon by one Eleazar in the presence of Vespasian the Roman emperor, by drawing the demon out through the subject's nostrils! It is also recorded in the gospels that some such operators enjoyed some success in casting out devils by using Christ's name, and Jesus told his disciples not to forbid it; if they succeeded, it helped his cause, if they failed, it emphasized his superior power. Mark 9:38-40 It should be remembered that, compared with his would-be imitators, both then and now, the healing work of Jesus was always both instant and complete. Very often, such well-meaning healers fail altogether, and sometimes exacerbate the problem. This is particularly the case in exorcist ritual, where the attempt may be repeated several times and yield no results.

Aldous Huxley wrote a most informative, book called *The Devils of Loudon*, in which he presents a most thorough investigation of the strange happenings at the priory at Loudon in France in the seventeenth century. Arising from a practical joke by one of the nuns (a joke which went sadly wrong as it turned out), several nuns at the priory, including the prioress herself, began to suffer

from demonic seizures. A priest who tried several times without success to exorcise the demon was wrongly accused of being the cause of the happenings, and was tortured, then burnt at the stake for witchcraft. The prioress whom he had tried to cure was no better, and it took a succession of exorcist monks many years before the seizures finally abated. In distinguishing between human exorcism and the curing of demoniacs by divine power, a very important principle emerges, and particularly so against the background of wholesale superstition that confronted Jesus in his ministry.

Superstition about devils and evil spirits was initially a serious hindrance to the preaching of the gospel. How were the people to determine which was the power of God and the power of evil? The answer was quite simple, we have intimated earlier that some demoniacs were telepathic; this was certainly so in Christ's day, and there are several instances of the demons uncannily knowing whom Jesus was, apparently without introduction. We are told that 'they cried out that they knew him to be the Son of God.' Hence to the watching crowd, the ultimate proof of Christ's authority was established. Luke 4:41 Luke 8:28 Acts 19:15. In order that the 'gospel of the Kingdom of God' be not impeded by ignorance and superstition, it was critical at the outset, that the divine authority of Jesus should triumph; and so Jesus taught, 'and if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the Kingdom of God is come to you! Luke 11:20. A similar example can be found in Luke 10:1-24, where Jesus, having equipped and instructed his twelve disciples to go out and preach the gospel, extended the work by commissioning a further seventy disciples to spread abroad the message. Like the other twelve, they were instructed to preach, and also heal the sick. They returned later, exulting that "even the devils" were subject to them and received both encouragement and a warning from the Master. His response was, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject to you; but that your names are written in heaven." Luke 10:17-20.

Apart from the lesson imparted by this passage, that salvation is more important than healing; the rather colourful language raises the question of whether the enemy referred to was an intelligent all-powerful evil entity, or simply a personification of sinful human nature, essentially always in opposition to God. The only other clear biblical reference to Satan falling from heaven is found in Revelation 12:9; which apart from being in a highly figurative context, is expressed as prophecy not history. It broadly depicts God's ultimate triumph over sin-power, which one day will no longer have dominion over His creation. Those seventy disciples had experienced in their own lifetimes, the beginnings of a victory foreseen as early in Scripture as Genesis 3:15; where the seed of the woman, though bruised in the heel, was to fatally wound the serpent in the head, prophetic of the conquering of sin-power through the sacrifice of Christ. The Gadarene Demoniac The record of the curing of the demoniac of Gadara appears in all three synoptic gospels. Both Mark and Luke concentrate on the man who believed himself to be inhabited by so many demons that he called himself 'Legion,' the Roman term for an army division. (Matthew records that there was another demoniac also, but we shall concentrate on 'Legion' since he figures more prominently of the two.) The narrative in Mark 5:1-19 and Luke 8:27-37 leads us to the eventual confrontation between Jesus and the tormented individual, Jesus having recently arrived by boat from the other side of the sea of Galilee. Until then, all attempts to exorcise the devils had failed, even though the poor man had been restrained by chains and fetters, and with characteristic demonic strength had

always broken free. It was probably his fear of such well-meaning treatment which had driven him to take refuge amongst the tombs in the area. This only served to increase the fear of the superstitious local inhabitants, who linked his place of abode with their suspicions about evil spirits and the dead.

It should be carefully noted that Jesus cured this man instantly, and required no elaborate ritual or regalia. One authoritative command was all it took for this man to be, as Luke puts it, "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind." Luke 8:35 Yet the cure had to be related to Legion's own understanding of what had happened, so that he might believe that never again would the obsession take hold of him; the devils were out, but how could he be made to understand that they were gone forever?

Legion himself voiced the answer on behalf of the so-called devils, which he concluded would now be homeless. Let them enter into the herd of swine feeding in the field on the cliff tops and when the swine then rushed over the cliffs into the sea, the demoniac was convinced that never again would they trouble him.

Whether Jesus intended from the outset that the swine should behave in that way it is impossible to know, but certainly the stampede was part of the cure. Some consider it a rather wasteful means of effecting Legion's cure, whilst others point out that it was illegal for Jews to keep pigs anyway, and the disposal of them was a just punishment upon the owners for disregarding the law. No doubt the bystanders also believed that the devils had transferred to the swine and perished with them in the ocean and for them likewise, the cure was complete and final.

Jesus consistently drew spiritual lessons from incidents in life and once, at least use the concept of casting out demons as parallel to casting out sins. It is just possible that the miracle was intended to bring to mind a passage from Micah 7:19 "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea," for with Jesus the lesson was always more important than the miracle.

It would be interesting to discover whether modern believers in evil spirits accept that such can be transferred to 2,000 swine, and whether such spirits can in fact be drowned; but it seems fairly clear that the whole process was important for the humouring of the demoniac and to demonstrate to all present the divine authority of Jesus.

Biblical Use of Figure and Metaphor.

There are sections of the Bible where almost everything written is figurative. For example the book of Revelation, and parts of Daniel's prophecy. A beast with many heads and horns, obviously, should not be taken as literal. There are also instances where figurative expressions occur in the literal narrative; hence, when Jesus called the Pharisees "serpents" and "generation of vipers," it is plain that he is colourfully describing their insidious teachings and practices. It would be impossible to properly interpret Scripture without accepting that it contains this sort of language.

Occasionally, 'Belial' crops up in both Testaments of Scripture, yet on examination it turns out to be a personification of worthlessness and nothing more. When the apostle Paul asks the Corinthians 2 Corinthians 6:15 "what concord hath Christ with Belial," it was understood that he was comparing a literal person with a metaphorical one, which is not uncommon in Scripture. Similarly, the enemies of Jesus accused him of casting out devils by "Beelzebub the prince of

devils." Luke 11:15 Beelzebub was a heathen god of flies, and though, since the return from exile the Jews had ceased to believe in idolatry, he was retained in their folklore. It was meant as an insult to Jesus who, in reply, simply took on board the concept and turned it against themselves, showing the absurdity of their charge. "If Satan is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?" The parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:1-31 is another example. It speaks of 'Abraham's bosom' and of a fiery torment, with both the rich man and Lazarus having bodies (one had a 'finger' and the other a 'tongue') and being able to see and converse with Abraham. From the writings of Josephus, the Jewish historian, we learn that this was a Jewish belief at the time. It was quite foreign to their Scriptures and is traced to Hellenistic superstition adopted into Jewish folklore. Jesus simply used the concept in parabolic form, and devastatingly turned the tables on the Pharisees who had earlier been deriding him, thus sending them a stern warning. When therefore such terms as 'Devil' or 'Satan' are used in Scripture it is untenable to automatically assume that literal beings are intended. Just as the idiom of the day personified worthlessness, and concepts from outside Judaism were in common use, it is not in the least surprising that sin itself is personified as a cruel master, which, wrote Paul, "shall not have dominion over you." Romans 6:14. A good example of the use of this hyperbole by Jesus in the matter of 'evil spirits' is to be found in Matthew 12:43-45 "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest and findeth none. Then he saith, 'I will return to my house from whence I came out' and when he is come he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first." Even a firm believer in the existence of evil spirits would not accept such words in full literality. Yet it is clear that the simple message behind them is this: for a repentant sinner to forsake the teaching of Christ, and revert to his old ways makes it difficult for him to do so a second time, and places him in a much worse state of responsibility. It is what James calls being 'twice dead,' and further supporting passages spell it out even more clearly (Hebrews 10:26-30 and 2 Peter 2:20-22). In the case of the parable of Matthew 12:1-50 quoted above, the clue to its understanding is in Matthew 12:38-42, which speaks of the blindness of the Jews to the sacrificial work of their Messiah. The figurative use of the restless spirit returning with other wicked ones, must be seen in the light of the concluding words of the passage, "even so shall it be unto this wicked generation." The sinfulness of the nation which led to the period of reformation initiated by John Baptist, and continued by Jesus, was surpassed by their crucifixion of the Messiah, and the subsequent widespread persecution of his followers. Thus their latter sin was worse than their original one.

Perhaps these examples are sufficient to show the use of figurative language in Scripture, and how it must be taken into consideration in the light of its immediate context. Since in our own language we are familiar with Mother Nature, Father Time, Jack Frost etc., it is not at all surprising that the Jewish nation at the time of Christ used similar idiom considering that for 500 years they endured Babylonian, Persian, and Grecian domination.

'Who maketh his angels spirits' The only clear information to be found in the Bible about intelligent spirits, is concerning angels. In the epistle to the Hebrews we learn that the angels of God are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs to salvation," Hebrews 1:14 and from the Psalms, that they do God's will. Psalms 103:20 Significantly, there is absolutely no information about any such 'spirits' being in opposition to God. In the King James version of

Scripture there is one lone reference to 'evil Angels'; it is to be found in Psalms 78:49. The context speaks of them punishing Pharaoh king of Egypt by means of the ten plagues, so they were obviously working for God. In modern versions the text is more correctly translated 'angels of evil'.

'Evil' in Scripture simply means trouble, and both good and bad agencies can bring it about 'Hence, when Amos 3:6 says, "shall there be evil.. and the Lord hath not done it," or Isaiah 45:7 announces that God "makes peace and creates evil," it is the evil of God's chastisement which is indicated. Wherever God's 'ministering spirits' are employed in the affairs of mankind, their work can be to protect, Psalms 34:7 to test, 1 Kings 22:22 or to oppose. Numbers 22:22 Although their duties may be either good, or evil, in no way can it be said they are wicked or opposed to God.

Spirits as Expressions of Human Thought The Apostle Paul exhorted the Thessalonian believers not to be troubled "by spirit nor word nor by letter as from us that the day of Christ is at hand." 2 Thessalonians 2:2 He is clearly using the word 'spirit' as belief or expression of human thought. Similarly John warns his readers to "try the spirits" in his, concern that they be not seduced by false teaching. 1 John 4:1 This particular use of 'spirit' has to do with human thinking and belief; it does not refer to any supernatural influence. In 1 Corinthians 5:4; Paul, advising those believers on a critical issue, commands that they consider the matter together with 'his spirit.' The Greek word pneuma translated 'spirit' in these and some other passages simply means the expression of human thought, and must not be confused with supernatural 'spirits.'(See also Romans 12:11;Ephesians 4:23;1 Peter 3:4)

03 - The Devil and Temptation

3. THE DEVIL AND THE SOURCE OF TEMPTATION The Source of Human Temptation

Compared with the great wealth of moral teaching in the Bible, little is written about how we are tempted to do wrong. However, those writers who do dwell on the source of sinfulness speak with united voice that temptation does not come from without but from within. James writes, "...but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed, then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death" (James 1:13-15). The Apostle Paul laments, "For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me". Romans 7:18-20.

Jesus himself, likewise blames the human heart as the real source of evil: "For from within out of the heart of man proceedeth evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness,. all these evil things come from within and defile the man. Mark 7:21-23. In the book of Genesis, the gross sin that brought the flood upon mankind sprang from the imagination of the human heart: And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. "

None of the above key passages blames any external evil agency for the sins of mankind, but much is said against the rebellion of the human heart which, says God through Jeremiah, "is deceitful and desperately wicked," therefore it is to the human heart (or conscience) that the gospel of salvation is directed.

Devil and Satan From what has been said so far, the obvious question follows: If devils and evil spirits and now temptation all emanate from within the person, how are we to explain the terms 'Devil' and 'Satan' which occur several times in Scripture? The book of Revelation uses 'Devil' and 'Satan' symbolically of opposing powers; in fact both terms have been left untranslated in the biblical text, giving the impression that they are always a proper noun, which is certainly not so. Basically, Satan means adversary and Devil means false accuser or slanderer, the terms are used in Scripture for individuals, disease, rulers, and generally things which are in opposition. Even Peter was called 'Satan' by Jesus when he objected to his going to the cross. He also called Judas Iscariot 'a devil' because he knew he would betray him. Matthew 16:21-3 John 6:70-71 The believers at Pergamos were said to dwell where 'Satan's seat' was, an obvious reference to some persecuting power, almost certainly Rome. Revelation 2:12-13.

It is not surprising that these terms were used parabolically as proper nouns, and found their way into folklore etc., but we are told nothing plainly about a supernatural agency called Satan who tempts mankind, nor how such a being originated. How very strange that we are kept in the dark; yet, all the passages about human evil declare plainly that it comes from within as we have

discovered!

Satan in the Book of Job The adversary in the story of Job was one of the assembly of 'the Sons of God' who discussed Job's character with the Almighty. Whether one believes this meeting took place between angels in heaven or men upon earth, the adversary invited the trials upon Job for his spiritual good, and under God's control. Job 1:12 Furthermore, we are told at the end of the book, that it was God who brought the evil on Job, who clearly benefited from his trials. Job 42:11-12 Whoever then Job's adversary was, he was not really his enemy nor even wicked. He is incidental to the main story, and is nowhere reproved by God for his part in it. The Tempter of Jesus

Similarly, the tempter of Jesus was under God's control, for we are told that he was "led up of the spirit" to be tempted in the wilderness. Matthew 4:1 As was the case with Job, it was God who arranged the trial. Exactly who the Accuser was therefore doesn't really matter. Brother John Thomas wrote in the third volume of his book, Eureka, that an angel could have conducted the temptations, which may have been the case, but the real battle undoubtedly was fought in the mind of Jesus, and it was there that the victory was won.

Sin Power Personified

If all that has been said fits together, then the last piece of the jigsaw would be that in Scripture, sin also is occasionally personified, as are other abstracts such as wisdom, worthlessness, idolatry, death, etc., and we most certainly find this to be the case. By way of example many passages in the epistle to the Romans could be cited where sin is described as an oppressive master who should not be allowed to get the better of us. Romans 6:14 Romans 7:14 It is not surprising therefore that when death and hell (the grave) are symbolically cast into a fiery lake to express their final end in Revelation 20:1-15, sin-power as 'the Devil' that deceived the nations is cast in with them. Revelation 20:10, Revelation 20:14 Thus with sin finally destroyed, the Bible concludes with a glimpse of the glory that God has in store for all those that love and serve Him.

CONCLUSION In our search to unravel the apparent tangle of demons, spirits, and the whole subject of paranormal happenings, in the light of Scripture revelation, we have travelled a long way and over a wide field, and each section of the subject touched upon is capable of expansion. We have pursued the subject on the basis that intelligent powers of evil do not and cannot exist, not because we refuse to consider that possibility, but because of the lack of direct scriptural guidance on the matter. If it were really true, it would be of such tremendous importance that God would have left substantial and indisputable evidence as clear warning to His children. The early chapters of Genesis, for example, are silent about the origins of supernatural evil, and we learn nothing about its impact upon man other than a beguiling serpent which is classified as 'a beast,' and such then it must have been. Genesis 3:12-14.

We discovered that where the Bible discusses temptation it is our 'own lust' which is responsible; that evil thoughts come from 'within'; that 'the heart of man is desperately wicked' and imagines evil. Surely then it must be from this basis that evil spirits and the like should be explained. In our quest to explain phenomena that many would attribute to a spirit world, we have spent a considerable time explaining that these and other paranormal manifestations are emanations from the human unconscious mind. The alternative when analyzed is too horrific to contemplate, and

not a little blasphemous: that Almighty God would even permit the existence of such powerful opposition; that angelic nature and evil could coexist; that God should he apparently unable, or unwilling to control such forces; and still worse, to cooperate with them when expedient. But most bewildering of all, that elected saints, having finally reached promised equality with angels, Luke 20:35-36 might still have the capacity to morally fail and fall. As individuals we are the very highest form of God's creative genius. We possess faculties truly remarkable by comparison with the lower creation, yet unlike them, we are sinners every one. The very first step in returning to God's favour and to salvation is the painful recognition that we ourselves and no other agency are to blame for our sins. The prodigal son returned to his father having first "come to himself" Luke 15:17-20 and placed the blame at his own disobedient heart and nowhere else when he said, "I have sinned against heaven and before thee. " The way back to God can only be via our own deep conviction of sin, with the spotlight shining into the deep recesses of our 'heart.' It is in there, within the human mind, that the battle with sin's power is either won or lost and where the grace of Almighty God can operate through His guiding providence and His Scriptures of Truth. It is such a mind, humbled and contrite, that makes the all-important decision our Creator always longs to hear: 'I will arise and go to my father.'

Malcolm Edwards, Chirnside Park

(Concluded)

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