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DEMONS IN THE WORLD TODAY

MERRILL F. UNGER

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A Study of Occultism
in the Light of God's Word

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Demons and the Supernatural

This is an age of phenomenal progress in man's conquest of the universe. Awestruck observers are flocking to the altars erected by science to revere human achievements in the realm of natural law. Meanwhile, the altars of God are forsaken as naturalism in theology threatens to eliminate the supernatural from everyday thought and life.

The situation is particularly ironical to the Christian who sees God permitting man to achieve feats bordering on the miraculous. Why should man become skeptical and apathetic toward religious supernaturalism at a time when science is demonstrating how "close" the natural and the supernatural can be?

The fact that supernaturalism embraces not only the morally good — God and his elect angels — but the morally evil — Satan and the fallen angels or demons — aggravates modern man's unbelief. For while some men have always denied the existence of God and the holy angels, skepticism has especially attended the sphere of evil supernaturalism. Many who profess faith in God question the existence of a personal devil and casually relegate evil spirits or demons to the realm of folklore and superstition.

Do demons exist?

If Satan and demons are merely the creation of superstition and imagination, the whole field of demonism belongs to the world of fairy tale and folklore, and not to the sphere of Chris-

lian theology. If there are no demons, evil cannot be traced to their activity and depraved aspects of human behavior must be attributed to other causes.

Biblical evidence

The Word of God attests the reality of evil supernaturalism through the career of both Satan and his myriads of helpers called demons or evil spirits (Luke 10:17, 20). Satan is presented as Lucifer, the first and most glorious creature of God, who subsequently sinned (Isaiah 14:12, 13; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Revelation 12:7-10). In his rebellion, Lucifer drew a multitude of angels with him and became "Satan," a Hebrew word meaning "opposer" or "adversary."

Satan reigns over a kingdom of darkness organized in opposition to God (Matthew 12:26). This opposition crystallizes in connection with man and God's purpose for him upon the earth (Genesis 3:1-15). The angels who followed Satan became the demons or evil spirits, Satan's minions.

Scripture not only presents a full-orbed picture of Satan's past, present, and future, it reveals the role of demons as Satan's powerful helpers in his opposition to God and man.

Scripture explains the reason why satanic and demonic malevolence is directed so relentlessly against man and the earth. Apparently Lucifer, the first of the angels, was created to have dominion over the earth (Job 38:1-7; Ezekiel 28:11-19). Satan was exalted and sinless before he rebelled and brought judgment and chaos upon the earth.

The Creator was now faced with the problem of evil and sin in a hitherto sinless universe. God chose the earth as the theater in which to present the great drama of human redemption. This great redemptive demonstration not only shows how God, in his infinite love and holiness, deals with evil, it will culminate in the conquest of sin, its banishment from a sin-scarred universe, and its rigid isolation for all eternity, together with its perpetrators, in a place of confinement called "the lake of fire," Gehenna or eternal hell (Revelation 20:11-15).

Until that conquest, Scripture reveals, an intense struggle rages between "the seed of the serpent," Satan with his demon hordes, and "the seed of the woman," the virgin-born Redeemer (Genesis 3:15). The Old Testament is replete with demonological phenomena because since the Fall of man in the Garden of Eden, God's saints have been the object of satanic attack (cf. Genesis 4:1-6; 6:1-10). Israel was surrounded by pagan nations which manifested the whole gamut of demonological practices and beliefs and clashed with Israel's monotheistic faith. Enlightened Israelites regarded idols as demons worshiped by man (Baruch 4:7; Psalm 95:5 Septuagint, 1 Corinthians 10:20); and the *shedhim* (Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalm 106:36, 37) and *seirim* (Leviticus 17:7; 2 Chronicles 11:15; Isaiah 13:21; 34:14) were demonic conceptions.

The New Testament presents overwhelming evidence for the existence of demons. Jesus' powerful spiritual ministry precipitated a violent outburst of evil supernaturalism. Satan and demons opposed his mighty mission among men, knowing well it would lead to their own undoing (Matthew 4:1-10; Mark 5:1-10). Our Lord gave his disciples authority to expel demons (Matthew 10:1) and expelled them himself (Matthew 15:22, 28), viewing his conquest over the demons as over Satan (Luke 10:17, 18).

The New Testament speaks of demons (James 2:19; Revelation 9:20), describes their nature (Luke 4:33; 6:18), their activity (1 Timothy 4:1; Revelation 16:14), their opposition to the believer (Ephesians 6:10-20), their abode (Luke 8:31; Revelation 9:11) and their eternal doom (Matthew 25:41).

Physical evidence

The tormentors and troublemakers of nature offer an interesting analogy to the evil agencies of the spiritual realm. In the plant kingdom, pests, insects, and blight continually harass the farmer. In the animal kingdom, all creatures have their deadly enemy. And the human body is relentlessly attacked by a multitude of bacteria which cause disease and death.

Those who hesitate to accept the testimony of Scripture about the reality of demons may thus find both scientific and philosophical corroboration in nature which has been called God's "oldest testament." The natural world vividly illustrates the activity of demonic beings in the spiritual world.

Historical evidence

The history of various religions from the earliest times shows belief in Satan and demons to be universal. According to the Bible, degeneration from monotheism resulted in the blinding of men by Satan and the most degrading forms of idolatry (Romans 1:21-32; 2 Corinthians 4:4). By the time of Abraham (c. 2000 B.C.), men had sunk into a gross polytheism that swarmed with evil spirits. Spells, incantations, magical texts, exorcisms, and various forms of demonological phenomena abound in archaeological discoveries from Sumeria and Babylon. Egyptian, Assyrian, Chaldean, Greek, and Roman antiquity are rich in demonic phenomena. The deities worshiped were invisible demons represented by material idols and images.¹

The great ethnic faiths of India, China, and Japan major in demonism, as well as the animistic religions of Africa, South America, and some islands. Even the ancient Bible lands swarmed with demons. As George W. Gilmore declares: "The entire religious provenience out of which Hebrew religion sprung is full of demonism."² Early Christianity rescued its converts from the shackles of Satan and demons (Ephesians 2:2; Colossians 1:13). To an amazing degree, the history of religion is an account of demon-controlled religion, particularly in its clash with the Hebrew faith and later with Christianity.³

Existential evidence

The crimes, atrocities, and immoralities of ancient and modern society point to the existence of vile spirits that take pos-

session of men's minds and bodies and drive them to wickedness and depravity (Romans 1:24-32; Ephesians 2:2-4; Revelation 9:20, 21). Because of human nature itself, "The belief in evil spirits is universal," as Davies observes.⁴ Because men sense the power of Satan and demons in their lives, their belief in evil supernaturalism has been as "persistent and widespread . . . as belief in God, in good angels, or in the soul's immortality."⁵

Some men believe in Satan and demons because they *know* the power of Satan and demons in their lives, just as those who believe in Christ *know* God and the power of the Holy Spirit. Such belief is not only the result of experience but also of instinct. God, as Creator of the human mind with its instinctive propensities, has given us a primitive revelation of both good and evil supernaturalism. The basic truths of this revelation have been perpetuated by a God-given instinct attested in human experience and verifiable by observation of psychic phenomena in the realm of the occult.

The actions of the drunkard, the criminal, the libertine, the psychically and emotionally disturbed, the dope addict, the gambler, and the suicidal person (cf. John 8:44; Luke 22-3) are often caused by influences beyond mental or physical injury or disease. The strongest evidence outside the Bible that wicked and unclean spiritual agencies can enslave their victims and drive them to self-destruction is provided by people who deliberately plunge into evil, fully aware of the disastrous consequences.

People who dabble in the occult and in magical arts are recklessly flirting with demonism. Ancient pagan practices find their counterpart in today's spiritistic activities and psychical research.

Moses warned Israel of the dangers of occultism as the nation prepared to enter Canaan, where demon-energized practices flourished. "When you reach the land which the Lord your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the obnoxious ways of those nations. There must not be found among you anyone who makes his son or daughter pass through the fire, anyone practicing divination or soothsaying, observing omens,

applying sorcery; a charmer, a medium, a wizard, or a necromancer. For all who do these things are offensive to the Lord, and because of these abominable practices the Lord your God will be driving out these nations from before you" (Deuteronomy 19:9-13, Berkeley).

Human sacrifice to appease an angry deity (demon) was a particularly louthsome practice of Israel's neighbors, the Ammonites. They presented their children as a fire offering to the god Molech, a cruel form of worship that displays all the marks of Satan (John 8:44; cf. 1 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 21:6; 23:10). This murderous practice was rigidly banned from Israel (Leviticus 18:21; 20:1-5).

Divination or soothsaying is the art of obtaining unlawful knowledge of the future. The methods violate God's holiness. In inspirational divination, the medium is under the direct influence or control of evil spirits or demons. The same is true of the modern spiritistic *séance*. The spiritistic agent claims to obtain the occult information from the deceased and is called a "medium" (i.e., in Hebrew, "one making inquiry of a divining demon") or "necromancer" (in Hebrew, "one seeking among the dead").

Augury, in contrast to divination, is based on the agent's or augur's interpretation of certain signs or omens in the sky, in the livers of animals, etc. This type of primitive occultism has its modern analogies in fortune-telling astrology, palmistry, cartomancy, the divining rod or pendulum, a mirror or crystal ball (mirror-mantic), and in forms of clairvoyance (called psychometry) in which objects are examined to give information about the owner.

Sorcery is a more general term to designate the practice of magic through occult formulas, incantations, and mystic mutterings. It goes beyond augury and includes the whole field of divinatory occultism. A charmer is a sorcerer who performs supernatural feats. A wizard (in Hebrew, "one who knows") is a male medium who receives superhuman knowledge through his contacts with demons. The female medium who possesses such knowledge is called a witch in the Ac-

Authorized Version, better translated sorceress by the Revisers of 1884.

To the question, "Do demons actually exist?" the answer is an emphatic "yes." Evidence from Scripture, nature, history of comparative religions, and human experience all testify to the existence of evil supernaturalism. In this realm, the invisible, hierarchical, spiritual personalities operate who are called "principalities . . . powers . . . world rulers of this darkness . . . spirits of wickedness in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12, Greek). These spiritual agencies are servants of Satan, "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2).

According to Scripture, Satan and demons not only exist, but they work among humanity, particularly in those who, like Satan, disdain God and openly rebel against his laws. Demonism certainly impinges on human experience and human conduct (Ephesians 2:2). Pastoral counseling, psychiatric and psychological therapy, and even medical treatment should take these demonic factors into consideration.

Who are the demons?

The precise identity of demons cannot be determined, because the Bible is silent on the issue. Because Scripture does not reveal exactly who the demons are or how they came into being, numerous theories have been advanced to account for their origin.

Incorrect theories

Demon possession is not merely a superstitious explanation of certain diseases. Such rationalizing does not define the phenomenon of evil spirits but merely explains them away. To say that demon possession in the time of Christ or in nineteenth-century China was nothing more than the effect of "certain diseases superstitiously regarded as due to demonical

influence," as Davies⁷ does, clashes with all the evidence of Scripture, history, and human experience.

Demons are not the spirits of deceased men. Josephus, the Jewish historian, was apparently persuaded of this idea when he viewed demons as: "the spirits of the wicked that enter into men that are alive."⁸ This explanation is apparently a reflection of Greek thought and has no foundation in biblical truth.

Demons are not the disembodied spirits of a pre-Adamite race of humanity on the earth. The whole idea of a pre-Adamite "human" race or "men in the flesh"⁹ is pure conjecture. The only created beings revealed to have existed before the creation of man are angels. Moreover, the rigid distinction between "angel" and "spirit," which this theory demands, is questionable since Scripture refers to angels as spirits (Psalm 104:4; Hebrews 1:14) and sometimes uses the term "angel" for the spirit of man (Matthew 18:10; Acts 12:15).

The classical Greek meaning of the term "demons," denoting "the good spirits of departed men of the golden age" as in Hesiod,¹⁰ is at complete variance with the uniform New Testament usage of the word. The word "demon," like other distinctive biblical words in Greek, was divinely molded through the pre-Christian centuries for its unique New Testament usage. To use its originally pagan concepts as the basis of a theory is totally unwarranted.

Demons are not the unnatural offspring of angels and antediluvian women. Two premises are necessary to establish this theory. The first is that "the sons of God" of Genesis 6:2 are fallen angels who had intercourse with mortal women, producing a mongrel race, partly human and partly angelic, called *nephilim* in Hebrew (fallen ones), rendered "giants." This term refers not so much to human size and strength, but to the Greek *gigantes* (earth horn), and is used for the mythical Titans, who were partly of celestial and partly of terrestrial origin. That these "sons of God" were angels and not "godly Sethites," as some scholars maintain,¹¹ is supported by the uniform use of that term in the Old Testament, where it appears restricted to angelic beings (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7).

Although the first premise of the above theory seems established, the second is mere supposition in the face of the silence of revelation. It is pure speculation to imagine that the monstrous offspring of fallen angels and corrupt pre-flood women became disembodied spirits or demons after their bodies were destroyed in the deluge. That the fallen angels who thus sinned were consigned to Tartaros is revealed in the New Testament (2 Peter 2:4-9; Jude 1:6, 7), but the fate of their mongrel offspring is not told in Scripture.

Biblical interpretations

Demons are unconfined fallen angels. In view of the Bible's silence regarding the origin of demons, the best supported deduction from scriptural hints is that demons are fallen angels. When Lucifer rebelled and introduced sin into a previously sinless universe, he drew with him a great number of lower celestial beings (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:4). These demons are free to roam the heavens under their leader prince, who became Satan, also called "Beelzebub, prince of the demons" (Matthew 12:24), "Satan and his angels" (Matthew 25:41), and "the dragon . . . and his angels" (Revelation 12:7).

In Satan's kingdom and under his rule, demons are his subjects and helpers (Matthew 12:26). They are so numerous that Satan's power is practically ubiquitous. They are also so well organized that satanic strategy can use them as effectively as a commander-in-chief wielding a great army (Ephesians 6:11, 12).

Satan's abode and base of operation is not in hell, but in the heavenly realms . . . not, however, in the third heaven or heaven of heavens (2 Corinthians 12:2). There the ascended Christ is seated "far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion" (Ephesians 1:21). Satan was expelled from this *highest heaven*, evidently not at the time of his primeval fall (cf. Job 1:6), but after Christ completed his redemptive work and glorious ascension. As "prince of the power of the

air" (Ephesians 2:2), Satan and his wicked minions are confined to the first and second heavens. During the great tribulation, Satan and his evil accomplices will be cast down to earth (Revelation 12:7-12), where they will make a last futile attempt to seize control of man and the earth (Revelation 19:20; 20:2, 3).

Demons also include confined or imprisoned fallen angels. In addition to the hosts of demons who are at liberty and serve Satan in the heavenly spheres, multitudes are confined in the abyss (Luke 8:31; Revelation 9:2, 11). This is evidently a temporary prison for evil spirits, who are apparently too depraved and harmful to be allowed to roam upon the earth. However, after the Church has been glorified and removed from earth (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-9), these vile spirits will be let loose to afflict and deceive wicked men who will follow Satan in the last demon-energized rebellion against God (Revelation 9:1-21; 16:13, 14; cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10; Revelation 13:1-18).

Why these demons are imprisoned is not explained in Scripture. They were originally numbered among Satan's free hosts, who roam the heavens. Perhaps their loss of freedom was the divine penalty for possessing human beings to satisfy their illicit desires or to perpetrate especially heinous crimes. Perhaps their victims' suicide left them helplessly exposed to the abyss. Apparently demons expelled from possessed people were automatically confined to the prison of depraved spirits, as in the case of the Gadarene demoniac (Luke 8:31).

Scripture does reveal, however, that the angels who left their "first estate" are bound in "Tartarus" rather than in the "abyss" (2 Peter 2:4, 5; Jude 1:6). These are thought by many scholars¹² to be "the sons of God" (fallen angels or demons) who cohabited with mortal women, producing moral chaos in God's established order of created beings. Their crime was so enormous that these lawless spirits (demons) and perhaps their monstrous offspring, were punished with imprisonment in Tartarus, the Greek nether world, comparable to hades, rather than in the regular prison of demons — the abyss. The flood may have been another indication of the enormity

of their crime, in which God destroyed the offspring of this bizarre union.

Are demons active today?

Evidence that demons exist prompts another question: Are demons interacting with our modern world of science and so-called enlightenment? Skepticism and ignorance concerning the Word of God produce appalling misapprehensions of reality. Men who deny the existence of Satan and demons betray their rejection of biblical teachings; people who deny the activity of demons in contemporary life betray their ignorance of significant portions of the Bible.

This is the plight of many liberal churchmen and of untrained Christians. They leave the safe moorings of the Word of God and are caught in swirling currents of occult fortune-telling, spiritism, magic, and false cults. A notable example is the late Bishop James A. Pike, who in September 1967 allegedly communicated in a televised séance with his deceased son (a suicide), through a well-known medium, Arthur Ford (now deceased), who was at the same time a Disciples of Christ minister.²³ This sensational séance startled people all over the world and alerted Bible students to the reality of modern occultism and traffic in demonism.²⁴

The tragic picture today includes the well-meaning but ill-taught Christian who professes to believe and honor the Word of God. Such a Christian, through ignorance of what the Bible teaches, may naïvely become the victim of the fallacious reasoning that since God can heal and perform miracles, then every case of healing and everything that passes for a miracle is from God. In seeking to be healed or helped, Christians may become involved in some form of demon-energized magic.

Satan knows biblical terminology. He is also a master in masquerading under the guise of divine power. Alleged miraculous cures or manifestations often are accompanied by doctrinal errors. Every believer should realize that Satan can use doctrinal errors to his advantage, but he cannot overcome the

Christian's defenses in God's Holy Word: This is our bulwark against demon incursion.

In the measure that we neglect or abandon the Word of God, demonism flourishes. Ignorance of biblical truth breeds gullibility. Deception is easy when the Word of God is not taught accurately. We are ready to believe anything when we cannot evaluate it in the light of biblical truth (1 John 4:1-6).

The contemporary Church lacks awareness of its true spiritual dimension and power. As a result many are seeking spiritual direction and help from organizations that stress psychic phenomena and experiences, such as *The Religious Research Foundation of America* (RRFA), *The Association for Research and Enlightenment* (ARE), *Inner Peace Movement* (IPM), and *The Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship* (SFF).

Others are turning to the delusions of spiritualism and to fortune-tellers for guidance. They neglect the Bible and seek enlightenment and comfort in the literature of occultism and metaphysics. Books such as *A Gift of Prophecy: The Phenomenal Jeanne Dixon*; *Edgar Cayce: The Sleeping Prophet*; *Nothing So Strange*; and *The Search for Bridey Murphy* have enjoyed a phenomenal sale. All types of metaphysical literature are inundating the market, especially books on astrology, the ancient, pseudoscientific art cultivated by King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:2).

Sales of horoscope magazines run into the millions. Monthly horoscope columns appear in prominent magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and being authored by Sybil Leek, self-styled as "the most famous witch in the world." Horoscope columns appear in over a thousand daily newspapers.

The scope and power of modern occultism staggers the imagination. Millions are unwittingly oppressed and enslaved by the occult. No wonder mental and emotional problems increase at an alarming rate. Unless the reality and purpose of Satan and demons are acknowledged, some of these problems will not be solved.

NOTES
CHAPTER 1

1. *Baruch* 4:7. That demonism is the dynamic of paganism is a clear revelation of Scripture (*Psalms* 95:5, Septuagint; *1 Corinthians* 10:20).
2. George W. Gilmore, "Demon, Demonic," *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 3: 399.
3. T. Witten Davies, *Magic, Divination, and Demonology Among the Hebrews and Their Neighbors; Tausik Canaan, Demonology in the Land of the Bible*; T. K. Oestreich, *Possession, Demonic and Other Among Primitive Races in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and Modern Times*; Walter Scott, *The Existence of Evil Spirits Proved*.
4. Davies, *Demonology Among the Hebrews*, p. 95.
5. L. T. Townsend, *Satan and Demons*, p. 42.
6. Father Delaporte, *The Devil: Does He Exist? And What Does He Do?*, pp. 13-16; Scott, *Evil Spirits Proved*, pp. 18, 19. For objections to the doctrines of evil angels answered, see Augustus Strong, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 460-464; Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 1: 28-32, 37, 38.
7. Davies, p. 105.
8. Flavius Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 7. 6. 3.
9. G. H. Pember, *Earth's Earliest Ages and Their Connection with Modern Spiritualism and Theosophy*, pp. 72, 73.
10. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, trans. Richard Lattimore, pp. 109-126.
11. For a full discussion pro and con of this problem, see Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, 8th ed., pp. 45-52. W. F. Albright says that "the Israelites who heard this sermon recoiled unquestionably thought of intercourse between angels and women (like later Jews and Christians)" (*From the Stone Age to Christianity*, p. 226). For the rule of Satan and demons in illicit sex see Brad Steiger, *Sex and Satanism*, pp. 73-97.
12. A. C. Gaebelin, *The Annotated Bible*, 4: 82, 83.
13. Hobart E. Freeman, *Deliverance from Occult Oppression and Subjection*, pp. 1, 2. See Jess Stearn, "Bishop Pike's Strange Séances," *This Week*, *The Baltimore Sun*, January 28, 1968.
14. See the author's study of modern spiritism as the revival of an ancient form of demonism in *Biblical Demonology*, pp. 142-164. Cf. F. D. Payne and L. I. Bendt, *Psychic Sense*, N. Blonsdon, *A Popular Dictionary of Spiritualism*.

Demons Against Men

Biblical teaching on demonology is lofty and chaste and strikingly in contrast to the excesses and superstitions of pagan systems and even the demonology of rabbinic Judaism.¹ As part of divine revelation, it should be free from the erudities as well as errors of nonbiblical systems. The Bible does not deal with the impractical or that which would merely satisfy human curiosity. Hence it is reticent on many questions concerning Satan and demons that have little or no bearing on human life and conduct.

For example, in the study of demonical origin and identity, scriptural reserve demonstrates that the practical consideration is not where the demons came from nor precisely who they are, but that they actually exist, they are depraved and malevolent, and the human race is the prime target of their evil designs.²

The Bible warns that demons are pernicious enemies of man and illustrates the tragic role they play in human experience. At the same time the Bible clearly outlines how men can be delivered from sin and evil supernaturalism through the redemptive work of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit (Colossians 1:13; 2:15; Ephesians 6:10-15; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:11).

What are demons like?

The Bible is quite explicit regarding the nature of demons and the methods they use in tempting, deceiving, and enslav-

ing human beings. Scripture acquaints us with our spiritual foes so that we may be delivered from their power and free to do the will of God.

Demons are spiritual beings

The Bible presents demons as spiritual beings or spirit personalities. The specific attribute of "spirit" is incorporeality or immateriality. "A spirit hath not flesh and bones" (Luke 24:39); that is, demons do not possess a material body. On the other hand, they can act upon the human body, as well as the human soul and spirit. They are capable of entering in and assuming control of a human body, speaking and acting through it from time to time and even possessing it, as if it were their own property.

That demons are spirits is clear from numerous references in the Gospels. "When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with *demon*: and he cast out the *spirits* with his word" (Matthew 8:16). When the seventy returned and joyfully declared, "Lord, even the demons are subject unto us" (Luke 10:17), our Lord replied, "Nevertheless in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you" (v. 20). "The demon" who went out of the lunatic boy, as described in Matthew 17:18, is also called a "foul spirit" in Mark 9:25.

The Apostle Paul emphatically declares that Satan and his demons are spirits. In describing the believers' conflict against the powers of darkness, he indicates that the intense warfare "is not against flesh and blood" but against evil spirits, described as "principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness," and "spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

The Apostle John also indicates that demons are spirits. He describes the three unclean spirits issuing from the mouth of the dragon, of the beast, and of the false prophet, as the "spirits of demons" (Revelation 16:14). The expression may be interpreted either as a common genitive of description, de-

fining the spirits as "demonic," or better as a genitive of apposition, more particularly defining the general term "spirits," which may be either good or bad, as bad, or "demon-spirits."

Demons are personalities

The fact that demons are spirits, and thus immaterial and incorporeal, does not in the least suggest that they lack individuality, with all the elements of personality such as will, feelings, and intellect. Like all God's creatures, they were constituted with self-determining choice. Created originally sinless, they joined Satan in a chosen course of rebellion. Their decision was deliberate and in the full knowledge of the infinite goodness and holiness of their Creator. This is why they are incorrigible and confirmed in their depravity with no hope of repentance or change. Like Satan's, their choice is irretrievable; their doom is sealed (Luke 8:31; Revelation 20:1, 2, 10, 15).

That demons are individuals is attested by their intelligent and voluntary actions. They think, they speak, they act (Acts 19:15, 16) through a spiritistic medium or through a person over whom they have acquired control. In the case of the demon possessed, the domination is almost complete (Mark 5:10; Luke 4:34). In case of demon influence, their control is less complete and direct (1 Timothy 4:1, 2; 1 John 4:1, 2).

Because demons are spirit personalities, they can act upon and influence man's body and mind. Counselors, parapsychologists, and psychiatrists who deny or ignore this sphere of reality render themselves unequipped to deal with patients who may be suffering from occult oppression and subjection in a day when disturbances of both mind and body from this source are becoming more numerous and more pronounced.⁸

Demons are invisible

Divine revelation uniformly views demons or evil spirits as denizens of the world of evil supernaturalism operating above

the natural law. Spirits are not normally subject to human visibility or other sensory perception. God's universe operates undeviatingly in accordance with the purpose for which he created it. The all-wise and all-powerful Creator is not permitting Satan and demons to throw his ordered universe into confusion by violating the laws he has established. Nor is he permitting his own people to do so through haphazard miracles.

Though not ignoring the laws of nature, God's Word also recognizes the possible transcendence of natural law in divine miracle both in good supernaturalism (Exodus 14:19-31; 17:5-7; Joshua 3:16, 17; 6:20; John 2:9; 11:44) and in evil supernaturalism (Exodus 7:10, 11, 22; 8:7; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10; Revelation 13:15).

When natural law is transcended by divine miracle, the natural eye may see the spiritual reality. An illustration is provided in 2 Kings 6:17. In answer to Elisha's prayer, the Lord "opened the eyes" of the prophet's servant who saw "the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." In like manner Elisha saw the "chariot of fire, and horses of fire" when Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven (2 Kings 2:11). Similarly John saw the demons coming up from the abyss in their last-day eruption as locusts (Revelation 9:1-12). He also saw the three hideous demons issuing from the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet as froglike spirits (Revelation 16:13, 14).

The apocalyptic seer glimpsed these foul spirits prophetically and by supernatural vision. But when they are sent against men they will be invisible to the natural eye. Their presence will be known by the excruciating pain they inflict and the gross deception they cause. The harm they inflict will be inescapable, because their victims will be unable to shield themselves from an invisible enemy.

But spirits can become discernible to men through transcendence of natural law. Evil spirits may be seen and communicated with through an intermediary or medium. Just as Peter and Paul saw and talked with an angel (Acts 5:19; 27:23, 24), so human beings today can communicate with evil spirits through magic rites and incantations.

Communication with the demon world results in supernatural manifestations, but these, strictly speaking, are not miraculous. Occult enslavement and extrasensory phenomena await people who enter the realm from which God would protect his own people (Deuteronomy 18:10, 11) and against which he solemnly warns them (Leviticus 19:31; 20:27; 1 Samuel 28:9; 1 Timothy 4:1, 2; 1 John 4:1-3).

When men ignore God's warnings and enter a forbidden realm, they may witness materializations, levitations, and luminous apparitions, as well as experience spirit rappings, trances, automatic writing, magic phenomena, clairvoyance, oral and written communications and other forms of spiritistic phenomena. Such manifestations are not miracles. They represent the operation of the occult within a certain well-defined sphere tolerated by God. Occult subjection and oppression are the inevitable penalties to all who traffic in the realm of evil supernaturalism.⁴

The Scriptures are markedly reticent on the matter of spirits being seen by humans. Here again the Bible stands in contrast to ethnic and rabbinic systems. Multitudes of demons in bizarre forms are described in ancient semitic demonology.⁵ Rabbinic demonology, for example, divides demons into two classes: one composed of purely spiritual beings, the other of half-spirits.⁶ The latter were thought to have a psycho-sarcous constitution that involved them in physical needs and functions. Although the Bible is silent concerning such "*halbgeister*," they would seem to be what the offspring of the angels and mortal women (Genesis 6:1-4) might have been, half-angelic and half-human monsters.

Demonic intelligence

Plato derived the etymology of the word "demon" (Greek, *daimon*) from an adjective meaning "intelligent" or "knowing." If this derivation is correct, it suggests that intelligence was considered a prominent characteristic of demons.⁷ This would be expected, if demons are fallen angels. As Satan's

vast wisdom became vitiated when he sinned (Ezekiel 28:12, 17). the great wisdom that characterizes angels in general (2 Samuel 14:20) must also have been corrupted in his followers. This is undoubtedly why demons use their great but perverted knowledge so relentlessly in an effort to frustrate God's purposes.

Men who consult professional mediums and use other methods of divination to obtain knowledge of the future seem to imply a degree of confidence in the intelligence of evil spirits. The superior knowledge demons possess is not a holy or saving knowledge. Demons "believe" but only to "tremble" (James 2:19). They are confirmed in depravity and never seek forgiveness. As preeminently unclean spirits, they never long for purity. They confess Jesus Christ is Lord, but they do not trust Christ or submit to him, although they recognize his authority (Mark 1:24; 5:6, 7). They cleverly withhold knowledge of his incarnation and completed redemption (1 John 4:1-6), corrupt sound doctrine (1 Timothy 4:1-3), discern between those who have God's seal and those who do not (Revelation 9:4), and know full well their own tragic destiny and inevitable doom (Matthew 8:29).

Demonic strength

Their superhuman intellect is accompanied by superphysical strength. The psalmist celebrates this angelic characteristic: "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word" (Psalm 103:20). The Apostle Peter also speaks of the "power and might" of angelic spirits (2 Peter 2:11). Our Lord himself indirectly referred to demonic strength (cf. Matthew 12:29).

Perverved power and strength are thus conspicuous attributes of fallen angels. This frantic energy is displayed in the supernatural strength demons can impart to the human body when they enter it and possess it. The Galilean demoniac who was dominated by a "legion" of demons (Mark 5:9) could not

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