

was so through the Fall of the higher, perhaps the highest, of these created spirits upon whom all depended according to the first design of God himself. However, inside this universe the coming of man, the creation of Adam, appeared as a new possibility as the rebirth itself did not succeed. Man, an inferior creature, issuing from matter, allowed himself to be seduced by the superior created spirit upon whom matter itself depended. Still the saving action of God inside his erring creation did not stop short at this first unfruitful attempt. As from enslaved matter he had raised up free man, so from humanity in its turn enslaved, he had raised up the victorious freedom of the Man-God. Thus, in despite of the original Fall and of its successive repercussions, a final recapitulation would reconcile his creation to him again, and at the universal Judgment when the entire world will be ready for the final division, it would eliminate from the cosmos every trace of the disobedience of Lucifer.

This solution of the Problem of Evil seems to me of interest still today. The analogy it suggests with certain contemporary theories are striking, and at a deeper level, I am inclined to see here a whole way of envisaging things which can meet the needs of existential thought as readily as the more 'modern' way repels them.

It is for the theologians to show whether, like the Scribe praised in the Gospel, they know how to bring out from their treasure both the old and the new as the occasion demands.¹

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THE CASE FOR EXORCISM

DIABOLICAL possession is the devil's hideous parody of the union between Christ and the soul in the spiritual marriage.

Whereas the marriage of Christ with the soul is the consummation and seal of a union by grace long adorned with the constant display of acts of heroic virtue, the diabolical counterfeit is achieved usually after the subject's long-continued and progressive indulgence in vice. The comparison is introduced only to indicate the nature of possession. Nor is it exact, for whereas Christ can possess only the souls of the good, it would seem that diabolical

¹ If the reader wishes to know along what lines I think that such a presentation of the old truth to the modern mind could be attempted, I should venture to refer to my contribution to the volume of collected essays on *Le problème du mal*, edited by Daniel-Rops, published by Plon at the end of 1948.

possession can sometimes occur when there is no deep-rooted habit of sin, and even in persons noted for holiness of life.

It is possible, however, that many records of supposed diabolical possession have not distinguished properly between 'possession' and 'obsession'. In possession proper the grasp of the devil acts as a directive force; he can influence conduct. Nevertheless, the connection between man and his diabolical control is not strictly as between slave and master; it is more a partnership, in which the devil has the controlling interest. The man does not cease to be a man, nor to behave as a man. People may rave and blaspheme under diabolic influence; but they may also behave quite 'properly'. They act always the part that suits the enemy of souls for the time being.

Obsession, on the other hand, is an incomplete and less disastrous form of diabolical influence. It operates chiefly through the imagination, and its effect is to worry or torture the mind, with less direct compelling force than in the possessed soul. Like possession, it may afflict people through no invitation of their own, and, in the designs of Providence produce some good result.

But there are, obviously, radical differences in possession occurring in good people and in bad, especially as concerns the surrender of the will. It would seem that the possession of holy persons, when it happens, constitutes a determined attempt by the devil to secure a prior hold on a soul that he conjectures is destined to become the Bride of Christ. That, of course, is his intention in every manoeuvre of his for gaining souls. But his intention becomes more explicit, and his efforts greater, when the attack is against any who seem to be undergoing preparation for the spiritual marriage in this life.

A remarkable example of apparent possession is recorded in the life of the Carmelite lay-sister, Mary of Jesus Crucified, who died at Bethlehem in 1878. She is said to have been possessed by the devil for forty days, and to have foreseen this trial, saying even that 'The devil will make me commit many exterior faults without sinning; my will will not be in them. I shall be like a little infant in whom reason sleeps and who therefore cannot commit sin.' The Abbé Saudreau, summing up the teaching of theologians on this subject, has said: 'Possession is not an absolute evil; sin alone is truly an evil; possession for the one who undergoes it is a terrible suffering, but one that can bring great spiritual good for which the soul will rejoice and thank God during all eternity. It is more frequently a trial than a chastisement. God has often allowed this trial to affect the most innocent souls.'

The fact of the influence of the devil over the saintly emphasises

the tremendous hold he has over human nature in general. And, although possession is not an absolute evil, our Lord exorcised demons, just as he cured people of diseases, thereby not only manifesting his divine power, but also removing what might have been, for those he healed, impediments to their salvation or sanctification. The power of casting out devils he passed on to his Church. This power of exorcism differs from the power of working miracles in that it is within the gift of the Church. But its practice has diminished through the years, since the grip of the devil on the world has lessened with the growth of Christ's influence through the extension of the Church into many lands. But the Church's custom of ordaining exorcists is evidence of the latent and widespread power to cast out devils that is hers.

But if the extraordinary power of the devil over human nature diminished with the growth of the Church, it seems certain that it has rapidly increased with the banishment of God and of moral considerations which is a feature of modern political and business life. Some priests who are competent to judge contend that there is far more diabolical possession today than is generally supposed. Indeed, it would be difficult to explain many of the manifestations of extreme vicious cunning and intrigue in public and commercial life, and sometimes in ordinary social relations, without inferring the influence of a malicious intelligence of a high order. We also have to account for, in all spheres of life, those forms of cruelty which we instinctively call 'diabolic'.

The present age also gives us the vast range of psychoses and neuroses, many of them, no doubt, of physical origin, yet often exhibiting symptoms that point to an evil influence. There is that strange phenomenon known as schizophrenia—the split mind—which indicates some sort of dual control. There are those who contend that everyone nowadays is more or less schizophrenic, even in the pathological sense. That, no doubt, is an exaggeration, but Gerald Heard, in *Man the Master* declares that 'the mental disease which heads all the others is schizophrenia'. And he goes on to stress a fact that is of vital importance in a consideration of this subject. He says: 'Instead of individual psychoses we shall find, we are finding, ourselves confronted with mass psychoses'.

These 'mass psychoses' may have a parallel, or even have their cause in, a 'mass possession' by the powers of darkness. What Christian, looking round the world today, will deny that it seems to be in the grip of Satan; that he has clamped down, as it were, making men muddled and impotent, and, in various ways, impeding the good in their task of furthering Christ's work? The Church

recognises the fact of mass possession. In modern times, when her authority is challenged at every step, her exorcisms are not employed so much as they might be were Faith a ruling factor in modes of thought. Modern psychological practice also claims to include within its scope the whole realm of abnormal conduct. And, although such claim is unwarranted, the effect must be for the mental specialist to have the field to himself, leaving little opportunity for any to be assessed as victims of diabolical possession. It certainly makes the practice of exorcism seem superfluous. The Church has met the difficulty and the need for exorcism by authorising, and even recommending, the use of a general exorcism.

This is the Leonine Exorcism 'against Satan and the rebellious angels', edited by order of Pope Leo XIII, and to be found in the *Rituale Romanum*, Tit. XI, Cap. III. In answer to a question put to the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences in 1892, it was said, by order of the Holy Father, that 'several priests in each diocese ought to be given the faculty to recite the proposed exorcism by their respective Ordinaries'.

Presumably there is not, in this general exorcism, the danger to the exorcist that is associated with particular exorcism. It may be used also privately by priests, and even by the laity as a prayer. Thus are the laity invited to take their part in driving out Satan and all wicked spirits who wander through the world for the ruin of souls.

The world needs exorcism. The exorcising of each parish would be a grand accompaniment to the campaign for the conversion of England that is afoot. By it, Christ's power would be manifested through his Church for the reclaiming of souls and bodies from the clutch of the devil that they might more freely and readily listen to his word.

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