Articles by Edwin J. Tharp

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Demonology (Part 1) (May 1957)

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Edwin Tharp

The Holy Scriptures make it very clear that demons abound, and that those who have dealings with them and those who have come under their power also abound. Demons are spoken of in some translations of the Holy Scriptures as “devils” rather than as “demons,” but it is clear that there is only one devil although it is evident that there are innumerable demons or evil spirits.

Demons that possessed victims during the lifetime of the Lord Jesus always recognized Him, for undoubtedly they had known Him as the Eternal Son of God before their own fall with Satan. Whenever demon-possessed individuals met the Lord, it was the demons which possessed the individuals that usually addressed Jesus, giving Him His titles; “Jesus Thou Son of God,” “Thou Son of the Most High God,” “Son of the Most High” (Matt. 8:29. Mark 5:7. Luke 8:28). Observation, as well as the Holy Scriptures, proves that the demons are always filled with fear; we read, “The devils also believe, and tremble” (Jas. 2:19). Demons, likewise, seem to recognize the servants of God, and this in all probability is because the latter are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The spirit of divination in the poor damsel recognized as servants of the Lord Jesus, Paul and Silas, and cried, saying, “These men are the servants of the Most High God, which shew unto us the way of salvation” (Acts 16:17).

It is noticeable that the demons were aware that judgment had been passed upon them, and they were conscious that the Lord Jesus would be the One Who would put that judgment into execution. This is seen in their terrorized outcry, “Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?” They made reference to the time when Satan and his angels would be cast into the lake of fire. The demons knew the Lord Jesus possessed the power to cast them out (Matt. 8:31); and, furthermore, although the demons desired to enter the swine, they could not do so until they had asked for, and obtained, permission from the Lord (Mark 5:10-13).

In any experience I have had with demon-possessed persons, I have invariably found the demons to be antagonistic, and it would appear they feared they would be expelled in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Years ago in Manchuria, a man came into our compound, and when I went to speak to him, he prostrated himself at my feet, repeatedly beating his head on the ground, and pleading with me to go and see his daughter. He told me that his daughter was to have been married, but that she was now possessed by a demon, and that, consequently, the family of the bridegroom would not allow their son to marry her, nor bring her into their house.

I was unable to go and see the girl, but one of my colleagues, a New Zealander, and a young Chinese evangelist offered to go. The father hired a Pekinese cart and drove them some forty miles into the country. As they approached the farm home the demon-possessed girl and her mother were outside the door. As soon as the victimized girl saw the missionary she threw herself

on the ground screaming in terror, and then lay prostrate. When the mother saw that the girl did not move, she cried out, “T’a-ssu-ssu-la!” “T’a-ssu-ssu-la!” That is, “She is dead!” “She is dead!” The father picking up the girl took her into the house and laid her upon the divan where she remained motionless. When the parents saw that the girl had recovered somewhat from the shock, they pled with the missionary to do something for their daughter. The servant of the Lord told them that neither he nor his companion had power to do anything of themselves, but that their God is both living and almighty as well as loving and compassionate; moreover, that the name of His Son was all-powerful. They told the farmer that if he would kneel with them, they would ask God in the name of His Son Jesus to deliver the daughter, assuring the distracted father, that if it was God will, He certainly would grant the request.

All knelt down on the floor, first the missionary prayed, but nothing happened; the Chinese evangelist then prayed in a simple childlike manner, and the possessed girl, suddenly with supernatural strength jumped to her feet, and with a shrill maniacal shriek threw herself violently on the floor. The poor mother added to the confusion by screaming at the top of her voice, “Now she is dead!” “Now she is dead!” Shortly after, however, the girl stood up, and to the great joy of her parents gave every evidence that the demon had left her. Some fifteen years later the writer saw her as a happy wife, and as a happy mother of several healthy boys and girls.

There would seem to be different types of demons and evil spirits; religious ones, lying ones, unclean ones, and ferocious ones, all with the ability to express themselves through the human voice. Those mentioned in Matthew

chapter 8 spoke audibly to the Lord; the one in the girl called after the Apostle Paul and his companions (Acts 16). The evil spirit referred to in Acts 19 spoke both of the Lord and of the Apostle Paul. It is always the demon possessing the victim that speaks in the cases quoted.

Priests in heathen temples are probably all demon-possessed, for many of the things which they do are uncanny in the extreme. In Manchuria and Mongolia the Lama priests are associated with the most debased form of Buddahism, and they profess to possess supernatural power. In the year 1905, the writer was in Tientsin when three British gunboats steamed up the Pei-Ho river and tied up at the commercial wharf. We visited the destroyers and discovered a number of Christians on board. One evening we were invited to dine with the officers, and both during and after the meal the question of Demonology was discussed. Some of the officers frankly stated that they believed all that were classed as demon-possessed in the days of the Lord Jesus were suffering from some form of insanity or mind aberration. We suggested that heathen temples were the abodes of demons and evil spirits, and that the priests in them were probably all demon-possessed. We offered to escort any of their number to Peking and visit the large Mongolian temple where there were hundreds of Lama priests. Two of the Christian officers accepted our suggestion, and in a few days went with us to Peking. On the way to the temple I asked the officers to join me in a spirit of prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus that we might prove to ourselves and to the priests that greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4). Upon arrival at the temple we took up our stand at one of the large open doors exactly at the moment when

some ninety or a hundred priests were filing into the auditorium to engage in vocal prayer.

At one end of the building was a very large gold plated image of Buddha, and at the other end there was a living Buddha, probably the Abbot, who was clad in garments of gold coloured silk. He was doing what is known as the "Great Seat," or, in other words, the Great Contemplation. From the motionless face of the living Buddha it was difficult to tell whether or not he was alive because there was not even a flicker of an eye.

We had agreed that we would silently, in the name of the Lord Jesus, oppose the priests by prayer and seek to prevent them from audibly praying in unison. We had agreed that if we succeeded in this, we would take it as proof that greater was He that was in us, than he that was in the world. At a given signal an acolyte tinkled a small bell and all the priests clapped their hands, and began in a sepulchral voice to chant, "O-mani-mani-pad-ni-heng," but they could not proceed beyond the first part, "O-mani." Something hindered them. Once again the bell tinkled and the priests began their chant, only to fail; they could not get further than "O-mani!" At this point a youngish priest came to us, and in Chinese said to me, "Ch'ing-pa-t'a-men-ling-ch'u," which means "Please lead those two men in uniform away." I tried to look very blank as though I did not understand Chinese so the priest again took his seat among the others. Once more the performance of tinkling the bell and the clapping of the hands took place, and all the deep voices again began, "O- mani-mani," but as during the previous attempts, they could not complete the remainder of their chant. Now came a heavy-set priest from the right side of the group, and putting both hands on my shoulders in

a loud voice said, “Ch’u-pa-Ch’u-pa,” which means “Be gone with you!” I turned to my friends and suggested that we leave in order not to offend them above measure because this gathering of theirs was what a prayer meeting is to us. When we had left I asked the officers what they thought of the whole affair. The senior one of the two exclaimed, “I could not have stood it a minute longer, I could feel the presence of demons all around me!”

We were scarcely away from the door when we heard the bell and then the words, “O-ma mani-pad-ni-heng;” “O great illustrious Buddha, O Jewel in the Lotus flower.” This was repeated continuously until we passed out of earshot. We left with the conviction that such temples were the abodes of demons, but that He Who dwells in the “Temple of God” is greater than he that is in the world.

Time and again I have been asked if demons can possess a truly born-again child of God. My answer always is that I see no Scripture to warrant any such suggestion, but I do believe a child of God living in a backslidden condition, and out of fellowship with His or her Heavenly Father, may have their minds obsessed by a demoniacal power. Perhaps one can illustrate this by Satan’s dealing with Judas Iscariot. In John 12:2, we find the adversary putting the thought of betraying the Lord Jesus into the heart of the betrayer; this we might suggest was obsession. Then in the same chapter, verse 27, we find Satan himself entering into Judas, which would be full possession of one who was merely a professed believer in the Lord Jesus.

The Holy Spirit through the Word of God or in answer to prayer, is still God's power to cast out demons. The Lord cast out demons by the Spirit of God (Matt. 12:28). The Apostle Paul used the precious name of the Lord Jesus to do likewise (Acts 16:18). Today we either lack the faith, or we do not recognize those who are demon-possessed; consequently, we do not attempt to command demons in the name of the Lord Jesus to leave their victims.

The Old Testament Scriptures warned Israel against any manner of dealing with those who seemed to be directly connected with any form of demonism or spiritism. We read in Deut. 18:9-12, "When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations … there shalt not be found among you any that useth divination, or any observer of times, or an enchanter, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer." Fortunetellers and astrologers of today would come under this category.

Demonology (Part 2) (June 1957)

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Years ago in Manchuria a man named Ho, a Confucianist, came to my study accompanied by a boy of seven or eight years of age, whom I supposed to be his son. I noticed that the little fellow was not quite normal, and that he was drooling so that the front of his silk gown was covered with saliva. Over cups of tea, Mr. Ho and I conversed on numerous topics, and when the conventional time had come for my guest to leave, he suddenly said, “I want you to do something for this boy, he is possessed by a demon. Mr. Ho then informed me that the lad had suffered in many different ways. After he had described the child’s experiences, I diagnosed the trouble as convulsive epilepsy and prepared some Cup-rum telling my guest how to administer it. Then Mr. Ho spoke with urgency, “I do not want any medicine for I have taken him to good doctors (native), to priests, to necromancers, to fortune-tellers, and to witches, but no one has been able to do anything for him.” I admit that in those days I did not think that demons could be cast out as in Bible times, and I felt rather helpless as Mr. Ho made his demand. However I was led to pray. I placed my hand on the head of the trembling lad, and in the name of the Lord Jesus I asked God to deliver him from whatever might be the cause of his trouble.

Twenty one years later I went to Pei-piao coal mines for a meeting. Dr Wang, the mining company’s physician was to meet me at the railroad station and to be my host. As I stepped from the train, a well dressed young Chinaman approached saying, “Dr. Wang apologizes for

not being able to meet you as he is attending an important case at the hospital, but he will see you at dinner this evening. Then the young man added, “My name is Ho-Kuan-Min, and I am from Ling-Yuanm do you remember me?” I answered in the negative, to which he replied “You ought to know me.” At that moment some Chinese believers came so that I did not have further opportunity to ask young Ho why I ought to have known him. In the evening, while enjoying a delicious Chinese dinner at Dr. and Mrs. Wang’s hospitable board, the doctor again apologized for being unable to meet me, and said, “I sent young Ho to meet you, did you know him?” When I said, “No,” the doctor immediately replied, “You ought to have known Ho.” However, before I could ask why, other believers arrived in order to go with us to the meeting. The next day I left for home, a distance of three and a half days by mule cart.

Two weeks later the Christian gatekeeper of our compound, brought me a card bearing the name of the well known Confucianist, Mr. Ho. I asked the card bearer to show him in and to bring along some tea and melon seeds. As we drank tea and ate melon kernels, my visitor gave me all the news of both the city and county. I finally had the opportunity of speaking about the gospel, and while doing so, I recalled it was Mr. Ho who many years before had brought his son, as I supposed, to me as a sick little lad so I said to him, “I was recently in Pei-Piao and I saw your son there.” He replied that it was not his son who was there but his nephew, and asked if I had recognized him. I assured my guest that I had not, and immediately Mr. Ho said, “You ought to have known him.” In answer I said, “Mr. Ho you are the third person who has told me that I ought to have known

your nephew; now, perhaps, you will be kind enough to tell me just why." Then to my amazement he said, "You cast a demon out of him." "No," I retorted, "I have never cast a demon out of anyone." Mr. Ho, nevertheless, continued, "Do you not recall my having brought the lad to you, and telling you that Ho-Kuan-Min was possessed by a demon? Well, you prepared some medicine for him and told me to give it to him three times a day. I refused to accept the medicine, and in turn begged you to do something for him. You then placed a hand upon his head and chanted something over him and after you were through, I took him home. From that time on he was completely cured and the demon never again troubled him." My guest then went on to say, "You know I am a Confucianist and it was my purpose to raise Ho-kuan-Min as such, but while He was still young I told him what had happened to him as a child, and how a foreign missionary had placed a hand upon his head and chanted something over him, and how thus he had been cured of his "ping" (that is his sickness). Eventually, quite unknown to me when Ho-Kuan-Min was at school in Peking, he obtained one of your Holy Books, and became a Chi-Tu-T'u, (A Disciple of Christ)."

Ho-kuan-Min had been baptized by Dr. Wang and was in the fellowship of the assembly in Pei-Piao until a few years later when he went to Pao-T'ai-Fu where he was accidently killed.

It was God, Who, all unknown to me, had honoured the name of His Son and had driven the demon out of the lad, and through His word had led him to accept the Lord Jesus as his Lord and Saviour.

I have already stated believers cannot be possessed by evil spirits, as that would mean that the Holy Spirit had given place to the devil (Eph 4:27); a thing He never would do. However, I have suggested that a born again believer might have his mind obsessed by a demon. We had one such case in Manchuria. Lao-T'sao lived in a mountainous village where there was a small assembly. He was a devout Christian who suffered from tuberculosis. Moreover, because he was so frail, he suffered persecution from his wife for he could only eke out a poor living as a charcoal burner. When feeling strong enough, he would climb to the top of the well-wooded peaks, fell scrub oak and prepare charcoal. Each time T'sao went to and from his work, he was obliged to pass the small hut of a renowned witch who claimed to possess power over demons. Accordingly, she was supposed to have produced wonderful cures in certain sick persons. Each time T'sao passed her door, she would have a pleasant word with him and sympathize with him. On occasion she would say, "T'sao, great brother, if only you should worship the fox, the weasel, or the black snake you would lose your tuberculosis, and be strong like other men to earn more money and to regain the respect of your wife. Having this constantly brought before him, T'sao began to toy with the idea of burning incense to and worshipping one or the other of the renowned powerful spirits which were supposedly under the control of the witch. T'sao did not tell any of the brethren his temptation and finally he succumbed to the blandishments of this witch. However, T'sao said that he would worship the black snake on condition he be allowed to keep his two holy books, meaning his Bible and his hymn book. The witch readily agreed to this, for she knew nothing of the power

of the Word of Truth. T'sao had to pay a certain fee, and to buy a bundle of incense sticks. On the morning for the worship rite, the witch made a ring of wood ashes on the ground on the north side of which she placed an incense burner. T'sao had to light all the incense sticks and then kneel outside the ring opposite the burning incense. The witch proceeded to chant incantations and seemingly from nowhere a black snake slithered into the ring and coiled itself. T'sao had then to Ke-Tou, that is, beat his head on the ground a prescribed number of times. Thus the ceremony ended. Some few months following this event, my wife and I visited Puai-Peng-Kou for a series of meetings. We missed T'sao but knew nothing of the circumstances which kept him away. One beautiful evening while we were sitting on the mountain side a strong looking man hurried past without speaking to us which was most unusual. After he had gone, I said to my wife, "That man looked uncommonly like brother T'sao, but it could not possibly be he because he always looks so emaciated." At meeting that night I enquired after T'sao and was told of what had taken place and informed by the brethren that he was now fat and strong and could do a full day's work along with any of the other charcoal burners. Special prayer was made nightly for our brother. I recall one night, after we had been three weeks in the district, we were all upon our knees when someone came into the hall. It was a weeping T'sao, he had come to confess his sin and to plead for forgiveness. T'sao was fully restored to the Lord and to the fellowship of the assembly, but within three months he lost all his strength and died from rapid decline. It appears that T'sao had begun to read his Bible while resting at noon. The Holy Spirit convicted him of his sin, and this led to confession and deliverance from this

obsession of the devil. I mention this as an instance of how a truly born again child of God may have his mind so influenced by demoniacal power.

Demonology (Part 3) (July 1957)

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The Old Testament Scriptures warned against any manner of dealings with those who seemed directly connected with any form of demonism or spiritism. We read in Deut. 18:9-12, “When thou art come into the land which the Lord Thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations … There shall not be found among you any one … that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.” Fortune-tellers and astrologers of today would come under this category. Years ago on the west coast at the close of an address on demonology, we contacted two assembly believers who were directly connected with the occult. One was earning her living in a large department store by reading tea cups, and the other went periodically to a fortune-teller. Neither thought that there was any harm in what she was doing, but both had lost the joy of salvation. It is always dangerous to toy with the ouija board, or to have one’s fortune told just for fun.

Some believers have been ensnared by “familiar spirits.” They had lost a loved one, and the idea occurred to them that they might be able to get into touch with and to communicate with their departed one. This is an utter impossibility. In Isaiah’s day God’s people were against any such practices. However, it is possible to get into touch with the “familiar spirit” of a departed one. A “familiar spirit” seems to be a demon who familiarizes itself with the living, so that it is able to reproduce the

voice and imitate the very personality of the dead. Several years ago a New Zealand preacher who was known on several continents lost his beloved wife. They did not have a family; consequently, they had enjoyed the closest possible fellowship in the work of the Lord, and were much devoted to each other. It came to the preacher's ears that the medium at a certain spiritsits church was able to put one into contact with his loved one. He began secretly to attend the seances and became fully persuaded he was in conversation with his beloved wife. The voice was the same and the questions put to her were all intelligently answered. However, the preacher did not give up prayer and the reading of the Scriptures; therefore, in time he became convinced that he was doing wrong in dealing with occultism. He was greatly tested and tried by the evil one, and almost lost his reason before he extricated himself from the snare of the devil (2 Tim. 2:26).

A Christian woman, now several years with the Lord, told me of her very trying experience with evil spirits. Her husband, a professional man, went to Europe to take a special course in his line. It was her habit constantly to pray for him although possessed of a deep jealousy for him. Some weeks after he had left for Europe, "voices" seemed to say, "It is no use of you praying for your husband for he has been unfaithful to you; your prayers are in vain." These "voices" continued to pester her to such an extent that she actually gave up praying. One day the "voice" told her to visit a certain city, and to go to a certain man on such-and-such a street, and he would tell her all that her husband was doing. The city was a long train journey from where she lived, but she went, found the address, and knocked at

the door which was opened by a man, an absolute stranger to her. This strange gentleman acted as though he knew her, and as he welcomed her, he said, “I was expecting you.” The man gave her an outline of all that her husband had been doing during the months he had been in Europe, and the story upset her in a dire way. However, she said nothing of this experience in her letters to her husband, but when he returned home she confronted him with the entire story. He confessed as sin all that was brought before him. He was fully restored to the Lord, but for many years his poor wife was under a severe nervous strain, and lost all spiritual joy.

When in Durban, South Africa, I addressed a company of believers from several parts of the city on demonology. A certain Mr. Clothier, the leader of the South African Evangelical Band was present. On the Lord’s Day following, Mr. Clothier spoke to a congregation of several hundred men and women and practically repeated all that I had said. At the close of the service he was asked to go to lunch at the home of a widow whose only daughter lived with her. Both the mother and the daughter were members of the congregation Mr. Clothier had addressed. In inviting him to lunch the widow told him that she and her daughter had a very difficult decision to make, and that perhaps he would be able to help them. “You know,” said the mother, “that my daughter is a very bright Christian and that she is ever seeking to lead souls to Christ. Well, in the business house where she works there is a young girl, a member of the spiritists church, whom she is trying to bring to the Lord. On several consecutive Sundays this girl accompanied my daughter to our meeting. After the service one evening, the girl said, ‘For several Sundays I

have accompanied you to your church, and now I think it would be nice if you would come to mine.' My daughter went with her the following Lord's Day evening and the service took the form of a seance. During the proceedings the medium (a man) suddenly pointed to three different persons in the audience, saying, 'I have three messages to-night, one for you, and you, and you,' pointing directly to the three individuals concerned, my daughter being one of them. My daughter thought he must have been pointing to some one else so looked around. The medium saw her and called out, pointing directly at her, 'It is you, Miss, I mean.' After delivering one message, he turned to my daughter and said, 'The message for you is from an old man with a very long white beard, who during his lifetime on earth was a preacher and was always antagonistic toward spiritualism, and constantly preached against it. However, since being on the other side, he has discovered how great was his mistake. His special message to you is that you try and undo the harm that he did in his preaching.' My daughter came home very upset and described to me all that had taken place. I at once recognized the old man as my father who died before my daughter was born. He was a Wesleyan minister and had a long white beard. I told my daughter that I was convinced that it was her grandfather of whom the medium spoke, for I recalled hearing him again and again from the pulpit denounce spiritualism. Moreover, I added that perhaps he had been wrong, and that the Lord wanted us to try and correct the mistakes that he had made. At the same time, I suggested to her that we pray about it for two weeks, and that then we could come to some decision; the two weeks are up to-morrow. You may be able to help us in our decision."

That servant of the Lord prayed with them, and from the Scriptures was able to persuade them that the entire thing was of the devil, and thus they were kept from being ensnared. The so-called Spiritualistic Churches are veritable “synagogues of Satan” (Rev. 3:9), and believers should be warned against attending any of them.

Speaking of “familiar spirits!” We seem to have an instance of their power in 1 Samuel 28. King Saul was supposed to have “put away those that had familiar spirits,” but that cannot be done by legislation. Later, however, when “Saul enquired of the Lord, and the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.” Saul ordered his servants to seek “a woman that hath a familiar spirit.” One was found, and Saul’s purpose was to get into touch with Samuel the prophet through her. When he stood before the woman, she said to the disguised king, “Whom shall I bring up to thee?” Saul answered, “Bring me up Samuel.” Now the woman, obviously expected to contact Samuel’s familiar spirit because when she saw Samuel actually appear, “She called with a loud voice,” and appeared filled with dread (1 Sam. 28:12). At the same time Saul recognized the form that appeared as none other than Samuel (Vv. 14-20). We know what judgment fell upon Saul because of his “transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it” (1 Chron. 10:13).