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Getting on Top of a Demon (Luke 4:39)

Professor Derrett is well known for his fresh contributions to New Testament study based on his vast knowledge of ancient Judaism (cf. 'The Samaritan Woman's Purity (John 4:4-52)' EQ 60:4, 1988, 291-8). He was formerly Professor of Oriental Laws in the University of London.

There are cases where the surface meaning of a foreign word is clear, yet some of its functions elude those who do not share the culture of the speaker and his immediate audience. The phrase *epistas epanō autēs* at Lk. 4:39 is an example. It has been looked into several times, without anyone suspecting the significance of the behaviour attributed to Jesus.¹ One may even, with Léon-Dufour, mistakenly classify the incident as tame-seeming, or, like Kertelge, as 'undemanding'. In fact the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Mk. 1:29-31; Lk. 4:38-39, reported from another source at Mt. 8:14-15)² has been written up by Luke with three objects concurrently. He emphasizes:

¹ H. van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* (Leiden, 1965), 551-555; X. Léon-Dufour, 'La guérison de la belle-mère de Simon-Pierre', *Est. Bibl.* 24 (1965), 193-216; R. Pesch, 'Die Heilung der Schwiegermutter des Simon-Petrus. Ein Beispiel heutiger Synoptikerexegese', *Neuere Exegese. Verlust oder Gewinn?* (Freiburg, 1968), 143-175 at p. 173 (a study not adequately observed by W. Kirchschräger, 'Fieberheilung in Apg. 28 und Lk. 4', J. Kremer (ed.) *Les Actes des Apôtres. Tradition, rédaction, théologie* (Gembloux and Löwen, 1979), 509-521 at 517 n. 37); A. Fuchs, 'Entwicklungsgeschichtliche Studie zu Mk. 1, 29-31 par Mt. 8, 14-15 par Lk. 4, 38-39. Macht über Fieber und Dämonen', *Stud. z. N.T. und seiner Umwelt* (SNTU), ser.A, parts 6-7, 1981-1982, 21-76 at 55-56 and n. 85.

² Léon-Dufour, 210; Fuchs, 37.

- (1) Jesus' on-going campaign—welcomed by some—against Satan,
 - (a) whose blandishments he has recently rejected, but
 - (b) whose powers resisted the proclamation of Isaiah (cf. Lk. 4:18d with LXX Is. 58:6), thus throwing doubt upon Jesus' divine commission;³
- (2) the necessity of *exorcising* causes of disease attributable to sin;⁴ and furthermore
- (3) Jesus' mastery of such demons as he encountered at his option.⁵

Luke pursues these three objects with marvellous economy.

All the above is indeed known, yet, though *ephistēmi* has been studied, not least by Fuchs, and its overtones of (a) power⁶ and (b) medical attention⁷ have been duly registered, one aspect of that *epistas* is altogether neglected.⁸ It would at once have struck an ancient Jewish, if not a Greek, hearer of Luke.

Epanō

A feeble attempt has been made to suggest that *epanō* ('above') is merely an intensification of *epi* ('upon'). In fact we can be clear that *epanō* meant, where physically possible, directly above⁹ or even on

³ Lk. 4:13, 18. W. Dietrich, *Das Petrusbild der Lukanischen Schriften* (Stuttgart, 1972), 18–23 at p. 20; H. C. Kee, *Miracles in the Early Christian World. A Study in Socio-historical Method* (New Haven and London, 1983), 204; Helge K. Nielsen, *Heilung und Verkündigung* (Leiden, 1987), 4 n. 20, 140. *Synechomenē* ('gripped', cf. Mt. 4:24; Acts 28:8) emphasizes the violence of the demon's stance (cf. Lk. 13:16). The exorcism in the synagogue raised expectations: W. E. Bundy, *Jesus and the First Three Gospels* (Cambridge MA, 1955), 81. Léon-Dufour, 201; D. Crump, 'Jesus, the Victorious Scribal intercessor in Luke's Gospel', NTS 38, 1992, 51–65 at 52–8.

⁴ Dt. 28:15–68; Lv. 26:14–39; Jos. 23:15–16. Léon-Dufour, 196 (Lk. 7:50), 207 (Lk. 4:35, 41, 8:24, 9:42, 55). Derrett, 'Simon Magus', *Studies in the New Testament IV* (Leiden, 1986), 207–223 at 222(67), where read Pss. 35:16, 37:12, 112:10; Pss. 38:2, 38:13. Derrett, *Making of Mark* (Shipston-on-Stour, 1985), 161. 4Q504III (cf. Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Harmondsworth, 1987), 218). Bab. Talm., Ned. 41a at K. Berger and C. Colpe (edd.) *Texte zum Neuen Testament* (Göttingen, 1987), 32 §13 (see also §§11, 12). 4QprNab (Vermes, 274): H. C. Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times* (Cambridge, 1986, 1990), 25.

⁵ Léon-Dufour, 211.

⁶ A. Wright, *Synopsis of the Gospels in Greek* (London, 1906), 17. *Epistatēs*: Liddell-Scott-Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon* meanings II.2, III. 2; *ephistēmi*: LSJ, B.II.

⁷ *Epistasis*, 'medical treatment', 'case': LSJ, II.2; *ephistēmi*, 'to give attention to': LSJ, B.v.

⁸ E. Klostermann, *Das Lukasevangelium* (Tübingen, 1929), 67; I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Exeter, 1978), 194–5; C. F. Evans, *Saint Luke* (London and Philadelphia, 1990), 281–282. G. Theissen, *Urchristliche Wundergeschichten* (Gütersloh, 1974), 95, 186.

⁹ LXX Je. 50:10; Mt. 2:9, etc. (see below).

top of¹⁰ the person or thing, which will appear in the genitive case, as here. *Epanō* can mean geographically 'above', but in any case *epanō* followed by the genitive means *above in point of situation*.¹¹ Where a vertical presence 'above' is not possible, then the implication is of being directly adjacent in a helpful,¹² or a malevolent¹³ context. When one wishes to say a person stood on the very brink of a river or pit, *epanō* is the word to use (LXX Dn. 12:6, 7; Bel. 36).

The Hebrew equivalent is *l'ma'alah min*. Schlatter found two excellent rabbinical passages where a personage *stood over* another, both, as it happens, threateningly.¹⁴ Jesus, according to Luke, stood over Peter's mother-in-law (about the nomenclature there is something to be said below). He did not straddle her or tread on her—though the phrase would be consistent with either—for there is nothing to confirm either of these bizarre positions, but from LXX 2 Sa. 1:9 we can tell that 'stood over', i.e. 'bent over', is the correct translation. So Beza notices the *gestus inclinantis sese ad fulchrum lecti*, and Bauer in his *Wörterbuch* says 'sich über sie beugend'. Jesus did *not* take her by the hand. Only here does he achieve a cure by bending over the patient, and at Lk. 4:40 we are deliberately told that his method at that time was the laying-on of hands.¹⁵ I submit that he, at a distance from the synagogue, but still under a common roof with his patient, directs his power onto the woman's 'demon', with the consequence that, directly, indirectly, or in both ways, he frees Peter to join his mission.

We should not delay to discuss the existence of demons, or Jesus' belief in them.¹⁶ Luke and his audience were clear that diseases

¹⁰ LXX Exk. 37:8; 1 Macc. 5:51, 6:46.

¹¹ Xenophon, *An.* 6.3.1; LXX Jdg. 1:36; Je. 52:32; Ezk. 1:27; Jdt. 1:10; Test. Levi III.3; Test. Jud. IX.3; 1 Macc. 3:37, 6:1; 2 Macc. 9:25. Mt. 2:9D, 23:22, 27:37; Lk. 10:19, 11:44; Rev. 6:8, 20:3. Hermas, *sim.* 9.3.1, 4.2; Did. 9:4, 16:8. *Ephistēmi epi* suggests standing by: Gn. 18:2, 24:43; Lv. 19:16; Nu. 23:6, 17; 2 Sa. 24:20.

¹² LXX Gn. 18:2. Cf. Lk. 2:9; Acts 12:7, 22:13; 23:11.

¹³ LXX 2 Sa. 1:9.

¹⁴ Pes. Kah. 32, 199b (the Angel of Death) and Tanh. (Buber) *wayehi* 10. 217. A. Schlatter, *Das Evangelium des Lukas aus seinen Quellen erklärt* (Stuttgart, 1931), 50. For the threatening aspects of *ephistēmi* see LSJ, B III 2. Van der Loos, 551, calls the demon a 'usurper'. By contrast *epe* with the *accusative* implies benevolence (LXX Ezk. 36:9). Léon-Dufour, 205.

¹⁵ *Ephistēmi epanō* occurs nowhere else, and indeed *epanō* is not used in this sense elsewhere in the New Testament.

¹⁶ Van der Loos, 204–211. For demonization see M. J. Edwards, 'Three exorcisms and the New Testament World', *Eranos* 87, 1989, 117–126; Derrett, 'Simon Magus' (above, n. 4) at 209–210 (54–55); T. U. Oesterreich, *Possession, Demoniacal and Other* (London, 1930).

could be caused by demons.¹⁷ and that rapid cures were conceivable once the cause had 'departed'. The idiom is not unlike our talk of 'resisting infection', 'building up immunity to disease', or 'delaying the onset of an attack'. The susceptibilities of demons were familiar to Luke (11:24(-26)) if they are no longer in Western Europe.

'Up', 'Down', and the Righteous

Many modern versions of Lk. 4:39 say 'he stood over her', which is correct provided it is understood that 'bent over' is implied, not 'stood over' threateningly as a schoolmaster might. He placed himself *above* her. The gods or God always belonged (until *Honest to God*) above, and in Hebrew 'above' implies the divine abode.¹⁸ Demons and hellish powers belonged below (2 Pet. 2:4). *Power* follows the law of gravity; but in climes where sunshine and shade are real powers, a second metaphor is available. One casts a shadow, benevolently (Jb. 7:2; Ps. 17:8; La. 4:20, etc.), or otherwise. Maximum force, as in a smithy, operates vertically downwards; shade can be more generous. See Tr. 2:10-13 (and Tg.); Ps. 17: 8, 91:4.

To be *up*, implies to be powerful, joyful;¹⁹ to be *down* powerless (Ps. 37:14; Ezk. 32:18), recipient, like the anvil, of the power of another. Those have power who have the *upper hand* (Dt. 32:27). Superiority implies being *on top*.²⁰ *L'ma'alah* means 'of higher rank' (Mishnah, Kel. I.2). Apprentices of Jesus can walk on top (*epi*) of all the powers of the enemy (Satan) (Lk. 10:19; cf. Ps. 91:13); and when Satan is frustrated he *falls* (where he belongs: Lk. 10:18). If the Lord sustains the humble he casts the wicked *down* to the ground; he brings them *down* to the pit (Pss. 147:6, 55:23(24), 73:18).

¹⁷ Commentators in general do not hesitate about this. Mk. and Mt. had left it doubtful. Zc. 13:1-2. Lk. 13:16. H. Strack—P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament* IV/1, 503, 505, 521, 523. Sifre Dt. §173. R. and M. Hengel, 'Die Heilungen Jesu und medizinisches Denken', *Medicus Viator*. FS. R. Siebeck (Tübingen and Stuttgart, 1959), 331-361 at 340-341. O. Böcher, *Dämonenfurcht und Dämonenabwehr* (Stuttgart, 1970), 46; id., *Das Neue Testament und die dämonischen Mächte* (Stuttgart, 1972), 20 and n. 42. Kee, *Medicine*, 1990, 21-22, 86.

¹⁸ Is. 38:14. Mishnah, Hag. II.1(11). 'The Father above' means YHWH.

¹⁹ Gn. 41:40; Nu. 24:7; Dt. 26:19, 28:1, 13, 44; Ps. 89:28(27); La. 1:5; Lk. 19:17, 19; Jn. 3:31, 8:23. Midr. R. Gen. XC.; Lev. XXIV. 9; Lam., proem. 11 (Soncino trans., 16). When the earth becomes flat, there are no ups and no downs (Bundahišn apocalyptic) and we may hope for social levelling: B. Lincoln, 'The Earth becomes flat'—a study of apocalyptic imagery', *CSSH* 25 (1983), 136-153. Shakespeare, *Rich. III*, Act 4, sc. 4, ll.37, 244-245; *Troilus & Cressida*, Act 3, sc. 2, l. 168.

²⁰ See last note.

To mime ownership or to transfer qualities, good or bad, to a living being one pressed oneself downwards upon him/her/it.²¹ Logically qualities could be transferred sideways or from below upwards, but they are not. So YHWH's wrath presses *downwards* on the psalmist (Ps. 88:7(8)). And the miracle-worker places himself *above* his/her beneficiary: 1 Ki. 17:21; 2 Ki. 4:34–35; Acts 20:10.

Even in present-day exorcisms one 'talks down' to the 'demon'. How precisely the patient connives at his/her demon's departure is a question in anthropology and psychology and need not detain us. Threatening the demon was, as it still is, a recognisable way of 'driving it out',²² and one who successfully drives out demons can, and therefore could, quite reasonably, be suspected of being possessed, himself, by a superior, more powerful, demon (Lk. 11:22), even by Satan himself or one of his many lieutenants (Lk. 11:15, 18, 19). Iconography (cf. the Dura-Europos illustration of Mt. 9:2) knows better than to show the patient, minus his emerging demon, higher, even by a millimetre, than the hand of the exorcist. One blesses from above, not sideways, or from below.

Demon-possession, especially with suicidal features, could be diagnosed as idolatry, submission to idols, 'adultery' towards YHWH.²³ The Targums of Onqelos, Pseudo-Jonathan, and Neofiti I on Dt. 32:24 leave us in no doubt. Henry Alford long ago pointed out that that *fever* was specifically threatened at Dt. 28:22. In Galilee and the Decapolis the ancient gods of the Canaanites and Greeks could well have figured in Jewish minds as demons.²⁴ We need look no further than 1 Co. 10:20–21 for proof of this. The defeated demons had plenty of excuse for annoying the intrusive and religiously self-assertive Hebrews. To get the better of demons one must be *above* them. Dt. 28 points the way to an understanding of this.

Dt. 28:13 is known to illustrate *epanō* (cf. Bar. 2:5), and is of great help to us. 'The Lord will make thee the head and not the tail, and thou shalt be only above (*ʿlma ʿlāh*, LXX *epanō*) and thou shalt not be below (LXX *hypokatō*), if thou shalt harken to the commandments of the Lord thy God . . .' 'LH is to ascend. If Dt. 28:43 predicts

²¹ See dictionaries under SMK, *s'mikāh*. Lv. 14:15, 16:21. Mishnah, Sanh. I.3. Did exorcists utter formulae 'over the head' of the patient? S. Eitrem, 'Some notes on the demonology in the New Testament', *Symbol. Osloenses, fasc. supplet. 12* (Oslo, 1950), 29–30.

²² See Derrett at n. 16 above (Sri Lanka instance). K. Threade, art. 'Exorcismus', *RAC* VII, 1969, coll. 44–117 at 48–55 (commands and threats appear at 51–52, 54). Cf. Fuchs, 55–56 n. 85. Jesus threatens the demon: E. Schweizer, *The Good News according to Luke* (London, 1984), 99. Cornelius à Lapide on Mt. 8:15 says Jesus compelled her to rise and the fever to depart.

²³ See n. 4 above.

²⁴ Derrett, *Making of Mark*, 98–103.

that the 'stranger' resident within disobedient Israel will mount above her higher and higher (*ma^alāh mā^alāh*), and Israel herself will descend lower and lower (*maṭṭāh māṭṭāh*), the objectionable Roman dominance is accounted for. *Maṭṭāh* 'downwards', and *mittāh*, 'bed' or 'bier'²⁵ both come from the root נָתַח 'to be opened out, incline, bend'; and those whom demons have 'cast' upon a bed²⁶ cannot be further *down* than that. Dt. 28's enormous catalogue of illnesses and misfortunes illustrated the idea of 'down' exhaustively. To rise up, suggestive of some resurrection,²⁷ is to get the better of such demons. When Israel is *above* she can issue orders to, and patronise, foreign nations. Dt. 28:10, 12, cf. 43–44, is clear about that. The demons, and their realm(s), can be worsted when Israel is totally obedient to YHWH.

Purity, Impurity, Verticality and Shadows

Moses, on the hill, with his hands aloft, worsted Amalek for a time (Ex. 17:8–13). Amalek represents the Devil or his agent. Demons were unclean, and therefore we hear of *unclean spirits* (Mk. 1:13, etc., and especially Lk. 4:35–36).²⁸ Spirits (*ruhôt, šēdim*) are never called 'clean'. Idols and recognizable fragments of idols were unclean, and sources of impurity. In the presence of anything unclean one must be wary of one's movements. Uncleaness, and holiness (its opposite) can infect other objects and persons in quite idiosyncratic ways. We must not commit the common European error of submitting an Asian institution to our kind of logic.²⁹ One can only list instances, and this is exactly what Asians, in general, do and did, the effort of generalizing being exhausting and perilous.

The altar imparted 'sanctity', 'holiness' to whatever was placed upon it (Mt. 23:18–19), the quality of the altar ('holiness') passed by a kind of convection upwards, not sideways. Rules of sanctification and desecration have always defied logic (Hg. 2:12–13). A person cast down by a demon must surely be impure. To share a roof, or to eat with, a demonized person must surely render the hardy comrade unclean, and give him/her a pressing reason for searching for a cure.

²⁵ Gn. 48:2, 49:33; 2 Ki. 1:4, 6, 16; 2 Ch. 24:25. Mishnah, Ned. VII.5; Ber. III.1.

²⁶ Mt. 9:2; Mk. 7:30; cf. Acts 5:15.

²⁷ See n.44 below.

²⁸ Cf. Rev. 18:2. Uncleaness of spirits: Strack-Billerbeck IV/1, 503–504, 516. *The Great Holy Assembly* §§1073–1083, 1112, in S.L. MacGregor Mathers, trans., *The Kabbalah Unveiled* [1887] (London and New York, 1991), 244–245, 249.

²⁹ R. Needham, *Against the Tranquillity of Axioms* (Berkeley CA, 1983), ch. 4; id., *Exemplars* (Berkeley CA, 1985), ch. 11. Explanations of rituals tendered even by those who practice them are far from conclusive.

Anyone caring for purity would avoid incurring death-pollution by himself/herself *overshadowing* a corpse (see below for the concept of overshadowing).³⁰ On the other hand a leper (Lk. 5:13), a corpse (Lk. 7:14), a menstruating woman, or a demon could not render impure a person immune to impurity (such as a gentile!). The gentiles were impure in themselves, they could not be rendered impure. If one could conceive of a person of perfect purity he might conceivably, like an angel,³¹ or the Holy Spirit itself, defy that network of taboos which tried to separate Israel from the abnormal, the threatening, the complex effects of sin, ancestral or personal.

Later Talmudic thinking confirms that the utterly righteous person's corpse will defile no one. There are, then, in theory, the rarest exceptions to the strange relationships which obtain between the polluting object and those which, or whom, it threatens with both pollution and the power to pollute third parties. As far as Jesus was concerned, he seems to have treated superstitious usages with indifference (Mk. 7:3, 5), since to him the rules relating to pollution were allegorical, pointing to the true 'impurity' which was immorality (Mk. 7:20-23), which of course is infectious. In our connection Bengel says, 'His very closely approaching her (Peter's mother-in-law) showed that the disease gives place before the power of Jesus, and that no danger of infection from disease could threaten his body',³² a brilliant guess. He could have realized that Jesus 'overshadowed' her, defying the fever's power by a power, operating vertically or nearly vertically downwards, which was greater. That this is not fanciful is proved by the story of the haemorrhaging woman³³ who, Luke agrees with Matthew, touched the hem of Jesus' garment (Lk. 8:44), so placing herself *below* Jesus' power transmitted automatically (Lk. 8:46) from him to his garment and from the garment, downwards, onto her. Placing herself beneath him she obtained an automatic cure of an ailment which we can at once find in Dt. 28:59. Both benefit and harm may come of touching, but the gravitational relationship also is relevant. Space-ships will need new idioms!

The scrupulous must not touch anything unclean (Lv. 5:2; Num. 19:16; Is. 52:11). Otherwise impurity radiates (as it were) principally

³⁰ J. D. M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (London, 1970, 1974), ch. 9, esp. 211-217.

³¹ Cf. Mt. 28:2; Jn. 20:11-12 (general impressions).

³² J. A. Bengel, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* (London, 1862), 213; EV (Edinburgh, 1858), II, 57.

³³ Derrett, *Studies IV* (1986), 30-61. M. Gourges, 'Deux miracles deux démarches de foi (Marc 5, 21-43)', *A Cause de l'Évangile. Études sur les synoptiques et les Actes*. FS. Jacques Dupont (Paris, Le Cerf, 1985), 219-249.

upwards and downwards vertically,³⁴ where there is no 'tent' above it. One becomes unclean by sitting on anything upon which a male or a female with a 'flux' has sat, by being borne by him/her (Mishnah, Zav. V), or by bearing him/her. One could stand next to a corpse without being defiled by it, provided one shared no common 'tent', or cause of shadow, with it. If one oneself overshadows it, naturally one is unclean, but so also is anything that shares that shadow. Imagine a tent with a corpse within it. The tent provides shade. The impurity passes upwards to the tent and is then dispersed in all directions downwards within the tent. The shadow reflects (as we might say) the ascending impurity. The corpse, for its part, or any part of a corpse, renders anything unclean which it overshadows (Heb. *b'e'ohel*), whether or not the sun is shining, also a sepulchre stone.³⁵ Under certain circumstances corpse-impurity could be prevented from infecting those vertically above or below it. Yet to be above a grave is to be doubtfully impure (Lk. 11:44). So much for 'flux' and corpse-impurity.

An idol conveys uncleanness to whoever carries it (being of course to that extent underneath it), or any part of it, and the building which 'overshadows' an idol is a source of uncleanness (Mishnah, 'A.Z. III.6). One is rendered unclean by passing directly below a tree beneath which is an idol still in worship (ib. III.8).³⁶ I can imagine a rabbinical debate whether one becomes unclean by standing underneath such a tree while out of its shadow, provided of course the idol was within it, and whether one could avoid impurity by circling so much of the tree as cast its shade away from one, until a point was reached where the idol was out of the shadow but one remained within it. There is certainly an answer to such a question, though only the fact that it can be raised is of interest to us. Even to share a roof with a person of doubtful purity could lower a benevolent Jew's prestige and conceivably his spiritual power (if any).³⁷ On the other hand a benevolent person's own shadow can cast life-giving power, of course *downwards*, for that is how shadows fall (Mt. 17:5/Lk. 9:34; Lk. 1:35; Acts 5:15). Only a territory familiar with the *power* of shade could beget such images. Benevolent power can pass *upwards* too, as we see from Lk. 7:36-

³⁴ Mishnah, 'Ohal. VI.6, VII.1, 2; Zav. IV.1.

³⁵ Elijah, Gaon of Wilna (1721-1799), *Rules of Uncleanness*, 4(b), 5(b), 6(ii), 12(b) (in H. Danby's *Mishnah*); 11 Q Temp. L. 10-19; Sifre Zuta (Horowitz), 312 (on a dead foetus and the mother as a movable tomb).

³⁶ P. Blackman, *Mishnayoth* IV. *Order Nezikin* (London, 1954), 464-466.

³⁷ Mt. 8:8/Lk. 7:6. Removing the common roof might help (Mk. 2:4; Lk. 5:19)! Students of that roof have not considered this possibility. On guests' privileges and dangers see Gn. 19:8.

50. A great sinner has entered a Pharisee's dining-room, overshadowed the feet of a prophet and touched them. The host's surprise is barely quieted if the prophet explains how, on the contrary, the baleful influence is counteracted by his contrary-moving influence of peace.

To counteract the upward-radiating impurity of a demon is not a task for the layman. As with the Temple, an abode of absolute purity might be conceived of as desperately threatening to the powers of evil—hence perhaps the shrieks of demons at Mt. 8:29; Lk. 4:33–34, 8:28. The psychological process reflected in this 'theatre' need not concern us at present. It is noticed that régimes of intense religious observance and attempts at religious censorship and intolerance are amongst facts predisposing to a rash of spirit-possessions as a kind of protest-movement.³⁸ We are concerned solely with the techniques of cure.

Conclusion

The demonized man who cried out, standing, in the synagogue was *thrown down* in front of everyone (Lk. 4:35), and thereby the demon confessed defeat by Jesus who was sharing its/his roof. The synagogue was demonized and defiled through that sufferer (or mountebank, according to one's point of view), so that Jesus freed both him and it. Jesus' next task was to cope with a demon which had already adopted a supine position. Jesus, leaning over it, i.e. the patient, formed a 'tent' over her (Heb. *he^ehîl 'ālephā*),³⁹ so demonstrating visually the conflict of powers.⁴⁰ The demon had no choice but to depart (cf. Mt. 4:11). The technique has its own interest, and is by no means irrelevant.

Peter's home was unclean so long as a demon resided within it. His personal inadequacy (Lk. 5:8, by no means ironical)⁴¹ could have hindered the mission, and defection at home could easily have bored a hole in the bottom of his boat, to coin a metaphor.⁴²

It was, and in the Middle East often still is, customary to name ladies after the menfolk responsible for them. It does something for

³⁸ K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Harmondsworth, 1971, 1985), 572–574. A search for an ascetic ideal, as with Montanus' followers, could well give birth to spirit-possession.

³⁹ Mishnah, 'Ohal. III. 1, 3, etc. Bab. Talm., Me'îl. 17a, Šabb. 17a.

⁴⁰ He immediately defeats the demon with his goodness (Léon-Dufour).

⁴¹ Derrett, *Studies III* (Leiden, 1982), 1–30. Luke omits James and John from the episode (cf. Mk. 1:29). It has become part of a Peter-scenario.

⁴² Van der Loos (555) reasonably asks whether the prospect of Peter's abandoning the family (Lk. 18:28) could have created a 'strained situation' (understatement).

their flimsy sense of security. See Mt. 20:20, 27:56; Lk. 8:3; Jn. 19:25; Acts 12:12. Parallels from outside the semitic world can be found. A certain Cornelia (2nd cent. BC) reproached her sons because Rome still called her the mother-in-law of Scipio, but not yet the mother of the Gracchi!⁴³ Our patient was almost certainly Peter's housekeeper, and the Devil, we are to understand, foreseeing the scene in Lk. 5, hoped to hinder Peter's availability for Jesus' programme (Lk. 4:38, 'and they besought him about her'). He is defeated by a master of such purity that no 'infection' could reach him, or diminish his command over spirits (Lk. 4:36). They depart, and with them all excuses whereby *other people* hinder the great enterprise (cf. Lk. 9:59-60). The excuses of the potential recruit himself are dealt with correspondingly and directly (Lk. 5:10). In the meanwhile yet another daughter of Eve has been coped with.

One may claim that *epanō autēs* at Lk. 4:39 had been sufficiently explained already: it was not. Luke postponed the general method of healing by laying-on (Heb. *SMK*) of the hands (Lk. 4:40 *tas cheiras epitithēis*) until he had demonstrated the theory: demons, when defeated, *fall*, or (2) Christ places himself *above* them, whereupon, in either case (3) the patient rises,⁴⁴ cured. This was Jesus' technique and his apprentices must know it and practice it. He who has had all things put under his feet will not idly say that demons are *subject* (*hypotassetai*) to the Seventy (Lk. 10:17, 20; cf. Heb. 2:8). The demons go *down* so that their former hosts may rise *up*.

Such trifles can explain much. Anomalous scintillas of evidence are treasured by the detective who is dissatisfied with the mere appearance of things, when the ultimate solution, hitherto, rests upon conjectures.⁴⁵

Abstract

At Luke 4:38-39 Jesus anomalously stands *above* the patient. Jewish impurity moved vertically upwards and downwards, and here a source of purity and sanctification (cf. Mt. 23:18-19) defeats a demon, a source of impurity, by exorcism. Jesus mimes the common and biblical power-relation between 'up' and 'down' (Dt. 28:13). Standing *epanō* (Heb. *ʾmaʿalah*) he threatens (2 Sa. 1:9) the demon,

⁴³ Plutarch, *Tib. Gracchus* 8.5 (cf. 1.5); Acts 12:12. H. D. F. Kitto, *The Greeks* (Harmondsworth, 1958, 1970), 224; J. Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Oxford, 1904, 1950), 264, 308. Jdg 20: 40!

⁴⁴ The overtones of *anastāsa* (Lk. 4:39c) are well brought out by Léon-Dufour, 197.

⁴⁵ Agatha Christie, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* [1920] (London, 1935), 51.

not the woman. 'Down' and 'underneath' is where Satan and his associates belong (Lk. 10:17–20). One may direct power downwards by overshadowing, not only detrimentally but also beneficially (cf. 1 Ki. 17:21; et. al.), as another woman knew (Lk. 8:44). Luke assumes popular Jewish notions in this area.