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GENESIS *

Our study of Genesis is purely homiletic. Questions of higher and lower criticism, of text and unity and authorship, do not concern us here. It is our purpose simply to inquire how the book as it lies before us may be studied in the closet and treated in the pulpit, and how the truth which it is designed to teach may be most clearly and effectively presented.

Genesis means beginning. The origin of all things is here disclosed—the heavens and the earth, man, sin, salvation, arts, industries, society, government, civilization, the church.

Genesis portrays the beginning as the Revelation portrays the end of all things. One unveils the eternal past, the other the eternal future. Scripture opens and closes with the vision of paradise. Here is the earthly paradise, soon forfeited by sin; here is the heavenly paradise, the home of the children of God, from which they shall go out no more forever. Here is man created, fallen; here is man redeemed, restored. Here is God the Creator, with the world in rebellion against Him; here is God the Redeemer, with the universe prostrate at His feet. Here the divine purpose is declared, the divine promises are given; here purpose and promises are fulfilled.

The account of the creation is not scientific but pictorial. So far as we can see, this is the only way in which the story could be told so as to convey essential truth, and at the same time be understood by men of every age. If it had been written in terms of modern science, it would have

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MISCONCEPTION OF JESUS, AND BLASPHEMY OF THE SON OF MAN

It is, perhaps, not always appreciated how great a popular excitement was roused when, as Mark puts it, "after that John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Mk. i. 14, 15). It is not the fault of the Evangelists if it is not fully understood. Mark, for example, adverts no less than eight times before he reaches the middle of his third chapter to the enthusiasm which attended Jesus wherever He appeared. We shall perceive how nearly this constitutes the main subject of these opening chapters of his Gospel, if we will but read consecutively the passages in which it is spoken of. "And the report of Him went out straightway everywhere into all the region of Galilee round about" (i. 28). "And at even when the sun did set they brought unto Him all that were sick, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city were gathered together at the door" (i. 32, 33). "And they found Him and say unto Him, All are seeking Thee" (i. 37). "Insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into a city, and was without in desert places; and they came to Him from every quarter" (i. 45). "And when He entered again into Capernaum after some days it was noised that He was in the house. And many were gathered together so that there was no longer room for them, no, not even about the door . . . and when they could not come nigh Him for the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was" (ii. 1, 2, 4). "And He went forth again by the seaside, and all the multitude resorted unto Him" (ii. 13). "And Jesus with His disciples withdrew to the sea; and a great multitude from Galilee followed: and from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and beyond Jordan, a great multitude hearing what great things He did, came unto Him. And He spoke to His disciples that a little boat should wait on Him because

of the crowd, lest they should throng Him" (iii. 7-9). "And He cometh into a house, and the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread" (iii. 20).¹ We may almost fancy that we can observe the crowds which thronged Jesus ever increasing in number and persistency under our eyes: they gather at the door (i. 32-34); there is no longer room even at the door (ii. 2); they are so continually with Him that He has no opportunity even to eat (iii. 20). But we note that, already at i. 45 (*cf.* i. 37), they had not only made the city inaccessible to Him, but had populated the very desert to which He withdrew; and at iii. 9 (*cf.* iv. 1) they so thronged Him even on the open sea-shore as to compel Him to take refuge in a boat and speak to them thence. The agency by which this great public agitation was created was not merely the proclamation that the Kingdom of God was at hand, but the manifestation of its actual presence in the abounding miracles of healing which were performed (Mat. xii. 28, Lk. xi. 20).² Disease and death must have been almost eliminated for a brief season from Capernaum and the region which lay immediately around Capernaum as a center. No wonder the public mind was thrown into a state of profound perturbation, and, the enthusiasm spreading, men flocked from every quarter to see this great thing, questioning with one another what it all meant.

Meanwhile, there were necessarily many who were not drawn into the movement but remained rather, whether momentarily or permanently, merely spectators of it. Of these there were in particular two classes who nevertheless could not look with indifference upon the wave of popular

¹ So, consecutively, iv. 1, v. 21, 24, 27, 31, vi. 34, vii. 24, 33, viii. 1, ix. 14, 25, x. 1, 4, 6.

² *Cf.* E. von Dobschütz, *The Expositor*, VII. ix (1910), p. 334: "This 'is come' (ἐφθανε) must mean something more than the usual 'is at hand' (ἤγγικεν); it is the solemn declaration that the Kingdom is present in Jesus' activity; His casting out of devils proves that the powers of the Kingdom are at work." *Cf.* also H. J. Holtzmann, *Synoptiker*.³ p. 243.

excitement sweeping through the land as it rose to its crest. These were those who felt responsible for Jesus Himself on the one hand, and on the other those who felt responsible for the religion of the community,—for we must bear in mind that the movement was from first to last a distinctly and intensely religious one. The circle of Jesus' relations (perhaps we may take the word for the moment in a rather broader sense than that of its current usage) and the body of the constituted religious guides of the people must each have been compelled to form at once a preliminary judgment upon the movement, and to act upon it. Nor was it likely that in either case this judgment would be favorable. Inevitably, in each case alike, it would be the expression of anxiety not to say of irritation. It is this natural judgment of what we may call the two interested classes that Mark records for us when, as he tells of the concourse of the crowd again to Jesus on His return to Capernaum after His second circuit in Galilee (Mk. iii. 20), he adds: "And when His relations heard it, they came forth to take charge of Him, for they said, He is out of His mind. And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebul, and it is by the prince of the demons that He casteth out the demons" (Mk. iii. 21, 22). The two judgments are as opposed as are the springs of emotion out of which they rise. It is pity that we hear the echoes of in the one; anger in the other. Jesus' relations, who, it must be observed, had a mere hearsay knowledge of the movement which was sweeping over Galilee in His train—He had not yet been to Nazareth (Mk. vi. 1),³—judged from the reports of His conduct which had reached them that He was not altogether Himself, and were prepared to take the responsibility of restraining Him. The scribes, who had heard His words and witnessed His works, could not deny that a supernatural power was operative among them; but, being unwilling to accredit this to a divine, ascribed it rather to a

³ Lk. iv. 16ff. seems to be a different visit (implied also in Mt. iv. 12, 13) which took place before His Galilean ministry had fairly begun (cf. Meyer, on Mt. xiii. 53).

demoniac source, and thus sought to break the influence of Jesus with the people. The two have in common only that they pass an unfavorable judgment upon the movement as a whole.

The naturalness of this unfavorable judgment in each case,⁴ in the circumstances in which it was formed, has not prevented its being appealed to, in each instance, in disproof of the supernaturalness of Jesus' person and ministry. It is urged that, if Jesus was really a divine person and His ministry was accompanied by obviously supernatural effects, such as are narrated in the Gospels, it would be inconceivable that those who stood nearest to Him and knew Him best, should have pronounced Him out of His mind. And it is urged again that, in His defence of Himself from the charge of the scribes that He was possessed of a demon and wrought His wonders by the power of the evil one, Jesus so far from asserting that He was a divine person actually contrasts Himself with the divine Spirit as one to speak against whom were a venial sin while to speak against the Spirit is unpardonable blasphemy—obviously because the Spirit is divine. That we may form a right estimate of these representations, we should look a little closely at the relevant passages.

I

It is Mark alone who tells us of the judgment passed upon Jesus by His relations. The words in which he does it are these: "And He cometh home, and the crowd cometh together again, so that they were not able even to eat bread. And when His relations heard it they came forth to take charge of Him; for they said, He is out of His mind."

The opening words, which we have rendered: "And He cometh home," are translated by many rather: "And He

⁴ Cf. A. Schweitzer, *The Expositor*, November 1913, p. 449, who remarks of them: "This only means, however, that the former [the scribes] wished at all costs to discredit Him with the people, and that His relations noticed a change in Him and could not understand how He could come forward as a teacher and prophet."

cometh into a house.”⁵ This statement is then explained as the fundamental statement of the passage, preparing the way, and setting the scene, for the whole remainder of the chapter. Thus a certain emphasis is made to fall on Jesus’ actual entrance into a house. We certainly should not in this case, however, expect the ambiguous simple *ἔρχομαι* to be used,—the *εἰς* following which might indeed be ordinarily best rendered “to” (compare “unto,” Mat. ii. 11, viii. 14, ix. 23, 28, Mk. i. 29, etc.). His actual entrance into the house may thus even be left in some doubt (compare Mk. v. 38, 39: “and they come to the house . . . and entering it . . .”). The more precise *εἰσέρχομαι* we may feel sure would have been employed had this been the meaning which was intended to be conveyed, especially if the emphasis which is assumed in the interpretation in question falls upon it (compare Mt. x. 12, xii. 4, 29, Mk. ii. 20, iii. 27, vi. 10, vii. 17, 24, ix. 28, Lk. ix. 4). Moreover it is not easy to find an adequate reason in the immediate context for so formal a statement that Jesus did so simple a thing as to “come into a house”. We may say⁶ that Jesus went into a house obviously to seek rest and to take food (verse 20): but his need of these things seems to supply no sufficient reason for so formal a record of so slender a circumstance as His going into a house. It is customary, therefore, to go further afield and to seek the real reason of the record in the preparation it gives for the subsequent narrative, the eye being particularly fixed on the statement of verse 31, that His mother and brothers “stood without.”⁷ Thus, however, an extraordinary method of

⁵ James Moffat, who in 1901 (*The Historical New Testament* p. 280), had correctly rendered: “Then He comes home,” has substituted for this in 1913 (*The New Testament: A New Translation*): “They went indoors.” This would exactly render the words in a different context: and the implication of “home” is in it. But it misses the point here.

⁶ With B. Weiss (1878).

⁷ B. Weiss *in loc.*: “He goes into a house, because it was in a house that the incident took place which the narrative has in mind (cf. verse 31)” (Meyer on Mark, ed. 6, 1878); “Emphasized in con-

composition is ascribed to the evangelist. We are to suppose that, having begun an account of Jesus' relations to His family with iii. 20, 21, Mark suddenly breaks off and thrusts in a long account of His relations with the scribes, only to return without warning again to His family at iii. 31, leaving all the sutures unclosed. We are to treat the whole narrative enclosed in verses 22-30, in other words, as a parenthesis, and to expound verses 20, 21 immediately in connection with verses 31 ff., as if the intermediate section were not there—although it grows naturally out of, and forms a natural whole with, verses 20, 21.⁸

Such results as these would seem to be a sufficient indication that a false start has been taken when we render the opening clause: "And He cometh into a house." In point of fact the phrase may in itself just as well mean: "And He cometh home" (compare viii. 3, 26 with defining pronouns and ii. 1, v. r. pregnantly with verb of rest: vii. 17,

trast to His sojourn at the sea-side or on the mountain-top (verses 7, 13), because the scene, iii. 31 ff. takes place in a house and Mark wishes to prepare for this," (Meyer on Mark, ed. 8, 1892; ed. 9, 1901); "Prepares for the narrative of iii. 31 ff., which what immediately follows, therefore, only introduces," (*Die vier Evangelien*, 1900, p. 186.)

⁸ The difficulties arising from this construction become flagrantly apparent in the course of A. Loisy's skilful efforts to overcome them (*Les Synoptiques*, I, pp. 696 ff.): "To consider only the present order of the texts, it might be said that Mark, having deliberately neglected (not been ignorant of) a fact which did not have in itself any particular prominence, substituted for it, in preparation for an incident which he intended to recount after the discourse of the Saviour [to the scribes], the mention of a judgment passed upon Jesus by His own family, which, though less unfavorable than that of the Pharisees, does not fail to exhibit in a sufficiently startling light, the relations of the new preacher with His own people. The *mise en scène* is the sufficiently natural preamble of the incident concerning the family of Jesus: what is secondary is the connection of the disputation with this incident and the artifice which has permitted Mark to neglect the teaching of the possessed man which in the common source of the Synoptics served as the introduction to the disputation. . . . What is said of the family does not attach itself without some embarrassment to the context: but this is a piece of unskilfulness which belongs to the redaction, arising possibly from the fact that the preamble, though conceived with a view to the anecdote, does not belong to the traditional basis of the narrative."

ix. 28 where εἰς οἶκον is connected with εἰσέρχομαι, are different—render “indoors”); and this sense is strongly recommended by the context. Jesus had been at the sea-side (verse 7) and on the mountain (verse 13): He now returns “home,” that is to say, to Capernaum (compare i. 21, ii. 1). The narrative is composed of circuits out from Capernaum and returns to Capernaum, as the center of Jesus’ active work: this is one of the points at which His return to His base of operations is intimated, and, as on the former occasions (i. 32, ii. 3; compare i. 45 where R.V.mg. questions whether εἰς πόλιν may not be “the city,” as indeed A.V. had boldly translated it⁹), the crowd immediately gathers. In this case, the close connection which has been assumed between iii. 20 and iii. 31 falls away; the misleading prominence into which the simple opening statement of verse 20 has been thrown is removed; and that statement resumes its natural place as only one of the numerous intimations in this narrative of Jesus’ alternating excursions from Capernaum and returns to it (i. 21-35; ii. 1-13; iii. 1-7; iii. 20; iv. 1).

The chief interest of this determination lies in its bearing on the interpretation of the phrase in verse 21 which we have translated “His relations”. If verses 20, 21 were not written specifically in preparation for verses 31ff; verses 22-30 are not a parenthesis; and verses 31-35 record a new incident: then the phrase “His relations” in verse 21 does not find its explanation in “His mother and His brothers” of verse 31—as is very commonly represented—but must be independently interpreted. This phrase,¹⁰ in Greek

⁹ Render “into town”.

¹⁰ For discussions of the meaning of the phrase, see especially Fritzsche *in loc.* and F. Field, *Notes on the Translation of the N. T.*, p. 25 (he argues for the meaning “household”). For the usage of the phrase in the papyri, see J. H. Moulton, *The Expositor*, VI, vii, p. 118, viii, p. 436; *Prolegomena*, etc., pp. 106-7; *The Expository Times*, xx, p. 476. At *Prolegomena*, pp. 106-7, he says: “Οἱ παρ’ αὐτοῦ is exceedingly common [in the papyri] to denote ‘his agents’ or ‘representatives.’ It has hitherto been less easy to find parallels for Mk. iii. 21 where it must mean ‘his family’; see Swete and Field *in loc.* We

writers generally, bears ordinarily the meaning of "legates", "representatives", and it still commonly occurs in the papyri in the sense of "agents," "representatives." By the side of this usage, however, there is found another, less common but nevertheless constant, in which it bears the sense, either broadly of "adherents", "followers", or more narrowly of "household", "family" or kindred". It is obvious that it is in this latter general sense that it is employed in our passage, but it is not easy to fix the exact limits of its connotation. That Jesus' disciples—His adherents, followers—are not intended, is clear, since a contrast is drawn with them (verse 20, *αὐτούς*). Our English versions—Authorized and Revised,—render the term "friends," not badly if it be taken, as it obviously is intended to be, in a personal, rather than an official sense.¹¹ The margin of the Authorized Version proposes instead the narrowed "kinsmen," following in this the Wycliffite "kynnesmen" and the Genevan "kynesfolkes". The modern versions continue the same line: George R. Noyes, "relations"; James Moffat, 1901, "relatives"; *Twentieth Century New Testament*, "relations"; Samuel Lloyd, "kinsmen"; James Moffat, 1913, "family".¹² It can scarcely be doubted that this is practically what is meant, though too restricted a sense should not be insisted upon.¹³ Obviously those are intended who bore such a relation to Jesus that they felt themselves responsible for Him, and that they would naturally be looked to by others to take charge of Him in the contin-

can now cite G H 30 (ii/B.C.) *οἱ παρ' ἡμῶν πάντες*, B U 998 (ii./B.C.) and Par. P. 36 (ii./B.C.)."

¹¹ F. C. Conybeare, *Myth, Magic and Morals*, 1909, p. 72 insists *suo more* that the rendering "friends" is a "falsification of the text" with the intention of "deceiving English readers who cannot read Greek". The rebuke administered to him by J. H. Moulton, *The Expository Times*, xx, p. 476, is richly deserved.

¹² But Weymouth, *The Modern Speech New Testament*, retains the A. V., "friends." Weizsäcker renders "die Seinigen"; Th. Zahn, *Forchungen*, etc. VI. p. 332, "die Angehörigen," as also P. W. Schmiedel, *cf.* note 40 below.

¹³ *Cf.* Swete's note.

gency of His needing to be kept under some restraint. We might think, in the varying circumstances which would render each natural, of His clansmen, of His fellow-townsmen, of His responsible friends, of His blood-kinsmen, of His household, of His family, of His parents, of His brothers.¹⁴ In the absence of closer contextual definition, only the known circumstances of Jesus' case could supply us with confident guidance in fixing upon the precise persons intended. All that is intimated here is that His natural guardians were inclined to judge Him to be out of His mind, and were prepared to take measures to put Him under the restraint required by His sad condition. Who these natural guardians were we can only conjecturally supply from our further knowledge. There are some who feel quite sure that His mother could not be included among them, because they find it difficult or impossible to believe that she should have so cruelly misjudged Him.¹⁵ There are others, on the contrary,¹⁶ who are prepared to assert confidently, if not even violently, that His mother was included among them; sometimes, apparently, for no other reason than that thus the passage may be exploited as inconsistent, say, with the representations of the Infancy-chapters of Matthew and Luke or in general with the doctrine of the supernatural origin of Jesus. Too great confidence on either part seems misplaced. The passage itself gives us no guidance; and general considerations appear indecisive.

It is important to observe, however, that the judgment formed as to His condition by Jesus' friends or kinsfolk—according to our broader or narrower understanding of the phrase—was founded on hearsay evidence only. "When His relations *heard* . . .", we read. The meaning can

¹⁴ Theophylact defines: *οἱ οἰκεῖται αὐτοῦ*, with *οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς αὐτῆς πατρίδος* and *οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ* as alternatives.

¹⁵ Th. Zahn, *Forschungen*, etc., VI, p. 332: "We are scarcely to think of Mary among them . . . the word, *ἐξέστη*, is not suitable in the mouth of the mother, and the intention to use physical force against the madman is attributable only to the men not to the women."

¹⁶ Conybeare, as above.

hardly be, merely, that as soon as they heard that He had come home, they went forth to lay hands on Him. Nor does it seem likely that the meaning is merely that they went forth to lay hands on Him when they heard that, on His coming home, a multitude had gathered about Him. The article before "multitude" is probably genuine; and, if genuine, should not be neglected. And, in any event, the "again" has its rights. What appears to be meant is that His relations were moved to their action by the reports which reached them of the great excitement that had been raised by His ministry throughout Galilee, a culminating manifestation of which was seen in this renewed gathering of the crowd at His house.¹⁷ The reports which had reached them of the thronging multitudes that attended His whole work in Galilee and of the popular enthusiasm which followed His movements, led them to suppose Him to be laboring under over-excitement and to undertake the duty of putting Him under restraint.

If His friends, however, had not themselves witnessed His work and knew of its effects only from hearsay, it is not likely that they were living in Capernaum which was the center of His activity and the seat of the most constant popular enthusiasm. On the other hand, in His circuits out from Capernaum He had not yet visited Nazareth (Mk. vi. 1, Mt. xiii. 54).¹⁸ If Nazareth was the home of His friends here mentioned, therefore, their dependence on rumor for knowledge of His work and its effects, is in harmony with what we read in Lk. iv. 23ff.,¹⁹ Mk. vi. 5, Mt. xiii. 58. It is, indeed, frequently supposed that not Jesus alone, but His

¹⁷ Cf. A. B. Bruce, *in loc.*: "not to be restricted to what is mentioned in verse 20; refers to the whole Galilean ministry with its cures, and crowds, and constant strain."

¹⁸ We have already noted (note 3) that Luke iv. 16ff. seems to record an earlier visit to Nazareth before His systematic Galilean ministry had begun. Besides Meyer's note at Mt. xiii. 53-58 (E. T. p. 372) cf. Godet's notes on Lk. iv. 23 (E. T. I, p. 238) and John ii. 12 (E.T. II, p. 19). Luke iv. 23 of course offers a difficulty for this view.

¹⁹ Cf. Godet, I, 237: "This speech betrays an ironical doubt respecting these marvellous things which were attributed to Him."

family also, had removed from Nazareth to Capernaum at the very beginning of His ministry (Jno. ii. 12).²⁰ This, however, is little likely in itself; ²¹ and it would compel us to suppose either that their settlement at Capernaum was quickly abandoned ("and they remained there not many days"²²), or that by Jesus' friends in our present passage, not "His mother and His brethren and His disciples" are intended, but some broader circle of those responsible for Him. If Jesus' "friends" in the responsible sense of our passage were dwelling in Capernaum—especially if these "friends" be understood as precisely His mother and brothers, constituting His "household"—it would be inexplicable that His returning "home" should not have been to their house; and not only would their personal lack of acquaintance with His work or movements ("when they heard") be inexplicable, but the action ascribed to them ("they went forth") would be inappropriate. It would seem that we must think of the "friends" in question as living somewhere out of the path of His work hitherto, and away from the "home" to which He returned from the sea-side and mountain-top. The elimination of His disciples—who belonged to the party which returned from Cana—from the "friends" of our present passage is not only required by the situation in our passage itself, but is in harmony with the statement of Jno. ii. 11, that they already believed in Him. For, a certain measure of unbelief is, of course, implied in the judgment passed on Him by His "friends" here. If His brothers are meant, as seems intrinsically probable, this is in harmony with Jno. vii. 5, from which we learn that they remained unbelieving until the end.²³ The phrases of Jno.

²⁰ So Wieseler, De Wette, Tholuck, Ewald: *cf. esp.* Th. Zahn, *in loc.* (p. 163 and note 3) and *Forschungen*, VI, p. 331.

²¹ *Cf.* Meyer's note on Jno. ii. 12 (E.T. I, p. 149).

²² *Cf.* Westcott's note on Jno. ii. 12: "This is perhaps mentioned to show that at present Capernaum was not made the permanent residence of the Lord, as it became afterwards."

²³ *Cf.* Swete's note: "The family of Jesus was doubtless inspired by a desire for His safety, but their interpretation of His enthusiasm implied want of faith in Him, *cf.* Jno. vii. 5; the Mother perhaps was overpersuaded by the brethren."

vii. 3-5 form, indeed, a very pungent commentary on our passage.

The measure of the unbelief—we designedly use the milder term, instead of the stronger, “disbelief”—which is implied in the judgment and action of Jesus’ “friends” recorded in our passage is deserving of some consideration. That we may form an estimate of it it would be well to ascertain with some exactness what is really meant by the term, “He is beside Himself.” Many insist that there is no real difference between this judgment upon Jesus and that expressed by the scribes in the words, “He hath Beelzebub” (verse 22).²⁴ Madness, it is urged, was explained as demoniacal possession, and to say that one was mad was all one with saying that he was possessed.²⁵ On the face of it, however, this view is untenable. Possession and insanity are not clearly identified in the Evangelical narratives. It is not even intimated that they were constantly associated.²⁶ In our present passage they even seem to be

²⁴ E.g. H. J. Holtzmann (p. 12), who remarks that Theophylact already explains correctly: *δαίμονα ἔχει*.

²⁵ Cf. E. Renan, *Vie de Jesus*² 1863, p. 263, note 4 (E.T. of the twenty-third and final ed. 1913, p. 273, note 3): “This phrase ‘Thou hast a demon’ (Mt. xi. 18, Lk. vii. 33, Jno. vii. 20, viii. 48 ff., x. 21 ff.) should be rendered by ‘Thou art insane,’ as it is said in Arabic *medjnoun enté*. This verb, *δαμονᾶν* has also in the whole of classical antiquity the sense of ‘to be insane.’” In the text, however, it is said: “But here again the difficulties must not be exaggerated. The disorders explained by possessions were often very slight. In our day, in Syria, people are regarded as insane or possessed by a demon (the two notions are the same, *medjnoun*) who have only some little eccentricity (*bizarrierie*).”

²⁶ The physical accompaniment of possession mentioned in Mt. ix. 32, Lk. iv. 14 is only dumbness, in Mat. xii. 22, blindness and dumbness, in Lk. xiii. 10-17, curvature of the spine; Cf. also Mt. xv. 22, Mk. vii. 26, xvi. 9, Lk. iv. 33, viii. 2 in none of which cases is insanity indicated. Only in a single instance is mania expressly intimated, and that only by its contrasting state (Mk. v. 15, Lk. viii. 35, cf. 2 Cor. v. 13). W. M. Alexander, *Demonic Possession in the New Testament*, 1902, upholding the thesis that “all cases designated ‘demonic’ belong to the category ‘Lunacy or Idiocy’” (p. 147), establishes his diagnosis in only three cases (Mk. i. 21-26 = Lk. iv. 31-37; Mt. viii. 28-34 = Mk. v. 1-17, Lk. viii. 26-37; Mt. xvii. 14-20 = Mk. ix. 14-29, Lk. ix. 37-43);

expressly distinguished. Mark clearly desires to contrast the judgments passed on Jesus by His friends and His enemies, as, though both uncomprehending, yet the pitying and the condemnatory judgment. Even, however, should we identify all mental alienation with possession, the degree of alienation implied in any given instance would still remain undetermined; the effects of the possession would naturally be very varied, and might on occasion involve only the slightest, perhaps the most temporary unbalancing. In any case, therefore, we are thrown back upon what is actually said.

The term employed²⁷ in the present passage is not a strong one and need not imply a serious state of mental disturbance. The fundamental implication of the word is no more than that the subject is thrown out of his normal state into a condition of strong, perhaps un-governable, emotion. The emotion in question may be of the most varied kind, but commonly in the New Testament usage of the word (uniformly except for our present passage and 2 Cor. v. 13) it is that of amazement, perhaps with a suggestion of bewilderment.²⁸ In the special usage and in two of these only with difficulty and at the cost of the enlargement of the category of "lunacy" by the addition of "and idiocy." He then applies this diagnosis, without express warrant from the text, to all other cases of possession. John x. 20 need not be read as identifying all possession with lunacy, but may only identify this particular case of lunacy with possession as its cause: cf. Jno. vii. 20, viii. 48.

²⁷ J. H. Heinrich Schmidt in § 174 of his *Synonymik der Griechischen Sprache* deals with the terms which designate a perverted state of mind (he had dealt in § 147 with these which express a mental deficiency, especially ἄφρων and ἄνοος). He divides them into three groups: (1) Words which in the first instance designate the violent utterances of a disturbed mind; (2) words which express more the inward disorder by which the soul is carried away by senseless passions; (3) words which rather describe the soul which thinks and feels in a disturbed manner. Ἐξίστημι (ἐκστασις) is not included in his lists; but this may be in part because he leaves to one side such terms as require the addition of a φρενός or φρενῶν, or some contextual indication, to define the meaning; and confines himself to such as bear in themselves their significance.

²⁸ Mt. xii. 23; Mk. ii. 12, v. 42, vi. 51; Lk. ii. 47, viii. 56, xxiv. 22;

illustrated by our present passage (*cf.* 2 Cor. v. 13), in which it expresses that state of mental aberration which we also describe as "not one's self", it need not import more than an overwrought condition in which it might be thought that the prudent conduct of life would be unlikely and could become impossible. In this general sense, it occurs nowhere else in the New Testament except in 2 Cor. v. 13, where (to say nothing of demoniacal possession) it certainly does not suggest either raving madness or irrational insanity, but describes on the contrary an ecstatic state in which the Apostle saw a ground for much glorying (xii. 1).²⁹ We need not imagine, then, that Jesus' friends saw in Him a maniac; we need only understand,—what surely would not be unnatural in men who had as yet at least no sense of the nature of His mission—that they were led by the reports which had come to them to believe that He was in a state of exaltation which endangered His health and safety and needed some soothing hand to guard Him from Himself.³⁰

Acts ii. 7-12, viii. 9, 11, 13, ix. 21, x. 45, xii. 16 = "amazed"; Mk. iii. 21, 2 Cor. v. 13 = "demented". *Cf.* ἔκστασις: Mt. v. 42, xvi. 8; Lk. v. 20; Acts iii. 10 = "amazement"; Acts x. 10, xv. 5, xxii. 17 = "trance". *Cf.* Art. "Amazement" in Hastings' *DCG*.

²⁹ *Cf.* C. F. G. Heinrici, *Das zweite Sendschreiben des Apostel Paulus an die Korinthier*, 1887, pp. 227f.: "The fundamental sense of ἐξίστημι, to be out of oneself, as this is brought about through the experience of an overmastering impression, makes the word equally suitable for describing conditions of very high emotions, like amazement, joy, terror; and emotions which lie beyond the limits of sound mental life (ἐν ἑαυτῷ εἶναι . . . ἐντὸς ἑαυτοῦ γίνεσθαι), whether of the nature of insanity or of rapture. In the latter sense σωφρονεῖν is the technical contrast to ἐκστῆναι, and it is accordingly introduced here for the purpose of indicating experiences which had for the Apostle a significance similar to that of the rapture which is described later. In this connection the expression then suggests that ecstatic conditions which remain, in their content and source, obscure for the estimate of all others, cannot be the subject of boasting before others . . . The key to the full understanding of the contrast of ἐκστῆναι and σωφρονεῖν is supplied, however, only by the detailed description of the ecstasy in the polemic concluding sections, which has been mentioned. (xii. 1) . . ."

³⁰ *Cf.* A. Loisy, *Evang. Synopt.*, I, p. 698: "They do not say that

That they felt His condition to be serious, may be inferred from the fact that they were prepared "to lay hold upon Him". Yet exaggeration must be shunned here too. The term, no doubt emphasises in its ground-idea the thought of force, even of violence; but, beginning thus with the notion of taking forcible possession of, it came to be employed also of simply taking possession of, with the idea of force quite out of sight, and ended by meaning merely to obtain, to get (Acts xxvii. 13), and, indeed, merely to cling to (Mat. xxviii. 9, Acts iii. 11), to retain, to hold (Mat. vii. 3, 4, 8, 9, 10). There is no need in our present passage to emphasise the idea of violence, as if His kinsmen wished "to seize" Jesus.³¹ Even "to lay hold upon Him" is too strong a rendering. "To get Him" is nearer to what it intended; and the idea is not so much to put Him in ward as to take Him in charge. Of course the idea of compulsion underlies everything: His relations were acting under the impression that He was in need of kindly control and were prepared to protect Him from Himself. But it is the idea of protection which dominates the statement, rather than that of compulsion.

Jesus had lost His mind, the word which the Evangelist employs not having this precise meaning in the usage of the New Testament, but being used to designate every transport of astonishment, of admiration, of stupor, of enthusiasm; but they believed Him to be in a state of mystical exaltation, which made Him lose the real sense of life and of His own condition." A. B. Bruce, *in loc.*, goes to an extreme when he says: "In the opinion of His friends, He was in a state of excitement bordering on insanity." Perhaps the English word "transport" presents as fair a rendering of the term here as can be found.

³¹H. J. Holtzmann: "Their purpose is to apprehend Him; to possess themselves of Him, *κρατ. αὐτ.*, like vi. 17, xii. 12, xiv. 1; they would seek out the morbidly overstrained member of the family who had become strange and incomprehensible to them, and, no doubt for His own advantage, but still forcibly, withdraw Him from public life." Wohlenberg: "In order to seize Jesus (*κρατῆσαι*), to possess themselves of Him, if not to take Him into custody, yet in some sense forcibly to apprehend Him; *cf.* xii. 12, xiv. 1, 46." B. Weiss: "In order to apprehend Him, possess themselves of Him. . . . In spite of the strongly colored expression of Mk. we are by no means to think of a hostile act (Klostermann), but at the most of a kindly compulsion, which they thought to exercise in His own interest to protect Him in the keeping of the family from further crowding."

Such a judgment upon Jesus' activities, and such an attitude towards His person, were inevitable for those of His kindred who, feeling responsible for Him, were yet ill-informed concerning His person and work. There were some of His kindred, no doubt, to whom such a judgment and attitude would have been at this stage impossible. James and John were of His kindred,³² and there may have been others of those closest to Him who, with them, already, in the full sense of Jno. ii. 11, "believed on Him". But it is not necessary to pronounce this judgment of His work and attitude toward His person incompatible with any measure of faith in Him; or even with a high degree of faith in Him if imperfectly informed whether of what was to be expected of Him or of what He was actually doing. There is no compelling reason for insisting that His mother was of the number of those of whom it is said here that they were led to believe that He was "beside Himself" and in need of some protective care. But neither does there seem to be any compelling reason for assuming that she could not possibly be of their number.³³ Mary too (like John the Baptist, Mt. xi. 2ff.), may have had searchings of heart before she adjusted herself to the Great Reality; and, in the meantime, as she had exercised control over her son in His infancy (Lk. ii. 51), so in the first days of His ministry she may have fancied that she saw indications that He still required her motherly care. There would be implied in this, not "a total unbelief in His pretensions, but only an imperfect view of them".³⁴ Where no belief in

³² As Wohlenberg reminds us.

³³ So, e.g. Wohlenberg: "From all that we otherwise know of Mary, His Mother, it must be taken as absolutely excluded that she should come forward in any way antagonistically to Jesus."

³⁴ The words we have quoted are from the excellent comment of J. A. Alexander on Mk. iii. 21, where, however, he is speaking not of Mary but of Jesus' friends in general, to whom is to be attributed also absence or deficiency of faith. "This," says Alexander, was "a very natural and intelligible state of mind at this stage of the history, and on the part of those whose spiritual or religious feelings were less strong and well-defined than their natural affections or humanity." With Mary also in mind, he repeats in his comment on verse 31, that

His pretensions existed such an attitude towards Him as is here intimated, was, as we have said, not only natural but inevitable. His unbelieving brothers, however kindly, must have thought Him in some sense out of His mind, and must have faced the duty of casting around Him some protection.³⁵

Natural, however, as the judgment of Jesus and the attitude towards His person which are here recorded, are in the circumstances and to the persons to which they are ascribed, the critics have laid hold upon them as representing a point of view regarding Jesus, or at least regarding Mary, which is inconsistent with the supernaturalistic tradition of Jesus. On this ground they seek to account for the fact that this section appears in Mark's Gospel only. It was omitted by Matthew and Luke, they tell us, because not consonant with their point of view. In what respect Mark's point of view as to the person of Jesus, or his reverence for Jesus, differs from that of Matthew and Luke, it is meanwhile difficult to perceive. The mere presence of this passage in one of the Evangelists is proof enough that it contains nothing contradictory to the reverence for Jesus' person which is common to them all.³⁶ Nevertheless P. W. Schmiedel gives this passage a place among his nine "pillar-passages" which he pronounces absolutely credible, as preserving traditions of the real Jesus, precisely on the ground that they make assertions

"nothing could be more natural or pardonable than precisely such solicitude, which is perfectly compatible with true faith and affection, but imperfect views both of His person and mission."

³⁵ Cf. G. Salmon, *The Human Element in the Gospels*, 1907, p. 203: "To the Christian reader it is shocking that any one should be able to suppose that our Lord was out of His mind; yet, if we consider the circumstances, we perceive that the idea was one most likely to occur as it has often done since, when followers of His who were afterwards venerated as saints, had judgments passed on them by sensible men of the world. It is in itself perfectly credible that our Lord should have made the impression commonly produced by one who steps completely out of the beaten track."

³⁶ Cf. F. Loofs, *What is the Truth about Jesus Christ?* 1913, pp. 114 ff.; *Princeton Theological Review*, XI, 2 (April, 1913), pp. 254 ff.

about Jesus which could not have been invented by His worshipping followers, and must therefore have thrust themselves upon this or that Evangelist merely by the force of their undeniable authenticity. This is evidenced, he declares, by the fact that they have been omitted by others of the Evangelists as offensive to their reverence for Jesus.³⁷ On this view, Matthew and Luke are supposed to have had this statement before them and to have omitted it, because it seemed to them derogatory to Jesus' dignity that those nearest to Him should, even at the outset of His ministry, have been led to fear that He might be beside Himself; and Schmiedel labors³⁸ to show that Matthew's narrative, for example, retains signs of having been consciously adapted from Mark's. It is more usual, however, to suppose that Mark's statement has been omitted by the other Gospels (presumed to be later than Mark and to be in large part based on it) in the interests of growing reverence for Mary as the mother of our Lord, rather than directly of reverence for Jesus.³⁹ And, indeed, Schmiedel himself when dealing with the passage at large lapses into this point of view.⁴⁰ In a passage like this, it is suggested,

³⁷ *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, col. 1881; cf. *Princeton Theological Review*, XI, ii (April, 1913), pp. 204 ff.

³⁸ Coll. 1847-1848.

³⁹ H. J. Holtzmann may serve as a typical instance (*Synoptiker* p. 68): "Mark in the most significant way stands alone with the notice in verse 21, since Matthew and Luke already are unable to reconcile themselves to this conception of Mary, and therefore the reparation to be spoken of at Lk. ii. 48." Accordingly at p. 323, he follows Pfeleiderer in supposing that the "Behold thy father and I have sought thee" of Lk. ii. 48 is a reminiscence of Mk. iii. 32, "Behold thy Mother and thy brothers seek thee," and serves the further purpose of counteracting what is said in Mk. iii. 21 (not in Luke) together with its consequences in iii. 31-35 (Lk. xviii. 19-21) and to soften the shadow thrown by it on Mary.

⁴⁰ *Das vierte Evangelium gegenüber den drei ersten*, 1906, p. 18: "We must observe moreover the rôle which *Jesus' Mother* plays in the miracle at Cana. Although Jesus had never before worked a miracle (Jno. ii. 11) she knows beforehand that He is going to work one and says to the servants, although she is rebuffed by Him, 'Whatever He bids you, do.' How entirely different it is in Mark! Here (iii. 21) Jesus' kinsmen (*Angehörigen*) go out to lay hold of Him because they

Mark accordingly preserves an earlier and truer tradition of the attitude of Jesus' kinsfolk to His person and work than can be found in the later Gospels, whether John or Matthew and Luke. It must be borne in mind, however, that, according to John also, the brothers of Jesus did not believe in Him (Jno. vii. 6), and must therefore have held much the view of Him which is placed on the lips of Jesus' kinsmen in our present passage. The attitude of Mary towards Him alone, can come into question; and it is upon it, accordingly, that the contrast between Matthew and Luke, with their "Infancy chapters" in which Mary's supernatural information as to her son is exploited, and Mark, which has nothing of this kind, is insisted upon.

The whole case hangs on the suppositions that Mary was included among the kinsmen of Jesus mentioned in Mk. iii. 21, and that the judgment upon Jesus there ascribed to His kinsmen would be impossible to the Mary of the opening chapters of Matthew and Luke. We have seen that neither supposition is necessary, or, indeed, in the presence of any good reasons to the contrary, even reasonable. We may accept the statement of Mk. iii. 20, 21 as intrinsically self-evidencing and therefore "absolutely credible" as a genuine historical fact, without any fear of discrediting thereby either the Infancy chapters of Matthew and Luke or the historical tradition of the supernatural Jesus which constitutes the substance of all the Evangelical records. The attempts to account for the absence of this statement from Matthew and Luke as deliberate omission on dogmatic grounds are accordingly altogether ineffective and the endeavor to discover in the narratives of Matthew and Luke hidden signs of acquaintance with⁴¹ and conscious alteration

said, 'He is beside Himself.' Who these kinsmen were we very soon learn (iii. 31-35): His mother and His brothers come to Him and call Him out of the house. And it is only from their purpose to put a stop to His work and to confine Him to His home that His rude answer finds its explanation: 'Who is my mother and my brothers? He who does the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother.'"

⁴¹ We do not doubt that the incident recorded in Mark iii. 20-21 was

of Mark's text are too flimsy to justify notice. The entire fact is that we are indebted to Mark for a piece of information altogether natural in itself and consonant with the entire body of facts recorded in the other Evangelists, which nevertheless they do not also preserve for us. This might be inexplicable if we were compelled to suppose that each Evangelist has told us all he knew, or all he knew which he thought "fit to print". But it is just what we should expect on the supposition—which is the only tenable one—that each Evangelist, though serving himself, to a very great extent, with common sources of information, has yet set down in his Gospel from the general store, only what commended itself to him as suitable for his purpose and adapted to advance his particular object in writing.

The naturalness and, indeed, inevitableness of the judgment that Jesus was out of His mind on the part of men not ill-disposed towards Him but yet unable to accept His claims for Himself at their face value, is illustrated by the return to this judgment by a type of modern unbelief. A large literature has in recent years grown up around the suggestion that Jesus was more or less of unsound mind. Whether He is explained as a paranoëic lunatic or merely as a visionary ecstatic, it is inevitable that those who cannot see in Him the Divine Being He proclaimed Himself to be, should think His lofty estimate of Himself too lofty and should seek the account of His too lofty estimate of Himself in some—greater or less—mental derangement. We can scarcely look upon a like judgment among His contemporaries as strange when we are so familiar with it to-day; or urge its existence among His contemporaries as evidence of anything more than it witnesses to to-day. In simple fact, Jesus' career was not that of an ordinary man: and the dilemma is inevitable that He was either something more than a normal man or something less. We, like His contemporaries,—and His contemporaries like us—have known to the authors of both Matthew and Luke, as was much else which they (as writing freely, each for his own particular end) do not record.

only the alternatives: either supernatural or subnormal, either Divine or else "out of His mind".⁴²

II

It is again Mark alone who records the extreme expression of the hatred of the scribes towards Jesus in their ascription to Him of demoniacal possession.⁴³ All three of the Synoptics, however, report the charge made by His enemies that it was by the aid of Beelzebul, the prince of the demons, that He cast out demons.⁴⁴ The solemn warning against blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which Jesus founded upon this charge, occurs—in one form or another—in all three Gospels, though in this connection only in Matthew and Mark,⁴⁵ while in Luke it appears in another context.⁴⁶ As it is solely with this warning that we are now concerned, we transcribe it in its three forms. "Verily, I say unto you, All things shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, their sins, and their blasphemies wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme; but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin. Because they said, He hath an unclean Spirit" (Mk. iii. 28-30). "And everyone who shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven unto him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven" (Lk. xii. 10). "Therefore I say unto you, every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven unto him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven unto him,

⁴² Cf. what is said with respect to W. Heitmüller's hesitations and difficulties in the *Princeton Theological Review*, XII, ii (April, 1914), pp. 315 ff.

⁴³ Mk. iii. 22-30; Cf. Jno. x. 20, vii. 20, viii. 48.

⁴⁴ Mt. xii. 22-27; Mk. iii. 22-30; Lk. xi. 14-23; the parallel, Mat. ix. 34 is not genuine.

⁴⁵ Mt. xii. 31, 32; Mk. iii. 28-30.

⁴⁶ Lk. xii. 10.

neither in this world nor in that which is to come" (Mat. xii. 31, 32).

Let us begin by looking at Mark's account.

Mark alone, as we have said, records the opprobrious judgment of the scribes upon Jesus and His work, that He was possessed by Beelzebul. This is formally due, probably, to the circumstance that Mark alone introduces his account of this incident in contrast with the judgment passed upon Jesus by His friends: here is the judgment passed upon Him by His enemies. It is intimated, however, that there is a closer connection between this opprobrious judgment of His enemies and Jesus' warning concerning blasphemy against the Spirit than merely that it formed the formal occasion of the discourse of which the warning is a part. Mark expressly tells us that it was precisely because the scribes attributed demoniacal possession to Him that Jesus was led to give His solemn warning (verse 30). That is to say, it was precisely in this ascription that their blasphemous words against the Holy Spirit culminated, or, at least, that their words approached most dangerously the unpardonable sin of blasphemy against the Spirit. It might infer a dangerous approach to blasphemy against the Spirit by whom He wrought His mighty works to say that He wrought them by means of Beelzebul. But He was able to argue that question. The assertion that He in whom the Holy Spirit dwelt beyond measure was possessed (instead) by an unclean Spirit, advanced so far beyond this, however, that not argument but quick warning was demanded.

The solemnity with which Mark represents Jesus as introducing the declaration regarding blasphemy is marked by its opening formula: "Verily, I say unto you . . ." And the weight given to it by this solemn opening formula is sustained throughout in the stately march of its words. The declaration begins with an impressive proclamation of the forgivableness, in the wide mercy of God, of all human sin. The words are so arranged as to throw the emphasis

upon the universality of this forgivableness:⁴⁷ "Verily, I say unto you, that *all things* shall be forgiven to the sons of men"—a solemn periphrasis for the mere "to men". Then this universal "all things" is more closely defined according to its nature, all "acts of sin;" and then the specific sins now more particularly in mind are brought to sight,—all "the blasphemies wherewithsoever they may blaspheme." The effect is to create a most moving sense of the amplitude of the divine forgiveness. All the acts of sin which the sons of men may commit; all the blasphemies wherewith they may blaspheme: all these may be forgiven. It is with the force of a great contrast that the single exception is then brought in: all, all is forgivable except this one thing: "But whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost"—the particular form of the designation is chosen which throws the emphasis on His quality of *holiness*⁴⁸—"hath not forgiveness". This was startling enough: but it is rendered even more so by the addition emphatically at the end, of the awful words—"for ever:" "hath not forgiveness—for ever". And then the already strained emphasis is still further enhanced by a repetition of the declaration of the hopelessness of this sin, in the negative form: "But is guilty of an eternal sin",—a sin, that is, which can never in all eternity be expiated or remitted. At the end, the Evangelist adds under the influence of the dread solemnity of the whole, the justification of this terrible warning. "Because," he says, "they said, He hath an unclean spirit." Because they accused Him of being possessed by an unclean spirit, He thus in awe-inspiring words warns them that blasphemy against that Spirit which is holiness itself, by whom He was really informed, is an eternally unforgivable sin.

The terms "blaspheme", "blasphemy", are obviously em-

⁴⁷ Meyer: "The order of the words places them so far apart as to place a great emphasis on *πάντα*." So also Weiss, Holtzmann and others.

⁴⁸ *Τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον*; cf. Swete *in loc.*: "The repeated article brings the holiness of the Spirit into prominence."

ployed in this passage in their highest sense of irreverent and impious speech with respect to the Divine Being. The words, no doubt, are capable of employment in a more general sense, to express any reviling or calumniating speech against men. They are actually used in this general sense in the New Testament, including (though with Jesus only as their object) the Synoptic Gospels (Mat. xxix. 39, Mk. xv. 29, Lk. xxii. 68, xxiii. 39). As the discourse of which it forms the climax has its start in a defamatory speech concerning Jesus, it might be colorably contended that they bear this more general sense in our passage.⁴⁹ But the extreme elevation of the language scarcely admits of this lower interpretation of the terms on which the whole turns as on its hinge. Why should such solemn assurance be given that among all the sins which will be forgiven the sons of men shall be included even (the "and" has a slight ascensive force) "the railings wherewith they may rail"—unless those "railings" possessed some special heinousness, as, for example, sins against the majesty of God? Otherwise, this sentence, in other respects so impressive in diction, would end on a sad anti-climax. It would be equivalent to saying: All their robberies and adulteries and murders shall be forgiven to men, yea even whatever bad language they may use. A similar incongruity would be created with the succeeding context, were the general sense of the terms insisted upon here. The heightening of the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit would lose its force if the contrast against which it is thrown up were nothing more than detraction of our neighbors. The full effect of the passage becomes apparent only when we recognize that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is set as unforgivable over against other—not merely slanders but—veritable blasphemies, described as capable of being pardoned. Moreover the terms "to blaspheme", "blasphemy", when used absolutely, had acquired a technical meaning practically equivalent to these terms in our current Eng-

⁴⁹ They are so explained, for example, by Wellhausen *in loc.* A parallel to the passage so understood is found in 1 Sam. ii. 25.

lish,⁵⁰ and they cannot be taken in a lower sense here without violence. No simple reader could possibly understand them in any other sense than that of insults to the Divine Being.

It is, no doubt, a startling result of distinguishing blasphemy against the Holy Spirit from blasphemies against God in general, that thus the Holy Spirit is set over against God in general and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is declared more unpardonable than general blasphemy against God. Startling as this result is, however, it must just be accepted; it is impossible to believe that the contrast in our passage lies only between blasphemy against God and slander against fellow-men—as if what were said were, You can calumniate your fellow-men and it may be forgiven, but if you blaspheme God there is no forgiveness—for ever. We must not be stumbled by the indications of a Trinitarian background in Jesus' speech. Such indications pervade His speech in much greater measure than is commonly recognized. They are present, indeed, in all the expressions of His divine self-consciousness, and we should not forget that it is in His words that the Trinitarian formula finds its most precise enunciation in the New Testament (Mt. xxviii. 19). Meanwhile, what is necessary to recognize at the moment is only that Jesus here declares that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit specifically, not blasphemy in general, is unforgivable; and that He declares this with an emphasis which can only be understood as singling this sin out among all sins as a sin of very singular heinousness. The reason of this seems to reside in the fact that the holiness of God is especially manifested in the Holy Spirit. His designation here is accordingly so phrased as to throw His holiness particularly into prominence: "But whosoever shall blaspheme against the Spirit, that Holy One."⁵¹ Because the holiness of God is peculiarly mani-

⁵⁰ The verb: Mt. ix. 3, xxvi. 65; Mk. ii. 7; Jno. x. 36, but *cf.* Lk. xxii. 65; and the noun: Mt. xii. 31, xxvi. 62; Lk. v. 21; Jno. x. 33, but *cf.* Mt. xv. 19; Mk. vii. 22.

⁵¹ Τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, not τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, as in Lk. xii. 10 or the

fested in the Spirit, whose very name is Holy,⁵² insulting words spoken against this Holy Spirit are a peculiarly heinous sin.

Mark reports only the contrast which Jesus drew between blasphemy of specifically the Holy Spirit and blasphemy in general. He communicates no specific declaration with respect to the pardonableness of blasphemy against Jesus' own person. The inference to be drawn from this omission may be variously conceived. It may be said that Jesus (according to Mark's conception) never thought of injurious words spoken against His person as "blasphemy". Conscious of His (mere, perhaps sinful) humanity, and setting Himself in all His thought in contrast with God, as a humble creature of His hands, He cannot speak of "blasphemy" with reference to Himself, but only with reference to God, inclusive of course of the Holy Spirit. He can contrast blasphemy against the Holy Ghost and blasphemy against God in general, but not "blasphemy" against Himself and blasphemy against God, the Holy Spirit. Or, more subtly seeking the same end—the presentation of Jesus as in His own estimate of Himself, merely a human being—it may be said that Jesus identifies here opprobrious words against Himself with blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and means to declare that they are the unpardonable sin.⁵³ The occasion of His remarks was the ascription to Him of demoniacal possession, and the attribution of His miracles

simple τὸ πνεῦμα of Mt. xii. 31 (but in the more emphatic repetition of verse 32 τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον as in Mk. iii. 29).

⁵² Cf. Is. lvii. 15.

⁵³ Cf. H. J. Holtzmann, *Synoptiker*³ 1901, p. 128: "Here, therefore, in contrast with Mt. xii. 32; Lk. xii. 10 the unforgivable sin consists precisely in blasphemy of Jesus, who, no doubt, possesses His power of exorcism through the Spirit, Mt. xii. 28." Similarly cf. P. W. Schmiedel, *Protestantische Monatshefte* II (1898) p. 304: "With Mark, blasphemy of the Messiah is thought to be by no means forgivable, since he expressly indicates (verse 30) as the occasion of the declaration, the contenton of the opponents from verse 22 that Jesus was in collusion with Beelzebul or even possessed by him, and therefore wishes to say that there lies in this a blasphemy of the Holy Spirit working in Jesus."

to Satanic agency. This He declares to be unpardonable blasphemy, because He really has within Him the Divine Spirit and works His miracles by the Spirit, that is to say, by "the finger" of God. To vilify Him is unpardonably to blaspheme the Holy Spirit within Him by whom all His works are wrought. That the injurious words spoken against Him when it was declared that He was possessed of a demon are represented by Him as blasphemy (or as coming very near to blasphemy) of the Holy Spirit is indeed clear: that is precisely what Mark affirms in verse 30. But this does not identify all opprobrious words against His person with blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: it rather distinguishes between His person and that of the Spirit, the point of the warning being that such words against Him as these particular words approached to the unpardonable sin because they expressly assailed not Him but the Spirit working in Him. In Mark's report, therefore, there is no express reference to blasphemy against the Son of Man and if it is included at all it must be included in the general reference to "the blasphemies wherewithsoever the sons of men blaspheme"; and these all, with the sole exception of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, are expressly declared to be forgivable. Since only blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unpardonable, then, of course blasphemy against His own person is already declared to be pardonable and there is no clamant need of explicating further so obvious a fact. With this understanding of the implications of the passage it stands in harmony with the conception of Jesus' person which underlies the whole of Mark's Gospel (*cf. e.g.,* xiii. 32) and with the more explicated assertion of his companion Evangelists in this place, both of whom speak of a blasphemy of the Son of Man which—like these undefined blasphemies spoken of by Mark—is pardonable. Unless there is some decisive reason why this should not be included in these, it is only reasonable to see it in them.⁵⁴ Mark in that case does not explicitly adduce blas-

⁵⁴ *Cf.* Meyer (E. T., I, p. 59): "The less is it to be said that Mark places on a par the blasphemy against the Person of Jesus (Mt. xii.

phemy against the Son of Man as pardonable only because its pardonableness is already sufficiently asserted in the emphasized declaration that all blasphemies, with the sole exception of that against the Holy Spirit, are pardonable.

Let us now look somewhat closely at the reports of the other Evangelists.

Luke gives the declaration its most compressed form, and places it in a wholly different connection from that in which it appears in Mark and Matthew. It may well be, indeed, that he is recording a different utterance of Jesus' of the same general purport. There is no intrinsic reason why Jesus may not have made such a declaration more than once. In any event, however, the declaration given by Luke is of the same general contents as that given by Mark and Matthew.

It is not a little difficult to be quite sure of the exact reference of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost which is spoken of in Luke's report. On the face of it the declaration is quite general, that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven; and no closer definition is supplied by the context. We may conjecture that the reference is to blasphemy of the Holy Spirit speaking in the disciples when put upon their trial (verses 11, 12),⁵⁵ or that the denial of the Son (verse 9) is here declared to be, when the act not of His enemies, but of His disciples, not merely "speaking a word against the Son of Man", but actually the unpardonable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, operative in them.⁵⁶ But such conjectures have little to support them.

There is a certain parallelism between the two clauses of verse 10 and those of verses 8, 9, which may warrant us in taking the two pairs of antitheses together as alike under

31 f.) and that against the Holy Spirit (Köstlin, p. 318), or that he has 'already given up' the former blasphemy (Hilgenfeld). It is included in fact, in verse 28." This note is retained by Weiss.

⁵⁵ So J. Weiss. Cf. Th. Zahn who broadens it to include the whole witnessing work of the disciples.

⁵⁶ So Hofmann, *Schriftbeweis* II, 2, p. 342. Cf. especially G. L. Hahn's note.

the influence of the solemn opening phrase: "But I say unto you" (verse 8). In that case, we have here two combined encouragements and warnings:

(1a) "Every one who shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God:

(1b) But he that denieth Me in the presence of men, shall be denied in the presence of the angels of God.

(2a) And every one who shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him:

(2b) But unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven."

Thus a gnomic character attaches to these twin declarations which lends them great impressiveness and gives to each member of each of them almost equal force. We must, it seems, assume, then, that our Lord advancing, in verse 10, to the climax of His combined encouragement and warning, makes two declarations of generally equal importance,—that to wit, blasphemy against His own person will be forgiven, and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. Closer definition wherein either blasphemy against His person or blasphemy against the Spirit consists is lacking, and would perhaps be out of place in such crisp, proverbial utterances.

We have spoken of "blasphemy" in both clauses, because it seems quite clear that the variation in their language, from "every one who *shall speak a word* against the Son of Man" in the former, to "to him who *blasphemeth* the Holy Ghost" in the latter, is without significance (cf. Mat. xii. 32, where "speak against" is common to both clauses).⁵⁷ Obviously the contrast between the two cases consists not in any difference in the nature of the offence committed, but in some difference in the persons against whom the

⁵⁷ Godet (E. T., II, p. 93) on the contrary emphasises the difference, as if the forgivableness of the "speaking a word against" the Son of Man depended on the precise point that this was not a "blasphemous" word.

offence is committed. What is in effect declared is that an offence will be forgiven when committed against the Son of Man which will not be forgiven when committed against the Holy Spirit. There is undoubtedly suggested here a certain subordination of the Son of Man to the Holy Spirit,—if we cannot say exactly in dignity of person, yet in the heinousness of the sin of blasphemy when committed against the two respectively. The ground of this distinction is in no way intimated unless it be hinted by the designations by which the two persons are described—"the Son of Man" and "the Holy Spirit". It is difficult to discover, however, in these designations, the desired implications of lowliness on the one hand and of exaltation on the other. "The Son of Man" is an exalted title and is employed to suggest the humiliation rather than the humility of Jesus' life on earth; the form of the title "the Holy Spirit" here is not (as in Mark iii. 29) that which most strongly emphasises His holiness and consequently His exaltation. Perhaps it would be wise to read the two designations, therefore, so far as simply denotative and not to seek in them for subtle contrasting connotations.

It is meanwhile easy also to misinterpret the contrast in dignity between the two persons involved in the differing treatment of blasphemy against them. It is of immense significance that Jesus should have thought it important to assure his followers that blasphemy against His person could be forgiven.⁵⁸ It would be bathos to say that every one who spoke a word against a man could be forgiven but not he who blasphemed the Holy Ghost. A high sense of the dignity of His person underlies the mere adduction of the case of blasphemy against Himself as a sin that might be forgiven. Otherwise that might go without saying. No doubt the immediately preceding declaration that those who denied Him would be denied before the angels of God (verse 9) somewhat prepares the

⁵⁸ And if we consider to "speak a word against" something less than to "blaspheme" the implication is even more striking.

way for such a further declaration. But that cannot empty of its significance the setting side by side of the Son of Man and Holy Spirit as if they had something in common which required that any difference in dealing with sins against them should be expressly notified. The title "Son of Man" moreover is taken up from verse 8 where it is a title of dignity. The effect of its repetition in verse 10 is clearly to aggravate the sin of speaking against Him: the reason why this sin is forgivable cannot be, therefore, that it is a little sin. It is the greatness of the grace of Jesus which is celebrated in this promise of forgiveness as truly as it is the heinousness of the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which is emphasized in the refusal of forgiveness for it in the succeeding clause. We cannot say, then, that the difference in the treatment of blasphemy against the Son of Man and against the Holy Spirit is rooted in an intrinsic difference between the two persons. It must rest on some other ground, and those seem to be led by a right instinct who seek it in the humiliation of the Son of Man in His servant-form on earth,⁵⁹ and the culminating manifestation of the holiness of God in the Holy Spirit,—though these things rather underlie the compressed statement before us than find expression in it. It is abundantly clear at all events that there is no depreciation of the dignity of the person of Jesus in the contrast that is drawn between blasphemy against Him as forgivable and blasphemy against the Holy Ghost as unforgivable. That it is possible to blaspheme the Son of Man, itself means that the Son of Man is divine.⁶⁰

All the more clear is it that it is not intended to declare that it is only blasphemy against the Son of Man among blasphemies which is capable of forgiveness. The gist of the declaration is not that only blasphemy against the Son of Man is forgivable, but that only blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable. It is the latter, not the for-

⁵⁹ Mt. xx. 28; Mk. x. 45.

⁶⁰ Cf. A. B. Bruce *in loc.*

mer, which is singled out as unique in its treatment. Blasphemy against the Son of Man takes its place, therefore, as one of a class,—the class of forgivable blasphemies. Wherever it may rank within this class, it has its place in this class. In substance of meaning, accordingly, the declaration of Jesus reported by Luke is identical with that reported by Mark. When Mark makes Jesus declare that “all the blasphemies wherewithsoever the sons of men blaspheme,” except that against the Holy Spirit, are forgivable, blasphemy against Jesus’ own person is naturally included among forgivable blasphemies. When Luke reports Jesus as declaring that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit alone is unforgivable and even blasphemy against the Son of Man may be forgiven, it is necessarily implied that all other blasphemies are forgivable. The essence of both statements is that there is no blasphemy that is unforgivable except that against the Holy Spirit. One explicitly contrasts with this as forgivable, all other blasphemies; the other, even blasphemy against the Son of Man. The ultimate content of both contrasts is the same.

The most notable characteristic of Matthew’s report of our Lord’s declaration is its comprehensiveness, by which it is markedly distinguished from the compressed report of Luke. In substance, it combines the reports of Mark and Luke; but it does this in language so different from theirs that it is impossible to suppose that one Evangelist is directly dependent upon another. Matthew is obviously giving us an independent report of the substance of what was said by Jesus.

Matthew alone introduces the declaration by an illative particle, connecting it with the preceding discourse. The connection appears to be with the entire preceding discourse. It was because the Pharisees accused Him of casting out demons by Beelzebul, and because this was obviously absurd, and it was clear to every single eye that it was by the Spirit of God that He was casting out the demons (and therefore in Him the Kingdom of God had

come upon them), that He solemnly ("I say unto you") warns them against blasphemy of the Spirit. This warning is couched in language of intense impressiveness, and is so ordered as to throw the heinousness of blasphemy against the Spirit into the most poignant emphasis. It contains a double declaration of the unforgivableness of this sin. The former of these is more general in character and contrasts this blasphemy with other blasphemies in general (verse 31). The latter advances to a more pungent assertion and contrasts it specifically with blasphemy against the Son of Man, as more heinous than even it. The effect of the whole is to isolate the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit with even startling distinctness and energy as the only sin which is entirely and forever incapable of pardon.

The former member of this striking declaration is clothed in language of extreme and impressive simplicity. "Every sin and blasphemy," we read—the addition "and blasphemy" descending from the genus to the particular species under discussion, and the combination of the terms focussing attention on the sinfulness of blasphemy: "Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to man, but the blasphemy"—"*the* blasphemy", isolating the particular blasphemy under discussion—"the blasphemy of the Spirit shall not be forgiven": "Blasphemy" in the first clause is evidently used in its technical sense and imports insult to the Divine majesty: and "the blasphemy of the Spirit" is separated from this only as a particular from the general. Every term employed is the simplest and most direct attainable, and the construction is wholly free from rhetorical heightening. The simple abstract "sin" is used, instead of the more unusual derivative "acts of sin" of Mark; the simple "blasphemy" instead of Mark's emphasized "the blasphemies wherewithsoever the sons of men blaspheme." The universal "every" is attached simply to its substantives instead of separated from them for increased emphasis. We have the simple "to men" instead of the solemn "to the sons of men" of Mark. Even the simplest designation of the Holy Spirit possible is em-

ployed—the mere “the Spirit”. The statement takes on, indeed, something of the baldness of a legislative enactment: there is not a superfluous particle in it, and not a single rhetorical flourish. It just simply states a fact of tremendous significance, and leaves it at that: “Every sin (including blasphemy) shall be forgiven to men; but blasphemy of the Spirit shall not be forgiven.”

To this naked statement of fact, there is adjoined, now, a repetition which is something more than a repetition. It adds nothing in substance to what was said in the preceding statement. But it adds a great deal to it in tone and effect. It has the nature of a startling specific application of a general doctrine, with the effect of carrying the general doctrine home with tremendous force. All is said when it is said, “Every blasphemy shall be forgiven except blasphemy of the Spirit.” But this all is said with quite new energy when it is added: “Even if anyone blasphemes the Son of Man, he shall be forgiven, but not if he blasphemes the very Spirit of holiness—no, not for ever.” The “and” by which this second member of the declaration is connected with the first, is not merely copulative, nor merely consecutive (“and so”). What follows is not merely an illustration of the general principle or a consequence drawn from it. The “and” has an ascensive force and introduces what is in effect a climax. Perhaps its force may be brought out by rendering it by some such term as “yea”: “Every blasphemy shall be forgiven; yea if one blaspheme the Son of Man. . . .” It is not merely *an* instance which is adduced; but *the* instance, which will illustrate above every other instance the incredible reach of the forgiveness that is extended, and which will therefore supply the best background up against which may be thrown the heinousness of blasphemy of the Spirit which cannot be forgiven. The blasphemy which cannot be forgiven when even blasphemy of the Son of Man is forgiven, must be heinous indeed.

That “whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man” is just a periphrasis for “whosoever shall blaspheme

against the Son of Man" is obvious. There would be an anticlimax if it were made to mean anything less than blasphemy. To declare that every blasphemy shall be forgiven and then add in climacteric illustration of this declaration that even the speaking a word against the Son of Man—which is something less than blasphemy—shall be forgiven would yield only bathos. The progress of the argument requires us, therefore, to take this "speaking a word against the Son of Man" as itself blasphemy in the sense of the preceding declaration. We rise here, not sink, in the definition of the sin. The progress consists in a change, not in the matter of the sin, but in the adduction of an object by which its heinousness is heightened. And, we must add, the heightening is, in the nature of the case, to the extreme limit. Blasphemy against the Son of Man is the extremity of blasphemy which can be forgiven. Beyond that limit, it becomes unforgivable. It is not a little sin, then, which is adduced; it is the greatest of forgivable sins. And therefore the title of dignity, "Son of Man", is employed to designate the object on which it terminates. To blaspheme the Son of Man is a sin so dreadful that it might be thought unforgivable; and the heinousness of the unforgivable sin may be estimated when it is perceived that it is more heinous than this. Clearly the Son of Man is not mere man: it is only because He is not mere man, indeed, that "speaking a word against Him" is blasphemy.

That by "speaking a word against Him" just blasphemy is meant is clear also from the employment of this same phrase in the next clause of blasphemy of the Spirit. For, that this clause must repeat the last clause of the first member of the declaration is beyond dispute: and we do not rise to our climaxes by weakening our expressions. And in this second member all the other expressions are heightened: Jesus designates Himself "the Son of Man" here for the first time in this context; the simple "Spirit" of the former member of the declaration gives place here to the solemnly emphatic "the Spirit, the Holy One"; the simple negative,

“shall not be forgiven” of the former member is expanded here to the awe-inspiring, “shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come”. It would seem, then, that the periphrasis, “to speak a word against”, is treated as a more, rather than a less, impressive way of saying “to blaspheme” than the word itself: it is the thing, not the term, that is condemned, and apparently it is felt that the thing is more precisely, and therefore more forcibly, expressed by the periphrasis than by the simple word, which, after all, is very fairly defined by the periphrasis.

By the employment of this periphrasis in this passage with respect to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit we are aided in determining the precise nature of the sin which our Lord pronounced unforgivable. It would seem that it is just speaking injurious or insulting words against the Holy Spirit; such words as are illustrated,—or at least approached—by the opprobrious attribution of acts of the Holy Spirit to Beelzebul. Matthew does not say, as Mark says, that our Lord has particular reference to the ascription to Him of demoniacal possession. What he says is that our Lord was led to give this tremendous warning to the Pharisees, because they declared that it was by Beelzebul, the prince of the demons, that He was casting out demons, this being in effect an identification of the Holy Spirit by whom He wrought His cures with the foul spirit. He bids them, therefore, to beware. The mercy of God is very wide; every sin and blasphemy may be forgiven to men—except only blasphemy of the Spirit; yea, though one speak a word against the Son of Man it may be forgiven; but if one speak against the Spirit, that Holy One, it shall not be forgiven—to all eternity.

The comprehensiveness of Matthew’s report of Jesus’ declaration, embracing as it does the substance of both what Mark and what Luke reports, affords a temptation to look upon Matthew’s report as artificially made up from a combination of what is reported by the other evangelists. We have already pointed out, however, that the divergence of

the language in Matthew's report from that of Mark's and Luke's respectively, renders this hypothesis untenable. If there ever were three reports purporting to give the substance of a single utterance—and actually giving it in complete harmony—which bore decisive marks of literary independence of one another, these three reports do. Nevertheless the temptation to explain the three as two divergent reports in Mark and Luke, and a conflation of them in Matthew, has proved too strong for the Synoptical critics to resist.

Which of the two brief divergent reports is to be held the more original, the critics are less agreed. Wellhausen is sure that Mark, along with Mt. xii. 31, has preserved in substance the original form, and that what was meant by it is that railing against men may be forgiven but not blasphemy against God. According to this view Jesus did not declare blasphemy against His own person to be pardonable, the version of Luke and Mt. xii. 32 resting upon a misunderstanding of the underlying Aramaic phrase for "man" which transmuted it into a title of the Messiah, "the Son of Man", used as a personal self-designation by Jesus.⁶¹ The fundamental assumption here is, of course, that the reason why Jesus did not declare blasphemy against His person to be pardonable is that He never could have connected the idea of blasphemy with that of "speaking a word against" Himself, conceiving of Himself, as He did, as merely a human being.⁶² P. W. Schmiedel, on the other

⁶¹ Cf. Arnold Meyer and Lietzmann as cited by P. W. Schmiedel, *Protestantische Monatshefte*, II, 1898, p. 304; also *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, col. 1848, note 1.

⁶² N. Schmidt, *The Prophet of Nazareth*, p. 112 has a similar view, although he takes Mt. xii. 32 as preserving the original saying, in which, he supposes, *bar nasha*, in the sense of "man", stood in the place now occupied by "the Son of Man", in the sense of Jesus, the Messiah: "He was careful to distinguish between an attack upon a fellow-man and a denunciation of the Spirit that operated in Him, saying: 'If any one speaks against *bar nasha*,—i.e. man—that may be pardoned him, but he that speaks against the Holy Spirit can have no pardon.' No one in the audience could have understood him to say, 'you may blaspheme the Messiah with impunity, but not the

hand, is equally sure that the original form has been preserved by Luke, or rather by the fuller Mt. xii. 31, 32, while Mark represents a dogmatic alteration of this in the interests of the dignity of Jesus' person, men having come to entertain so high an opinion of Jesus' person that it offended them to have it said that blasphemy of even the Holy Spirit would be more unpardonable than blasphemy of Him.⁶³ According to this view Jesus declares speaking a word against Him to be pardonable because He conceives Himself to be only human, while the Holy Spirit is a periphrasis for God: the upshot of His teaching being just that we may speak against men and be forgiven but we cannot blaspheme God and expect pardon. The pathways over which the two interpretations would travel are different; the goal which they reach is the same; Jesus was only human and spoke out of a purely human consciousness.⁶⁴

Holy Ghost.' The distinction is clearly between the divine spirit and the human instrumentality." C. G. Montifiore, *Synopt. Gospels* II, 624, says quite impartially that this interpretation seems "very strained".

⁶³*Encyclopaedia Biblica*, col. 1848: "In their worship of Jesus it must have appeared to them in itself the greatest possible blasphemy to say that blasphemy against Jesus could be forgiven."

⁶⁴*Cf.* the discussion of the opposing views in Schmiedel's article in the *Protestantische Monatshefte* II, 1908, pp. 303-307: an excellent brief account of them is given by S. R. Driver in Hastings' *BD* IV. p. 588, at the close of his article on the "Son of Man". E. von Dobschütz, *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 85 (1912) p. 340, is sure that we have two reports here, but will not decide which is the more original, contenting himself with remarking that the double attestation gives us peculiar surety that something of the sort was said by Jesus: "When we read in the Mark-tradition (Mk. iii. 28 f.; Mt. xii. 31), 'All sins are forgiven to the sons of men and the blasphemies wherewithsoever they blaspheme, but he who blasphemeth the Holy Ghost has no forgiveness forever'; but on the other hand in the Q-tradition (Lk. xii. 10; Mt. xii. 32), 'He who speaketh anything against the Son of Man, that will be forgiven him, but he who speaketh against the Holy Spirit, to him it will not be forgiven (neither in this nor in the future world)'; it is clear that we have before us two conceptions and also two translations: *bar nasa* is in one taken collectively, "sons of men," in the other as the well-known personal self-designation of Jesus. The one is a modification of the other, although it is not altogether easy to say in what direction the theology of the community has worked here; it is clear, however that through

So sure is Schmiedel that Mt. xii. 31, 32 presents to our view a purely human Jesus, that he includes this passage among those "pillar passages" which he announces as the foundation stones of a truly scientific knowledge of Jesus,—on the precise ground that they could never have been invented by worshippers of Jesus (as all the Evangelists were) but must have come to them as part of an authentic tradition of a human Jesus. This true tradition, he contends, was altered by one or another of the Evangelists in accordance with their later worship of Jesus.⁶⁵ Jesus here, he tells us, is represented as frankly ranging Himself with men, speaking against whom is pardonable; and as separating Himself from the Spirit of God to speak against whom is unpardonable.⁶⁶ That the passage in Matthew will not bear the meaning which Schmiedel puts upon it, we have already seen. Jesus does not place Himself there among men, and subordinate Himself to God in His essential nature. He does not say there that calumnation of men may be forgiven but never blasphemy against God. What He says may be forgiven is precisely blasphemy, in its strict sense. He declares that speaking a word against His person is blasphemy in the strict sense; and that this may be forgiven only because blasphemy may be forgiven.⁶⁷ And

this double attestation a declaration of Jesus to His Pharisaic opponents as to unpardonable sin is assured."

⁶⁵ *Encyc. Bibl.* col. 1881; cf. col. 1848 (d and note 1). See *Princeton Theological Review*, April, 1913, pp. 204, 252.

⁶⁶ The following is Schmiedel's most lucid statement of his view of the bearing of the passage (*Das vierte Evangelium*, etc., p. 33): "In John Jesus knows, then, nothing higher than Himself, the bliss or misery of men for time and eternity is determined by whether they believe or do not believe in His divine origin. In the Synoptics, He knows something higher than Himself. He says in Mt. xii. 31, 32: 'Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven to men, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whosoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whosoever speaks a word against the Holy Ghost, it will not be forgiven him, either in this world or in the next.' Therefore He places His person below the Holy Spirit, i.e. below the holy work which He advocates." Cf. Karl Thieme, *Die christliche Demut* I. 1906, p. 139.

⁶⁷ W. Beyschlag, *Die Christologie des Neuen Testaments*, 1866, p. 24.

though He subordinates Himself to the Holy Spirit, at least in manifestation, to this extent, that blasphemy against Him may be forgiven but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit not, it is illegitimate to interpret this as implying a subordination of Himself to the Spirit in intrinsic dignity of person: blasphemy against God may also be forgiven but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit not. It may be difficult to determine precisely why blasphemy against the Spirit is made unpardonable and blasphemy against the Son of Man not: no doubt the reason lies in some discrimination in the modes of divine manifestation in the two persons. But this difficulty affords no reason for cutting the knot by representing Jesus as definitely subordinating Himself—and God also—in dignity of person to the Holy Spirit.

It has been frequently remarked that it is only in the two passages, Mt. xii. 32 and Lk. xii. 10, that (as, for example, H. J. Holtzmann expresses it), “a distinction is had written—no doubt with wrong suggestions, but for the final matter very justly, as we think—as follows (we use Bruce’s rendering): “Let us consider the relation here indicated between the Son of Man and the Holy Ghost. It is a relation of distinction; and yet of close connection. The distinction is that in the Son of Man the revelation of God to man is in mediated, and, so far, veiled form; therefore may be misunderstood, so that the blasphemer may always have the benefit of the prayer, ‘Forgive them, they know not what they do’; but in the Holy Ghost the revelation is made immediately, inwardly, therefore unmistakably; therefore there is no excuse for the blasphemer. At the same time the Holy Ghost is not thought of as above the Son of Man but in Him. The Son of Man is the man who has the Spirit of God in His entire fulness, whose inmost though unrecognized essence is the Holy Spirit, the man whose human appearance is the absolute revelation of God. To this corresponds the fact, obvious in the text, that the blasphemy of the Son of Man is represented as the most heinous of pardonable sins.” A. B. Bruce, *The Humiliation of Christ*², 1881, p. 227, quotes these statements only unsuccessfully to contravert the view that the passage teaches that “offences against the Son of Man are pardonable, but that is all; such sins form the extreme limit of the unforgivable.” He supposes that Jesus rather means to say “with characteristic magnanimity” that sins against Himself are easily forgivable, because not more heinous than sins against any other good man, and due to the same general cause; and he adopts the view that Jesus’ warning turns precisely on this,—that the Pharisees in their injurious imputations were “not sinning against *Him*, but against the Holy Ghost.”

made between the Spirit as the higher power (*Inстанz*) and Jesus as the human vehicle of the Spirit." A somewhat bizarre writer, on that ground, insists that these passages—which, he considers, represent the original form of the declaration—are a Montanistic interpolation into the Gospels, since (as he is reported) "only Montanism places the revelation of the Spirit, the Paraclete, above that of the Apostles of Christ." We cite this extraordinary opinion, not, as we well might, as an example of the lengths to which this kind of criticism can go,—in principle, it is just as sound criticism as that of many who seem to be pillars,—but in order to introduce Schmiedel's, as it seems to us, instructive rejoinder to it. "Certainly," Schmiedel replies, "Montanism was the first to place the Holy Spirit above Jesus—after Jesus Himself. Some effort is made to form an appropriate idea of Montanism: but of what Jesus thought of Himself, none at all. 'Where elsewhere in the Synoptic tradition can anything similar be found?' I should have thought we would have been thankful to find it only once. A pearl does not cease to be genuine merely because it exists in only one example. . ."⁶⁸ Possibly. But meanwhile, it is thus allowed that in this interpretation a meaning is assigned to the passage which is unexampled elsewhere in the Synoptic Gospels, and indeed in the entirety of the Christian literature of the first age; a meaning, that is, so unexpected that surely it cannot be entertained unless it is unassailably shown to be the real meaning of the passage. How little that is the case we have already seen. What Schmiedel is actually doing in his interpretation of the passage is, therefore, importing into the Gospels a conception which is wholly alien to them; and also which, as he expressly admits (for this is the very principle of his criticism), stands in direct contradiction to their whole drift. A human Jesus must be found at all hazards, and if violence is required to find Him in the Evangelical tradition, then violence must be used.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ *Protestantische Monatshefte*. II. (1898), p. 305.

⁶⁹ Into the detailed attempts to account for the divergent forms of

Meanwhile it is unquestionable that the passage contains difficulties. It is not easy to separate clearly blasphemy of the Son of Man from blasphemy of that Holy Spirit by which He wrought His great works of healing upon the possessed. It is not easy to understand in what blasphemy of the Son of Man is a less heinous sin than blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, or why the one is more pardonable than the other. It is not easy indeed to be perfectly sure, precisely in what the unpardonable blasphemy of the Holy Spirit consists, or whether our Lord means to convict His opponents of having committed it. We may, of course, form conjectures on these matters; and these conjectures will, no doubt, be more or less plausible; and they may seem to be supported with more or less convincingsness by this or that assertion or suggestion of the text or context. The passage itself, however, scarcely gives us decisive instruction on these matters; and on most of them opinions may lawfully differ. They are in any event subjects of perpetual investigation and most of them continue to be zealously debated by the commentators.⁷⁰ Many commentators, for example, are eager to make it clear that our Lord does not charge His opponents with having committed the unpardonable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, but only warns them against committing it.⁷¹ This carries with it, of course,

the whole passage as given by the three Synoptics, on the Two-Document hypothesis, in its mechanical interpretation, we do not enter. We cannot look upon a discussion like that of Burton Scott Easton, "The Beelzebul Sections", *The Journal of Biblical Literature*, XXXII (1913), pp. 57-73 as anything more than highly refined speculation without any possibility of attaining valid results.

⁷⁰ A good brief *résumé* of the main discussion may be read in Carl Clemen's *Die christliche Lehre von der Sünde*, 1898, pp. 89 ff.

⁷¹ For example, Th. Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus*, 1903, pp. 460-466, closing with the statement (p. 466): "Jesus does not yet treat the Pharisees here as such as have already committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, but as such as need to be warned of this ultimate step which they have it in mind to take." Compare the statement on p. 461: "No doubt the Pharisees called the Power by which Jesus healed the possessed, an evil spirit, whereas that Power was in fact the Spirit of God; but they did not blaspheme the Spirit for they did not recognize Him in the Power which worked through Jesus.

denial that merely to accuse Jesus of working His healings of demoniacs by the aid of Beelzebul, or even of being possessed by Beelzebul, constitutes the unpardonable sin. And the way having thus been opened, a wide field lies open for conjecture as to what does constitute that sin. Despite these deeper mysteries, however, the main implications of the passage are sufficiently clear, and among these implications this one must rank among the clearest—that He who authoritatively makes this great declaration of the relative heinousness of sins, and calmly announces what sins shall and what sins shall not be forgiven, whether in this world or in that which is to come, does not mean to proclaim Himself a mere man, when He declares that he who speaks a word against Him may be forgiven, but not he who speaks a word against the Holy Spirit. Whatever may be the reason for treating blasphemy of the Son of Man as more pardonable than blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, that reason cannot be found in a sheer difference in the intrinsic dignity of the two persons.

The judgment of unbelief on Jesus, we have found occasion to remark, is inevitably that He was mad. As inevit-

They rather concluded from the behavior of Jesus, which in their judgment was godless, lawless, and immoral (ix. 3-11, xii. 2-10) that this man wrought these, in themselves, beneficent and praiseworthy miracles by the aid of evil spirits, and thus they blasphemed the Son of Man. This blasphemy would become a blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, however, if they persisted in it, after Jesus had shown them the irrationality of their inference. When and in the measure in which they must recognize that the Power by which Jesus heals is a holy Power, every inimical word against Him becomes a sin against the Holy Spirit." So also G. Wohlenberg, *Das Evangelium des Markus*, 1910, p. 115: "That the scribes have committed such blasphemy the Lord does not say. It may even be judged that even their accusation that Jesus had Beelzebul and cast out the demons through the prince of the demons, or as it is said in verse 30, that He had an unclean spirit, does not yet necessarily involve that terrible sin. For the question continually presents itself, how far uncomprehending but well-meant zeal has coöperated here; how far the conscience has been unpricked, unconcerned, when they so dreadfully accused the Lord." For earlier writers to the same effect, see C. Clemen, as cited, p. 91 note.

ably the judgment of active disbelief on Him must be that He was wicked. Not only in His own day but throughout all time the alternatives constantly stare us in the face—*aut Deus aut non sanus; aut Deus aut non bonus*. If in our own time the latter alternative has retired somewhat into the background, and that which imposes itself upon the consciousness of contemporary criticism is that between a Divine Jesus and an “ecstatic” Jesus, as it is euphemistically called,—a parancæic Jesus, as it really would amount to—that is doubtless in part because, in the languid sceptical temper of our times, and their preoccupation with abstract questions of pure history, little occasion or place has been left for the play of the more violent emotions about our historical findings. At bottom, however, disbelief, when it works itself out, must not merely neglect Jesus but condemn Him: and the ravings of a Nietzsche may serve to keep us in mind that the ultimate alternative is always that of the Pharisees and Scribes. Either Jesus has come forth from God, or we can scarcely avoid declaring Him possessed of the Evil One. He makes or mars the world.⁷²

⁷² Compare the striking closing pages of the fourth of Liddon's Bampton Lectures on *The Divinity of our Lord, etc.*