

their lack of worldly resources. This has been the soil in which the Christian tragic drama has been kept alive in the collective consciousness because it has been kept going in life itself.

Of course one must not forget the experience of the occupation that underlies much of the new spirit in the Dutch Church. Yet little of that experience seems to surface in today's world. There is rather a sense that Catholicism in Holland is the product, not of a tragic or revolutionary 'metanoia', but of a steady progress towards a more adult grasp of life. But does such a notion of steady progress, lacking, as it perhaps does, the sense of the fundamental contingency of all historical developments, their radical dependence on an unpredictable providence, on a Christ who comes like a *tiger* 'in the juvenescence of the year' as Eliot put it—does such a notion fit into the Christian scheme of things? Or are we to think rather of some moment of revolution which, when it comes, will demand of us a momentous decision of faith? If so, do we not need more than the common marketeer's purified, transcendent Christianity?

The very description 'Roman Catholic' seems now, and increasingly, to bring with it a tension and yet we are beginning to see this tension not as something accidental or temporary, the difficulties of an ancient hierarchical structure adapting itself painfully and slowly to the changed conditions of the modern world, but as revealing the intrinsic tensions in the way things are.

In the recent canonization of the Forty Martyrs this tension became apparent in a specially clear way. Here, from one point of view, was a defiant act of Roman imperialism reviving conflicts and old controversies, proclaiming loyalty to the Papacy and indicating in unmistakable terms the gravity of a faith that our ancestors had died for. And yet it was precisely this occasion which the Pope took to make the most historic statement on ecumenism, referring to the Anglican Church as an 'ever-beloved sister' and to speak of her 'special traditions'. This was far indeed from the mood of 'our separated brethren'. And it is perhaps here, on the most central stage of all, that we are having acted out in the tormented, puzzling career of Paul VI the drama of what it is simply to be, existentially as it were, a Roman Catholic at the present time. And for some the ineradicable tension posited by that description still continues to offer the deepest insight into what it means to be a Christian—the 'via crucis' of Paul taking us further into the meaning of the 'aggorniamiento' initiated by his far-seeing predecessor.

Satan and the Failure of Nerve by Roy Yates

It is an interesting exercise to trace the development in the character of Satan that takes place in the Old Testament. In the earlier strands

of tradition, evil and suffering are attributed directly to Yahweh himself, while in the later strands, when the problem of evil had become more acute in the experience of the nation and of the writers concerned, the evil and suffering inflicted upon them is attributed to supernatural beings other than Yahweh. By the time of Jesus this 'failure of nerve' had resulted in a complex demonology and satanology as men were borne down by this 'cosmic totalitarianism'. In the Old Testament itself there are comparatively few allusions, let alone direct references, to hostile evil powers; a fact that is made more surprising when considered against the background provided by the demon-riddled world of Mesopotamia.¹ Nevertheless we see this development beginning and growing. In this respect the figure of Satan is of great interest because in the role ascribed to him we have the clearest example of a development which begins with his work as 'adversary' and member of the heavenly council and builds up through clearly discernible stages to a supernatural enemy of God and man who organizes a kingdom of evil in opposition to God.²

The conception of Satan as an individual and superhuman power occupies but a small space in the literature of the Old Testament. From the relevant references we gather that he in no sense fulfilled the role of the evil and subversive power ascribed to him in later Jewish literature. T. McDermott³ suggests that 'satan' is only a lazy translation of 'adversary' or 'accuser'. In this connection human beings are also described as 'satans' or 'adversaries' in the Old Testament. Thus David, while in exile among the Philistines, is not allowed to go to do battle with them against Israel because his loyalty is suspected.

Send the man back, that he may return to the place to which you have assigned him; he shall not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he become an adversary (*satan*) to us.⁴

This indicates that the noun 'satan' comes from the verb 'to accuse',⁵ but does not explain or invalidate the fact that 'satan' was later applied to a superhuman personality whose office it was, in the heavenly court, to put the case against man.

The earliest reference to Satan as a superhuman individual is in the story of Balaam, when the Angel of Yahweh confronts him on the way to curse Israel.

Behold I have come out as an adversary, because your way is perverse before me.⁶

¹D. E. H. Whiteley, *The Theology of St Paul* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1964), p. 20; T. Ling, *The Significance of Satan* (London, S.P.C.K., 1961), p. 3; E. Langton, *Essentials of Demonology* (London, Epworth, 1949), ch. 1.

²E. Langton, *op. cit.*, pp. 52ff.

³'The Devil and His Angels', *New Blackfriars*, 48, No. 577, 1966, p. 19.

⁴I Sam. 29, 4. cf. II Sam. 19, 22; I Kings 11, 14, 23, 25; Ps. 38, 27; 71, 13; 109, 6, 20, 29.

⁵cf. Ps. 109, 4; Zech. 3, 1.

⁶Num. 22, 32.

The most probable interpretation is that 'adversary' here is a periphrasis for Yahweh himself, in the same sense that 'Angel of the Lord' is a periphrasis for Yahweh.¹ Even here 'Satan' is the one who opposes evil; a function allotted to him by Yahweh, since he is referred to in the same verse as 'the Angel of Yahweh'.

There are three passages in the Old Testament in which Satan appears as a distinct superhuman personality, and all come from the post-Exilic period. He is seen as a fully qualified member of Yahweh's heavenly court; an angel of God entrusted with the particular task of acting as 'public prosecutor', and of bringing men's guilt to God's remembrance. This occupation does not necessarily of itself presuppose an evil character. In Zechariah 3., 'Satan' is not yet a proper name, but rather a descriptive title used with the article, 'the Satan', 'the adversary'.

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and the Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the Lord said to the Satan, 'The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?'

He is represented as cursing Joshua the high priest, but is himself rebuked by Yahweh for demanding too severe a punishment. The Lord's mercy prevails, and the Satan loses his case. Even in this early reference, where Satan appears as the servant of God and fulfilling a divine function, there seems to be something evil and malignant in his personality. The seeds of the later development of his evil character are already present. We see this also in the role of Satan in the Book of Job, where it could almost be said that Satan is on the brink of a metamorphosis towards evil.² The development that takes place here is that evil in the world and the mishaps that befall men begin to be attributed to Satan rather than to Yahweh. Again the name appears with the article: 'the Satan'. In pursuit of his divinely appointed task he suspects that the piety of Job is very much in need of testing because thus far it has been to Job's advantage to be good; any man would be as scrupulous as Job if he was sure of the divine protection, accompanied by comfort and prosperity. Thus Satan is given permission to inflict on Job a series of catastrophes and mishaps to test the sincerity of his profession of faith.³ Throughout the drama it is important to remember that Satan is still regarded as one of the angel-ministers of Yahweh, and never acts without God's permission. The problem presented in the book of Job is an attempt to say something about the paradox arising from continued belief in a good God and the presence of suffering and evil in the world, especially the evils which had come upon the Hebrews.

¹E. Langton, *Ministries of Angelic Powers* (London, Jas. Clarke, 1936), pp. 23f.

²J. Kallas, *The Significance of the Synoptic Miracles* (London, S.P.C.K., 1961), p. 50.

³The references to Satan are contained in Job 1, 6-12; 2, 1-7.

T. Ling¹ has suggested that the solution offered in Job, if it may be called a solution, lies in the suggestion that the sufferings of one human life can only be understood by reference to forces acting outside the individual human life. He emphasizes the corporate aspect of evil; the fate of the individual is to be seen in the wider setting of social evil. However, in Job we note that the testing is done by Satan only in accordance with Yahweh's will; there is no idea of an independent force of evil.

In pre-exilic times, in so far as we can deduce the beliefs of the Hebrews from the text of the Old Testament, the spiritual leaders found it unnecessary to speak of Satan; an indication that the idea was not yet of central importance. Thus in II Samuel 24, 1 we read that Yahweh incited David to conduct a census:

Again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, 'Go, number Israel and Judah'.

an act for which David was duly punished. But in the parallel passage in I Chronicles 21, 1 the editor introduces a change into the narrative, ascribing the temptation to Satan rather than to Yahweh, and thus overcoming the inconsistency of David being punished for an act which Yahweh had incited him to do.

Satan stood up against Israel, and incited David to number Israel.

This alteration in the text is significant in two ways. First, 'Satan' is used as a proper name, indicating that the concept of a supernatural adversary had solidified into a definite figure. Secondly, the temptation to do evil is now associated with this being; the function of accuser has been detached more clearly from God and made into an independent hypostasis. This figure was then made the focus of unexplained superhuman forces of evil.² This is the first major development towards that view of his office which was current in the apocalyptic literature. The paradox whereby evil and suffering in the world, even for the righteous, was reconciled with the activities of Yahweh was resolved. Evil powers were seen to be operative in the world, which was regarded as no longer under the direct rule of God, but the battlefield on which the hosts of Satan warred against the hosts of God. One reason why the activities of Satan seem suddenly to become more prominent in the apocryphal and apocalyptic writings is that these works were generally the product of unofficial teachers. There was always more place for such beliefs in the popular than in the official religion. Despite their popularity they were looked on with disfavour by the official religious authorities.³ In the earlier works in this category Satan is not quite so prominent, but he gradually gains prestige, until he occupies a supreme position,

¹*Op. cit.*, p. 6.

²W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, Vol. 2 (E. T. London, S.C.M., 1967), pp. 206f.

³E. Langton, *Satan: A Portrait* (London, Skeffington, 1945), p. 13.

as in New Testament times, as the arch-enemy of God and man.¹ The idea of a rebellion in heaven and the fall of several of the angels under the leadership of Satan is described in II Enoch, where the evil angels are seen to be awaiting punishment.

These are they who apostasized from the Lord, who obeyed not the commandments of God, and took council of their own will and transgressed together with their prince.²

Or again in I Enoch mention is made of a number of 'satans' ruled over by a prince.

For I saw all the angels of punishment abiding there and preparing all the instruments of Satan.³

But in the vision Enoch sees that their reign is limited.

And Michael, and Gabriel, and Raphael, and Phanuel shall take hold of them on that great day, and cast them on that day into the burning furnace, that the Lord of Spirits may take vengeance on them for their unrighteousness in becoming subject to Satan and leading astray those who dwell on earth.⁴

The function of these evil spirits is to accuse men on earth,⁵ to tempt men to do evil,⁶ and then to act as angels of punishment.⁷ The prince of the evil hosts appears under several names: Azazel, Mastema, Beliar, Sammael, and Satan, but all with the same function. He is a superhuman force who has set up a kingdom in opposition to God; yet he is never outside the jurisdiction of God's will, as the accounts of his punishment indicate.

These themes are continued in the Rabbinic literature,⁸ with the additional development that Satan was thought to be associated with such Old Testament events as the fall of man through the serpent,⁹ and the testing of Abraham.¹⁰ We thus see the full development of Satan's character, from the angel who was concerned with maintaining justice in Yahweh's court to the arch-enemy of God and Man. G. B. Caird comments on this development:

Throughout his tragic history his zeal for justice remains unimpaired. He is a martinet, who demands that men shall be dealt with according to the rigour of the law, and will go to any lengths to secure a verdict. His tragedy consists precisely in this, that law is not an ultimate truth about God, so that, in defending the

¹*Ibid.*, pp. 14-21, *Essentials of Demonology*, Ch. 5, for a detailed survey of Satan in apocryphal and apocalyptic literature. Thus rather than repeat the evidence we give a few representative references to complete the picture of the development which the concept of Satan undergoes. See also W. Eichrodt, *op. cit.*, pp. 207f; D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (London, S.C.M., 1964), pp. 254-7; H. A. Kelly, *Towards the Death of Satan* (London, Chapman, 1968), pp. 19-23.

²II Enoch 7, 3. cf. I Enoch Chs. 15 and 16.

³I Enoch 53, 3.

⁴I Enoch 54, 6.

⁵I Enoch 40, 7.

⁶I Enoch 69, 6.

⁷I Enoch 53, 3; 62, 11.

⁸See E. Langton, *Satan: A Portrait*, pp. 10-12.

⁹Bereshith Rabbah 19.

¹⁰Jerusalem Targum to Genesis 22.

honour of God's law, Satan becomes the enemy of God's true purpose.¹

We see this development in Satan's character as part of an attempt on the part of the Hebrews to give some account of the evil and suffering which they experienced in the world around them, without implying that God was the direct author of that evil. But in doing so an awkward dualism of the forces of good and evil was set up; a situation that would only be resolved with the coming of the Messianic Age, when Satan and his attendant angels would be finally banished. T. Ling² thinks that this development represents a more profound understanding of the nature of evil, rather than the influence of Persian dualism. Although we agree that the Persian influence is not as great as some have supposed, it seems that in the attempt to provide a more adequate theodicy, the sovereignty of God was sacrificed in the belief in a kingdom of evil under the rule of Satan, a kingdom only to be banished at the coming of the Messianic Age. The world is seen as the temporary domain of Satan, and human beings as mere pawns in the cosmic drama. Although it is never doubted that God is ultimately in control of all things, this particular theodicy is less than satisfactory because it loses that valuable paradox and that act of faith which affirms that God is in direct control of the course of history, despite suffering and evil in the world. In this sense the development we have traced in the character of Satan, and the changed attitude to suffering and evil, can be said to be a part of what J. B. Bury has described as a 'failure of nerve'.³

¹*Principalities and Powers* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1956), p. 37.

²*Op. cit.*, p. 7.

³Quoted by E. G. Rupp, *Principalities and Powers* (London, Epworth, 1952 and 1965), p. 10.

On Non-Infallible Pronouncements by Cardinal Newman

Fr Bede Bailey O.P., archivist of the English Dominican Province writes: 'I read Rahner on non-infallible pronouncements (*New Blackfriars* November 1970) and was reminded of the enclosed which I send you, a letter from Newman to Fr Buckler, O.P., in 1870.' (Ref. APAOP, Coll. Letters, Vol. 1, p. 132.)

* * *

The Oratory,
Good Friday, 1870

My dear Fr Buckler,

Accept all the prayers and good wishes from me which are suggested by this most sacred time, & my congratulations in anticipation of Easter.