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EDITOR: Paul Ellingworth

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Jocelyn Murray

KEES F. DE BLOIS

HOW TO DEAL WITH SATAN?

with particular reference to the book of Job and the Old Testament. A study in biblical theology and translation theory and practice.

Dr. de Blois is UBS Translations Coordinator for Africa.

1. The Hebrew roots STN and STM

The Hebrew verbal root STN always carries the idea of an activity by enemies aimed at replacing good by evil and love by hate. The variant root STM seems to have the more general meaning of “treating like enemies”. In most of the contexts in which the latter is found, it is rendered as “hate”. In Job 30.21, where the agent of the action is God himself, English translations avoid this meaning and use expressions like “turn against me” (RSV), or “treat cruelly”. STN is in most contexts rendered as “oppose”, “be against” or “attack”. Consequently, the noun derived from this root basically means “opponent”, “enemy”, or “adversary”.

The noun “satan” occurs 24 times in the Hebrew Old Testament. In the Septuagint (Greek version of the Old Testament, LXX) the equivalent of the Hebrew noun “satan” is generally “diabolos”. It is found 21 times in LXX (including 13 occurrences in Job), always as a translation of “satan”. In the book of Kings the Hebrew term has been transliterated as “Satanas”. The referent in this context (1 Kgs 11.14a,23a,25b) is a leader of a faction in the army of King David; RSV translates “adversary”. In the Septuagint translation of Esther (8.1), the enemy of the Jews, Haman, is referred to as a “diabolos”.

The New Testament uses both “Satanas” and “diabolos” with reference to the devil, the former 36, the latter 37 times. Interestingly, Mark only uses “Satanas”. Luke has it only in special material. “Diabolos” is never employed as a term of address. “Satanas” functions as a proper name for the devil, but not exclusively. The name “Beelzebul” is found 7 times in the New Testament. He is described as the head of the evil spirits. The three terms Satan, diabolos and Beelzebul, refer to the same cosmic adversary and opponent of God.

2. Semantic analysis of the referents of “satan”

In the OT “satan” is used in reference to various people or (spiritual) beings who stand in the way of others:

- a. Adversary, wicked opponent, e.g. 2 Sam 19.22:

What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should this day be as an adversary to me? (RSV)

. . . Are you going to give me trouble? (GNB).

b. Potential saboteur, e.g. 1 Sam 29.4 (“epiboulos” rather than “diabolos” in LXX):

He shall not go with us to battle, lest in the battle he become an adversary to us (RSV).

. . . he might turn against us during the fighting (GNB).

c. Leader of a faction, e.g. 1 Kgs 11.23,25:

God also raised up as an adversary to him, Rezon, the son of Eliada . . . He was an adversary of Israel all the days of Solomon . . . (RSV).

God also caused Rezon . . . to turn against Solomon . . . He was an enemy of Israel during the lifetime of Solomon (GNB).

In relation to the above and other occurrences of “satan”, Horst remarks that in the OT context somebody can become like a “satan” to somebody else by trying to prevent a planned action or measure from being carried out, by opposition or contradiction, or as a political opponent, contesting an achieved political status by taking the law into one’s own hands.

In the above-mentioned contexts the meaning of the term “satan” may be broken down into the following components:

1. human being(s)
2. from within or outside (Israel)
3. planning or carrying out actions aimed at opposing somebody or established authority, or disturbing peace/harmony
4. intentions: evil or to promote one’s own interests.

d. In the account of Balak and Balaam (Numbers 22), Balaam is stopped on his way to King Balak by “an angel of the LORD, who took his stand in the way as his adversary” (RSV). GNB translates “who stood in the road to bar his way.”

What kind of a “satan” is this angel of the Lord in Num 22.22,32? From the context it is clear that he is just carrying out a command from his master, and the purpose of his mission is to withstand Balaam, because his way is “perverse before him” (v 32, RSV). The intentions of the angel are positive; he wants to prevent Balaam from doing the wrong thing.

The components of meaning of “satan” in this unique context may be formulated as follows:

1. spiritual (angelic) being
2. opposes a person and prevents him from doing the wrong thing
3. carries out mission at God’s command; no personal interest.

e. Public prosecutor, who accuses the righteous to God’s face; the Accuser, as he is portrayed in Job and Zechariah, e.g. 3.1-2:

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, O Satan!” (RSV).

. . . Satan, ready to bring an accusation against him . . . (GNB).

Before we attempt a componential analysis of “satan” in the way he appears as the forerunner of the devil and the personification of evil, we need to study the development of the “satan” concept from the point of view of biblical theology.

3. The development of the concept of Satan in the OT

Much has been written about the origin and development of the Satan concept. Most scholars seem to think that the idea of Satan as a force of evil influenced Hebrew thought as a result of contact with Persian religion.

Gordis suggests that the role of Satan in the story of Job betrays this Persian influence. According to him, Jews came into contact with Zoroastrianism during the Persian period. Closely associated with this school of thought is the doctrine of “two forces” in the universe, Ahriman, the god of darkness and evil, and Ahura-Mazda, the god of light and righteousness. This dualism had a powerful effect on Hebrew popular religion. The reason for this, according to Gordis, is that it offered a simple answer to the problem of evil by freeing God from his responsibility and attributing evil to a malevolent spirit. Furthermore, it assigned to man a crucial role in the cosmic battle between good and evil. He was to fight the forces of darkness for the triumph of righteousness. Although this belief was congenial to the Hebrew spirit, it was also dangerous, since it impugned the unity of God. It was attacked and condemned by Judaism, on the strength of, e.g., Isa 45.7, where the Lord says: “I bring both blessing and disaster. I, the LORD, do all these things” (GNB). Where Persian dualism offered a less direct confrontation, Gordis continues, the Hebrew tradition accommodated itself to the concept of creating the figure of Satan as a quasi-independent symbol of the forces of evil. Nevertheless the idea made its way slowly in Hebrew thought.

It is in the book of Job that Satan first emerges as a well-defined personage. Gordis contends that in Job, Satan is portrayed as “ha-satan”, the “prosecuting attorney” in the heavenly court. Horst lists various theories regarding the role of Satan in Job. Is he a demon figure causing disease and disaster? Is he an “eye of God”, a kind of secret officer of JHWH, following the example of ancient kings? Is he the “public prosecutor” in the heavenly court (a view also held by von Rad)? Or the opponent of the “angel of JHWH”, earlier identified with the divine being, but later dissociated from him? Horst himself is of the opinion that Satan nowhere acts as a prosecutor. He would rather define him as an opponent. The idea of the “prosecutor” would be a later development taking shape in post-biblical times (Rev 12.10).

According to the scholars who worked on the notes of the German *Gute Nachricht* translation, the concept of the prosecutor is derived from Hebrew legal practice. The majority of scholars, however, seem to favour the concept of Satan being the prosecutor in the heavenly court. In the book of Job he is presented as a figure who occupies a special place in heaven among the “sons of God”: he is still counted as one of them!

The “sons of God” are mentioned for the first time in the OT in Genesis 6, where they are reported as marrying earthly women, who as a result produce giants as offspring. The sons of God constitute a category of spiritual beings in between God and man. God himself surpasses them (Ps 89.7), and consequently they give him power and glory (Ps 29.1). In the book of Job they are portrayed as a heavenly army (Job 15.8) and compared with the morning star (Job 38.7). In a way comparable to El and Baal who had their council of deities, JHWH is depicted as Lord in the circle of the sons of God in Psalm 82.1 and Deut 32.8.

The semantic components of “sons of God” could thus be defined as:

1. spiritual or angelic beings
2. in rank somewhere between God and the sons of men (Dan 3.25)
3. at God's service.

Another interesting case involving “ha-satan” is found in the book of Zechariah. Zechariah is generally considered to be written in the Persian era, approximately 500 BC, since it describes events taking place at the time of Emperor Darius. In Zech 3.1, the prophet is reported as having a vision, which confronts him with “Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him” (RSV). “Ha-satan” is ready to accuse (STN) the high priest. Here again, most commentators interpret Satan as the prosecutor in the heavenly court, as in the book of Job. Horst consistently sees Satan as the regular and professional opponent, trying to prevent an act of divine greatness. Anyhow, this constitutes another case, where the term “satan” still appears in Hebrew with the definite article, not yet as a proper name. This might imply that at this stage of development we should see him primarily as the prosecutor or accuser of the righteous before God.

According to Gordis, the picture changes radically in later times, when the definite article begins to disappear, and the term develops into the proper name of a being who becomes the source and personification of evil, which people found difficult to attribute to God.

In this connection it is interesting to compare an account that is given in both 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles. In 2 Sam 24.1 we read that “again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, ‘Go, number Israel and Judah’” (RSV). Interestingly, the parallel account in Chronicles, which as is generally agreed dates from approximately 300 BC, modifies the incident quite significantly. It reads: “Satan stood up against Israel, and incited David to number Israel” (1 Chr 21.1, RSV). It looks as if Satan has become the proper name for the Evil One opposing God.

Vriezen, in his study of OT theology, expresses a different view with regard to the development of the “satan” concept in the OT. In monotheistic faiths, the problem of evil is always a real one. In the OT God is depicted as having spirits and angels around him, one of them being the spirit of evil that brings about anger. In 1 Sam 16.4 an evil spirit from God is reported as tormenting Saul after the Spirit of the Lord has departed from him. Besides this evil spirit, there is Satan, the accuser, who searches for evil in man, with a view to reporting him to God.

Later on, Satan also takes upon himself the function of this evil spirit and becomes the Evil One himself. He constitutes a subordinate but independently operating force, tempting people to do evil. The emergence of the doctrine of Satan results from a deeper, moral understanding of God, who is too holy to be able to face sin. Due to the development of a transcendent divine being, it is no longer possible to perceive evil as coming from God’s hand. Instead, it is now ascribed to Satan.

Vriezen furthermore emphasizes that Satan, in his earlier appearance, does not seem ill-deposed towards man, nor opposed to God. Interestingly, the two books, Job and Zechariah, which depict Satan as an accusing angelic being, also mention an interceding angel, positively inclined towards men of God (Job 5.1; 33.23-26; Zech 1.12; 3.1).

Brown’s *Dictionary of New Testament Theology* points out that in the OT “satan” cannot be equated with “devil” in the later sense of the word. It is not yet

the evil principle opposing God. Perhaps, in the light of what we have seen above, we should rather say that there is a shift of meaning in this direction in the OT.

A componential analysis of the meaning of "satan" in the OT should consequently reflect this shift in the course of the development of the OT:

SATAN	
In pre-exilic literature	In post-exilic literature
1. spiritual being	spiritual being
2. accuser of men	accuser of men
3. not necessarily evil	evil force opposed to God
4. in company of "sons of God"	fallen angel
5. term description of function	term primarily proper name

Although the way Satan is depicted in Job seems to correspond quite well with the components of the "pre-exilic Satan", one cannot avoid the impression that there already appears to be an evil element in Satan's character. Perhaps these observations favour an earlier dating than some scholars would be inclined to accept, although views about dating diverge quite a bit, and one should not attach too much value to a single feature of the book.

4. Satan in the deuterocanon, late Judaism and Qumran

According to Brown, LXX shows a shift in this direction in the way it uses the Greek "diabolos". In fact this term is avoided in the Numbers and Samuel accounts. As a result, "diabolos" is used less unambivalently than "satan" in the Hebrew original, and the main emphasis is put on Job. In the deuterocanonical Wisdom of Solomon, written in approximately 100 BC, the "diabolos" is portrayed as an envious rival of God, by whose fall death has entered the world. The followers of the devil and subjected to death as a result (Wis 2.24). In 1 Macc 1.36 the devil is seen as the evil one, who had watched Israel and enabled the Syrians to attack and invade Jerusalem and plunder the Temple. [Most translations identify the "diabolon ponēron" with the citadel of Jerusalem as occupied by foreigners, but the activity of the devil is at least implied. — Ed.]

In late Judaism the devil is particularly identified with the "evil inclination" and the "angel of death". He clearly has an evil character. As in the OT, he is the accuser of man. It is in this period that other evil spirits and demons come into the picture. According to Gordis, dualism is becoming a cardinal doctrine in later apocalyptic writings, as in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The forces of good and evil fight their cosmic war. Belial, the angel or spirit of darkness, is let loose to attack Israel, but will finally be destroyed. Satan or Beelzebul becomes the Devil, the cosmic adversary of God, who contends with God for dominion over the world and the souls of men.

5. Satan in the NT

As we noted in section 1, the term *Satanas* occurs 36 times in the NT, one time less than "diabolos". The devil is referred to by four other names: "echthros" (enemy), "ponēros" (evil one), "archōn tou kosmou toutou" (prince of the

world), and “antidikos” (adversary). “Antidikos” is the translation of the Hebrew “satan” and is used in 1 Pet 5.8.

Since “diabolos” is never used as a term of address, it seems that “satanas” primarily functions as the proper name of the devil. As Brown’s dictionary points out, the NT radically does away with the dualistic view of the world held at Qumran. Jesus is reported in Lk 10.18 as having seen the downfall of Satan, the accuser, from heaven. Revelation describes in metaphorical and symbolic language the defeat of “diabolos” and “Satanas”, who stand side by side, by Jesus Christ (Rev 12.9). In the same chapter Satan is also described in three additional ways: as the dragon, the serpent and the accuser. In spite of his downfall, he can still act! Peter is identified as “satan”, when he wants to hold Jesus back from his suffering.

Interestingly, the NT does not speculate about the origin of the devil, nor does it equate him with the evil inclination or the angel of death. In the Gospel of John, the Epistles of John, and Revelation there seem to be references to the role of the devil in the primeval history of Genesis.

As we saw above, the devil is referred to as the “ancient serpent”. In John 8.44 he is described as “a murderer from the beginning”, and as “a liar and the father of lies . . . who has sinned from the beginning” (RSV).

On the basis of these observations it seems that we can posit the following components of meaning for “Satanas” and “diabolos” in the NT:

1. spiritual being
2. rules the world in opposition to God
3. tempts and accuses the righteous
4. defeated and to be finally destroyed by Christ.

6. How to deal with Satan in Bible translation

A. Translation or transliteration?

The question whether “satan” should be considered a proper name needs to be resolved by the translator before he can properly handle the term.

Proper names are normally transliterated into receptor languages, taking into account the phonological structures of the language in question. Transliteration would normally be done on the basis of the Hebrew form. If the term occurs in the Old Testament.

In a language that has been strongly influenced by a trade language or lingua franca, particularly when a translation of the Bible in the “prestige language” has had a great impact on the Christian community in the language area, one would most likely expect the transliteration of proper names to be based on the form of these names in the prestige language, rather than in Hebrew or Greek.

In the case of new translations in languages that have had a Bible for some time, proper name traditions have often been firmly established, and there may not be any need to deviate from that tradition. However, if the new project is going to be done on an interconfessional basis, and there have been different translations in circulation in Protestant and Roman Catholic constituencies, often characterized by different traditions of transliteration, it has been UBS practice, in accordance with the Guidelines on Interconfessional Co-operation in Translating the Bible (1968) to re-transliterate proper names on the basis of

the Hebrew or Greek forms. In many African languages, transliteration of proper names have been traditionally based on English, French, Portuguese or Arabic models, depending on the political, cultural and religious spheres of influence.

The question thus reappears: should we translate or transliterate "satan"?

It is obvious that in past translation practice, the term "satan" has generally been treated as the proper name of the devil. Consequently, it was usually transliterated following one of the patterns pointed out above. In the NT this does not seem to cause many problems, particularly in situations where a certain amount of Christian vocabulary has been established. In the case of Satan, however, the name also expresses the function and role of the referent. In addition, this study has shown that the term "satan" cannot yet be considered a proper name in pre-exilic literature, where it occurs with the definite article in Hebrew. In view of this I believe translators would do more justice to the components of meaning of "satan" by translating the concept of "accuser", if necessary in conjunction with the transliteration of the name Satan, rather than by a transliteration alone. This would certainly apply to "satan" in Job 1.2 and Zech 3. In 1 Chr 21.1, however, it should be dealt with as a proper name.

It is an interesting exercise, in this connection, to compare how a number of common language translations, some of which serve as important model translations, have handled this matter.

Let us compare Job 1.6, Zech 3.1 and 1 Chr 21.1 in the following translations:

GNB=Good News Bible

FC=La Bible en Français Courant

GN=Die Gute Nachricht.

Job 1.6

GNB: When the day came for the heavenly beings^b to appear before the LORD, Satan^c was there among them.

^bHeavenly beings: supernatural beings who serve God in heaven.

^cSatan: a supernatural being whose name indicates he was regarded as man's opponent.

FC: Or un jour que les anges de Dieu venaient faire leur rapport au Seigneur, le Satan, l'accusateur, se présenta parmi eux, lui aussi.

(There is a cross-reference to Rev 12.10, where "accuser" is said to be the etymological name of Satan).

GN: Eines Tages kamen die Gottessöhne zur himmlischen Ratsversammlung, und jeder stellte sich an seinen Platz vor dem Herrn. Unter ihnen war auch der Satan.

(Glossary items: sons of God: . . . heavenly beings, between God and man . . . ; Satan: OT accuser; NT opponent of God).

Zechariah 3.1

GNB: And there beside Joshua stood Satan, ready to bring an accusation against him.

(Footnote: as for Job 1.6).

FC: Satan se tenait à la droite de Yéchoua pour l'accuser.

(Footnote: Satan or accuser, see v 2 and Job 1.6-12).

GN: . . . und rechts von ihm stand der Satan und wollte ihn anklagen.

(Footnote: as for Job 1.6).

1 Chronicles 21.1

GNB: Satan wanted to bring trouble on the people of Israel, so he made David decide to take a census.

FC: Un jour Satan décida de nuire à Israël en poussant David à dénombrer les Israélites.

GN: Der Satan wollte Israel ins Unglück stürzen. Deshalb verführte er David dazu, das Volk zu zählen.

Of the three common language translations, only FC translates the term “satan” somewhat contextually in the OT. The other two basically treat the term as a proper name throughout the Bible. In the Job and Zechariah accounts, Satan is named as such in FC, but also qualified as the “accuser”, in the former in the text itself, in the latter by way of a footnote. In Job 1.6 the name is preceded by the definite article.

“Satan” and “devil”

As we saw above, the term “satan” tends to be transliterated as a proper name in translations of both the OT and the NT. When a certain amount of Christian vocabulary has developed in a language, the referent is usually understood as being the devil. An equivalent for “diabolos” is often not so easy to find, particularly in situations where such terminology is not well established.

Generally, translators search for the right term in their language. In conjunction with related concepts in the same domain of spiritual beings, opposed to God. For this it is necessary to do a thorough analysis of the spirit world, as it is presented in their system of religious beliefs. In the NT the devil also presents himself as Beelzebul, who is described as the chief of the evil spirits. These spirits are also referred to as demons or unclean spirits, terms that in many receptor languages cannot be distinguished.

On the basis of the Beelzebul concept, the devil is often equated with the “chief” of the evil spirits; translators use the word referring to this spirit, or use a descriptive phrase expressing this idea.

The problem is, however, that in many animistic religious systems, evil spirits are believed to be realizations of the spirits of the deceased. Such an association in people’s minds is to be avoided.

Furthermore, the translator must ensure that the equivalent of “evil spirit” in his language refers to a spirit that is known to be consistently and in all circumstances evil. The chief of the evil spirits is presented in the NT as the evil force opposed to God, and this is certainly not always the case in the receptor culture.

If an existing concept in the religious system represented by the receptor language seems unsuitable as an equivalent for “devil”, and the term used to refer to it is inadequate or ambivalent, it might be preferable to look for a descriptive phrase qualifying the central components of meaning of the term. The following qualifiers found primarily in the NT seem the obvious ones:

“accuser”, “evil one”, “tempter”, and “enemy (of God)”. In such cases it would be wise to use the qualifier also in conjunction with Satan.

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PAUL D. FUETER

THE THERAPEUTIC LANGUAGE OF THE BIBLE

The author recently retired from the post of UBS Distribution Consultant for the Europe region. This article is based on a paper presented to the UBS Europe Regional Translation Committee.

Introduction

When I sit in church and hear a preacher speaking about salvation, I remind myself that this word comes from the Latin ‘*salus*’, health, as the German *Heil* comes from *heilen* to heal. The Good News of salvation is a therapeutic message. The purpose of this article is to investigate the language of the Bible, and particularly of the gospels, to find out how the evangelists tried to heal the minds, hearts and bodies of their audiences.

To achieve this end, I will follow the book by Professor Paul Watzlawick *The Language of Change. Elements of therapeutic communication* (New York: Basic Books Inc. 1978) in which the father of modern communication theory explains the difference between the language of science or “diagnosis” and the language of healing. He calls the first “digital language” and the second “analogical language”, the language of change.

1. The different characteristics of digital and analogical language

1.1. Definitions

Digital language is defined by Watzlawick and others as objective, cerebral, logical. It is the language of science, of digits, of numbers. It distinguishes between what the word means and what it does not mean, e.g. 2 is two and nothing else. It alone can negate, subordinate, analyse, hierarchize, explain, interpret. It follows the laws of linguistic logic: grammar, syntax and semantics.

Analogical language, on the other hand, cannot be defined, as it is not the language of definition. A word can have many meanings. People spoke to Jesus as “a God” as well as “a devil”. It is the language of imagery, metaphors, *pars pro toto*, synthesis and totality. It uses the imperative and the indicative. It is the stuff of dreams, fantasies, and has its own rules.

We constantly use both these languages but each has its own function. We need digital language to interpret, describe, analyse and explain the information