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Humanity's Devil

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THROUGH THE EYES of modern digital communication, human ingenuity to create pain and suffering appears bottomless. Does this propensity derive from the influence of an evil cosmic being? Is the devil a metaphysical reality or a conceptual scapegoat for human wickedness? If it is a reality, how can the devil co-exist with a holy and omnipotent God? The traditional Christian view of the devil as a fallen angel who deceptively led and imprisoned humans in sin, and who heads the demonic realm against God, does not appear to be clearly evidenced in canonical Hebrew scripture.[1] Instead, the function of 'adversary' or 'accuser' (*śātiān*) is ascribed to different humans and angelic beings, named or unnamed, who may be singular or plural.[2] Indeed, it has been proposed that the evolution of the concept of the devil in Jewish religious thought has taken place over centuries, with critical milestones occurring during the Babylonian exile, and the emergence of Apocalyptic Judaism during the period of Greco-Roman hegemony.[3] Furthermore, it appears that first century Christians may have inherited the concept of the devil from Apocalyptic Judaism.[4] Recent scholars who have examined the conceptual development of the devil diverge in five ways within a spectrum of thought regarding its ontogeny, namely, that the devil is an ideological myth, or a celestial functionary of God, or the projection of human evil, or a fallen angel, or God's evil and co-equal opposite. This paper evaluates representative scholarship in the light of scripture and contemporary theological perspectives to propose an understanding of the devil's

1 Nicholas Thomas Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (SPCK: London, 1992), 254.

2 Peggy Lynne Day, *An Adversary in Heaven: śātiān in the Hebrew Bible*. Harvard Semitic Monographs 43 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 25-31, 33-34.

3 Gerald Messadié, *A History of the Devil* (New York: Kodansha, 1997), 41, 78-90, 240.

4 Messadié, *A History of the Devil*, 234; Russell, *Prince of Darkness*, 42-43; Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan & The Combat Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1987), 10; Wray, T.J. and Gregory Mobley, *The Birth of Satan: Tracing the Devil's Biblical Roots* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 165.

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ontogeny that does not deny the goodness or supremacy of God, and explores its implications on Christian life and ministry.

I Theories of the Devil's Ontogeny

1. The devil as an ideological myth (*Kersey Graves; Elaine Pagels*)[5]

Kersey Graves bases his objection to the reality of the devil on the fact that he sees no description of such a person in canonical Hebrew scripture, and he rightly observes that the monotheistic Jews ascribe evil to God himself. He views dualistic ideas concerning the good-evil struggle from ancient Hindu, Assyrian, Egyptian, Peruvian, Grecian and Persian mythology as 'heathen',[6] and believes that these concepts found their way into Jewish apocryphal writings, and thereby into the New Testament. Graves believes that the 'whole train of ideas and doctrines' concerning the devil have been formulated and preached in order to frighten people into piety.[7] He is convinced that the devil is a man-made theological construct to absolve God of the responsibility for evil in this world, and concludes that a deity who punishes humans eternally for temporal sins is one who is 'a thousand times worse and more fiendish than the wickedest of his creatures'.[8] Although he can be criticised for his scant regard for other religious paradigms, Graves accurately pinpoints the tension within monotheistic theodicy, and he voices the thoughts of many people today.

Elaine Pagels also believes that the devil was contrived by human minds. She maintains that in an era of increasing conflict, the evangelists recounted Jesus' life and message in polemical terms, and the devil represented opposition from *within* the community.[9] For example, Mark describes Jesus as the one who has been sent by God to contend against the evil demonic forces that infect and possess people (Mk. 3:1-5,7-12), and identifies the coalition of the Pharisees, Herodians and scribes as Satan's agents energised against him (Mk. 3:6, 23-27).[10] Matthew inverts traditional enemies and allies, and with ethnicity no longer a valid criterion for salvation, Jesus divides humans into those belonging to God's kingdom and those belonging to 'the evil one' (Mt. 13:37-39).[11] The demonic vilification of the Jewish leaders intensifies in the other gospels, and Jesus denounces his opponents as the devil's progeny (Jn. 8:44).[12] Pagels correctly perceives that this trend of demonising one's enemies has led to devastating consequences in the his-

5 Kersey Graves, *Biography of Satan: Exposing the Origins of the Devil* (California: The Book Tree, 1999); Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Vintage, 1996).

6 Graves, *Biography of Satan*, 29, 63-69, 91.

7 Graves, *Biography of Satan*, 143.

8 Graves, *Biography of Satan*, 118-119, 124, 127.

9 Pagels, *The Origin of Satan*, 34,111.

10 Pagels, *The Origin of Satan*, 19-20, 22.

11 Pagels, *The Origin of Satan*, 82-83.

12 Pagels, *The Origin of Satan*, 88.

tory of the church. However, her subsequent conclusion that the devil must therefore be simply 'a reflection of how we perceive ourselves and those we call "others"'[13] ignores the very real issues of experienced evil.

For both scholars, it appears that the chronological development in the concept of personified evil is sufficient proof of its human ideation. Hence they perceive anthropocentric motivations for its development. Graves sees the devil answering the need of the religious establishment to terrorise a superstitious laity into pious submission, while Pagels believes that demonisation is society's response to external threat, rallying a community and assuaging consciences of violent acts against demonised foes. Indeed, Messadié takes it further by declaring that the devil himself is nothing but political propaganda dressed up in religion.[14] The testimony of the New Testament writers regarding the existence of a personal devil is then viewed as deluded and misleading. In a purely anthropological paradigm, their conclusions may well be valid. However, in doing away with the devil, they also do away with God, because the acknowledgement of a transcendent benevolent principle raises the problem of existential evil. Even if the devil is viewed as myth, Bultmann is surely correct in pointing out that mythology does not necessarily imply falsehood, but that it 'expresses a certain understanding of human existence'.[15]

2. The devil as a celestial functionary of God (T.J. Wray and Gregory Mobley; Henry A. Kelly)[16]

That celestial adversaries exist in the Old Testament, usually as God's functionaries, is well recognised. Indeed, God is portrayed as the one who sent the evil spirit that plagued Saul (1 Sam. 16:14-23, 18:10) and the lying spirit that deceived Ahab's prophets (1 Kgs. 22:20-23), and who both makes weal (*ōśeh šalôm*) and creates woe (*vûḇôrē rā*) (Isa. 45:7). Even Job's Satan remains one of the 'sons of God' (Job 1:6, 2:1), acting as an *agent provocateur* and undertaking his evil tasks with the permission of God (Job 1:12, 2:6). In Zechariah's fourth vision, Satan is the heavenly prosecutor (Zech. 3:1-5).

Against the perspective that in the New Testament Satan's status has been given an entirely different role as the powerful Prince of Darkness, T.J. Wray and Gregory Mobley assert:

13 Pagels, *The Origin of Satan*, xvii.

14 Gerald Messadié locates the emergence of the concept of the embodiment of unmitigated evil in Persia in the sixth century B.C.E, with the creation of the evil twin-god, Ahriman, by a priest, Zoroaster. In changing the religious focus to ethical good and evil, he made religion both transcendent and also personally relevant, thereby undermining the cultic power of the ruling class and consolidating power within the priesthood. 'It was politics that gave birth to the Devil, and the Devil is indeed a political invention' (Messadié, *A History of the Devil*, 87).

15 Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 19.

16 Henry Angsar Kelly, *Satan: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

> Even though Satan's character is more clearly defined in the New Testament than it had been in the Hebrew Bible….his essential function in the Bible remains unchanged: he is still the troublemaker, the stumbling block, the Adversary.[17]

They correctly deduce that in the synoptic accounts of Jesus' temptations Satan is still the tempter, tester and adversary, trying to corrupt and divert the messianic mission. '[T]he Satan of the temptation stories is a descendent of the overzealous prosecutor in Job and Zechariah.'[18] Likewise, where Jesus addresses Peter as Satan (Mk. 8:32-33; Mt. 16:22-23), it is because he is a stumbling block and not because he is the Prince of Evil.[19] Wray and Mobley rightly point out that in the undisputed Pauline letters, Paul's infrequent references to the devil portray the latter as an obstructer (1 Thes. 1:18), tester (2 Cor. 12:7), tempter (1 Cor. 7:5-9), deceiver (2 Cor. 2:11, 11:13-15) and punisher (1 Cor. 5:5).[20] They see that it is only in Revelation that Satan becomes the Titan of evil.[21] They conclude that Satan is a 'heavenly lackey gone bad' but who nevertheless has the important theological function of cosmic scapegoat deflecting blame for evil away from God. However, Wray and Mobley avoid committing themselves to the existence of an actual entity behind this Satan, and hedge by stating that 'Satan is real in the sense that evil is real'.[22]

Henry Kelly agrees with Wray and Mobley that in the gospels and undisputed Pauline letters Satan largely retains his functions in the Old Testament,[23] and suggests that 'Satan and God are working hand in glove with each other for the same purpose'.[24] For example, Satan snares those who reject the truth, and 'God sends them a powerful delusion' (2 Thes. 2:11),[25] and Paul finds divine empowerment through Satanic testing (2 Cor. 12:7-8). Kelly seems more convinced than Wray and Mobley that Satan is a real celes-

17 Wray, and Mobley, *The Birth of Satan*, 113.

18 Wray and Mobley, *The Birth of Satan*, 124. Interestingly, no verbal confrontation between Jesus and Satan appears in the Fourth Gospel, and moreover, it is people rather than demons who oppose Jesus. This raises the question regarding the historicity of the temptation narratives in the synoptic gospels. Were they metaphors used to symbolise Christ's struggle with the forces of evil?

19 Wray and Mobley, *The Birth of Satan*, 123.

20 Wray and Mobley, *The Birth of Satan*, 129-136. They identify Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and Philemon as undisputed Pauline letters.

21 Wray and Mobley, *The Birth of Satan*, 147.

22 Wray and Mobley, *The Birth of Satan*, 175-176, 180.

23 Kelly, *Satan: A Biography*, p. 62. He perceives the 'Original Biography of Satan' (Satan as celestial functionary) in both Old and New Testaments. He rejects the 'New Biography of Satan' (Satan as fallen angel) because he traces its creation, during the Patristic and medieval eras, from Jewish apocryphal writings (324).

24 Kelly, *Satan: A Biography*, p. 120. Even in the other New Testament epistles the devil is portrayed as the accuser (1 Tim. 5:15), adversary (1 Pet. 5:8,9), deceiver (2 Thes. 2:9-10; 1 Tim. 3:7, 5:15; 2 Tim. 2:26) and punisher/rehabilitator (1 Tim. 1:20).

25 All scripture passages are quoted from the New Revised Standard Version (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989).

tial being carrying out God-ordained tasks. Unfortunately, he fails to explore the theological implication of God's creation of an Accuser of humanity. Although he rejects the idea of a pre-mundane angelic rebellion for its lack of scriptural evidence, his own diabology that sees Satan as a wayward celestial functionary is not greatly different.

The strength of this perspective is that it provides some consistency between the Old and New Testaments with regards to Satan, and there is sufficient biblical support for it.[26] In many passages, Satan appears to be functioning with God's permission, and even in obedience to the divine plan. Luke makes the latter point implicitly in his statement 'When the devil *had finished every test…*' (Lk. 4:13, my italics).[27] However, these authors admit that Satan appears to grow in power and evil through the New Testament. The weakness of limiting Satan's role to that of God's servant is that his divinely ordained work as tester, tempter and deceiver of humanity poses a severe challenge to the belief that 'God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one' (Jas. 1:13), that 'God is light and in him there is no darkness at all' (1 Jn. 1:5), and 'If you know that [God] is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who does right has been born of him' (1 Jn. 2:29). Nevertheless, the idea of Satan as divine servant resonates with Rabbinic Judaism which maintains that God implants within humans a duality of inclinations, towards good (*yēs*er hatôḇ*) or evil (*yēs*er hara*), and Satan's task is to help humans learn to overcome the latter by placing temptations before them.[28]

3. The devil as the projection of human evil (*Walter Wink; Nigel Wright*)[29]

Walter Wink agrees that the biblical testimony promotes two ideas of Satan, as servant of God (*agent provocateur*) and as the Evil One. In overstepping his mandate as God's servant, Satan evolves into God's powerful evil foe.[30] However, Wink differs from

26 In his recent overview of Satan as God's servant in both the Old and New Testaments, Sydney H.T. Page succinctly emphasises that Satan's work is used by God to accomplish his good purposes (in 'Satan: God's Servant', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 50 [2007]: 449-465).

27 Wray and Mobley, and Kelly, overlook the significance of this portion of the verse that seems to indicate that Satan is completing a predetermined program of testing.

28 Regarding the duality of the divine nature, Philip Davies wrote: 'Indeed, the rabbis were capable of suspecting that the same was true of God' (in 'The Origin of Evil in Ancient Judaism', *Australian Biblical Review*, 50 [2002]: 43-54, 43). Even stronger was the statement by C.G. Montefiore and H. Loewe: 'Though God created the *Yetser ha-Ra*, he created the Law as an antidote….against it' (in *A Rabbinic Anthology* [New York: Schocken, 1974], 295).

29 Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament. The Powers: Volume One* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine Human Existence. The Powers: Volume Two* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986). Nigel Wright, *A Theology of the Dark Side: Putting the Power of Evil in its Place* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003).

30 Wink, *Unmasking the Powers*, 11-30.

Wray, Mobley and Kelly, in that he sees human choices, to succumb to or to resist temptation, modulating Satan's performance between one and the other. Not only is this modulation occurring at an individual level, but also corporately.[31] Drawing on his extensive study on the meaning of the power terminology in Ephesians 6:12, Colossians 1:16 and Psalm 54:1,[32] Wink is convinced that Israel's religion is a complex henotheism 'in which, under the sole sovereignty and permission of God, vying forces are able to prevail against one another to determine the unfolding of history'.[33] He believes that the 'angels' appointed over each nation (Deut. 32:8-9; Dan. 10:13, 12:1) symbolise corporate spirituality and personality.[34]

Wink interweaves his Satan-modulation theory and the 'angel of the nations' motif with the Jungian concept that Satan is the projection of the evil within the human psyche. He concludes that the spiritual powers of Ephesians 6:12 and Colossians 1:16 refer not to heavenly entities but 'the inner aspect of material or tangible manifestations of power' by which he means the psychic energy inherent within individuals, organisations and nations, and also within all material things.[35] He sees Satan as 'the actual power that congeals around collective idolatory, injustice, or inhumanity, a power that increases or decreases according to the degree of collective refusal to choose higher values'.[36]

In a nutshell, Wink believes that Satan is what humans have made it to be. Satan has metamorphosed from the divine policeman and God's intelligence-gatherer into an autonomous suzerain. Satan's 'fall' took place, not in time nor in the universe, but within the human psyche.[37] While not a person, Satan is nonetheless real, and exists intra-, supra-, and trans-humanly 'as a profound *experience* of numinous, uncanny power in the psychic and historic lives of real people'.[38] Interestingly, he interprets demon possession as the state wherein an individual bears the brunt of the collective malady.[39] Bultmann holds a similar view in that he sees Satan as a power made up of 'all particular evils' that grow out of human actions, and which 'mysteriously enslaves every member of the human race'.[40]

The strengths of Wink's innovative perspective are that it incorporates

31 Wink, *Unmasking the Powers*, 32.

32 By power terminology Wink identifies the terms 'rulers', 'authorities', 'cosmic powers', 'thrones', 'dominions' and 'name'.

33 Wink, *Naming the Powers,* 28.

34 Wink, *Unmasking the Powers*, 88-93. He identifies the 'angels of the nations' as a special category of the *bene elohim*, the 'sons of God', who are members of the divine council (1 Kgs. 22:19-22; Job 1:6,2:1; Ps. 82:1, 6-7, 89:5-7; Isa 14:13; Wink, *Unmasking the Powers*, 109).

35 Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 104

36 Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 105.

37 'Satan has become the world's corporate personality, the symbolic repository of the entire complex of evil existing in the present order' (Wink, *Unmasking the Powers*, 24).

38 Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 25. He provides the example of the mob spirit to illustrate the trans-human aspect of Satan (Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 105).

39 Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 50.

40 Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, 21.

both polarities of Satan's career in this world, allowing for its changing status in the biblical testimony, and recognises human responsibility without removing the reality of a supra-human evil power. In addition, it integrates some valid observations about human psychology and experience, and brings the spiritual realm closer to earth. However, Wink does not explain adequately how psychic energy, no matter how powerful, can think and plan. The language used to describe the devil, particularly in the New Testament, is distinctly personal, and Satan is portrayed as intelligent (2 Cor. 2:11, 11:14; Eph. 6:11; 1 Pet. 5:8).

Nigel Wright recognises that there is 'an irrational, surd-like power at work in human society' and observes that evil is most obvious and concrete in sinful human behaviour.[41] Even in scripture, the devil is portrayed by his activity, and is never described as having been made in the image of God. Evil is seen as the forceful 'nothingness' of black holes, as discreativity and chaos that negates true creativity, and as having no existence apart from God because it exists parasitically.[42] Logically then, on the day of redemption, the devil will cease because evil is no more.[43] He agrees with Wink that the devil's origin lies within corporate humanity, from which he draws strength.[44]

Wright believes that there is greater objective substance to the devil as a knowing, thinking, willing and acting agent than Wink allows, although both struggle with the personhood terminology used within the biblical description of the devil. He registers his strong discomfort with Wink's Satan-modulation theory that assumes the devil has a legitimate function as the divine adversary. Wright argues that such a doctrine would impugn evil to the will of God, which he rejects as monistic.[45] Therefore he returns to 'the notion of metaphysical evil, the idea that there was an aberration in creation prior to the human fall', in which creation itself is threatened by possible collapse back into chaos[46] and proposes a three-staged drama of disruption.

Wright suggests that a pre-human angelic catastrophe *did* occur as the first stage of the whole cosmic fall, despite his recognition that there is little explicit support in canonical scripture.[47] He accepts that caution is war-

41 Wright, *A Theology of the Dark Side*, 56, 58.

42 Wright, *A Theology of the Dark Side*, 27-41.

43 Wright, *A Theology of the Dark Side*, 72.

44 'In this way we can address the question of the ontological status of the devil. Of himself he has none but he does have an *ontological ground* or a point at which he might emerge in the existence of humankind. He is the construct albeit a real one, of fallen society. Without a created ontology he is none the less real, but in the same way that a vacuum or a black hole or death itself are real' (Wright, *A Theology of the Dark Side*, 70).

45 Wright, *A Theology of the Dark Side*, 47, 61, 71.

46 Wright, *A Theology of the Dark Side*, 93.

47 Wright, *A Theology of the Dark Side*, 92-93, 157. In view of passages that allude to angels who sinned (Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2:4), he disagrees with Barth's position (in *Church Dogmatics, volume III, part 3: The Doctrine of Creation* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1960], 371, 480-481) that angels cannot sin because they were not created to have moral freedom (Wright, 63).

ranted because the angelic fall is based on extra-biblical literature, but insists that there are good theological, in contrast to exegetical, reasons for considering the concept. Importantly, this scenario locates the origin of evil within the created sphere, and accounts for physical evil.[48] However, Wright denies that Satan himself is a fallen angel by locating his origin within the second stage, together with the human fall.[49] In this way, he incorporates Wink's hypothesis that Satan is the parasitic power of darkness that gorges on the energy of human sin. Finally, in the third stage, the structures of human life and society become pervaded and corrupted by evil. The weakness of Wright's theological paradigm of evil is that in attempting to merge the fallen angel theory with Wink's hypothesis, thereby showing some ambivalence, he appears to have two separate demonic systems, namely, the fallen angels and Satan. He appears unclear as to how both systems integrate, or if they do.

4. The devil as the metaphor of a fallen angel (*Jeffrey Burton Russell*)[50]

Jeffrey Burton Russell, who has researched extensively into the origin and development of the devil in many religions and cultures, rejects both the idea that Satan is the psychic projection of human evil, and also that he is 'one of God's functionaries whose morals and motivation continually declined'.[51] Instead, he suggests that the concept of Satan began as 'the personification of the dark side of God'. In harmony with other scholars, Russell notes that as Israel's religion became monotheistic, evil was increasingly separated from the 'good' God as a response to theodicy—Satan emerged as one of the 'sons of God' who also roams the earth as one of the divine messengers (Gen. 6:2,4; Job 1:6, 2:1).[52] For example, the author of Chronicles altered the pre-exilic narrative of 2 Sam. 24:1 so that it was Satan who incited David to do the census (1 Chr. 21:1), because in the author's post-exilic understanding, he could not conceive that the good God could have planned evil.[53]

48 Wright, *A Theology of the Dark Side*, 62-64, 92.

49 Wright, *A Theology of the Dark Side*, 157-158.

50 Jeffrey Burton Russell's extensive study on the devil's ontogeny through the same publisher, Cornell University Press, includes *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity* (1977); *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (1981); *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (1984); *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (1986); *Prince of Darkness: Radical Evil and the Power of God in History* (1988).

51 Russell, *The Devil*, 176-177. He attributes the idea of Satan as the evil spiritual ruler of this present age to Ignatius, Satan's identification with the Eden serpent to Justin Martyr, the idea of Satan as the first angel to rebel against God to Tatian, the idea that Satan's sin was envy of God to Irenaeus, and the idea that Satan was envious of humanity to Tertullian (in *Satan*, 34, 66, 74, 81, 93).

52 Russell, *Prince of Darkness*, 31-32,36-37.

53 In the same way, in the inter-Testamental book of Jubilees, it is Mastema, the prince of evil spirits and not God who asks Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, and it is Mastema who attempts to kill Moses in Exodus 4:24, taking on all the evil once ascribed to God (Russell, *Prince of Darkness*, 38-39).

In the New Testament, Russell sees a dualist element as a central theme—'the powers of darkness under the generalship of the Devil are at war with the power of light'.[54] However, by insisting on the oneness of God, Christianity stops short of dualism, although Russell frankly labels it a semi-dualist religion.[55] 'God' is divided into the good Lord and the devil, but the latter is anomalous because it is conceived as a creature of the good Lord. Being a creature, it had to have been initially good, and therefore it was necessary to assume a moral fall.[56] Hence, for Russell the devil is a theological necessity in order to preserve the concept of the good Lord.

The fact that a principle of evil has developed a persona over centuries, and integrated numerous strands of philosophy, myth, lore and tradition, poses no difficulties for Russell who holds that 'historical truth is development through time',[57] and will not measure truth by an antiquity scale. He concludes that Judeo-Christian monotheism lives in tension between ambivalent monism and dualism, and indeed, is moving from the former towards the latter. Such tension, according to Russell, is creative.[58] He himself appears uncomfortable with the idea that God has absolute omnipotence, which he believes led Luther to see the will of God present in all evil.[59] However, he is convinced that radical evil is a real phenomenon that transcends the human consciousness,[60] and in the final analysis, accepts 'the traditional Prince of Darkness, a mighty person with intelligence and will whose energies are bent on the destruction of the cosmos and the misery of its creatures' as an important *metaphor* that enables humanity to confront evil.[61]

Russell provides an important key to the apparent progressive metamorphosis of the devil in the bible by speaking in terms of shifting metaphors.[62] He does not deny that there is a reality behind the metaphors, but remains open to continual contextualisation of the idea of evil as human understanding changes. Nevertheless, he makes an assumption that the reality behind the metaphors remains static. Perhaps it is also important to think about the possibility that the reality itself has undergone ontological change.

5. The devil as God's equal opposite (*Phil Hancox*)[63]

Phil Hancox completes the ideological

54 Russell, *The Devil*, 227.

55 Russell, *The Devil*, 227-228. He uses the term 'mitigated dualism' (in Russell, *Lucifer*, 187).

56 Russell, *The Devil*, 256.

57 Russell, *The Devil*, 174.

58 Russell, *The Devil*, 251.

59 Russell, *Mephistopheles*, 37-38.

60 Russell, *The Devil*, 259-260.

61 Russell, *Prince of Darkness*, p. 276. The doctrine that the devil is a good angel who sinned is still taught today (e.g. Millard J. Ericksen, *Christian Theology* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998], 472).

62 Eugene Peterson insightfully defines the metaphor as language that invites the listener to participate in 'creating the meaning and entering into the action of the word', a symbolic image that uses the visible to describe the invisible (in *The Jesus Way: A Conversation Following Jesus* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2007], 26).

separation of evil from God, and proposes that the devil is the co-eternal opposite of God.[64] He supports this view from his interpretation of Colossians 1:16 and John 1:3, from which he argues that since all things were created through Christ, and all things were initially created good, therefore Satan could not have been part of that creation since he was a sinner, liar and murderer from the beginning (1 Jn.3:8; Jn. 8:44).[65] Hancox (1986:18) uses this circuitous reasoning in order, in his own words, to 'exonerate God from any blame for all the sin and misery that have befallen mankind'.[66] In his view, God is the creator and Satan, the destroyer. It follows therefore that angels and humans, both made with moral freedom, are divided by their loyalties to God or Satan.

Happily, Hancox is convinced that God has triumphed through Christ and eventually Satan and all his allies will be defeated, because 'it is obvious that God and Satan could not continue indefinitely vying for control in the heavenlies as well as on earth'.[67] He also theorises that being eternal, Satan cannot be destroyed but is imprisoned forever in hell.[68] However, Hancox speculates that Satan will not be enjoying immortality (which he defines as life within the blessed Kingdom of God) but mere godless everlastingness. He bases this idea on the fact that God alone has immortality (1 Tim. 6:16).[69]

In order to reconcile his dualistic perspective with biblical passages that proclaim that there is only one God, for example Isaiah 43:10, Hancox chooses to interpret 'one God' as monolatory (one God for Israel) and not monotheism (one God for the world). He also points to Paul's acknowledgement of 'the god of this world' (2 Cor. 4:2) as further support for the existence of an eternal uncreated Satan.[70] In his attempt to distance evil from God, Hancox explains away texts like Isaiah 45:7, in which God is said to be the source of both peace and evil, by translating *rā* as 'calamity' instead of 'wickedness'.[71] He also seems to have ignored 2 Thessalonians 2:11 which represents a New Testament witness to God's deception of unbelievers, although he uses the preceding verses to discuss the 'man of lawlessness'. Nor does he adequately explain the subordination of Satan to God in the Old Testament (Job 1:12, 2:6; Zech. 3:2).

Hancox's dualism answers theodicy by allowing God to be perfectly good at the expense of his omnipotence. How-

63 Phil Hancox, *Honest to Satan: A Search for Truth Concerning the Origin, Objectives and Overthrow of Man's Greatest Enemy* (Slacks Creek: Assembly, 1986).

64 Hancox, *Honest to Satan*, 69.

65 Hancox, *Honest to Satan*, 13, 32, 38-40, 128.

66 Hancox, *Honest to Satan*, 18. Using stronger language he states, 'It's a frightful thing….for anyone to attribute to God any alliance with Satan'; 'To suggest that God is part good and part evil is to make a caricature of God' (in Hancox, *Honest to Satan*, 12, 126).

67 Hancox, *Honest to Satan*, 69-70, 99.

68 Hancox, *Honest to Satan*, 117.

69 Hancox, *Honest to Satan*, 20-24.

70 Hancox, *Honest to Satan*, 27-28.

71 Hancox, *Honest to Satan*, 126. He does have a valid point here, because in Amos 3:6, *rā* is translated as 'disaster' in many English translations.

ever, in order to maintain his theological position, Hancox resorts to unusual biblical hermeneutics. In particular, he redefines immortality, transforms Israel's monotheism into monolatry, and reinterprets or omits contradictory scriptural evidence. Nevertheless, the greatest weakness in his dualistic framework is his attempt to combine the idea of an eternal cosmic dualism with the biblical eschatological scenario of Satan's final downfall. Such an outcome projects a future cosmic imbalance between good and evil, and betrays his view of eternity as linear time, albeit everlasting. Perhaps in recognition of this uneasy logic, Hancox then retreats from full-fledged dualism and declares that 'good and evil do not have identical rights and powers',[72] which is a philosophically convenient but unsatisfactory answer.

II Theological Integration

Every religion must grapple with the existence of evil and suffering in this world. In many ancient belief systems, the spiritual world is not polarised into good and evil, and indeed, gods are often morally ambivalent.[73] For example, Hindu cosmology identifies a hierarchical pantheon, with the supreme but impersonal Brahman at the highest level, followed by devas, devatas or godlings, and finally demons at the bottom. The subordinate divinities can show both benevolence and malice.[74] In traditional Africa, the spiritual and physical worlds are viewed as an inseparable whole, and 'the spiritual domain [i]s a chaos of competing forces'.[75] In Mexico, Quetzalcoatl, the benevolent god of life and art is also the god of death.[76] Within such paradigms, a supreme devil is noticeably absent. Indeed, it is in monotheistic and dualistic religions that the devil appears, perhaps to explain the co-existence of evil with a good God.[77]

> The singular devil was an import to Africa, coming with the world religions of Islam and Christianity, part of the spiritual ensemble in either case. Malicious spirits of the

72 Hancox, *Honest to Satan*, 125.

73 Andrew Chiu, 'Spirit and Spirits in Classical Asian Religions and Traditions', in *East Asia Journal of Theology*, 4 (1986): 104-120.

74 Chris Gnanakan, 'The Manthiravadi: A South Indian Wounded Warrior-Healer', 140-157 in *Angels and Demons: Perspectives and Practice in Diverse Religious Traditions* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2007), 141-142.

75 Keith Fernando, 'The Spiritual Realm in Traditional African Religion', 21-41 in *Angels and Demons: Perspectives and Practice in Diverse Religious Traditions* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2007), 25. Fernando also points out an important difference between the traditional African and biblical perspective of the spiritual realm, namely the anthropocentricity of the former versus the theocentricity of the latter (see 'Screwtape Revisited: Demonology Western, African, and Biblical', in *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons and the Heavenly Realm*, Ed. Anthony N.S. Lane [Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1996], 124). A Kenyan Catholic Archbishop was reported as claiming that devil worship was brought into Kenya by Westerners (Edward Miller, 'Reporting on Satan', in *Christian Century*, Nov. 17-24 [1999]: 1111-1112).

76 Russell, *The Devil*, 57.

77 Lap Yan Kung, 'Why Did the Heavenly Father Take My Mother Away?': Theodicy Revisited', in *Asia Journal of Theology*, 15 (2001): 67-92. This author comments in his paper: 'Putting the blame for evil on fallen angels may relieve our puzzle, but it is unfair to them', 86.

village, the family, the locality could thus be subsumed under the authority of the Prince of Evil.[78]

However, the perspective that sees the devil as merely an idea fashioned in human minds for political, social or religious motives, does not appear to adequately account for, nor seriously consider, the depth and extent of human cruelty, particularly in its systematic and societal forms. This view tends to restrict itself to the material realm, and ignores the biblical testimony of transcendent evil. The idea that the devil is an empty myth cannot explain the unspeakable horrors of the world wars, the Holocaust, the repeated genocides and the multiple acts of terrorism, as well as the widespread suicidal addictions and behaviour, that show humanity in the grip of a corporate death-wish. The opposite polar perspective that attributes the source of evil to an uncreated divine twin of God is also biblically insecure, as an eternal cosmic dualism is incompatible with Christian eschatology.

The views that portray the devil as God's servant or as fallen angel both presuppose that the devil is God's creature. From canonical scripture, there is more evidence for the former than the latter. In the first view, God's goodness is challenged, while in the second, his omnipotence. The idea that God purposely created and placed a celestial tempter within his creation goes against the idea of his moral goodness and contradicts the statement that 'God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good' (Gen. 1:31). If Satan was a good angel who rebelled, then the dogged persistence of evil particularly after Christ's victory on the cross calls into question God's power. Interestingly, the celestial servant and fallen angel motifs are not mutually exclusive. On the one hand, God can use sinful angels to serve his purposes, and on the other, a celestial servant who chooses to work autonomously becomes a rebellious angel. However, Barth argues persuasively that the weight of scripture is in favour of the goodness of angels, and sees these beings as representatives of God's presence; without moral autonomy, they belong totally to God and never to themselves, unlike humans. Therefore, he rejects the idea of an angelic fall.[79] Nevertheless, as minimal and enigmatic as they may be, biblical references to angelic sin cannot be ignored (Gen. 6:1-4; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6).[80] Yet it is important to note that the

78 Donal B. Cruise O'Brien, 'Satan Steps Out from the Shadows: Religion and Politics in Africa', in *Africa* 70 (2000): 520-525, p. 525.

79 Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/3, 371-380.

80 The identity of the 'sons of God' in Gen 6:1-4 has been debated, but contemporary scholarship leans towards the interpretation that they are angels. This cross-species union between angels and humans may have been a metaphor for the human attempt to achieve immortality. Hence God's punishment is the limitation of the human life span; note that there is no mention of the angels being punished (Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis, Interpretation* [Louisville: John Knox, 1982], 70-72); Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 262-272; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary [Waco: Word, 1987], 139-142). Jude 6 is believed to be dependent on the 1 Enoch embellishment of the narrative in Genesis 6:1-4 (Hamilton, 272).

event in Genesis 6:1-4 occurs *after*, not before, the human rebellion, and no canonical text links those rebellious angels with Satan.[81] Furthermore, these apostate angels have been imprisoned by God, and are not free to roam the earth (Job 1:7, 2:2). A pre-human cosmic fall is not unambiguously evidenced by the snake in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3), which is portrayed as an animal without any celestial overtones.[82] The tale is one of deception and complete creaturely rebellion against the Creator, involving both animals and humans (male and female). Bearing in mind the paucity of references to the devil in the Old Testament, a direct linkage between the serpent and Satan was probably not in the author's mind. The view that Isaiah 14:12-21 and Ezekiel 28:11-19 refer to Satan's fall is not uniformly held, and scholars suggest that these passages speak about powerful human rulers rather than about the pre-mundane fate of celestial beings.[83] For these reasons, the argument for the concept of Satan as a fallen angel is controversial, while the idea that God planted him in creation to test humans makes God directly responsible for the evil that now engulfs our world, because his

81 The linkage is made in 1 Enoch and Book of Jubilees (1 En VI-VIII, X:4-8,12, XV:4-9, LXIX:6; Jub IV:15,22, V:1-11, X:1-14). Interestingly, while a key theme in 1 Enoch is the corruption of humanity by evil angels, one passage subverts the concept: 'so sin was not sent on earth, but man of himself created it, and those who commit it will be subject to a great curse' (1 En XCVIII:4). Pseudepigraphical references were obtained from H.F.D. Sparks, *The Apocryphal Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984).

82 See Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 188; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 72.

83 For Isaiah 14:12-21, see John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 320; Edouard Kitoku Nsiku, 'Isaiah' in *African Bible Commentary*, (Nairobi: WordAlive, 2006), 820; Christopher R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39, Interpretation* (Louisville: John Knox, 1993), 135-136. Childs suggests that ancient mythologies may have provided the framework for the imagery in Isaiah 14:12-21, particularly the Babylonian-Assyrian myth about Ishtar's descent to the underworld, or the Canannite myth about the cosmic battle of the morning star (Helel) against the supreme El Elyon in which Helel lost and was thrown down to Sheol. Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louiseville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 126. For Ezekiel 28:11-19, see Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 29 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 94-95; Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapts. 25-48*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 103-121. In the Septuagint, the prince of Tyre was *with* the cherub in Eden (*meta tou cheroub*, Ezek. 28:14) and it is not the cherub that is cast out from the midst of the stones of fire, but rather, the offender is cast out by the guardian cherub (*kai ēpage se to cheroub ek mesou lithōn purinōn*, Ezek. 28:16). Blenkinsopp and Olley suggest that the writer may be comparing the King of Tyre with Adam (Gen. 2-3) who in this imagery possesses both royal and priestly roles (Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel, Interpretation* [Louisville: John Knox, 1990], 123-125; John W. Olley, *Ezekiel*, Septuagint Commentary Series [Leiden: Brill, 2009], in press). Habtu identifies the King of Tyre with Satan by linking this passage with Revelation 12:9; however, the latter was written centuries later, and the concept of Satan is absent in the rest of Ezekiel (Tewoldernedhin Habtu, 'Ezekiel' in *African Bible Commentary*, [Nairobi: WordAlive, 2006], 964-965). The Septuagint references were taken from Lancelot C.L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (London: Bagster & Sons, 1851).

own celestial servant overstepped his mandate.[84]

Wink's hypothesis that the devil is a human rather than a divine product is worth serious consideration. His idea shares some similarity with Barth's concept of evil. Barth recognised positive and negative aspects in the Genesis 1 creation account, namely light versus darkness, day versus night and land versus water. He differentiates the negative aspects of creation from evil that opposes God's will.[85] Barth terms the latter 'nothingness' and warns that it often masquerades as the negative aspects of creation.[86] 'Nothingness is a factor so real that the creature of God, and among his creatures man especially in whom the purpose of creation is revealed, is not only confronted by it and becomes its victim, but makes himself its agent'.[87] Barth differentiates 'nothingness' from God and humanity, seeing it as a third reality whose very existence is the result of human sin. Its representatives are the devil and demons, and its essence is falsehood and death. Hence, Barth is convinced that angels and demons cannot be bracketed together as though they share a common root, because angels are true creatures of God, whereas demons exist illegitimately.[88] However, he denies that 'nothingness' shares any part of humankind, and in this respect, he differs from Wink. Weber, unconvinced by solutions for the ontogeny of the devil that involve dualism, abstraction or divine creation, suggests that the answer may lie somewhere in Barth's concept of 'nothingness', but admits that it remains a mystery.[89]

Pannenberg adds another viewpoint when he applies his intriguing field theory of the Holy Spirit to the angelic realm. He sees the Holy Spirit as a dynamic spiritual 'force-field' manifesting God's lordship, and angels as special centres that form within the unitary movement. When such forces become autonomous centres, they become demonic.[90] While Pannenberg's concept of angels appears to align with Barth's angelology, his view of demonic ontogeny does not. Nevertheless, when the ideas of Wink, Barth and Pannenberg are considered together, another hypothesis of the devil's origin emerges.

Since canonical scripture does not identify the devil as one of the fallen angels nor speak of its origin, perhaps evil did not begin with an angelic rebellion, but was born when humanity chose autonomy over obedience to God. The devastating flood (Gen. 6-9)

84 God's omnipotence is also questioned, because he seems unable to keep his servant in line.

85 Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/3, 295.

86 Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/3, 289, 305. 'Nothingness' was the word used to translate Barth's *das Nichtige*. The translators describe their difficulty in finding a term that captures Barth's meaning (in *Church Dogmatics* III/3, 289, translators' footnote).

87 Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/3, 352.

88 Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/3, 305,349-368,522-526.

89 Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics, volume 1* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 491-493.

90 Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology, volume 2* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 104-105.

that was the divine punishment for evil involved humans, birds and animals, but no mention was made of angels, and despite the illegitimate union of the 'sons of God' with human females (Gen. 6:1) it was human evil that was God's concern. In the tower of Babel episode, the focus is again on sinful humanity and not on angels (Gen. 11:4). Although people sin individually, humanity exists corporately, and perhaps the coalescence of our evil created, and now feeds, the entity we call the devil.[91] According to this hypothesis, the devil manifests as a quasi-personal power (or powers) that invades and tyrannises individuals, institutions and legitimate human structures of existence.[92] A possible example of this manifestation may be the mob behaviour when groups of people seem gripped and driven by suprahuman forces to carry out atrocities that as individuals they would not do. Interestingly, it is the human face of evil that is keenly felt by liberation theologians who struggle with societal and structural evil: 'Humans are beings infected by evil, almost identified with it'.[93]

Additionally, this hypothesis suggests that the devil be understood as the distorted counterfeit of the Holy Spirit.[94] The uniqueness of the Holy Spirit is his procession from the Father through the Son; he unites the Son with the Father, and unites humanity with the Son.[95] Even as the Spirit proceeds from God, perhaps the devil proceeds from corporate human spirituality, and thereby derives the characteristics of personhood from its source. The devil's power and authority as the ruler of this world and this age thus is explicable, as is its illegitimacy. Its power, being derived from human evil, is limited, and it is not another god. Importantly, this hypothesis denies that God created the devil. The devil has been described as the personification of deception and murder (*anthrōpoktonos*, literally 'human-killer', Jn. 8:44), and not surprisingly, God-less humanity seems bent on self-destruction. Demon-possession could perhaps be viewed as a parody of the indwelling of

91 Paul emphasises the power of sin and death over all humanity (e.g. Rom. 3:9, 5:12,21, 6:6,12, 12:21; Tit. 3:3) much more than he does the power of the devil and demonic (e.g. Gal. 4:3,8; Eph. 2:2). Satan is portrayed frequently as the deceiver and tempter (e.g. 1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 2:11, 4:4, 11:3,14; Eph. 6:11; 1 Thes. 3:5; 2 Thes. 2: 9-10).

92 This same idea is conveyed by Karl Barth (in *Church Dogmatics, volume IV, part 4, Lecture Fragments: The Christian Life* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981], 214-215), Hendrikus Berkhof (in *Christ and the Powers* [Scottdale: Mennonite, 1977], 27-35), Stanley J. Grenz (in *Theology for the Community of God* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 230-235) and Wright (in *A Theology of the Dark Side*, 70).

93 José Ignacio González Faus, 'Sin' in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, Eds. Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuría, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996).

94 Although John Calvin believed that God created the devil, he also wrote that Satan often apes God (in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Ed. John T. NcNeill [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960], 1.viii.2, 1.xiv.16).

95 Jürgen Moltmann discusses this aspect of intra-Trinitarian relationships in *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God* (London: SCM, 1981), 169-170.

the Holy Spirit, and its characteristic is the eventual destruction of the host.[96] The biblical teaching that at the eschaton both heaven and earth have to be made anew (Rev. 21:1) suggests that even heaven is awry, perhaps because the devil has contaminated the spiritual realm (Eph. 6:12; Rev. 12: 3).

To sum up, this paper suggests that the devil may be essentially humanity's product, existing both intra- and suprahumanly, rather than being of divine origin or creation.[97] In this view, Satan grows stronger, albeit parasitically, even as human evil increases. The changing biblical metaphors for Satan may reflect changing human experience and perception of evil, and perhaps also humanity's intuition of its strengthening power. However, the biblical testimony to God's passionate and unalterable love has remained consistent.

III God's Victory Through Christ

The theological implication of this hypothesis is that God's enemy is then primarily humanity, because Satan's roots are human. Thus, to get rid of the devil, and evil, God has to annihilate humanity. Hence, the wages of sin is indeed death for humans (Rom. 6:23; also Jas. 1:14-15). But through his grace, God chooses to have us live instead. He exemplified his own command to love one's enemies when he chose to redeem us through the death of his own Son through whom he 'condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom. 8:3). God took upon himself the burden and consequence of our rebellion, and thus displayed the depth of his love for his hostile creatures.[98] The power of evil (and thus the devil) is broken, not because Satan was duped into killing the sinless Son of God, but by the fulfilment of the 'just requirement of the law', God's own law (Rom. 8:4). Reconciliation between God and humanity is thus effected so that subsequently the Holy Spirit can dwell permanently within believers, to complete the process of negating evil and restoring the *imago Dei*. The eschatological destiny of Satan and evil, anomalies in God's creation, is then absolute and eternal negation, dramatically imaged in Revelation 20:10,14.

The idea that the devil originates from human evil does not contradict the synoptic narratives of Jesus' desert confrontation with the devil, and with the demon-possessed (Mt. 4:1-11; Lk.

96 In Africa, where there is a wide acknowledgement of demons, disease and mental illness are often attributed to evil spiritual forces (James Nkansah-Obrempong, 'Angels, Demons and Powers', in *African Bible Commentary*, [Nairobi: WordAlive, 2006], 1454-1455). Nkansah-Obrempong holds to the traditional perspective that the devil is a fallen angel, created by God.

97 Perhaps there is a grain of truth in the myth about Pandora's box. This hypothesis leaves God's goodness and omnipotence intact.

98 'If God's reality and revelation are known in his presence and action in Jesus Christ, he is also known as the God who is confronted by nothingness, for whom it constitutes a problem, who takes it seriously, and who is not engaged indirectly or mediately but with his whole being, involving himself to the utmost' (Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/3:349).

4:1-12).[99] As the Logos who is the bearer of the Holy Spirit, yet also human, Jesus Christ would be exquisitely sensitive to the evil power that humans have unleashed, and which rules over them. He would necessarily have to confront it, deny its deceptive power and finally to destroy it by fully satisfying the penalty incurred by its illegitimate birth.[100] Christ' resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit into humanity are the evidences of his victory. Why then does evil still seem to thrive in this tired, limping world? The answer is because humanity still exists, and therefore the devil remains, but de-fanged. Through Christ's victory and the power of the Holy Spirit, believers overcome it. Humanity will continue to exist because there are people yet unborn whom God loves and will not give up for the sake of putting an end to evil.

IV Impact on Christian Life and Ministry

As we consider our day-to-day lives, does it really matter whether the devil is a divinely created being or humanity's own personified evil? Indeed it does—it affects profoundly how as individuals we view ourselves and other people, believers and non-believers, individuals and organised power structures. It affects how we pray and serve one another. Christian ministry is compelled to move beyond the perimeter of the church to the rest of our hurting family in the world.

When we admit culpability for the devil, our right response to God's overwhelming grace and love can only be complete repentance, worship, obedience and love. Every minute of our continued existence is an undeserved gift from God. Sanctification assumes greater urgency when we realise that it is an oxymoron to allow sin to exist in our lives. Firstly, when we sin we feed the power that subsequently rules over us (Gen. 4:7; Rom. 6:12; 1 Jn. 3:8), and secondly, if we are God's children, sin has no legitimate place in our lives (1 Jn. 3:6). In Christ we died and in Christ we have been given new life (Rom. 6:3-4, 14).

Rejection of sin, however, cannot mean withdrawal from the sinful world, because although we belong to God, we stand in solidarity with all humanity in our corporate contribution to the devil's existence. We can no longer draw separating lines between 'good guys' and 'bad guys' because we are all shareholders in Devil, Inc.[101] When Jesus put anger and verbal abuse in the same category as murder (Mt. 5:21-22), he was accurately describing

99 It is interesting that John's gospel records neither. While Satan is described as the father of deception and murder (John 8:44), Jesus is confronted by human opponents and tempters rather than Satan or demons. This raises questions about the historicity of the temptation scene, and highlights the Fourth Evangelist's rejection of exorcism as a sign of Jesus' divinity.

100 As the new Adam (Rom. 5:12-17), Jesus rejected the seduction of human autonomy, and embodied God's command for perfect obedience (Jn. 14:31). In this way, the devil had no power over him (Jn. 14:30).

101 Damning labels like 'axis of evil' which world leaders apply to certain nations demonises them, and justifies war.

the essence, evolution and end-result of sin. As Christians, we cannot recoil from those we think are wicked or who seem to have unacceptable lifestyles, nor can we ignore systematic injustice and wrongdoing, and retreat into holy enclaves. On the contrary, since we all participate in the devil's ontogeny, we must confront its fatal infection with God's power, truth and love, and bring Christ's redeeming hope to fellow sufferers. Evangelism and mission cannot therefore be tinged with condescension, which is the devil's deceptive corruption of empathetic love.

As members within communities, organisations and nations, Christians are commanded to be God's light-bearers (Mt. 5:14-16), allowing Christ's counterculture to transform our human structures of existence. This is a painful process. For example, the only Christ-like response to terrorism is not war, but self-denying love and forgiveness,[102] actualised in concretely addressing the inequitable socioeconomic imbalances that have contributed to resentment and hatred. There are inherent dynamics in the global business and financial networks that advantage the 'haves' and disempower the 'have-nots'. Human organisations and powers can be reclaimed for Christ for whom they have been made (Col. 1:16).[103] Christians, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, are God's change agents, with the emphasis on *God's*, meaning that prayer must lead praxis.

Prayer for others is revolutionised when we recognise the unity we share as humans, which should lead to empathy. When we bring others into God's presence, we stand shoulder to shoulder with them. God hears us, because in Christ he has given humans the privilege of speaking to him on behalf of other humans.[104] It matters greatly when we pray, and even more when we *do not* pray, for our human siblings. In prayer, we confront the root of evil, and God himself prays with us and through us (Rom. 8:26-27). As agents with cosmic influence, we participate in God's redemptive activity.

Conclusion

Theologians from antiquity have struggled to understand the nature of evil, particularly moral evil, and to reconcile its reality with a good and holy creator. Within the human experience of evil is the sense of hostile suprahuman forces which biblical writers initially attributed to evil spirits and celestial functionaries sent by God, and subsequently to demonic powers under the leadership of the devil. Those who deny that the devil exists fail to provide in its place a superior metaphor for the real experience of suprahuman evil. Those who believe that Satan is God's creation have difficulty explaining why a good God would create a being that is unmitigated evil, or even one that might have been initially good but which, in choosing autonomy, could

102 This is strongly affirmed by Nigel Wright (in *A Theology of the Dark Side*, 96-97).

103 See Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 82-83.

104 'Prayer thus lies at the heart of the task of God's people, their glorious, strange, puzzling and enobling vocation' (Wright, in *A Theology of the Dark Side*, 77).

become such a powerful source of evil. Those who perceive a God-devil dualism are not able to convincingly reconcile this eternal dualism with the eschatological scenario in scripture that proclaims the eventual destruction of the devil and all evil.

However, if the devil is seen as a spiritual entity that proceeds from the coalescence of all human evil, resembling in some perverted fashion the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father through the Son, then its reality is affirmed while God's goodness and omnipotence remains intact. God subsequently uses the devil for his own redemptive purposes. This is the diabology proposed here, and it reinforces the biblical teaching that sinful humanity is doomed for destruction because humans are the source of evil. Christ's death represents the fulfilment of God's righteous judgement on evil. On the other hand, God's redeeming sacrificial love for his enemies, humankind, is indescribable grace. Through Christ's victory and the Holy Spirit's indwelling, Christians finally have power over evil and the devil. This world will continue to exist until God's human family is complete. Meanwhile, Christians should keep their focus on God, and while acknowledging the deceptive and destructive influence of evil spiritual forces, should cautiously avoid becoming obsessed with the demonic.