“BETTER TO REIGN IN HELL, THAN SERVE IN HEAVEN”: SATAN’S TRANSITION FROM A HEAVENLY COUNCIL MEMBER TO THE RULER OF PANDAEMONIUM

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Arts

In

Religious Studies

University of Regina

By

Allan Edwin Charles Wright

Regina, Saskatchewan

September, 2012

Copyright 2012: Allan E.C. Wright
UNIVERSITY OF REGINA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
SUPERVISORY AND EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Allan Edwin Charles Wright, candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in Religious Studies, has presented a thesis titled, "Better to Reign in Hell, than Serve in Heaven": Satan’s Transition From a Heavenly Council member to the Ruler of Pandaemonium, in an oral examination held on August 31, 2012. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

External Examiner: Dr. Tim Hegedus, Wilfrid Laurier University
Supervisor: Dr. William Arnal, Department of Religious Studies
Committee Member: Dr. Jacoba Kuikman, Department of Religious Studies
Committee Member: Dr. Franz Volker Greifenhagen, Department of Religious Studies
Chair of Defense: Dr. Ulrike Hardenbicker, Department of Geography

*Not present at defense
Allan Edwin Charles Wright, candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in Religious Studies, has presented a thesis titled, "Better to Reign in Hell, than Serve in Heaven": Satan's Transition From a Heavenly Council member to the Ruler of Pandaemonium, in an oral examination held on August 31, 2012. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

External Examiner: Dr. Tim Hegedus, Wilfrid Laurier University

Supervisor: Dr. William Arnal, Department of Religious Studies

Committee Member: Dr. Jacoba Kuikman, Department of Religious Studies

Committee Member: Dr. Franz Volker Greifenhagen, Department of Religious Studies

Chair of Defense: Dr. Ulrike Hardenbicker, Department of Geography

*Not present at defense
Abstract

In this thesis, I argue that Satan was not perceived as a universal malevolent deity, the embodiment of evil, or the “ruler of Pandaemonium” within first century Christian literature or even within second and third century Christian discourses as some scholars have insisted. Instead, for early “Christian” authors, Satan represented a pejorative term used to describe terrestrial, tangible, and concrete social realities, perceived of as adversaries. To reach this conclusion, I explore the narrative character of Satan selectively within the Hebrew Bible, intertestamental literature, Mark, Matthew, Luke, Q, the Book of Revelation, the Nag Hammadi texts, and the Ante-Nicene fathers.

I argue that certain scholars’ such as Jeffrey Burton Russell, Miguel A. De La Torre, Albert Hernandez, Peter Stanford, Paul Carus, and Gerd Theissen, homogenized reconstructions of the “New Testament Satan” as the universalized incarnation of evil and that God’s absolute cosmic enemy is absent from early Christian orthodox literature, such as Mark, Matthew, Luke, Q, the Book of Revelation, and certain writings from the Ante-Nicene Fathers. Using Jonathan Z. Smith’s essay Here, There, and Anywhere, I suggest that the cosmic dualist approach to Satan as God’s absolute cosmic enemy resulted from the changing social topography of the early fourth century where Christian “insider” and “outsider” adversaries were diminishing. With these threats fading, early Christians universalized a perceived chaotic cosmic enemy, namely Satan, being influenced by the Gnostic demiurge, who disrupts God’s terrestrial and cosmic order. Therefore, Satan transitioned from a “here,” “insider,” and “there,” “outsider,” threat to a universal “anywhere” threat.
Acknowledgements

I would first like to acknowledge my appreciation to the Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of Regina for their financial support in the form of Graduate Teaching Assistantship and Graduate Studies Scholarship awards.

I would also like to thank my committee members Dr. Franz Volker Greifenhagen and Dr. Jackie Kuikman. Special thanks to my supervisor and academic mentor Dr. William Arnal for all the feedback, support, and conversations. I would also like to thank the entire Department of Religious Studies for their stimulating classes and discussions during my time as an undergraduate and graduate student. Another special thanks to Dr. Leona Anderson for providing various opportunities and employment within the department. Also, I would like to thank the Religious Studies graduate students, especially Jesse Bailey, Sarah Hagel, Ian Brown, and Alex Tkach, for their encouragement, contributions, and endless hours of invigorating academic and non-academic discussions.

I would also like to thank my entire family for their love, support, encouragement, and patience. Especially, my mother Juverna Wright, my father Nicholas Wright, my grandparents Norman Amundson (RIP), Jean Amundson, Derek Wright, and Sheila Wright (RIP). Also, thanks to my friends for their continual support.

Last, but especially not least, I would like to thank my be all and end all, my rock, Ernesta Vileitaite-Wright. This project would have not been possible without your contributions and endless amount of love, support, patience, and encouragement. I cannot express how truly fortunate I am to have you in my life. Moreover, I eagerly anticipate the next chapter in our lives with the birth of our baby girl.
Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to grandma, Jean Amundson, and to my Nana Sheila Wright (RIP) for all their encouragement, love, and support throughout my academic journey and my entire life.
# Table of Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................... i  
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................... ii  
Dedication .............................................................................................................. iii  

Introduction .......................................................................................................... 1  

Chapter 1: Near Eastern Narratives which Influenced the Development of Satan ........................................................................................................ 6  
Mesopotamia .......................................................................................................... 7  
Canaan .................................................................................................................. 10  
Egypt ...................................................................................................................... 11  
Greek ..................................................................................................................... 14  
Persian .................................................................................................................. 17  
Conclusion ............................................................................................................ 27  

Chapter 2: Satanic Figures within the Hebrew Bible and Intertestamental Literature ...................................................................................................... 32  

Chapter 3: New Testament Representations of Satan ........................................................................................................................................... 64  
Mark ....................................................................................................................... 65  
Matthew ............................................................................................................... 74  
John ....................................................................................................................... 99  
Paul ....................................................................................................................... 107  
The Book of Revelation ......................................................................................... 112  
Conclusion ............................................................................................................ 117  

Chapter 4: Second and Third Century Representations of Satan ........................................................................................................... 120  
The Nag Hammadi Texts and the Demiurge ................................................................... 120  
Ante-Nicene Fathers ............................................................................................ 127  
Conclusion ............................................................................................................ 135  

Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 139  

Bibliography ........................................................................................................ 149
Introduction

An apology for the Devil: It must be remembered that we have heard only one side of the case. God has written all the books.

--- SAMUEL BUTLER, Note Books

The Satan of John Milton’s epic poem *Paradise Lost* is a familiar character. He leads a group of angels in a rebellion against God which results in their expulsion from heaven. With the rebellious group of angels banished below to the dark void of chaos, Satan has now become the ruler over “Pandaemonium.” “Pandaemonium” is a term Milton coined by combining the Greek terms *pan* and *daimones* simply meaning “all,” or “every,” demons. In response to God’s punishment, Satan tempts Eve to eat the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden; this, of course, leads to the “fall of man.” This portrayal of Satan has become the dominant perception of Satan within popular discourse. However, the notion of an “evil” figure within the Hebrew Bible, intertestamental, and early Christian literature is much more complex than Milton’s characterization.

I will discuss the narrative character of Satan in these ancient texts in order to show that Satan was not perceived as a universal malevolent deity, the embodiment of evil, or the “ruler of Pandaemonium” within first century Christian literature or even within second and third century Christian discourses as some scholars have insisted.¹ For example, Jeffrey Burton Russell claims that the Devil within the New Testament is not a peripheral character and is not a symbolic representation in any manner. He states that

Satan is God and Jesus’ chief opponent and the ultimate “principle of evil.” Peter Stanford claims that a central emphasis for the entire New Testament is the conflict and hostilities between Jesus and the Devil. Additionally, Gerd Theissen’s reconstruction of Satan relies heavily on the narrative of Jesus’ temptation within the desert. The dependence upon the temptation narrative to reconstruct Satan does specifically apply to Matthew and Luke, but other texts such as John and any of the Pauline letters lack any mention of the temptation narrative. Therefore, applying the temptation narrative to reconstruct an overall caricature of Satan is misleading. Scholars such as Russell, Stanford, Miguel A. De La Torre, Albert Hernandez, Paul Carus, and Gerd Theissen combine various narratives from different and diverse sources to form a conglomerate character. Their chapters, books, and essays about Satan within the New Testament do not differentiate between Satan in Mark, Satan in Matthew, etc. Therefore, their reconstruction of Satan within the New Testament is a homogenized one.

This perception of Satan is more indicative of contemporary discourses as seen in popular films, books, music, and certain Protestant and Catholic theologies. For example, Russell writes: “the devil is a creature of God, the chief of the fallen angels... He is lord of this world, chief of a vast multitude of powers spiritual and physical, angelic and human, that are arrayed against the Kingdom of God.” Instead, I argue that for early Christian authors, Satan represents a pejorative term used to describe terrestrial, tangible, and concrete social realities, perceived as adversaries. Additionally, Satan is occasionally portrayed as a peripheral celestial tester and/or stumbling block to the narratives’ main

\[^2\text{Russell, 247.}\]
\[^3\text{Stanford, 55.}\]
\[^4\text{See Theissen as summerized by Nienke Vos, 9.}\]
\[^5\text{Russell, 247.}\]
characters, such as Jesus. I explore the narrative character of Satan within the Hebrew Bible, intertestamental literature, Mark, Matthew, Luke, Q, John, Paul, the Book of Revelation, the Nag Hammadi texts, and the Ante-Nicene Fathers. By examining each text separately, I can focus on how each portrays Satan. The result of such an examination is that the Satan figure varies throughout various literatures.

Some scholars tend to ignore the Satan figure while conducting hermeneutical examinations of various pericopes. Others often project their contemporary notion of Satan onto the ancient literature they are examining. This type of anachronistic reading dealing with any type of critical assessment is problematic. Of course, scholars know that anachronistic readings are problematic, but somehow this problem still persists when it concerns the narrative character(s) of Satan. Henry Ansgar Kelly notes:

As an introduction to the New Testament, let me say that in spite of the fact that practically every Scriptural topic under the sun has been subjected to much critical evaluation, most exegesis are remarkably uncritical when it comes to satans and Satan. They are content to show that various sinister figures, like Belial and Beelzebub, were linked to a personal Satan in Jewish and Christian sources, never mind how late, and they assume that this Satan had become the all-evil enemy of God by the time that the Christian Scriptures were written, never mind how or when.  

In contrast, the data suggests that the narrative character of Satan within the Hebrew Bible, Intertestamental, and early Christian literature was not the “incarnation of evil,” or God’s absolute celestial enemy. I will eventually suggest that this universalized notion of Satan developed within Christian discourse as a result of a changing social topography not until the beginning of the fourth century.

The first chapter will be dedicated to examining Satan’s possible “roots” within Near Eastern and Greek mythologies. In this chapter, I will discuss the characters of

---

Humbaba from the epic of Gilgamesh; Mot from Canaanite mythology; Set or Seth from Egyptian mythology; Hades and certain elements of Orphism from Greek mythologies; and Angra Mainyu or Ahriman from Zoroastrianism. After examining these characters, I will suggest three common characteristics.

The second chapter will be an examination of various discourses surrounding Satanic figures within the Hebrew Bible and Intertestamental literature. This chapter will attempt to explain the discursive transition which enables Satan to eventually become a predominant representation of evil for Christianity. To begin, I will examine how the term “satan” is utilized within the Hebrew Bible, namely in 1 Samuel 29:4, 1 Kings 11, Numbers 22:22, 1 Chronicles 21:1, Zechariah 3:1-2, and Job 1 – 2. Then I will provide a brief outline of the social circumstances during the Second Temple period focusing on the Intertestamental Period. This background information is important because it was during this timeframe that the various discourses of “evil” appeared to transition into a single dominant discourse of evil centered on Satan. Next, I will discuss the numerous “evil” figures during the Intertestamental period, namely Semyaz, Azaz’el, Mastema, and Belial. For each “evil” figure, I will examine the meaning of their name, the texts they appear in, and the possible social discourses which shaped them. Finally, I will explore three possible explanations of how the numerous discourses of evil shifted towards a single predominant discourse of Satan being the ultimate personification of evil.

The third chapter will consist of an examination of Satan within first century Christian literature. For this examination, I will discuss the Satan narratives within Mark, Matthew, Luke-Acts, John, the Pauline letters, and finally the Book of Revelation. Each text represents Satan in a different manner. For example, in Matthew Satan is predominantly associated with the Pharisaic social group whereas in Paul he is more of a
hindrance and obstacle to Paul’s proselytizing. However, it is evident within every text I examined that Satan is not considered a primary threat to the authors. In general, within first century Christian literature, Satan is not the primary antagonist and, for the most part, the authors do not concern themselves to develop or emphasize him.

The fourth and final chapter will be dedicated to second and third century Christian representations of Satan. To begin this chapter, I will discuss the Nag Hammadi texts and the Gnostic notion of the demiurge representing a Satan-like figure. Lastly, I will examine Satan within the literature of the Ante-Nicene Fathers. This section will not consider all the representations of Satan in all the Ante-Nicene fathers; instead it will offer an overall general frame of their rhetoric about Satan as directed against perceived “outside” and “inside” threats to their ecclesiastical institutions, structures, and their desire for Christian unification.

To conclude, I will argue that certain scholars’ homogenized reconstructions of the “New Testament Satan” as the universalized incarnation of evil and God’s absolute cosmic enemy are absent from early Christian literature. Using Jonathan Z. Smith’s essay *Here, There, and Anywhere*, I will suggest that the cosmic dualist approach to Satan as God’s absolute cosmic enemy resulted from the changing social topography of the early fourth century where Christian “insider” and “outsider” adversaries were diminishing. With these threats fading, Christians, influenced by the concept of the Gnostic demiurge, universalized a perceived chaotic cosmic enemy, namely Satan, who disrupts God’s terrestrial and cosmic order. Therefore, Satan transitioned from a “here,” “insider,” and “there,” “outsider,” threat to a universal “anywhere” threat.
Chapter 1: Near Eastern Narratives which Influenced the Development of Satan

All things truly wicked start from an innocence. ---Ernest Hemingway, A Moveable Feast

Without question, the biblical character of Satan did not originate within a vacuum; external mythic narratives aided in the discursive development of this character. Mesopotamian, Canaanite, Egyptian, Greek, and Persian mythologies all encompass some form of a mischievous, trickster, or malevolent deity, demi-god, or monster. I am not suggesting, however, that these mythologies provide the only characters or conceptions that contribute to the development of Satan. I am selecting these five mythologies due to the fact that the cultures that produced them were extremely influential as “Israel’s closest neighbours.”7 As a result, Israel and/or Judea, the social contexts for the production of the literature contained in the Hebrew Bible, would have had significant dealings with all five of these cultures. In this chapter, I will discuss the characters of Humbaba, Habayu, Mot, Set or Seth, Pan, Hades, Orphism, and Angra Mainyu or Ahriman within Mesopotamian, Canaanite, Egyptian, Greek, and Persian narratives respectively. I will examine these characters to identify common elements found within discourses surrounding Satan. After examining these characters, I will suggest three common characteristics.

Mesopotamia

The extant copy of the Epic of Gilgamesh was written on twelve clay tablets in Akkadian. During an excavation at Megiddo, a fragment of the epic, which was dated to 1550-1150 B.C.E., was discovered in addition to the twelve tablets. There have been numerous debates regarding the Gilgamesh epic. Certain scholars, such as Morris Jastrow and Noah Kramer, do not find Gilgamesh appealing and disregard it because they view the narrative as too pessimistic, meaning Gilgamesh fails to achieve immortality. However, disregarding an ancient piece of literature because it is too pessimistic is indeed puzzling. By contrast, other scholars such as Hope Nash Wolf, Gerald K. Gresseth, and George F. Held “make Gilgamesh appear to be a heroic and humanistic figure of exemplary significance.” Jonathan Z. Smith states that the Gilgamesh epic “is not the possibility of ‘everyman’ escaping death … Rather, the question is whether Gilgamesh … might escape the common lot of humankind, a question already explicitly formulated and negatively answered in the Sumerian ‘Death of Gilgamesh.’” Benjamin Caleb Ray provides another plausible scenario; he states that

The Gilgamesh story never became standardized and was constantly altered through contact with a continuing oral tradition. … The general purpose for which the Gilgamesh epic and its folk-tale elements existed in both oral and written form appears to have been entertainment in the contexts of royal courts, private houses, encampments along the desert caravan routes, or aboard ships sailing the rivers of the Indus Valley.

---

8 Wray & Mobley, 76.
9 Wray & Mobley, 76.
11 See Ray, 303.
13 Ray, 305.
For my purpose, I will focus on the character of Humbaba in the Gilgamesh story. Humbaba is described as a terrible ogre, with unusually large eyes and nose, who “had been appointed by Enlil, the lord of the gods, as the guardian of a distant and almost boundless cedar forest.” A combat myth occurs within a narrative when a “hero’s victory over a powerful monster typically embodies a triumph of good over evil, order over chaos, civilization over nature.” When Gilgamesh and Enkidu encounter Humbaba, a combat myth motif is present. According to Bruce Louden, “monsters are typically figured as representing, or integrally connected with, a natural, uncivilized state of existence.” Louden illustrates “the combat myth” by comparing Odysseus’ encounter with Polyphemos, or the cyclops, in Homer’s epic the Odyssey to Gilgamesh’s clash with Humbaba. Overall, Louden argues that “Odysseus’ victory over Polyphemos and Gilgamesh’s defeat of Humbaba share a considerable number of common motifs, occurring in roughly the same sequence.”

T.J. Wray and Gregory Mobley suggest that the epic of Gilgamesh makes three contributions to the development of Satan. First, there is a motif of a supernatural opponent to the hero. This is important due to the fact that the Gilgamesh epic is “one of the oldest examples of a supernatural adversary in literature.” Additionally, there are Humbaba echoes in Genesis 3:24 where YHWH assigns a frightening cherub to guard the

---

16 Louden, 180.
17 Louden, 185.
18 See Louden, 180-196.
19 Louden, 183. See Louden ,184 for his extensive list.
20 Wray & Mobley, 77.
gates of Eden; it states “he drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.” The second contribution is the epic’s “description of the permeability of the border that separates out the terrestrial landscape from a terrifying and fantastic netherworld.”

The third contribution of the Gilgamesh epic is witnessed through the trickster character of Enki/Ea. Enki displays a motif of a divine council member “with a mind of his own, artfully adept at circumventing the divine will.” This motif is strikingly similar to the satan’s role in Zechariah 3:1-2 and Job 1 – 2.

The epic of Gilgamesh is not the only Mesopotamian myth that contributed to the development of Satan. The Babylonian creation epic, the Enuma elish, includes a deity called Tiamat who represents chaos. Marduk, the newly voted leader of the Babylonian gods, eventually splits Tiamat in two, thus creating the physical world and the cosmos.

Generally, the “demons” of Mesopotamia were considered to be the offspring of Tiamat. They were hostile and lacked the dignity and power of the gods. Also, they were characterized as “grotesque, appearing as ugly animals or as misshapen humans with partly animal forms.” Similar to the Epic of Gilgamesh, Marduk’s defeat of Tiamat also employs elements of a combat myth. For both narratives, “the hero’s defeat of a monster suggests a similar dynamic, the creation of order or civilization, the liberation of crucial resources hoarded by the monster.”

---

21 See Wray & Mobley, 77.
22 Wray & Mobley, 77.
23 Wray & Mobley, 78.
24 I shall discuss Zechariah 3:1-2 and Job 1-2 in Chapter 2.
27 Louden, 182.
Canaan

The discovery of Canaanite mythic poems near the ancient city of Ugarit, located at the northern coast of modern-day Syria, has provided scholars with a great deal of information about Canaanite mythologies.28 Jeffrey Burton Russell states that “at the center of Canaanite religion was a fertility cult, and their chief figures were Baal, Anath, and their enemy Mot.”29 According to Canaanite mythology, the high God of their pantheon was El and his sons include “Baal, the god of fertility, and Mot, the god of the underworld.”30 Even though Baal represents God’s “rival” in the Bible, it appears Mot had a more direct influence on the development of Satan.31 Due to Mot’s association with the underworld (his name actually means “death”), he was considered a dark and detestable god who was connected with sterility and death.32

The segment of the Ugaritic myths that is pertinent for this examination are the narratives of the battles between Baal and Mot. Baal travels to the underworld to subdue Mot because Mot has been wreaking havoc upon the earth. A battle ensues and Baal is killed by Mot. Baal’s sister, Anat, however, exacts revenge upon Mot and kills him as well. Ultimately, Baal is resurrected, resulting in fertile soil, closely followed by Mot’s resurrection.33 Thus, according to Canaanite mythology, Baal and Mot, representing life and death, are continually locked in an eternal conflict.34 Wray and Mobley outline four reasons why this narrative is important for the exploration of Satan:

First, the themes of good triumphing over evil, and life over death, that resonate throughout the poem are themes consistently associated with tales about Satan.

28 Wray & Mobley, 79.
29 Russell, The Devil: Perceptions of Evil, 94.
30 Wray & Mobley, 79.
31 Wray & Mobley, 80.
32 Wray & Mobley, 80.
33 Wray & Mobley, 80.
Second, the shadowy, terrifying underworld inhabited by the evil character Mot is highly suggestive of Satan’s own terrifying abode. Third, Mot is a son of the high god El. This reminds us of Satan’s beginnings, in the form of *hassatan*, as one of the ‘sons of God’ (Job 1:6). Fourth, and perhaps most important, Mot is the adversary who must be conquered by the ‘good god,’ Baal. This conflict, of course, anticipates Jesus’ [temptation] against Satan in the New Testament.35

The Ugaritic texts reveal another figure who might also have aided to the development of Satan, namely Habayu. Although Habayu is not as developed as Mot, his physical features of horns and a tail resemble a later Christian discourse concerning the appearance of Satan. Wray and Mobley state “that the origins of the traditional depiction of Satan with horns and a tail ultimately can be traced back to the physiognomy of Habayu.”36 In antiquity, horns had positive symbolic meanings, such as wealth, protection, fertility, sexuality (an aphrodisiac), and power.37 Later discourses of Satan, however, have a somewhat different interpretation of horns. Satan’s horns are utilized to denote a negative power, dangerous animals, the underworld, promiscuity, and frowned upon sexualities.38

**Egypt**

Egyptian mythologies were consistently changing and developing throughout their millennia of history.39 The Egyptian myth I will be focusing on is the conflict between Osiris and Set, or Seth. As Miguel A. De La Torre and Albert Hernandez state,

Egyptian mythology developed stories that personified the eternal struggle among the forces of nature in the legend of their perpetual conflict between Osiris and Seth. Osiris represented cosmic and terrestrial order plus life-sustaining waters of

---

35 Wray & Mobley, 80-81.
36 Wray & Mobley, 81.
the Nile while Seth represented chaos, natural disasters, and the dry lifeless lands of the desert.\textsuperscript{40}

Thus, the perfect model for civilization, or a type of “golden age,” was symbolized through the reign of Osiris.\textsuperscript{41} This idyllic model was destroyed by Osiris’ younger brother Seth. Numerous narratives exist on how exactly Seth killed Osiris but they all are consistent in labelling Seth as the destructive force.\textsuperscript{42} Seth subsequently ripped apart Osiris’ body and scattered the pieces throughout the Nile River. Afterwards, the goddess Isis, who was Osiris’ wife, found every piece of his body except for the phallus which, according to legend, was swallowed by a fish or a crocodile.\textsuperscript{43} Isis was then able to restore her husband enough in order to somehow conceive. This conception resulted in the birth of Horus. According to Plutarch, when Horus grew older, he “gathered together the supporters of his murdered father and … attacked the usurper Seth.”\textsuperscript{44} Horus eventually defeated Seth and banished him to the desert. Thus, “the desert became metaphorically synonymous with evil and death and with Egypt’s foreign enemies”\textsuperscript{45} or vice-versa.

Even though the struggle between Horus and Seth is merely a small episode in the entire Osiris myth, it gave an opportunity for their own mythologies to grow and develop which has resulted in numerous interpretations. Clark compares the narrative of Horus and Seth with the conflict between Agamemnon and Achilles: “a minor theme in the whole history of the Trojan War was magnified into the chief motif of the \textit{Iliad}.”\textsuperscript{46} De La Torre and Hernandez state that many scholars suggest that this narrative echoes the

\textsuperscript{40} De La Torre & Hernandez, 53.
\textsuperscript{41} R.T. Rundle Clark, \textit{Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt}, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1959), 103.
\textsuperscript{42} See Clark 103-104.
\textsuperscript{43} Clark, 105.
\textsuperscript{44} Clark, 106.
\textsuperscript{45} De La Torre & Hernandez, 55.
\textsuperscript{46} Clark, 196.
conflict between Cain and Abel in the book of Genesis.\textsuperscript{47} Thankfully, De La Torre and Hernandez are quick to warn readers about “suggesting that mythological similarities like these are the result of universalizing tendencies that trump cultural differences.”\textsuperscript{48} Bruce Lincoln’s early work can be witnessed as an example of universalizing myths. Lincoln suggests that the Proto-Indo-European warlike mentality and thrust for larger herds (wealth) inevitably led to hostile expansion.\textsuperscript{49} Lincoln argues that Indo-Europeans have similar myths because they possess some form of knowledge of the “prototype” Proto-Indo-European myth.

Besides being renowned for his conflicts with Osiris and Horus, Seth encompasses many other designations. He is known as the demon of death and decay,\textsuperscript{50} god of storm and thunder, the desert wind, dryness, earthquakes, sickness, and quarrelling.\textsuperscript{51} He is seen as the personification of disorder, chaos, confusion, foreign lands, storms, turbulent seas, and infertility.\textsuperscript{52} Seth’s physical appearance was also considered frightening and abhorrent. Egyptian narratives “describe Seth as having red hair and white skin, which gave him an almost demonic, corpse-like appearance.”\textsuperscript{53} Other narratives describe him as pure red, representing the scorched heat of the desert.\textsuperscript{54} The colour red appears to have a significant meaning as Egyptians associated red with “evil.”\textsuperscript{55} Plutarch and Herodotus even “comment that the Egyptians sacrificed redheaded people”\textsuperscript{56} due to the belief that

\textsuperscript{47} See De La Torre & Hernandez, 56. They do not provide a list of scholars who subscribe to his view.
\textsuperscript{48} De La Torre & Hernandez, 56.
\textsuperscript{50} Clark, 50.
\textsuperscript{51} Clark, 115.
\textsuperscript{52} De La Torre & Hernandez, 54 -56.
\textsuperscript{53} De La Torre & Hernandez, 55.
\textsuperscript{54} Wray & Mobley, 84.
\textsuperscript{55} Wray & Mobley, 84.
\textsuperscript{56} Russell, 78.
they were somehow connected with Seth. With all these factors combined, Seth became the closest representation to an “evil” deity in Egyptian mythology and their pantheon.\footnote{Wray & Mobley, 84.}

Seth’s “influence” on later caricatures of Satan is apparent: he is seen as a disruptive deity who represents terrestrial and cosmic chaos against Osiris’ idyllic order. He is also known for the death and destruction which occurs within the natural world and for a frightening physical appearance. Similarly, Satan is viewed to disturb God’s “perfect” creation and wreak havoc, death, and devastation upon the terrestrial and cosmic realms. Additionally, Seth is associated with the desert. The Satan-like figure, or Satan precursor, Azaz’el, who is present within the Hebrew Bible and Intertestamental literature,\footnote{I discuss the narrative character of Azaz’el in greater detail within Chapter 2.} is also associated within the desert as in Lev.16:8-10 where Aaron casts him into the desert to dwell. Hence, Azaz’el became known as the “desert demon.”

**Greek**

Regarding the notions of good and evil, the gods of the Greek pantheon are ambivalent. They possess qualities that are considered good and evil. The Greek gods’ personalities are not monochromatic, meaning they are not perceived as entirely “good” or “evil.” The gods Pan and Hades appear to have had the greatest impact on the development of Satan. Pan’s influence on later Christian discourses surrounding Satan appears to be based strictly on physical features as their iconographies are virtually identical. Pan has cloven hooves, goat’s legs, horns, a goatee, and elongated ears. Numerous descriptions of Satan through the last two thousand years have integrated all of
these characteristics, especially since the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{59} The iconographic resemblance does not appear to be coincidental. The replication of Pan’s appearance could be linked to a later Christian discourse concerning sexuality. Since Pan was professed as a chthonian god of sexual desire, Satan’s constructions correlate sexual desire with negative connotations, namely promiscuity and perceived immoral sexual behaviour. As Russell states, “the association of the chthonic with both sex and the underworld, and hence with death, sealed the union.”\textsuperscript{60} The root of this similarity lies within Medieval Christianity. The chthonic deities were described as demons by Christians due to association with sexual passion and the wilderness.\textsuperscript{61} These associations did not mesh with the Christian ideals of sexual asceticism.\textsuperscript{62}

The Greek god who is perhaps the largest contributor to the popular depictions of Satan is Hades. Wray and Mobley state that Hades is a “solitary, enigmatic deity, famed only for his kidnapping of Persephone, and wholly dreaded by the Greeks.”\textsuperscript{63} Hades, similar to Satan, gained a reputation for being insidious. Perhaps the greatest resemblance, however, is Hades’ abode. Hades is considered to be the god, or ruler, of the Greek underworld. The underworld has a fear-provoking tripartite structure where the deceased could spend eternity. Wray and Mobley explain:

The highest level, known as the Elysian Fields, is usually reserved for those who accomplished great things in life, such as war heroes, who will enjoy a peaceful repose, similar to the Christian notion of heaven. The second level is called the Asphodel Fields, a sort of purgatory for those who were neither great nor evil. But the lowest level of the underworld, Tartarus, is a place of pure darkness, located in the deepest recesses of the earth. This particular level is the dwelling

\textsuperscript{59} Russell, 126.
\textsuperscript{60} Russell, 126.
\textsuperscript{61} Russell, 126.
\textsuperscript{62} Russell, 126.
\textsuperscript{63} Wray & Mobley, 89.
place for criminals and other evildoers who are condemned to suffer eternal
torture and punishment for their disreputable lives on earth.\(^{64}\)

Hades’ job within the underworld is to judge the dead and he commanded a faction of
spirits who torture the “damned” in Tartarus.\(^{65}\) Tartarus is comparable with the Jewish
concept of Gehena. Russell claims that “Gehenna, the location of which is not specified
in the New Testament, is a place of eternal fire and punishment for the wicked.”\(^{66}\) De La
Torre and Hernandez suggest that Gehenna derives from the Hebrew phrase for the
Valley of Hinnom, located southwest of Jerusalem. It “was the ancient site where some
of the kings of Judah sacrificed children, through fire, to the god Moloch.”\(^{67}\) The
narratives surrounding Tartarus and Gehenna laid a large segment of the foundation for
the mythology of the “Christian Hell.”\(^{68}\)

Around 570 – 495 B.C.E. an Ionian Greek philosopher and mathematician named
Pythagoras developed a system of beliefs and practices called Pythagoreanism which later
developed into Orphism.\(^{69}\) Questions do remain regarding whether Orphism was an
autonomous organized movement and about its perceived relationship with Dionysus’
cult. Russell states, “the central myth of Orphism may have been the myth of Dionysus
and the Titans.”\(^{70}\) Nevertheless, for our purpose, the important factor is that Orphic
tradition is known to be the first Greek tradition to portray dualistic ideas and practices.
Essentially, in Orphic tradition, humans have a dual nature, namely spiritual and material.
Russell explains: “the material part of our nature derives from the Titans, the spiritual part
from the Dionysus whom they devoured … For the Pythagoreans, soul is immortal, flesh

\(^{64}\) Wray & Mobley, 90.
\(^{65}\) Russell, 172.
\(^{66}\) Russell, 240-241.
\(^{67}\) De La Torre & Hernandez, 75.
\(^{68}\) Russell, 172.
\(^{69}\) Wray & Mobley, 88.
\(^{70}\) See Russell, 137 for extended details.
mortal. The soul is trapped in the body like a prisoner; our task on earth is to escape our bodily prison by means of ritual purification.”\textsuperscript{71} The Pythagoreans constructed a clear dichotomy between the “spirit” and the body.

The principle that the “pure” spirit was imprisoned within an “impure” body led the Pythagoreans to believe in metempsychosis, or the transmigration of spirits.\textsuperscript{72} Therefore, people can only liberate themselves from the bodily prisons through practices of ritual purity because according to the Orphic tradition “purity” was accomplished through ritual and not a perceived morality. Their rituals were strikingly similar to those of the Dionysus cult; the rituals took place within caves, always at night with torch illumination, and their locations where connected to fertility and moisture.\textsuperscript{73} One major difference, however, is that the Pythagoreans never partook in euphoric dancing or sex rituals.\textsuperscript{74}

To explain evil, Orphism suggests there is a cosmic flaw, a disorder in the cosmos and unformed matter. These flaws are present throughout the universe and within people's own minds.\textsuperscript{75} The Pythagoreans, however, were in the minority of Greek thought considering theodicy; the Epicureans, Skeptics, Cynics, and Stoics all “rejected the idea of cosmic good and evil in favour of strictly human responsibilities.”\textsuperscript{76}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Persian}
\end{center}

The similarities between Zoroastrianism’s Angra Mainyu and popular discourses surrounding Satan are remarkable. Zoroastrianism is considered by scholars to be one of the

\textsuperscript{71} Russell, 137-139.
\textsuperscript{72} Russell, 139.
\textsuperscript{73} Russell, 139.
\textsuperscript{74} Russell, 154.
\textsuperscript{75} Russell, 144.
\textsuperscript{76} Russell, 158.
first monotheistic religions. Additionally, scholars see it as the first religion with a perception of cosmic dualism: between Ahura Mazda, meaning “the Wise Lord,” and Angra Mainyu, meaning “the Hostile Spirit.” These duelling characters later became known as Ohrmazd and Ahriman respectively. This section will provide a detailed examination of the “Hostile Spirit,” or the evil opponent, in Zoroastrianism by examining the character of Angra Mainyu, or Ahriman. I will begin this section by providing a brief overview of the Zoroastrian religion. Then, I will describe the birth, or the creation, of Ahriman. I will then discuss Ahriman’s attributes and characteristics. Finally, I will examine Ahriman’s place of dwelling.

Before I can begin an examination of Ahriman, a brief overview of Zoroastrianism itself is necessary. Zoroastrianism is predominantly known for being the religion of the ancient Persian Empire. It thrived during the Achaemenian period under the reigns of Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius, and Xerxes. It even survived the invasion of Alexander in 331 B.C.E. Alexander’s invasion severely threatened the religion of Zoroastrianism because “he ransacked the beautiful capital of Persepolis, destroying fire temples, burning the library containing the holy scriptures of Zarathustra, and killing so many Zoroastrian priests that oral transmission of many scriptures was also lost.” A greater threat to the Zoroastrian religion, however, came with the arrival of Islam around 632 C.E. Mary Boyce provides a description of how the Persians gradually converted from Zoroastrianism to Islam.

[Islamic] missions went out from the Iranian cities into the smaller towns and villages, and earnest preaching was at times supported by mob violence, persistent harassment and occasionally officially sanctioned force. Many mosques were built,
some in place of fire temples, and as the number of Zoroastrians dwindled, the ability of the remainder to resist intimidation and injustice also became less, as did their limited freedom to manage their own affairs.\(^81\)

A number of Zoroastrians, however, migrated to western India where they are now called Parsis.\(^82\) Overall, it is impossible to reconstruct a picture of Zoroastrianism during these specific time periods. With the destruction of temples, scriptures, etc. and a lack of archaeological material, an accurate depiction of Zoroastrianism is problematic. Additionally, one of the major texts in Zoroastrianism, called the *Gathas* “are composed in what has been identified as a very old esoteric tradition of mantic poetry.”\(^83\) This has led to issues with translations and reconstructions.

Zoroastrianism is supposed to have begun with the teachings of the prophet Zarathustra, or Zoroaster as he is known in the West.\(^84\) The exact date of Zarathustra’s life is unknown and has been a subject for scholarly debate. According to Persian tradition, Zarathustra lived around 660 B.C.E.\(^85\) Another traditional date “is 258 years before Alexander … This occurred in 330 B.C.E, and Zoroaster’s date would then be 588 B.C.E.”\(^86\) Zoroastrian scholar Mary Boyce places Zarathustra’s life significantly earlier; around 1700 and 1500 B.C.E.\(^87\) According to the Greeks, Zarathustra’s time was “5000 years before the Trojan War or 6000 years before Plato.”\(^88\) This extraordinary date, however, could be a

---

\(^{82}\) Fisher, 232.
\(^{83}\) Boyce, *Antiquity*, 62.
result of the Greeks’ “misunderstanding of the Zoroastrian theory of the ages of the world.”

Zarathustra’s birthplace has also been a topic for scholarly debate. Most scholars, however, indicate that his birth place was Bactria, or contemporary Iran.

According to a Persian mythic narrative, when Zarathustra was thirty years old, he received a vision, or revelation from an archangel named Vohu Manah. This archangel led Zarathustra “into the presence of Ahura Mazda,” where Mazda called Zarathustra to be his prophet. Zarathustra eventually “proclaimed Ahura Mazda to be the one uncreated God, existing eternally, and Creator of all else that is good including all other beneficent divinities.” In other words, Ahura Mazda was seen “as the One God” and “the ultimate ‘Creator of all things’”. He is considered righteous, unchanging, and incorruptible. Additionally, Ahura Mazda was the “supreme ruler over the kingdom of good, of truth, [and] of light.” Hence, Ahura Mazda is seen to be the only deity worthy of worship.

According to Zoroastrian tradition, Zarathustra himself composed his encounters with Ahura Mazda in the sacred texts called the Gathas which are “preserved in the liturgy of the Yasnas.” It has been described as an ethical handbook. As Boyce states,

Every [person] has the duty … to watch over his own physical and moral well-being, and to care for his fellow-men, since each of them is likewise the special creation of God. The particular ethical code which Zoroaster gave his followers to live by demanded of them good thoughts, good words and good deeds.

---

89 Moore, 185.
91 Noss, 338.
92 Boyce, Beliefs and Practices, 19.
93 Boyce, Beliefs and Practices, 20.
94 Smart, 216.
95 Boyce, Antiquity and Vigour, 67.
97 Matthews, 267.
98 Boyce, Beliefs and Practices, 24.
It is within the *Gathas* that we first come across the “hostile spirit,” or Angra Mainyu. Since Ahura Mazda is entirely benevolent, there must be a reason for malevolence within the world. Zarathustra offers Angra Mainyu as an explanation. Thus, everything benevolent within the world is attributed to Ahura Mazda and all the malevolence is due to Ahriman.\(^99\)

Since Ahura Mazda is the creator God, Zoroastrian tradition indicates that twin spirits were derived from him. One spirit is Ahura Mazda’s Holy Spirit named Spenta Mainyu. The other spirit is the hostile Angra Mainyu. These two spirits are seen “as twins since they do not exist singly by themselves, but each in relation to the other.”\(^100\) According to Zoroastrian tradition, Angra Mainyu is not inherently evil, but chooses the malevolent path.\(^101\) Therefore, Ahura Mazda granted his twin spirits free will and the ability to make decisions. Perhaps this alludes to the Zoroastrian thought of free will and people’s individual choices between “good” and “bad.”\(^102\)

From his creation, Angra Mainyu has represented “evil” and was not envisioned as a type of fallen angel.\(^103\) He is constantly in a state of opposition to Spenta Mainyu; for example, light is opposed with darkness, and order with disorder.\(^104\) Angra Mainyu attacks and taints anything Ahura Mazda creates. His ultimate objective is “the ruin and destruction of the world.”\(^105\) Boyce describes Angra Mainyu’s attacks on Ahura Mazda’s creations resulting in impurity.

[Angra Mainyu] broke in violently through the lower bowl of the stone sky, thus marring its perfection. Then he plunged upwards through the water, turning much of it salt, and attacked the earth, creating deserts. Next he withered the plant, and slew the Uniquely-created Bull and the First Man. Finally he fell upon the seventh

---

99 Stanford, 31  
100 Jackson, 71.  
101 Zaehner, 51.  
103 Jackson, 71.  
104 Zaehner, 254.  
105 Jackson, 74.
creation, fire, and sullied it with smoke, so that he had physically blighted all the good creation.\textsuperscript{106}

This is seen as the initial cosmological disorder.\textsuperscript{107} Logically, since Ahura Mazda is purely benevolent, all his creations must therefore be seen as beneficial and pure. This narrative explains how the material world contains unpleasant or inhospitable conditions. Ahriman’s attributes and characteristics indicate what is considered “evil” within Zoroastrianism. Ahriman has many titles attributed to him; he is called “the Evil One,” “the Hostile Spirit,” “the Destructive Spirit,” and “the Ignorant One.” Additionally, Ahriman is responsible for all the world’s “chaos, imperfection, disease, sorrow, [and] destruction.”\textsuperscript{108} He has also created all the “loathsome things, such as scorpions, toads, and vipers.”\textsuperscript{109} However, one of Ahriman’s most important attributes is associated with death.

According to Zoroastrian tradition, Ahriman “first introduces death into the world.”\textsuperscript{110} Each person has two distinct parts, the body and soul. Angra Mainyu can deceive a soul, but he cannot destroy it. Therefore, Angra Mainyu introduces physical death.\textsuperscript{111} Since Spenta Mainyu is associated with life, logically, Angra Mainyu is considered “not-life.”\textsuperscript{112} Basically, Angra Mainyu destroys peoples’ bodies through “not-life.”\textsuperscript{113} Therefore, afflictions such as illness, aging, “disease, decay, and death are perceived in the Zoroastrian ethos as vices created by the evil spirit Angra Mainyu and brought by him into the material

\textsuperscript{106} Boyce, \textit{Beliefs and Practices}, 25.
\textsuperscript{107} Russell, 113.
\textsuperscript{108} Fisher, 233.
\textsuperscript{109} Russell, 113.
\textsuperscript{110} Zaehner, 47.
\textsuperscript{111} Zaehner, 271.
\textsuperscript{112} Fisher, 233.
\textsuperscript{113} Boyce, \textit{Antiquity and Vigour}, 74.
world to cause suffering, pain, unhappiness, and sin.”

Without Angra Mainyu, humanity would not fall ill, grow old, and die. For these reasons, death is “never welcomed or viewed as martyrdom.”

Since death is associated with Ahriman, “any portion of a dead body, or, for that matter, any part severed from a living body – as for example nail-parings, or hair cut from the head or beard – is [considered] unclean.” A corpse cannot come into contact with the earth, water, or fire because these elements are considered sacred. As a result corpses cannot be buried or cremated. To avoid polluting the sacred earth, an attempt is made “to contain the pollution supposedly present in a corpse [by laying the body] upon a row of three stone slabs or a stone floor.”

These death rituals are usually done within a funerary tower; a circular structure with an open roof. The reasoning behind the open roof concept is that birds of prey will feed upon the corpse. These birds of prey are “thought capable of digesting the flesh without assimilating the demonic forces believed to dwell in the corpse.”

Arguably, Ahriman’s most important attribute directly correlates with deceit, or lying. “The Evil Teacher” and “the False Speaker” are two distinct titles attributed to Ahriman. According to Zoroastrian tradition, these titles imply that Ahriman is the creator of falsehood and deceit. Ahriman created “Lying Speech, and ‘from Lying Speech the harmfulness of the Destructive Spirit became manifest.’” Russell states that the “conflict between truth and lie was one of the main sources of Zarathustra’s dualism: the prophet perceived Angra

---

115 Choksy, 249.
116 Noss, 348.
117 Choksy, 253.
118 Choksy, 255.
119 Zaehner, 255.
Mainyu, the lord of evil, as the personification of the lie.” 120 Thus, the lie is the essence of “evil.” Another sign of Angra Mainyu’s deceit was his physical appearance. Zoroastrian tradition claims that Angra Mainyu did not have any material body because matter was the creation of Ahura Mazda. Therefore, he “might adopt any material form he saw fit, since his numerous disguises were another sign of his inner nature as a liar and deceiver.” 121 For example, Angra Mainyu has been known to take the physical forms of a serpent and dragon. To illustrate the importance of Angra Mainyu’s association with lying, according to Zoroastrians, when people are led astray by untruth, they are known as “the followers of the lie.” 122 This information indicates that deceit was seen as highly unethical.

It is unclear, however, what sort of lies, or untruths, Zoroastrianism is condemning. Is it critical of lies in general, even smaller “white lies”? Possibly it is only condemning malicious lies which result in some form of tragedy or despair. It appears Ahriman’s titles of “The Evil Teacher” and “the False Speaker” provide some insight. Perhaps the “Evil Teachers” and “the False Speakers” were other priests, religious figures, aristocracies, etc. who preached against Zarathustra and/or Zoroastrianism.

Another title given to Angra Mainyu is “Evil Thought.” It is through “Evil Thought” that Angra Mainyu emanates his demonic minions. 123 These demons were produced by Ahriman to aid his war against humans and everything considered “good.” 124 These demons are commonly referred to as daevas and drujes and are usually envisioned as spirits. Some traditions indicate that Angra Mainyu did not create the daevas but he recruited older gods. 125

---

120 Russell, 102.
121 Russell, 116.
123 Jackson, 75.
124 Jackson, 81.
125 Messadie, 83.
These old gods are probably referring to the Hindu devas. Therefore, they were perceived as “false gods who were not to be worshipped because they stood for conflict among [people], luring them through their greed.”

Angra Mainyu, however, is always thought of as the leader of all daevas; he is “the demon of demons.”

It is important to note here that the notion of the daevas and drujes being demonized did not just appear out of thin air. Zoroastrianism’s demons appear to derive from a discursive mythic conflict between the ahuras and the daevas. Russell provides a description:

In India, the elder gods, the asuras, were defeated and overthrown by the devas, who became ‘the gods’ and relegated their ancient enemies the asuras to the level of demons. But in Iran, the ahuras defeated the daevas. … [Thus relegating] the daevas to the ranks of the demons by elevating one of the ahuras, Ahura Mazda, to the position of the one God. The daevas then logically had to be categorized as enemies of the God.

This mythic discourse appears to represent an inversion of the dominated “gods” to become the victors and the ones worthy of worship while demonizing the opponents. By relegating a group of “lesser” deities to be purely malevolent, it appears Zarathustra invented the concept of demonology.

The realm of drujo-demana, or druzman, is where Angra Mainyu and his horde of demons reside. It is a realm “filled with darkness, cold, stench, harmful insects and animals like scorpions and serpents.” It is also a realm filled with “pollution, pain, punishment, affliction, suffering, misery, and discomfort.” Instead of the earthly pleasures associated with wahisht (Zoroastrian heaven), in druzman a sinful “soul must also suffer terrible heat and biting cold, nauseating filth and stench, and it must consume the most loathsome and

---

126 Boyce, Beliefs and Practices, 22.
127 Jackson, 83.
128 Russell, 104.
129 Choksey, 258.
130 Zaehner, 307.
putrid food.”

*Druzman* has four levels, namely, bad thought, bad speech, bad action, and the deepest pit of *druzman*. Angra Mainyu and his demons “are said to gloat as they torment the newly arrived impious soul together with his or her predeceased bad relatives and friends.”

The demons torment the impious soul “by gnawing it, swallowing it, or piercing it with spears.”

Usually, however, the torment is directly related to the sins committed during the person’s lifetime; for example, “an adulteress is suspended by her breast while vermin gnaw at her viscera.”

There are two dominant interpretations dealing with the location of *druzman*. One interpretation is that it is located in the cold north, where Angra Mainyu “sends down hail and snow and devastating floods upon the land.” This location is associated with darkness, cold, and ice. Another interpretation suggests that Angra Mainyu plummeted through the earth finally settling in the primal waters beneath the earth. According to this interpretation, *druzman* is then located within the core of the earth.

Generally, Angra Mainyu and his demonic forces are personifications of every immoral thought, word, and action. They also represent the unexplainable hostilities and displeasures of this world. In this sense, they fill the void of unpleasant situational incongruities. Since social, moral, and physical ills do not correlate with an all powerful benevolent God, an explanation is then needed to explain all the frustrations within the world. For Zoroastrians, Angra Mainyu, or Ahriman, is the embodiment of all things “evil” thus making him the perfect explanation for social, moral, and physical flaws.

---

131 Russell, 119.
133 Russell, 119.
134 Russell, 119.
136 Russell, 113.
137 Russell, 119.
This characterization of Angra Mainyu is remarkably similar to popular conceptions regarding Satan. In certain discourses, Satan is perceived of as the root of all immoral activity and his demonic hordes are blamed for certain physical ills within the New Testament.\textsuperscript{138} Thus, it is conceivable that the New Testament authors could have possessed an understanding that a malevolent entity was the direct foundation of certain disorders. Even in certain contemporary circumstances this perception of illness is not completely absent. Satan is still utilized to be responsible for physical and psychological ailments, which again, result in exorcisms. The unique feature of Zoroastrianism compared to Mesopotamian, Canaanite, Egyptian, and Greek mythologies appears to be an emphasis on cosmic dualism. Thus, when Satan becomes a “universalized” adversary in Christian discourse around the fourth century, the concept of cosmic dualism was not unique and would therefore not be considered incongruous.

**Conclusion**

Examining the mythologies of various cultures’ according to a dichotomy between “hero” characters and “evil” characters can be problematic. Except for perhaps Angra Mainyu in Zoroastrianism, the “evil” deities I have examined are more ambiguous. Additionally, the narratives examined do not necessarily reflect the focal point of each particular mythology; for example, Gilgamesh’s quarrel with Humbaba is not the nucleus of the entire narrative, nor is Hades the center of interest in Greek mythology. However, the narratives examined are invaluable for an understanding of Satan’s development. As I

---

mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the character Satan did not emanate within a vacuum; external mythic narratives aided in the discursive development of this character.

It appears there are three commonalities these narratives share with Satan. First, the “evil” characters are always subordinate to a “higher” God, meaning they are not autonomous. Humbaba serves Enlil, the lord of the gods, as he was sent by Enlil to guard a great cedar forest.\(^{139}\) Even though the Canaanite god of the underworld Mot wreaks havoc, he is still a lesser deity compared to his father El. Similar to Mot, Seth in Egyptian mythology is the son of Nut, the sky-goddess, and after his quarrels with Horus, a council of Egyptian gods and goddess reduced Seth to a subordinate role.\(^{140}\) In Greek mythology, Hades was the son of the Titans Cronus and Rhea. While he helped his brother Zeus usurp power from the Titans, Hades was still subordinate to Zeus who became the supreme ruler of Mount Olympus. Angra Mainyu seems to provide an exception but it must be remembered that he is considered an emanation of Ahura Mazda. Even though Angra Mainyu is considered an autonomous being in carrying out his mischief, Ahura Mazda is always thought to be in control and eventually will destroy Angra Mainyu. Similarly, it could be argued that Satan is subordinate to YHWH, especially in the Hebrew Bible. Texts such as Job and Zachariah demonstrate that Satan was directly under YHWH’s control, a point I will be elaborating on in the next chapter. Satan does appear to be more autonomous in the New Testament’s narratives, but again, he has limited power and is only able to carry out as much mischief as God and Jesus allow.

The second commonality these narratives share with the later Satan is that the “evil” entities usually represent some form of chaos and death. The “good” deity they are usually

\(^{139}\) Heidel, 6.  
\(^{140}\) See Clark, 100-111.
quarrelling with balances this chaos by representing some form of structure and order. Since people are “naturally” inclined to gravitate towards social organization and cohesiveness, the deities denoting the opposite will be viewed with suspicion and fear. Beelzebub, originally an ancient Syrian “god or lord of the flies” but also a synonym for Satan in the New Testament, is also called the “lord of chaos” in the Gnostic writings of Valentinus.141

Finally, all of these “evil” deities dwell in, guard, and/or represent an unpleasant and/or mysterious location. Humbaba guarded “a distant and almost boundless cedar forest.”142 Indeed forests can be sites of mystery, fear, and disorientation. Numerous forests have been associated with the “fear of the unknown”; for example, in the mythology of Robin Hood, the Sheriff of Nottingham’s deputies were always anxious about venturing into Sherwood Forest for the fear of what would transpire. Many folktales also include a predatory beast living in confines of a forest, e.g. Hansel and Gretel, Little Red Riding Hood, etc. Additionally, many fictional and supposedly non-fictional narratives have utilized the labels “haunted forest,” and “enchanted forest,” as specific locations. The inhabitants who reside in these forests are usually represented by some form of a demented hermit, witches, trolls, and/or mischievous beings. Generally, it is difficult to graph an entire forest and its dwellers. Therefore, if one cannot predict what creatures populate a dense and mystifying landscape, fear follows. Mot is known to be the god of the Canaanite underworld, a place which is accessed only through death. Seth is understood to be the patron of the desert, a place notorious for infertility, inhospitality, and uninhabitability. For Egyptians, the desert was also associated with “foreigners and invaders who crossed the desert to attack Egypt.”143

142 Heidel, 6.
143 De La Torre & Hernandez, 72.
Finally, similar to Mot, Hades was also a god to the Greek underworld and was in charge of judgement and torture. In popular Christian discourse, Satan is also the ruler of Hell, a place infamous for torture, fire, pain, and all around an abhorrent location. Generally, people are fearful of the unknowable, especially death. Therefore, any horrible narratives surrounding a detestable “spiritual” existence after death are bound to be met with fear, reprehension, and condemnation. Moreover, the deity linked to an undesirable experience after death, or death itself, will inevitably experience the same sentiments.

By examining the “evil” monsters and deities in Mesopotamian, Canaanite, Egyptian, Greek, and Persian narratives, it is evident that they all, in one way or another, influenced the development of the narrative character Satan. Claude Levi-Strauss suggests that myths (I would also add mythic characters) are made up of constituent units. Numerous narratives have been influenced by varied resources; for example, *The Adventures of Pinocchio* by Carlo Collodi was influenced by various Biblical narratives, such as Jonah and *The Metamorphoses*, or *The Golden Ass*, by Apuleius. Individual characters are also the result of bricolage. The Norse god Odin is one example. H.R. Ellis Davidson suggests that the character of Odin is a mix between the Germanic War god Woden, or Wotan, and Tiwaz. It is evident that Satan is also not a “unique” character who originated within a vacuum but encompasses numerous elements of other Near Eastern narratives which involve mischievous, trickster, or malevolent deities, demi-gods, or monsters. This suggests that there appears to be a fixed set of cross-cultural characteristics for describing death, evil, etc.

145 See Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 16-33, for an extended explanation of *Bricolage*. Basically, a *Bricoleur* is someone who works with their hands, who undertakes odd jobs, a Jack of all trades, and a professional do-it-yourself person.
Since Satan combines various features of these narratives surrounding “evil” deities, especially from Mesopotamian, Canaanite, Egyptian, Greek, and Persian mythologies, Satan is a clear example of a mythic character developed via bricolage.
Chapter 2: Satanic Figures within the Hebrew Bible and Intertestamental Literature.

“... the greatest trick the Devil pulled was convincing the world there was only one of him.”
--- David Wong, John Dies at the End.

This chapter will explore the various discourses of “evil” figures within the Intertestamental period with an attempt to explain the discursive transition which enables Satan to become the predominant representation of evil. To begin, I will examine how the term satan is utilized within the Hebrew Bible. Then, I will provide a brief outline of the Jewish people’s social circumstances during the Second Temple period focusing on the Intertestamental Period. This background information is important because it was during this timeframe that the various discourses of “evil” appeared to transition into a single dominant discourse of evil centered on Satan. Next, I will discuss the numerous “evil” figures during the Intertestamental period, namely Semyaz, Azaz’el, Mastema, and Belial. For each “evil” figure, I will examine the meaning of their name, the texts they appear in, and the possible social discourses which shaped them. Finally, I will explore three possible explanations of how the numerous discourses of evil shifted towards a single predominant discourse of Satan being the ultimate personification of evil. Generally, it appears that an influential group of scribes, utilizing various methods, constructed the satan discourse in an attempt to “make sense” of their changing society.

Three concurrent discourses surrounding satan appear in the Hebrew Bible. First, 1 Samuel 29:4 and 1 Kings 11 reflect a discourse that portrays satan as a terrestrial adversary. Secondly, Numbers 22:22 and 1 Chronicles 21:1 reflect a discourse of satan as a celestial opponent and/or stumbling block. Finally, Zechariah 3:1-2 and Job 1 – 2
reflect a discourse of *satan* as a divine member, or position, within the heavenly council, who functions as an examiner, and/or an “accuser,” of human piety.

1 Samuel is part of a corpus within the Hebrew Bible called “the Deuteronomic History.” This body of literature was most likely written under foreign domination (Persian or Greek), and consists of the books Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. These books are referred to as Deuteronomic because they reflect an ideology similar to that found in the book of Deuteronomy relating to the history of the Israelites. David Jobling briefly outlines the Deuteronomist ideology, or discourse:

> The Deuteronomists’ view of history is tragic … The past is lost, and because it is lost adequate models for the present cannot be developed out of it. This tragic sense of a lost past centers in 1 Samuel since what is most deeply sensed as lost is some ideal state of affairs that preceded the monarchy. But the loss is so profound that it entails the partial loss of national memory. The ideal state of affairs cannot even be conceived, only sensed as lost.

In 1 Samuel 29:4, the NRSV Bible translates the Hebrew term *satan* as “an adversary.” The term is used here by the commanders of the Philistine army in reference to David. Since Saul had a vendetta against David, David has chosen to hide among the Philistines. When a battle appears inevitable between the Philistines and the Israelites, the Philistine commanders disapprove of “David’s participation in the upcoming combat on the basis that David would become an adversary (*satan*), turning against them on the battlefield in order to ingratiate himself to Saul.” Clearly, the term *satan* in 1 Samuel 29:4 refers to a possible military adversary. It is utilized by the

---

148 Jobling, 17-18.  
149 Jobling, 18.  
150 Jobling, 19.  
151 1 Sam. 29:4 (NRSV)  
Philistine commanders to suggest that David may be a hindrance to, or obstruction of, their victory against Israel.\textsuperscript{154}

The NRSV Bible also translates the Hebrew term \textit{satan} as “an adversary” in 1 Kings 11, specifically, 1 Kings 11:14 and 11:23. In both passages, God raises up two separate adversaries (\textit{satans}) against Solomon, namely Hadad and Rezon. However, the text gives little information regarding the historical characters of Hadad and Rezon. T.J. Wray and Gregory Mobley indicate that Hadad was an Edomite who despised the Davidic lineage due to his earlier defeat in combat against David.\textsuperscript{155} Rezon, on the other hand, is seen “to be the leader of a band of outlaws.”\textsuperscript{156} The term \textit{satan} in 1 Kings 11:14 and 11:23 again clearly represents military enemies. Both Hadad and Rezon are terrestrial \textit{satans}, or adversaries, that threaten Solomon through military force. Overall, in 1 Samuel 29:4 and 1 Kings 11, the Hebrew term \textit{satan} refers to specific terrestrial beings. Thus, \textit{satan} is a representation of the presupposed “adversary” within various quarrels between people.\textsuperscript{157}

The second discourse surrounding the term \textit{satan} appears in Numbers 22:22 and 1 Chronicles 21:1. These texts utilize a discourse of \textit{satan} as a celestial opponent and/or stumbling block. Peggy Day suggests that Numbers 22: 22-34 is a later interpolation, because the text surrounding it appears to hold Balaam in high regard whereas Numbers 22: 22-34 appears to mock him by indicating that he is ignorant of an angel blocking his path.\textsuperscript{158} Besides this contradictory assessment of Balaam, the narrative of Numbers 22:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{154} Wray & Mobley, 53.
  \item \textsuperscript{155} Wray & Mobley, 55.
  \item \textsuperscript{156} Wray & Mobley, 55.
  \item \textsuperscript{158} Day, 60-61.
\end{itemize}
22-34 also appears to be somewhat incongruent with the surrounding narratives. This would indicate that these passages would be dated later than the surrounding narrative.

Intriguingly, the adversary in Numbers 22:22 is an “angel of the Lord.” This is the first instance in the Hebrew Bible that a messenger of God is described as a satan, or adversary.\textsuperscript{159} It is important to recognize that the manner in which the text utilizes the term satan does not denote the title of “Supreme Evil.”\textsuperscript{160} In other words, satan in Numbers 22:22 is an angelic messenger of God who acts as a stumbling block to Balaam’s plans.\textsuperscript{161} Thus, in Numbers 22:22, the satan is not humanity’s obstructor in general, but is linked to a specific action, carried out by God’s angel, or wrath, to hinder Balaam.\textsuperscript{162}

The satan in 1 Chronicles has been a subject of much scholarly debate. Proponents of a terrestrial satan, or adversary, indicate that the satan who “stood up against Israel”\textsuperscript{163} in this passage refers to a military power. In other words, David is forced to undertake a military census because the state of Israel is being provoked by a hostile terrestrial military power.\textsuperscript{164} Scholars such as Day and Marvin E. Tate, however, are of the view that the satan in 1 Chronicles is “a divine accuser who brings an unspecified charge against Israel to the heavenly assize.”\textsuperscript{165} Since 1 Chronicles 21 is a recounting of 2 Samuel 24, the former replaces Yahweh’s wrath in the latter with satan.

\textsuperscript{159} Henry Ansgar Kelly, Satan: A Biography, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 16.
\textsuperscript{163} 1 Chronicles 21:1.
\textsuperscript{164} Day, 143.
\textsuperscript{165} Day, 143-144.
This substitution distances Yahweh from instigating David’s negatively portrayed actions of initiating a census.\textsuperscript{166} As Wray and Mobley state;

\begin{quote}
It is not Yahweh but Satan who orders the census, and when Joab, David’s right-hand man, fails to complete the census, Yahweh’s subsequent wrath seems justified. Moreover, by assigning blame to Satan, the Chronicler, in a stroke of sheer genius, is able both to preserve David’s integrity and to keep Yahweh’s reputation unblemished.\textsuperscript{167}
\end{quote}

Ryan E. Stokes offers a more convincing explanation of 1 Chronicles 21:1. First, the closest biblical pericope which resembles 1 Chronicles 21:1 is Numbers 22:22-25.\textsuperscript{168} Secondly, he suggests that Chronicles was retelling a Dead Sea Scroll, or Qumran, version of 2 Samuel 24 rather than the more popular Masoretic version.\textsuperscript{169} This is a significant detail because the Qumran version of 2 Samuel varies from Masoretic text. Stokes arrives at this conclusion because the language and pericopes used in the Chronicles text are more akin to the Dead Sea Scrolls version.\textsuperscript{170} Thus, it is conceivable that the “wrath of God,” manifested as a satan, in Numbers 22 could have shaped the author’s reading of 2 Samuel as well.\textsuperscript{171} Additionally, the author of 1 Chronicles did not use “the satan,” but simply “satan” without a definite article.\textsuperscript{172} Stokes states that “the only other place in all of the [Hebrew Bible] where ‘satan’ without the article refers to a heavenly being is the Balaam pericope of Numbers 22.”\textsuperscript{173} This would indicate that the author of 1 Chronicles intended the satan to be understood in accordance with Numbers

\textsuperscript{166} Day, 144.
\textsuperscript{167} Wray & Mobley, 67.
\textsuperscript{169} Stokes, 101-102.
\textsuperscript{170} See Stokes, 101-103.
\textsuperscript{171} Stokes, 100 &103.
\textsuperscript{172} Stokes, 104.
\textsuperscript{173} Stokes, 104.
22, namely as a celestial opponent or stumbling block which acts on behalf of God’s wrath.

The third and final discourse surrounding *satan* in the Hebrew Bible is found in Zechariah 3:1-2 and Job 1 – 2. These two texts reflect a discourse of *satan* as a divine member, or position, within the heavenly council, who functions as an examiner, and/or an “accuser,” of human piety. The setting for verses 1-7, in Zechariah 3, appears to be a type of heavenly court, including divine members, in which the high priest Joshua is on trial. David L. Petersen suggests that *satan*, standing on the accused’s right, acts as a prosecuting attorney, one who is portrayed as un-neutral, or biased.  

These verses can be understood as veiled inter-Jewish polemic about the appointment of Joshua as the high priest of the re-built Temple in Jerusalem.  

Day suggests that Zechariah’s “*satan* is depicted as objecting to Joshua’s investiture because in fact his assumption of office was not univocally supported within the restoration community.” As Verse 2 indicates, he was “plucked from the fire.” Petersen suggests that fire can be conceived as a moderate punishment or test. In this case, Joshua would have “saved,” or survived, from the fire, indicating that YHWH deems him innocent or worthy.  

A more likely interpretation, however, suggests that being “plucked from fire” may relate to the notion that Joshua was a part of the Babylonian exile. It is conceivable that some Jews would have classified Joshua as unfit to become high priest because of his time spent away in

---

175 Day, 120.
176 Day, 121.
177 Zechariah 3:2.
178 Petersen, 193.
exile. Possibly Joshua’s opponents considered him “tainted” because of his exilic experience.\textsuperscript{179}

The notion of a “foreign” high priest controlling the re-built Temple could have been controversial.\textsuperscript{180} Naturally this controversy would lead to a dispute over legitimacy. To “resolve” this conflict, Joshua is sent to a heavenly tribunal. Within this heavenly court, satan appears to function as the one who examines supposedly devout people.\textsuperscript{181} In this case, the satan examines Joshua’s credentials for the position of high priest. Thus, Zechariah 3:1-7 informs readers “that the objections to Joshua’s investiture had been heard by the highest possible court, the divine council, and were overruled.”\textsuperscript{182} The author of Zechariah, using allegory to support the appointment of Joshua as high priest, reflects a particular discourse which gives credence to people returning from exile, as authority is not exclusively for Jews who remained in Palestine.\textsuperscript{183}

Similar to Zechariah 3, the satan in Job appears to be a member of the heavenly council who aids God by examining supposedly pious people. Even though the satan is a member of the heavenly council, it is important to mention that he appears to act somewhat independently by wandering around the world,\textsuperscript{184} although this may be a part of this particular satan’s duty. Similar to kings’ spies, the satan’s duty could be to watch for subversive behaviour and report the information to the heavenly council.\textsuperscript{185} As Pagels states, “satan’s special role in the heavenly court is that of a kind of roving intelligence agent, like those whom many Jews of the time would have known – and detested – from

\textsuperscript{179} Tate, 463.
\textsuperscript{180} Day, 120.
\textsuperscript{181} Wray & Mobley, 65.
\textsuperscript{182} Day, 126.
\textsuperscript{183} Pagels, 44.
\textsuperscript{184} Wray & Mobley, 64.
\textsuperscript{185} Kelly, 28.
the king of Persia’s elaborate system of secret police and intelligence officers.”

These Persian intelligence agents roamed around the entire Persian Empire searching for any indication of subversion, or disloyalty, among the people. This suggests that the satan in Job is still a particular function of the heavenly council and thus a title, not a personal name. This particular discourse of the satan being like the “eyes and ears of the king” also applies to the satan, or accuser, in Zechariah 3:1-2.

Day describes Job 1-2 as a prologue to a folktale that questions a particular theological discourse that the righteous and pious will prosper. If Day is correct, then the book of Job reflects a discourse of protest against a competing theology. Day states: “I think that it is the juxtaposition of fantasy and reality – of folktale world and real world – that persuades the orthodox members of the audience to listen and encourages them to take seriously the book’s critique of their position.”

The ending of Job, however, appears to contradict this critique as Job’s fortunes are returned to him. Day provides an explanation for this ambiguity; “traditional wisdom is reaffirmed, but in the world of fantasy! The world in which the righteous prosper is pronounced unreal, and orthodox reality becomes the fairytale ending.”

Day’s explanation is indeed possible, but the entire text of Job appears to be using inversion and counterinversion to sustain contended ideologies. Inversion of an orthodox ideology can be used as a critique, but the orthodox can also employ a

---

186 Pagels, 41.
187 Pagels, 41.
188 Tate, 462.
189 Day, 74.
191 Day, 75.
192 Day, 84.
counterinversion to defend their positions. As Bruce Lincoln states, “to be sure it is a powerful act to turn the world upside down, but a simple 180-degree rotation is not difficult to undo. An order twice inverted is an order restored, perhaps even strengthened as a result of the exercise.” It could be argued that by employing this strategy, the book of Job was intended to defend a particular discourse through the method of counterinversion. Job was a righteous man who was tested by an accuser, a satan. The satan turned his world upside down, but he maintained his righteousness, and was therefore rewarded in the end with even more prosperity. Thus, the final counterinversion strengthened the original notion that pious people will eventually prosper. This ending, however, could have been a later interpolation which would give credence to Day’s argument.

Overall, there appear to be three discourses concerning satan in the Hebrew Bible. First, 1 Samuel 29:4 and 1 Kings 11 appear to reflect a discourse that portrays satan as a terrestrial adversary. Secondly, Numbers 22:22 and 1 Chronicles 21:1 reflect a discourse of satan as a celestial opponent and/or stumbling block. Finally, Zechariah 3:1-2 and Job 1 – 2 reflect a discourse of satan as a divine member, or position, within the heavenly council, who functions as an examiner, and/or an “accuser,” of human piety. However, it is important to distinguish the celestial discourses of Numbers/1 Chronicles from Zechariah/Job. Within the Numbers and Chronicles texts, there is no indication of any formal divine councils, or legal accusations. This reveals that there were two distinct discourses surrounding a celestial satan in addition to the terrestrial adversary discourse. However, the satan discourses within the Hebrew Bible relating to Persian imperialism,

---

194 Lincoln, Discourse, 159.
195 Stokes, 105.
military adversaries, legitimizing “exiled” high priests, examiners of people’s piety, etc. do not contain the notion of an actual “evil” cosmic opponent of God as in later discourses, or even the “evil” figures present within Intertestamental literature.

Having provided a brief examination of the various discourses regarding the term *satan* in the Hebrew Bible, I will now shift my focus to literature primarily from within the Intertestamental period. The Intertestamental period marks the time between the final composition of the Hebrew Bible (circa the early second-century B.C.E.) and the first New Testament compositions (circa mid-late first century C.E.).\(^{196}\) This specific timeframe lasts roughly three to four hundred years. First, however, I will provide some additional details about the Second Temple period in general before discussing the Intertestamental period.

According to Ezra and 2 Chronicles, in 538 B.C.E., the Persian leader Cyrus declared that the Jewish community and the Judean cult would be restored.\(^{197}\) According to Jewish tradition, this decree resulted in some Jewish people returning to Palestine thus ending the Babylonian exile. Cyrus and his successors had a “general policy of respecting the customs of [their] subject peoples, protecting and fostering their established cults, and entrusting responsibility to native princes who proved trustworthy.”\(^{198}\) This last point is important to note. Indeed there would be “native princes” “in charge,” but this could have resulted in various Jewish groups quarrelling for control and power leading to frictions between them, a point that will be significant for the formation of the “evil” figures within Intertestamental literature.

\(^{196}\) Wray & Mobley, 95.
\(^{198}\) Lucas, 39.
Two hundred years later, Alexander conquered Palestine en route to Egypt. Since there was no clear successor after Alexander’s death in 323 B.C.E., a forty year struggle between Alexander’s generals for control followed. This timeframe is referred to as the period of the Wars of the Diadochi\(^{199}\) (Diadochi is simply a term for the contending generals and literally means “successors.”) Lester L. Grabbe states that “during the wars of the Diadochi, Palestine was fought in and over many times. We have no details for the most part but can assume that this had a devastating effect on the population and economy of the country.”\(^{200}\) After the Wars of the Diadochi, Alexander’s empire was divided into three kingdoms: the Macedonian Kingdom, the Ptolemaic Kingdom, and the Seleucid Kingdom. A treaty in 301 B.C.E. stated that Palestine was technically under control of the Seleucid kingdom. The Ptolemaic kingdom, however, refused to leave while the Seleucids continually stated the region was “theirs.”\(^{201}\) The result was the Syrian wars between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids.\(^{202}\) The Seleucids finally gained total control over Palestine in 200 B.C.E.\(^{203}\)

Alexander and his successors sought to bring Greek culture into the subjugated people’s lives and to unify the known world through cultural hegemony.\(^{204}\) Grabbe states,

The pressure to adapt to Greek ways was fairly general and diffuse under the Ptolemies. Because the Seleucids put a good deal of emphasis on Greek foundations, however, under them there was more pressure to engage in more specific and more communal measures: instead of individuals choosing to conform to Greek culture, it would be advantageous to make a collective decision

---


\(^{200}\) Grabbe, 211.

\(^{201}\) Grabbe, 204.

\(^{202}\) Grabbe, 204.

\(^{203}\) Grabbe, 270.

\(^{204}\) Lucas, 40.
that would involve a large group of Jews in one specific action, namely, for the Judean capital to elect to become a Greek foundation.\textsuperscript{205}

Ernest Lucas describes how the Jewish nation reacted to this cultural hegemony:

Tensions grew within the Jewish community in Palestine in the face of this cultural pressure. Some welcomed Greek ways and the possibilities of social and economic advancement that came with the adoption of the ways of their rulers. Others resisted moves in this direction because of the departures from their laws and customs that it inevitably involved.\textsuperscript{206}

When Antiochus IV came to power in the middle of the second century, tensions reached a critical level. Again, Lucas describes the situation:

A struggle for control of the high-priesthood for Jerusalem between the pro- and anti-Hellenists gave [Antiochus IV] the opportunity to make much-needed money by selling the office to the highest bidder among the pro-Hellenists. This meddling of a pagan monarch in the highest religious office outraged orthodox Jews, and especially so when he appointed someone, Menelaus, who was not from the traditional high-priestly family.\textsuperscript{207}

Antiochus IV also enraged the Jewish people by outlawing certain distinctive Jewish practices such as reciting Torah, circumcision, dietary laws, keeping the Sabbath, and offering sacrifices within the Temple.\textsuperscript{208} Additionally, he dedicated the Temple in Jerusalem to Zeus. Because of the persecution, many people fled from Jerusalem into the countryside.\textsuperscript{209} Allegedly, a Jewish armed revolt began in the countryside with a man named Judas Maccabeus who eventually led a successful uprising. He was then able to rededicate and “purify” the temple. However, internal Jewish political conflicts remained in regard to who would control the institutions of the Temple and priesthood. Moreover

\textsuperscript{205} Grabbe, 166-167.
\textsuperscript{206} Lucas, 40.
\textsuperscript{207} Lucas, 41.
\textsuperscript{208} Lucas, 41.
\textsuperscript{209} Grabbe, 285.
several complex dichotomies also existed. Many Jews were pro-Seleucid, pro-Ptolemaic, or pro-Hasmonean, etc.\textsuperscript{210} In other words, inter-Jewish polemics were still prevalent.

After the successful revolt in 160 B.C.E., the Hasmoneans, who viewed themselves as moderates, ruled over the Temple priesthood.\textsuperscript{211} This implies that the Hasmoneans were the pinnacle of the Judean power structure, and in total control of the religious and political activities in Judea. The Hasmoneans did not attempt to eliminate the Hellenistic elements within Palestinian culture.\textsuperscript{212} In fact, the Hasmoneans ruled Judea similarly to a Hellenistic kingdom.\textsuperscript{213} Another group called the Pharisees challenged the Hasmoneans by advocating for an increase in religious rigor. As Elaine Pagels states, “the Pharisees, backed by tradespeople and farmers, despised the Hasmoneans as having become essentially secular rulers who had abandoned Israel’s ancestral ways.”\textsuperscript{214} Inspired by the Pharisees, other Jewish groups arose denouncing the Hasmoneans and their allies.\textsuperscript{215} These groups, however, were very diverse and not unified whatsoever; an example would be the Essenes. One way that these groups vented their frustrations, whether being anti-Hellenist or anti-Hasmonean, was through literature.\textsuperscript{216} Overall, the post-Maccabean inter-Jewish polemics are vital for an understanding of the numerous “evil” figures within the Intertestamental period.

The first “evil” figure to appear within Intertestamental literature is Semyaz. Out of all the “evil” figures within Intertestamental literature, Semyaz is perhaps the most ambiguous. Semyaz is also known as Semihazah, Semyaza, Semjaza, or Shemihazah. I

\textsuperscript{210} Grabbe, 247.
\textsuperscript{211} Pagels, 52.
\textsuperscript{212} Grabbe, 164.
\textsuperscript{213} Grabbe, 164.
\textsuperscript{214} Pagels, 46.
\textsuperscript{215} Pagels, 47.
\textsuperscript{216} Grabbe, 164.
will discuss the possible meaning of the name later in this section. Semyaz is found in the book of 1 Enoch, especially 1 Enoch 6-14. 1 Enoch is a composite book which represents various time periods and authors.\(^{217}\) Within 1 Enoch, Semyaz is the leader of a group of angels, called the Watchers, whom God appointed to look after the universe.\(^{218}\) Instead, in 1 Enoch 6-7 and 12 Semyaz and his group of Watchers were filled with lust for human women; for example, 1 Enoch 12 states that the Watchers “have defiled themselves with women.” As a result, they descended from heaven onto Mount Hermon and take human wives to whom they taught the arts of magic and agriculture.\(^ {219}\) The result of these celestial and human sexual encounters was the *nephilim*, or Giants, who wreak havoc, destruction, and death upon the earth. 1 Enoch 7 states: “These (giants) consumed the produce of all the people until the people detested feeding them. So the giants turned against the people in order to eat them. And they began to sin against birds, wild beasts, reptiles, and fish.” Eventually, the Giants completely obliterated each other, but their Ghosts, or Spirits, endured.\(^ {220}\)

These giants then were the product of an unnatural union between the sons of God (angels), or the Watchers, and human women.\(^ {221}\) This could lead to a conclusion that perverted sex, or sexual lust, results in evil.\(^ {222}\) As Wray and Mobley state, “one of the central motifs in the Watchers myth is the element of taboo sexuality.”\(^ {223}\) The Jewish community, or communities, could have been concerned with their own people inter-

---


\(^{218}\) Wray & Mobley, 100.

\(^{219}\) See 1 Enoch 6-7, Charlesworth, Vol 1., 15-16.

\(^{220}\) See 1 Enoch 7, Charlesworth, Vol 1., 16.

\(^{221}\) Stanford, 51.


\(^{223}\) Wray & Mobley, 102.
marrying with Gentiles. 1 Enoch indicates that their offspring would be a perverse generation, or, horrendous giants and monsters that cause destruction upon the earth. George W.E. Nickelsburg, however, compares these sexual unions with Greek mythology. Greek heroes would usually have one mortal parent and one divine. The Jewish writer of 1 Enoch could be employing some form of parody here by indicating, “yes their fathers were divine; however, they were not gods, but demons – angels who rebelled against the authority of God.” With this in mind, the Semyaz myth could be seen as literature subversive of the Hellenistic myths. Since Nickelsburg dates the Semyaz narrative to an early Hellenistic date, this interpretation appears to be plausible.

The most likely discourse surrounding the Semyaz narrative is provided by Siam Bhayro. Bhayro dates the Semyaz narrative ca 300 B.C.E. and suggests that it was an independent composition, inserted into 1 Enoch, composed in northern Galilee. This is due to the fact that Semyaz descends upon earth on Mount Hermon which is situated in upper Galilee. Additionally, since Semyaz taught people various arts, Bhayro provides a convincing argument that the rhetoric used in the Semyaz narrative was directed against the Babylonian mantic arts. The most striking piece of evidence supporting his claim is the name Shemihazah itself, which was a term used to describe a Mesopotamian incantation bowl. Thus, the Semyaz narrative could be seen as a northern Galilean discourse directed against Babylonian importations.

225 See Nickelsburg, 389.
227 Bhayro, 42.
228 Bhayro, 27.
The next “evil” figure I shall discuss is Azaz’el. Azaz’el appears once in the Hebrew Bible, namely Lev. 16:8-10. This narrative has been understood as the “scapegoat” narrative, where Aaron casts sin into a goat to be sent into the wilderness (desert) for Azaz’el. M.H. Segal, however, writes: “It is incredible that a priestly writer would have embodied in the Book of Leviticus a divine command to offer a sacrifice to a demon just immediately before the divine oracle in chapter 17 denouncing the sacrifices to the se’irin,” meaning demons. As Aron Pinker notes,

The ritual described in Lev 16:5–26 was to the same God, potentially being at two locations … This would explain the meticulous rite of ensuring sameness of sacrifice and leaving the final pick of the scapegoat to God via the procedure of a lot. On the unique Day of Atonement God was approached at both locations, there could not be even the slightest show of preference. In later times, God’s abode in the Temple or Jerusalem completely displaced God’s desert abode, relegating it to evil forces as was the belief in Near-Eastern cultures. In this process [Azaz’el], or a derivative of this name, became a satanic figure.

The etymology of Azaz’el is controversial. The most common hypothesis, however, appears to be “strong god.” The origin of the name appears to derive from southern Anatolia or northern Syria.

Similar to Semyaz, Azaz’el’s main narrative appears in 1 Enoch. This suggests that the Azaz’el narrative originated independently of the Semyaz narrative because, while their myths are almost identical, they appear as separate figures in 1 Enoch. Within 1 Enoch, Azaz’el provides humanity with forbidden knowledge such as metallurgy and mining. Nicklesburg relates the Azaz’el narrative to the Greek myth of Prometheus.
Similarly, Newsom suggests that, since humans were considered unrighteous and worthless, Azaz’el was guilty of providing humans with valuable celestial knowledge. Perhaps a better explanation lies in the foundations of the author’s social context. Bhayro suggests that the “forbidden knowledge” provides evidence for a possible location where the Azaz’el narrative was written. Bhayro states that the “most important site in the land of Israel for metallurgical activity was Tel Dan … [and] Tel Dan is situated at the foot of Mount Hermon.” With this location in mind, Bhayro proposes that the Azaz’el narrative was composed in northern Galilee as a rhetorical devise directed against metal weapons. As Nicklesburg states, “the author lives during a time of great violence and bloodshed.” Since Azaz’el teaches humans metallurgy, he has provided people a method on how to manufacture weapons.

Semyaz and Azaz’el appear to provide an explanation regarding human sin as they have “corrupted humanity with forbidden knowledge such as the manufacturing of weapons.” As Peter Stanford states, “the sins of the world are ascribed to the Watcher Angels for introducing humankind to wicked ways.” If the Semyaz and Azaz’el narratives were simply describing human sin, one has to wonder what the social discourses were that perpetuated these “evil” figures. Gerald Messadie states that “the period when Jewish texts first assumed a resolute hostile attitude toward [the ‘evil’ figures,] coincided with the full bloom of Hellenistic Judaism.” Thus, the author

---

235 Bhayro, 42.
236 Nicklesburg, 389.
237 Wray & Mobley, 101.
239 Stanford, 51.
240 Messadie, 240.
condemned anything that he/she considered foreign.\textsuperscript{241} Grabbe offers a more probable explanation by arguing that 1 Enoch was written during the Wars of the Diadochi. Thus, the “evil giants” who destroyed the earth are allegories for the destructive military activities during this troublesome time.\textsuperscript{242} Pagels, however, provides an alternative argument, namely one based on an inter-Jewish polemic. During the inter-Jewish conflicts under the Seleucid kingdom, the “greatest and most dangerous enemy did not originate, as one might expect, as an outsider, an alien, or a stranger.”\textsuperscript{243} Instead, the “evil” figures are the intimate enemy. These intimate enemies could have been fellow Jews who were seen as apostatizing to Hellenism, or certain Jewish groups who were believed to be not practising their Jewish customs and laws as strictly as the author expected. Therefore, stories of “fallen angels proliferated in these troubled times, especially within those radical groups that had turned against the rest of the Jewish community and, consequently, concluded the others had turned against them – or (as they put it) against God.”\textsuperscript{244} Thus, a specific community, or communities, appear to reinterpret the Semyaz and Azaz’el narratives to condemn another community, or perhaps the temple’s priesthood.\textsuperscript{245}

The third “evil” figure present within Intertestamental literature is Mastema. In Hos. 9:7-8, the noun Mastema simply means “hostility.”\textsuperscript{246} In Intertestamental literature, Mastema, as the name of an actual character, appears in the book of Jubilees. The composition date of Jubilees is still under debate by the scholarly community. Possible

\textsuperscript{241} Messadie, 239.  
\textsuperscript{242} Grabbe, 211.  
\textsuperscript{243} Pagels, 49.  
\textsuperscript{244} Pagels, 49.  
\textsuperscript{245} Pagels, 50.  
dates include 134-104 B.C.E., 163-140 B.C.E., and 169-167 B.C.E. Generally, these dates are centered around the Maccabean revolt. Thus, the issues of Hellenization and revolt appear to underscore this specific text.

Jubilees has a similar tale to 1 Enoch regarding the Watchers. This indicates that the author of Jubilees may have been familiar with the Enoch tradition. According to Jubilees, Mastema is the leader of the Watchers. The entire book of Jubilees is essentially a rewriting of certain myths within the books of Genesis and Exodus. Jubilees, however, identifies Mastema as the supernatural force behind some confusing myths within the Hebrew Bible. For example, “it was Mastema and not God who tempted Abraham to kill Isaac, who provoked the Egyptians to pursue Israel, and who sought to kill Moses on the way to Egypt.” Thus, the author of Jubilees has removed God from some questionable activities. As Russell states, “Mastema and his followers tempt, accuse, destroy, and punish [humankind], taking onto themselves all the evil characteristics once attributed to Yahweh.” It appears the discourse surrounding “evil” has adopted more of a cosmic dualism approach.

The discourse surrounding Jubilees appears to derive from the perceived threat of apostasy. The author insists that his people should maintain their traditions, or customs, and not concern themselves with Hellenistic practices. In Jub. 1:19, the author clearly states that the enemy of Moses, and God, are the Gentiles. Additionally, Jub. 15:31-32 states that “the other nations are separated from God because he has placed spirits in

---

248 Grabbe, 235.
249 Kelly, 36.
251 Russell, 204.
252 Pagels, 53.
authority over them to lead them astray.”

This passage appears to be a reinterpretation of Deuteronomy 32:8. Since the author of Jubilees identifies foreign gods with demons, he asserts that the Gentiles venerate demons. James H. Charlesworth argues that the main concern for the author of Jubilees was ritual law and piety. His message was to the “pious” Jewish people to advocate a strict adherence to “the law and a proper observance of sacred times in accordance with God’s covenant.” Thus, it is probable that the author of Jubilees was a member of a priestly family, or Pharisaic group. As a representative of his position he accuses Jews who did not adhere to, or observe, his position of being ignorant akin to the Gentiles. In general, the author of the book of Jubilees, being deeply troubled by inter-Jewish polemics, advocated his position against Jewish groups assimilating into Hellenistic culture.

The final “evil” figure present in Intertestamental literature that I will discuss is Belial. The etymology of Belial is widely debated. One possible explanation is that Belial is connected with the Babylonian goddess Belili of the underworld. John A. Maynard suggests that “Belili is probably the primitive form of Belial … [and that] the Hebrew monotheists changed Belilli to Belial in order to stigmatize the goddess of the

254 Pagels, 54.  
257 Charlesworth, Vol. 2, 45.  
259 Wray & Mobley, 102.  
261 Maynard, 92.
Underworld.” The most probable explanation, however, suggests that Belial derives from the term bilima, meaning “nothingness,” “useless,” and “worthless.”

There are seventy references to Belial within Intertestamentary literature. Belial can be found in the War Scroll, the Damascus Document, the Testament of Simeon, the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Lives of the Prophets, etc.

Generally, these documents were written in the first century B.C.E. Within these documents, Belial appears to be a pure personification of evil. He “is the personification of sin, and he commands at his right and left hands the spirits of wrath, hatred, and lying. He is lord also of fornication, war, bloodshed, exile, death, panic, and destruction.” Additionally, Belial is in control of his own “dark” kingdom. Thus, God is associated with all the benevolence in the world while Belial is responsible for all the malevolence.

The social discourse surrounding Belial appears to derive from a Jewish apocalyptic sect called the Essenes. The Essenes understood Belial to be the evil commander who led people away from the path of righteousness. They also believed that they were personally involved in the center of a cosmic battle between Belial and God. Moreover, they “saw the foreign occupation of Palestine – and the accommodation of the majority of Jews to that occupation – as evidence that the forces of evil had taken over the world and … infiltrated and taken over God’s own people, turning

---

262 Maynard, 93.
264 Messadie, 243.
265 Russell, 209.
266 Russell, 211.
267 Russell, 213.
268 Wray & Mobley, 105.
most of them into allies of the Evil One.”

As Pagels states, the Essenes detested “Israel’s traditional enemies, whom they call the *kittim* (probably a coded epithet for the Romans); they struggle [.however,] far more bitterly against their fellow Israelites, who belong to the ‘congregation of Belial.”

It appears this derogatory designation was directed at fellow Jews who were assimilating to Hellenization. The Essenes viewed themselves as the “sons of light,” and anyone who disagreed with their position were labelled the “sons of darkness.”

They also emphasized that they represented the “new” Israel. As Pagels states, “whoever wants to belong to the true Israel must join in a new covenant – the covenant of their own congregation.”

The assertion that political and/or religious opposition members were possessed by demons could have been a powerful tool employed by sects in an attempt to invalidate their opponents’ beliefs and practices.

Overall, these “evil” figures within Intertestamental literature appear to reflect certain discourses of various communities’ condemnations of Hellenization, a perceived threat of apostasy, and inter-Jewish polemics. The names of the “evil” figures could represent a certain community’s understanding, representation, or modelling of their condemnations. Moreover, they could also derive from the interplay of the actual meaning of the word, e.g. Mastema/hatred and Belial/worthlessness. It appears these specific names for various communities’ condemnations developed and intertwined with the emergence of cosmic dualism and manifested into celestial “evil” figures.

The rise of cosmic dualism within Jewish communities of the Second Temple period coincided with the proliferation of numerous Jewish discourses surrounding “evil”

---

269 Pagels, 57.
270 Pagels, 58.
271 Wray & Mobley, 106.
272 Pagels, 59.
figures. Wray and Mobley suggest, however, that by the end of the Second Temple Period, “the name Satan … had become the popular designation for the Evil One.”\(^{274}\) However, they fail to explain why this is so; why did Satan become the popular designation for the Evil One? Russell suggests that “the victory of ‘Satan’ over ‘Azaz’el’ or ‘Belial’ is less the victory of one kind of being over another than the victory of one name over the others.”\(^{275}\) Russell claims that Satan became the prominent name for God’s cosmic opponent for two reasons. First, the term satan “appears more frequently and more prominently [in ancient Jewish literature] than the names of the others, and [secondly] it appears at a number of crucial points.”\(^{276}\) Russell, however, does not define what these “crucial points” are. Additionally, he does not offer an explanation of why the term satan appears more frequently than the other names for “evil” figures. His two explanations do not provide any tangible reasons why one discourse completely overran and became dominant over competing or conflicting discourses. I think three possible explanations, which all correlate with the rise of cosmic dualism, could provide a more useful answer. First, a group of influential scribes could have used the term Satan to define God’s ultimate celestial nemesis. Second, scribal translations of the Hebrew term satan into the Greek term diabolos could have influenced readers in correlating the two terms. Third, with the rise of cosmic dualism, the actual meaning of the Hebrew noun satan could have had a significant impact for the designation of God’s “evil” opponent as the term fits best with a dualistic perspective. Since the Hebrew term satan literally means “adversary,” it would make sense that people would designate this term as a proper noun to emphasize the perceived ultimate adversary instead of a name like Azaz’el,

\(^{274}\) Wray & Mobley, 101.
\(^{275}\) Russell, 189.
\(^{276}\) Russell, 189.
Semyaz, Mastema, or Belial which have more ambiguous and specific literal meanings. It should be noted that these three hypotheses are not exclusive and can overlap with each other.

Generally, scribes in the Second Temple Period belonged to what contemporary audiences would consider the upper middle class.\textsuperscript{277} It appears that scribes did not work primarily as individual authors but rather as a part of a larger social institution. Individual authors belonged to socials group that expressed their common ideological and artistic principles.\textsuperscript{278} Under the Persians, scribes were employed as administrators. Their primary responsibilities “included the reading and writing of correspondence and records, supervising functions and sometimes legal matters … [Additionally] scribes would have had knowledge of national as well as Persian laws.”\textsuperscript{279} Thus, scribes appear to be a branch of the royal court. Since they were employed under royal patronage, scribes would also be responsible for political propaganda. Outside of these administrative duties, there appears to be little or no evidence supporting the notion of independent scribes. This may be due to the fact that the majority of the population in small provinces were illiterate farmers.\textsuperscript{280} Therefore, written documents were not in high demand among this populace.

In Hellenistic Palestine, it appears scribal culture flourished. Ptolemy II Philadelphus initiated new reforms which resulted in additional bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{281} Thus, the demand for written records dramatically increased. Moreover the rise of Hellenistic

\textsuperscript{278} Van Der Toorn, 46-47.
\textsuperscript{280} Schams, 311.
\textsuperscript{281} Schams, 312.
culture in Palestine led to a growth in literacy and the establishment of libraries.\textsuperscript{282} Greek schools also started appearing, and as a response, Jewish schools arose as well. Karel Van der Toorn explains the functions of these schools:

The scribal curriculum in the Second Temple period is likely to have consisted of two phases, just like the scribal curriculum in Mesopotamia and Egypt. In the first phase, students acquired the basic skills of writing, composition, and eloquence. The second stage of the curriculum was devoted to the memorization and study of the classic texts of their trade and their culture. Further specialization is likely to have occurred, presumably in the form of an individual traineeship.\textsuperscript{283}

With the growth of reading and writing, groups of scribes started appearing in rural areas as well. Their duties included administrative tasks such as keeping tax records, and acting as representatives for their respective villages in matters dealing with higher authorities.\textsuperscript{284} The scribes’ expertise in written records and their ability to be representatives gave them an elevated social status.\textsuperscript{285} Therefore, scribes became a part of the rural elite. Perhaps the most influential scribal group was that of the official Temple scribes. According to Jewish tradition, the Temple in Jerusalem was the center of written law, education, and scholarship.\textsuperscript{286}

With Judaism increasingly becoming a “religion of the book,” the authority of written texts became paramount. Thus, the privileged minority who kept written texts, namely the scribes, wielded positions of influence, power, and prestige.\textsuperscript{287} Additionally, the scribal skills of reading, writing, interpreting, etc., commanded respect amongst the

\textsuperscript{282} Van Der Toorn, 23.
\textsuperscript{283} Van Der Toorn, 98.
\textsuperscript{284} Schams, 313.
\textsuperscript{285} Schams, 315.
\textsuperscript{286} Van Der Toorn, 86.
\textsuperscript{287} Van Der Toorn, 76.
general population.\textsuperscript{288} Van der Toorn provides three explanations why the scribes were so revered among Jewish communities:

First, they were the literate minority in a culture that was still basically oral. Second, they were privy to the deeper meaning of the sacred writings – a meaning hidden from the common crowd. Third, they were the inheritors of Moses and the prophets; no other group could claim the office and authority of the spiritual ancestors of the nation.\textsuperscript{289}

With Judaism’s emphasis shifting towards texts, the scribes were elevated into a prominent position.\textsuperscript{290} With an increase of authority and power, the scribes now claimed control of religious instruction.\textsuperscript{291} They were considered experts on the scriptures and as a result, they were deemed the logical choice for interpreters.\textsuperscript{292} As Christine Schams states, “the function of copying sacred scrolls may have conferred some sort of authority on scribes as interpreters.”\textsuperscript{293}

It is evident that the scribes in the Second Temple period had tremendous power, authority, and influence. Van der Toorn even suggests that the Jerusalem Temple scribes were responsible for the composition of the Hebrew Bible.\textsuperscript{294} Thus, it is plausible that with the rise of cosmic dualism, an influential group of scribes, such as the official Temple scribes, preferred the term \textit{satan} for God’s cosmic nemesis. Being interpreters and readers of the Scriptures and laws, this influential group of scribes would have been in a favorable position to have their discourse elevated into being considered the norm. If a group, or groups, of influential scribes did declare that Satan was God’s celestial opponent then it is conceivable that this discourse would have trickled through to the

\textsuperscript{288} Van Der Toorn, 106.  
\textsuperscript{289} Van Der Toorn, 106.  
\textsuperscript{290} Van Der Toorn, 107.  
\textsuperscript{291} Van Der Toorn, 107.  
\textsuperscript{292} Schams, 317.  
\textsuperscript{293} Schams, 317.  
\textsuperscript{294} Van Der Toorn, 1.
general population. This could explain why the later segments of 1 Enoch (i.e. 1 Enoch 53 and 54) generally use the term Satan instead of Semyaz or Azaz’el to describe God’s opponent.

Generally, different Jewish communities had various discourses surrounding many issues. Thus, they appeared to have varying canons of “authentic” Scripture.295 The term “authentic” is important here because, as Van der Toorn states, “the criteria for establishing the Hebrew canon were authorship and antiquity [among others]; often the issue narrowed down to the authenticity of books claiming to be part of the heritage of the canonical era.”296 In other words, each community designated a specific canon which they deemed authentic. For example, the scrolls found in Qumran included:

Texts of works transmitted in secondary versions (1 Enoch, Jubilees, Sirach), as well as previously unknown works (Genesis Apocryphon, “pesharim” or biblical commentaries on the Prophets and Psalms, targums of Job and Leviticus). Moreover, there are many previously unknown "rules" for community life (Community Rule), for the eschatological battle (War Scroll), and for the ideal-temple city (Temple Scroll). Finally there are poetic and liturgical pieces (Thanksgiving Hymns, Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice), wisdom instructions, legal rulings (4QMMT), horoscopes, and even a treasure map (Copper Scroll).297

All these texts within the Qumran library may have been considered authentic Scripture. Within the majority of the Qumran documents, the most prominent “evil” figure present is Belial. In other words, it is possible that various Jewish groups had different scribes utilizing diverse libraries which resulted in different names for God’s cosmic enemy. In the case of the Qumran group, since it faded, their favourite term Belial did not become dominant.

295 Van Der Toorn, 262-263.
296 Van Der Toorn, 262.
If Van der Toorn was correct in stating that the Temple scribes in Jerusalem were responsible for the basic cohesion of the Hebrew Bible as we know it today, then these scribes would have deemed many of the Qumran texts inauthentic especially since the Qumran group seems to have specifically opposed the Temple authorities, or they were simply not even aware of them. Perhaps with the rise of cosmic dualism, the Temple scribes plucked the name for their celestial adversary (satan) out of texts such as Job, 1 Chronicles, and Zechariah. Since the Temple in Jerusalem was the “center,” or the axis mundi, for the Jewish religion by the end of the Second Temple period, it is conceivable that the official Temple scribes wielded the greatest influence regarding certain contentions, discourses, and interpretations. Therefore, if the official Temple scribes did indeed subscribe to the “Satan as God’s opponent” discourse, then it would have permeated into the smaller communities as well. Due to the Temple scribes’ influence, their specific discourse would then have gained momentum overriding other conflicting discourses. Thus, the Satan discourse prevailed over Semyaz, Azaz’el, Mastema, and Belail discourses in terms of labelling God’s cosmic nemesis.

The second possible explanation of the term satan becoming the predominant name for God’s opponent is the scribal translations of the Hebrew term satan into the Greek term diabolos. In other Greek art and literature, daimon was simply a term utilized to denote an ethereal being or “spirit.” As Russell states, however, “by the late Hellenistic period the term daimonion had acquired an almost universally bad connotation.”

---

298 De La Torre & Hernandez, 105.
299 Russell, 142.
The Septuagint translates the Hebrew term *satan* as *diabolos*, which simply means “the Slanderer” or the devil.\(^{300}\) *Diabolos* has also been translated as adversary, obstructor,\(^{301}\) and/or a defamatory/slanderous person.\(^{302}\) As Pagels states, “the Greek term *diabolos*, later translated ‘devil,’ literally means ‘one who throws something across one’s path.’”\(^{303}\) This translation occurs in every instance where *satan* is personified in some form of a celestial being, such as in Numbers 22:22, 1 Chronicles 21:1, Job 1-2, and Zechariah 3:1. This may be due to the fact that scribes would often express their philosophy, beliefs, customs, etc. in Greek terms. An example can be found in Deuteronomy 32:17: “they sacrifice to demons, not God, to deities they had never known, to new ones recently arrived, whom your ancestors had not feared.”\(^{304}\) The translator translated the Hebrew term *sedim* with the Greek term *daimonia*.\(^{305}\) Dale Martin suggests that *sedim* “originally meant simply ‘lord’ and served as a divine title like ‘Baal’ or ‘Adonai.’”\(^{306}\) Thus, the translator, or scribe, equated foreign gods with *daimonia*.\(^{307}\)

These changes in translation may be due to the fact that during Hellenization, the scribes would often combine their Jewish background with Greek literary genres.\(^{308}\) For example, on a strictly literary basis, the intertestamental Jewish book Tobit appears to have been influenced by Homer’s *Odyssey*. Another intertestamental narrative, Judith,

---


\(^{301}\) Pagels, 39.


\(^{303}\) Pagels, 39. “One who throws something across one’s path” sounds like later interpretations of *diabolos* meaning “a hinderer.”

\(^{304}\) Deuteronomy 32:17 NRSV.


\(^{306}\) Martin, 658.

\(^{307}\) Martin, 659.

\(^{308}\) Schams, 319-320.
displays a chiastic structure similar to the *Odyssey* and/or the *Iliad*. The ramifications of translating *satan* as *diabolos* could have influenced people to correlate the two terms. Thus, by the end of the Second Temple period, *satan* would have been linked with “the devil.” Consequently, the proper name *ho Satanas* in Greek arose and was designated as God’s cosmic opponent, as suggested by the Hebrew *ha-satan*.

The third and final possible explanation of the term *satan* becoming the name for God’s opponent in the predominant discourse could derive from the actual meaning of the Hebrew noun *satan*. Generally, the Hebrew noun *satan* simply means “adversary” or “opponent.” With the rise of cosmic dualism, the general population would have probably preferred one name to designate God’s true nemesis. A name with a powerful meaning behind it, such as *satan*, appears to be more “worthy” of God’s cosmic nemesis. The meaning “adversary” or “opponent” implies that this being is in direct conflict with God, and is more meaningful than the alternative meanings of “strong god” (Azaz’el), “hostility” (Mastema), “nothingness,” “useless,” and “worthless” (Belial).

The prevailing *satan* discourse could have arisen without conscious intention. People use various terms to explain their frustrations, emotions, thoughts, etc., without necessarily consciously thinking about what terms they are using. This explanation, however, may imply that people are static within their specific socio-historical contexts. Alternatively, people do think consciously about what terms they use to describe specific circumstances. I do not think that the prevailing *satan* discourse was a coincidence, or unintentional. In labelling such an important figure connected with the rise of cosmic

309 Breytenbach and Day, 726.
310 Nielsen, 73.
311 Janowski, 128.
312 Willem, 553.
313 Sperling, 170.
dualism, it seems unlikely that the satan discourse would have prevailed organically, or without any thought process. I assume a great deal of thought went into the classification process. As Jonathan Z. Smith states, “myth is a ‘strategy for dealing with a situation.’”314 It is “a limited collection of elements with a fixed range of cultural meanings which are applied, thought with, worked with, experimented with in particular situations.”315 The particular situations for our purpose are Hellenization, the rise of cosmic dualism, and the increase of more widespread scribal cultures. With these “situation”s in mind, the prevailing satan discourse could have begun with an influential group, such as the official Temple scribes, and trickled through to the general population. This influential group may have then used translation techniques, public readings, etc., to emphasize their discourse. As Bruce Lincoln states, “an authoritative mode of narrative discourse … may be instrumental in the ongoing … construction of society itself.”316 Thus, an influential group could construct a discourse which their society would eventually adopt as their own. Hence, the satan discourse prevailed over the other “evil” figure discourses.

Overall, the three possible explanations that I have offered could be plausible independently, but it is more probable that they intertwined and overlapped with each other. This would indicate that a complicated cognitive process occurred in dealing with socio-historic conditions, which resulted in designating Satan as God’s central cosmic “adversary.”

In conclusion, the discourse surrounding satan evolved from earlier concepts of a terrestrial adversary, a celestial opponent and/or stumbling block, and a divine member,

315 Smith, 308.
or position, within the heavenly council, who functions as an examiner, and/or an
“accuser,” of human piety to God’s ultimate cosmic nemesis and the pure personification
of “evil.” I have examined how the term satan is utilized within the Hebrew Bible,
discussed the numerous “evil” figures during the Intertestamental period (Semyaz,
Azaz’el, Mastema, and Belial), and explored three possible explanations of how the
numerous discourses of evil shifted towards a single predominant discourse of Satan
being utilized as God’s antagonist. I concluded with a hypothesis that an influential
group of scribes constructed the designation of Satan as God’s cosmic adversary in an
attempt to “make sense” of their changing society, namely Hellenization and the rise of
cosmic dualism.
Chapter 3: New Testament Representations of Satan

“In Calvin: Do you believe in the devil? You know, a supreme evil being dedicated to the temptation, corruption, and destruction of man? Hobbes: I'm not sure that man needs the help” --- Bill Watterson (The Days are just Packed. Calvin and Hobbes)

In this chapter, I will discuss canonical New Testament representations of the narrative character Satan, specifically within the gospel of Mark, Matthew, Luke-Acts, John, the Pauline literature, and the Book of Revelation. For this examination, I have decided to explore the narrative character of Satan within each narrative. This will avoid the problem of character homogenization, a problem that is evident in scholarship on Satan in the New Testament. By interweaving various pericopes, some scholars have constructed an overall character profile of Satan which resembles certain contemporary discourses.317 Gerd Theissen, for example, provides a conglomerated interpretation of Satan within the New Testament. Theissen claims that the Devil has gained an enormous amount of power by the time the New Testament was composed and proclaims that Satan is utilized as a symbol to “flag dangers of religious absolutizing tendencies,”318 and/or “as a powerful notion with which to criticize the various dangers inherent in religion.”319 While providing a unique interpretation of the Devil within the New Testament, Theissen also tumbles into the trap of character homogenization. For example, Theissen proclaims that within the entire corpus of the New Testament, Satan has been annulled due to Luke

319 Vos, 9.
10:17-20.\textsuperscript{320} As I will discuss later within this chapter, this interpretation appears accurate for Luke’s perception of Satan but is not indicative of the entire New Testament corpus. Within this chapter, I will demonstrate how the homogenized perception of Satan is not indicative of Mark’s, Matthew’s, Luke’s, John’s, or Paul’s actual Satan character. To begin this examination, I will discuss the Satan narrative within Mark. Then, I will examine the Satan narratives present within Matthew. Next, I will consider the Satan narratives within Luke-Acts and John. Then, I will examine the Pauline treatment of Satan. Finally, I will examine Satan within the Book of Revelation.

**Mark**

Within the gospel of Mark, the term Satan is only employed six times. The first mention of Satan occurs in Mark 1:13: “And the Spirit immediately drove him into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him” (Mk 1:12-13, NRSV). T.J. Wray and Gregory Mobley suggest that Jesus’ “‘casting out’ foreshadows the casting out of demons, the exorcisms, that Jesus (and his disciples) subsequently perform.”\textsuperscript{321} Additionally, the time span which Jesus spent in the wilderness (forty days) is seen as an allusion to the Hebrew people’s struggles for forty years in the book of Exodus.\textsuperscript{322} Mark’s temptation narrative, however, does not provide any details regarding any actual temptations. The only details the reader is given is that Jesus “was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him”

\textsuperscript{320} Vos, 11.
\textsuperscript{322} Wray & Mobley, 118.
(Mk 1:13). The author of Mark must have believed his audience would reach the obvious conclusion that Jesus had no problem overcoming his temptation.\textsuperscript{323}

Wray and Mobley suggest that Mark’s temptation narrative brings the reader “one step closer to completing the cast necessary for an apocalyptic drama … A war with many battles involving Jesus versus Satan.”\textsuperscript{324} In other words, the main protagonist and antagonist of Mark’s narrative, namely Jesus and Satan, are now introduced. Wray and Mobley are implying that within this pericope, Satan is cast as the “ruler” of the evil forces struggling against Jesus. Upon further examination, however, Satan appears to resemble the discourse of the celestial “tester,” “accuser,” or “examiner” in Job 1-2 and especially Zechariah 3. As Henry Ansgar Kelly states: “Mark is more traditional in having Satan perform the role of tester.”\textsuperscript{325} Satan’s function in Zechariah 3 and Mark 1:12-13 appears to be an “examiner” who tests Joshua and Jesus’ credentials. By passing these “tests,” the reader is informed that the protagonists, or prominent figures, are capable, and authorized, to achieve their “task,” “journey,” “role,” etc. Such narrative tactics occur throughout numerous cultural myths and history, from the Apocalypse of Abraham, where Abraham’s faithfulness is tested by fasting for forty days and by recognizing Azazel’s attempted trickery,\textsuperscript{326} to contemporary films such as Star Wars, where Luke Skywalker removes himself from the main plot line and undergoes testing of his Jedi credentials.

The second, third, and fourth mention of Satan occur within the same pericope in Mark 3: 22-26:

\textsuperscript{324} Wray & Mobley, 118.
\textsuperscript{325} Kelly, 81.
And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.” And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come.” (Mk 3:22-26)

These passages are indeed interesting and have provided an abundance of interpretations. Two interpretations, however, appear to be more prominent. Kelly argues that “Satan is still ‘standing,’ still securely in his place, and that his end is nowhere in sight. At the same time we can read between the lines: it’s too bad that Satan is not divided against himself and that his end is not imminent.” This implies that Satan has power, is still active, and causing havoc. The second interpretation is nicely summarized by Austin Busch:

It makes no sense, the parables suggest, to hold Satan responsible for Jesus’s exorcisms, for if Satan were responsible for them then he would be opposing himself, and his “house” or dominion could not stand. On the contrary, Jesus invades Satan's house from the outside and plunders his property. Far from satanically authorized, Jesus the exorcist violently opposes Satan's authority. The fact of this opposition, to which Jesus's parables draw attention, sufficiently refutes the scribal interpretation of his exorcisms as evidence that Jesus is in league with the devil.

With the aid of Mark 3:27, scholars have suggested that the author of Mark was indicating that Satan was already bound. Since Satan was already bound, Jesus was able to invade and plunder Satan’s “house.”

Mark 3:22 is the only occasion in which the author utilizes the term “βεελζεβουλ.”

Readers tend to assume that Mark is using the names Beelzebul and Satan

---

328 Kelly, 83.
interchangeably. Wray and Mobley state: “Beelzebul is an alternative name for Satan in the Synoptic Gospel.”

Beelzebul, however, is labelled the “ruler of the demons” and at this specific juncture in Mark, the only detail of Satan that has been provided was the “examiner” within the temptation narrative. It is conceivable that Mark did use Beelzebul in connection with Satan but is it possible that the author was referring to two distinct entities? Could Jesus have been referring to the cosmic “examiner” and “tester” as a parallel to the “ruler of the demons”? Whether one wants to view Beelzebul and Satan being utilized as interchangeable or distinct entities, it is important to note the narrative character of Satan in Mark is either still employed as a “tester/examiner,” or as a cosmic ruler of a distinct kingdom separate from God’s kingdom. The latter view appears to be derived from the notion of cosmic dualism.

The fifth occurrence of Satan appears in Mark 4:15: “These are the ones on the path where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them” (Mk 4:15). Wray and Mobley suggest that “Satan in this parable is a strain of voracious antimatter that inhibits healthy life and productivity.”

Kelly suggests that Satan is an entity who is misleading people. According to this passage, the narrative character of Satan appears to be a type of celestial opponent and/or stumbling block. It is possible that this specific discourse surrounding Satan could have been a variation and/or development of the celestial opponent/stumbling block discourse present in Numbers 22:22 and 1 Chronicles 21:1. Each instance indicates that Satan is capable of misleading and/or destruction.

---

330 Wray and Mobley, 121.
331 Wray & Mobley, 124.
332 Kelly, 84.
The final occurrence of Satan is Mark 8:33: “But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, ‘Get behind me Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things’ (Mk 8:33). It appears that the author of Mark did not intend to suggest that Peter was somehow possessed by Satan; rather, this passage is analogous to 1 Samuel 29:4 and 1 Kings 11. Within the parameters of these three occurrences, Satan reflects a terrestrial adversary discourse or in this instance, a “tempter” as well. Thus, Satan is a representation of the presupposed “adversary” within various quarrels between people. In this particular instance, Peter takes Jesus aside and attempts to rebuke him for stating that he will be shunned by the elders, priests, and scribes, be killed and then rise again. In response, Jesus refers to Peter as a “Satan” simply meaning that Peter has become a stumbling block, or opponent, to Jesus’ perceived divine “mission.” Therefore, this quarrel between Peter and Jesus is directly related to terrestrial concerns and is not an example of Jesus debating, banishing, or “overcoming” a great evil cosmic enemy.

If there are indeed several distinctive, perhaps competing, discourses of Satan within the narrative of Mark, why would the author attempt to unify them? Utilizing Claude Levi-Strauss’ theory of “fundamental oppositions,” Riches suggests that Jewish mythic narratives within the first centuries BCE and CE, “say what they have to say about the world and human patterns of behaviour by drawing on different, indeed opposed, views of reality, for example of the origins of good and evil and the overcoming of evil.

---

by good.” The function of myths is to be a mediator between oppositions. Riches continues:

[They] enable the communities to live with the tensions that beset them. The myths, that is to say, are there not simply to impose a particular view of the world and a particular social order on a particular people, but rather to attempt to alleviate the deep-set problems and tensions within a given society.

Thus, by incorporating various discourses surrounding Satan, the author of Mark has become a mediator by combining various Satan discourses into a single unifying myth. By combining various discourses, the “mediator” is able to produce a mythic narrative which numerous and diverse people would be able to recognize and support. Therefore, the new united myth would be able to conglomerate these numerous and diverse groups of people into a more common position. I am not suggesting that the Satan narratives are the main catalyst for the author of Mark being labelled a “mediator,” or even that the author consciously combined various Satan discourses, but it appears applicable.

The need for “mediators” was indeed necessary as the gospel was written during a traumatic time period in Palestine and for Jewish people. The gospel of Mark was composed during the Jewish Rebellions against Rome (66-70 CE) or immediately after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. Pagels suggests that that the author of Mark “had no quarrel with the Romans but with the Jewish leaders—the council of elders, the Sanhedrin, along with the Jerusalem scribes and priests.” Essentially, within Mark, the figure of Satan “is not a hostile power assailing Israel from without, but the source and representation of conflict within the [Jewish] community.” Thus, Mark’s purpose was

---

334 Riches, 34.
335 Riches, 35.
337 Pagels, 10.
338 Pagels, 34.
to address inter-Jewish polemics. Borrowing supernatural imagery and themes from Jewish apocalyptic literature, such as 1 Enoch and Jubilees, Mark created a new narrative. Pagels explains: “the subject of cosmic war serves primarily to interpret natural form. The figure of Satan becomes, among other things, a way of characterizing one’s actual enemies as the embodiment of transcendent forces.” Consequently, Pagels understands the passages in Mark regarding Satan as allegories for tangible realities dealing with inter-Jewish tensions. For example, concerning Mark 3:22-26, Pagels argues that the author of Mark viewed the “house of Israel” as the divided house, or kingdom.

While Pagel’s argument of inter-Jewish polemics is convincing, I believe she slightly underestimates Mark’s indignation towards the Romans. Since the Gospel of Mark is wartime literature, it seems likely that the author would have strong sentiments against the people occupying his/Jewish land and destroying Jerusalem, the city which is a symbol and representation of his/Jewish identity and heritage. Mark 5:1-20 appears to be a clear example of anti-Roman propaganda. A demon named “legion” who is driven into a herd of swine is clear. Obviously the name of the demon represents Roman Legionnaires. Additionally, the herd of swine running off the cliff into water symbolizes a desire for the Roman occupants to be driven out of Jewish territory.

None-the-less, the main antagonists in Mark are the Pharisees, and Jerusalem’s scribes and priests. Pagels states that “in Jerusalem, the priestly party and their city-dwelling allies tried to maintain peace with Rome.” It is possible that Mark’s author resented the priestly party’s close ties with Roman authority. One main argument for Mark’s apparent apathy towards Rome is the portrayal of Pontius Pilate. Mark’s Pilate is

---

339 Pagels, 13.
340 Pagels, 20.
a “crowd pleaser” who is personally concerned about justice. Yet the historical Pilate was a brutal governor who was accused of “greed, violence, robbery, assault, abusive behaviour, frequent executions without trial, and endless savage ferocity.”

So why the discrepancy? Interestingly, Pagels appears to provide an answer: “Mark is eager to allay Roman suspicions by showing that Jesus’ followers are no threat to Roman order, any more than Jesus himself had been.” Witnessing how Romans treat rebellion and sedition, the author of Mark would have been extremely cautious in dealing with Rome. Outward, direct, and clear subversion would have been stamped out harshly. By employing “insider” image representations, such as “demons” being driven into a swine herd and criticising priestly parties associated with Rome, the author would have been able to write whatever they pleased without “outsider” repercussions. The inter-Jewish polemic and/or anti-Roman propaganda interpretations lie far beyond the scope of the actual character of Satan in Mark.

Three hypotheses emerge from an examination of Mark’s Satan. First, Mark does not really concern himself with Satan. There are only five references to Satan and none of them are extremely significant to the overall narrative of Jesus. Additionally, there is no mention of the term or designation “the devil.” Satan is a peripheral character, not the main antagonist. That honour resides with the Pharisees and Jerusalem’s scribes and priests.

Secondly, Mark discusses Satan as though his audience is familiar with the character. The author does not provide any descriptive details whatsoever. There is no mention of physical attributes, background information, motivations, or even an

---

342 Pagels, 10.
introduction and conclusion. This lack of detail once again implies Mark’s lack of interest in Satan. Satan, however, is not an anomaly in this respect. Simon of Cyrene in Mark 15 is also lacking character details.\textsuperscript{343} This indicates that Mark’s audience(s) would have enough knowledge of the character in order for the narrative to make sense.

Finally, the merging of various discourses regarding Satan appears to reflect, on a microcosmic level, Mark’s willingness to incorporate various conflicting mythemes into a single unifying myth.\textsuperscript{344} Since Mark’s gospel was written within a period and location of turmoil, it is possible that the author “is engaging in a post-traumatic re-imagining of identity in his (invention of a) Jesus-narrative.”\textsuperscript{345} Generally, the situational incongruity of the war (and exile) for many Jewish, and Christian, communities was an opportunity for re-imagining their identity.\textsuperscript{346} On a microcosmic level, the character of Satan supports the idea that the author of Mark was actively engaged in “re-thinking identity.” Mark, using diverse discourses surrounding Satan, as a “tester/examiner,” a celestial stumbling block, and a terrestrial stumbling block, constructed a “unified” Satan character. This newly created Satan was unique since he was a conglomeration of diverse discourses but he would have also been recognizable for various communities. Thus, the character of Satan provides a microcosmic example of how numerous communities would be able to recognize and relate to certain characteristics of the gospel’s diverse narratives, myths, etc. Ideally, this re-imagining of identity would create a new sense of unity and comradery among various factions, provide a new sense of identity, and help rectify the situational incongruity of the rebellion and destruction of the Temple. Being under colonial rule and

\textsuperscript{344} See Matthew section for further details.
\textsuperscript{345} Arnal, 60.
\textsuperscript{346} See Arnal, 57-66.
witnessing the loss of their common identity marker (the Temple), identity would have been a massive concern for the Jewish people. A new identity is easier to create, by appealing to and combining other common identity markers (belief Jesus is the Son of God, etc.), since people will be able to latch on to markers they feel are important and create a “new” unified community. Therefore, the collective “we” existed before the Romans and the destruction of the Temple and “we” will be preserved through new mythologies and reconstructing “our” collective identity.  

**Matthew**

Matthew’s gospel has been interpreted as a campaign against the Pharisees. Since Matthew was written around a decade or two after the Jewish revolt, it is not considered wartime literature due to its primary concern with stable social relations. Matthew emphasizes the Pharisees as the main antagonists. As Pagels states, “Matthew, proclaiming the message of Jesus the Messiah, found himself in competition primarily with these Pharisaic teachers and rabbis, who were successfully establishing themselves throughout the Jewish world as authoritative interpreters of the Torah.” Matthew issues a scathing attack on these “new” Jewish leaders to delegitimize their authority. Additionally, the author of Matthew also addresses accusations regarding Jesus’ illegitimate birth and a rumour that Jesus’ disciples stole his body.  

---

349 Pagels, 76.  
351 Pagels, 77
summarizes Matthew’s hostility to the Pharisees nicely: “What Matthew defends is what is crucial to him, and what he attacks is probably important to his opponents’ view of Judaism. Both … share many values and know each other’s weak points.”

There are only two occurrences where Matthew utilizes Q regarding “the devil.” The first one I will discuss is the Beelzebul accusation. With Mark’s framework in mind, Matthew employs two additional verses before and after the Beelzebul accusation. Matthew 12:22-23 states, “Then they brought to him a demoniac who was blind and mute; and he cured him, so that the one who had been mute could speak and see. All the crowds were amazed and said, ‘Can this be the Son of David?’” (NRSV). This “set-up” to the Beelzebul accusation follows a typical pattern found in miracle stories: “description of the illness, healing, confirmation and reaction of the crowd.”

Matthew 12:22-23 is so brief and secondary that John Kloppenborg suggests “that it can hardly have circulated independently of the speech material.” The crowd’s proclamation, however, of “Can this be the Son of David?” does appear to be a Matthean invention. This phrase is not found in Luke and it is congruent with Matthew’s attempts to locate Jesus within the Davidic lineage and to legitimize his birth.

The second addition to the Beelzebul accusation, Matt. 12:27-29, states: “If I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own exorcists cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you.” One interpretation of these verses suggests that the verse 27 “compares Jesus’ exorcisms with those of contemporary Jewish exorcists, and

---

352 Pagels, 87.
353 Saldarini, 45.
355 Kloppenborg, 122.
356 See Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus (Matt. 1:1-17) which links Jesus to King David’s lineage.
[verse 28] … asserts that the kingdom of God is manifest in Jesus’ exorcisms."\(^{357}\)

Kloppenborg, in a very persuasive argument, refutes this interpretation and instead suggests that these passages derive from Matt. 12:30, or Q 11:23\(^{358}\) — “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.” As Kloppenborg states, both examples illustrate

That failure to recognize and accept the kingdom in Jesus’ preaching is tantamount to opposing the kingdom and allying oneself with Beelzebul … It is impossible to be free of demonic occupation if one has not positively responded to the kingdom.\(^{359}\)

In general, these verses are suggesting the Beelzebul accusation is ludicrous and charges the accusers with failing to perceive the exorcism as divine works and manifestations of God’s kingdom, which makes them susceptible to God’s judgement.\(^{360}\) In other words, “to reject the kingdom as proclaimed by its envoy and manifest his works is tantamount to demonic opposition to God, and will indeed meet with a severe judgement.”\(^{361}\)

Within Matthew’s Beelzebul accusation, there is one anomaly that is worth mentioning. Matt. 12:24 states, “But when the Pharisees heard it they said …” Matthew places the Pharisees in the role of the accusers whereas Mark places the Jerusalem scribes as the accusers and Luke (probably reflecting Q) simply places “some” of the crowd as the accusers. Matthew’s blatant emplacing of the Pharisees as the accusers is clear; he is locating a certain social position as the antagonist, villains, and/or obstacles. This hostility, however, against the Pharisees is congruent with Matthew’s gospel and should come as no great surprise. The terminology Matthew utilizes is also worth mentioning.

---

\(^{357}\) Kloppenborg, 122.

\(^{358}\) See Kloppenborg, 122-127.

\(^{359}\) Kloppenborg, 127.

\(^{360}\) See Kloppenborg, 127.

\(^{361}\) Kloppenborg, 127.
Matthew specifically employs the terminology of “βεελζεβουλ” and “ό Σατανας” exactly where Mark places them. The only other reference to an “evil figure” occurs in Matt. 12:27 (Q 11:19) where Matthew labels him “βεελζεβουλ.” It is indeed possible that Q did employ the term Beelzebul, or possibly “ό διαβολος,” but it seems apparent that Q did not utilize the term, or designation, “ό Σατανας.” Within this pericope, the term Satan only appears where Mark locates it. Matthew takes no creative liberties regarding the term in the Beelzebul accusation narrative.

The second occurrence where Matthew utilizes Q regarding Satan is found in Matt. 4:3-11. This narrative is an addition to the temptation narrative in Mark. Mark implies that Jesus was tested for forty days. Matthew, however, states “the tester” appeared after he fasted for forty days and forty nights. Afterwards, “the devil” tempts Jesus with three separate suggestions. First, he suggests that Jesus turn stones to bread. Second, the devil tempts Jesus to throw himself off the pinnacle of the Temple to witness whether or not God’s angels would catch him. Finally, the devil suggests Jesus bow down and worship him; in return, Jesus will rule “all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour” (Matt 4:8). Similar to Mark’s temptation narrative, “the devil” figure appears to resemble the celestial tester, or prosecutor, found in Job and Zachariah. In addition, corresponding to Job and Zachariah, but not Mark, “the devil” is given his first speaking role in the Synoptic Gospels.

This narrative, however, is considered an anomaly within Q. As Kloppenborg states:

---

362 I discuss the possibility of Q only employing the term “the devil” on page 80-81.
While most of the Q materials are simply sayings, chriae or short ‘speeches,’ Q 4:1-13 is a three-part dialogue with a relatively detailed narrative framework. More importantly, it is a true narrative, albeit one in which speech plays a central function.\(^{364}\)

This has caused confusion in scholarly circles resulting in certain scholars rejecting the claim that it belongs to Q.\(^{365}\) Henry Ansgar Kelly states that “it is rather a fanciful elaboration on the testing episode in Mark.”\(^{366}\) Kloppenborg, however, suggests that this narrative was “a later interpolation” into Q.\(^{367}\) Kloppenborg believes that the narrative was added because Q was becoming more influenced by the Abraham and Job narrative patterns and Graeco-Roman hero biographies; the heroes have to undergo a period of temptation in order to indicate that they are capable, and authorized, to achieve their “task,” “journey,” “role,” etc. Therefore, “Satan acts as the obstacle that deflects Jesus from his messianic role. Satan’s temptations here have to do with power and address the nature and authenticity of Jesus’ mission.”\(^{368}\) Additionally, Kloppenborg states, the testing “motif commonly occurs at the beginning of wisdom collections.”\(^{369}\) Thus,

The special character and especially the placement of the testing story after the predictions of John and just before the beginning of Jesus’ main activity (preaching) conforms the opening sequences of Q to the narrative pattern shared by the legends about Abraham and Job, and the Graeco-Roman hero biographies. This conformity with a typical biographical pattern confirms … that Q was moving toward a narrative or biographical cast. The fusion of Q with the Marcan narrative in Matthew and Luke only continued what had already begun in the last stages of Q redaction.\(^{370}\)

---

\(^{364}\) Kloppenborg, 246.  
\(^{365}\) See A.W Argyle, “Accounts of the Temptation of Jesus in Relation to the Q-Hypothesis,” In ExpT 64, (64. 1952-53), 382. Found in Kloppenborg, 246.  
\(^{366}\) Kelly, 87.  
\(^{367}\) Kloppenborg, 248.  
\(^{369}\) Kloppenborg, 260.  
\(^{370}\) Kloppenborg, 262.
The additional temptation narrative has produced numerous other interpretations. Elaine Pagels suggests that Matthew utilizes Satan as a testing mechanism in order to prepare Jesus for the inevitable confrontations, debates, and “tests” provided by the Pharisees and others.\(^{371}\) Therefore, this narrative “turns Satan into a caricature of a scribe, a debater skilled in verbal challenge and adept in quoting the Scriptures for diabolic purpose.”\(^{372}\) It appears that Pagels is signifying that Matthew is linking Satan with the Pharisees. For example, Pagels proposes that Satan’s last temptation (offering Jesus all the kingdoms of the world) “implies that political success and power (such as the Pharisees enjoy under Roman patronage) may evince a pact with the devil – and does not, as many of Matthew’s contemporaries would have assumed, mark divine favour.”\(^{373}\) The debate hypothesis indicates that rabbinical “show-debates” were forms of midrash “that displayed an authoritative figure responding to a series of challenges by citing the correct passage from Scripture.”\(^{374}\) Therefore, Matthew is attempting to illustrate that “Jesus does not reject the Torah. Instead … Jesus proclaims its essential meaning.”\(^{375}\) This “gentlemanly” exchange does appear to be a viable interpretation as it correlates nicely with “testing” Jesus before he can undertake his mission. The form of temptation, however, is not starving, falling, or worshiping the devil; it is a set of Scripture debates with the end result establishing Jesus’ merit and authority. Consequently, by “winning” the midrash debate, Jesus is now able, and authorized, to commence his mission.

Another interpretation of the longer temptation narrative is provided by Kelly; “Matthew may have been inspired to develop his threefold testing of Jesus at the hands of

\(^{371}\) Pagels, 80-81.  
\(^{372}\) Pagels, 81.  
\(^{373}\) Pagels, 81.  
\(^{374}\) Kelly, 87.  
\(^{375}\) Pagels, 81.
Devil by two episodes in Mark’s Passion narrative, which Matthew also includes in his own Passion account.”\textsuperscript{376} The first testing is the Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane and the second testing is the challenge Peter experiences in the courtyard of the High Priest. Kelly reasons that the longer temptation narrative and the two specific Passion narratives both include three-part ordeals.\textsuperscript{377} This interpretation appears to be highly problematic. First, comparing various narratives because they have a similar number of ordeals is tenuous, circumstantial, and arbitrary. There is no evidence to support the notion that these narratives should somehow be linked. The only commonality is the number three which appears to be purely coincidental. Secondly, this temptation narrative derives from Q. Thus, it is not a by-product of Matthew’s creativity. Overall, this interpretation should be disregarded.

The terminology, however, that Matthew employs within the longer temptation narrative is compelling. In verse 4:3, Matthew describes ό πειραζων, literally meaning “the one-trying” as “the tempter.” Afterwards, Matthew employs the term ό διαβολος almost exclusively. This is fascinating due to the fact that one of Matthew’s sources, namely Mark, never uses the term “ό διαβολος.” It seems apparent that the term, or designation, “ό διαβολος” was employed by the writers of Q. There is, however, one problem, namely verse 10: “τοτε λεγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, ‘Ὑπαγε, Σατανα, …’” meaning “then Jesus said to him, ‘Be gone, Satan!’” Verse 10 indicates that the term “Σατανα” could have been used by the writers of Q. Upon closer examination, however, verse 10 appears to be the product of Matthew’s own hand and not original to Q. This verse is the only occasion where Matthew utilizes the term “ό Σατανας” within this narrative.

\textsuperscript{376} Kelly, 89.
\textsuperscript{377} Kelly, 90.
Additionally, this verse is not found within Luke. Luke simply states, “When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.” Why Matthew would include this verse is extremely hard to determine. Perhaps he wanted to conflate the “evil figures” found within Q and Mark. It is also possible that Matthew utilized the term unconsciously to finish the narrative by demonstrating Jesus’ divine powers against an external force. As Wray and Mobley suggest, “the banishment of Satan at the end of the story demonstrates Jesus’ power over evil, his messianic role and the futility of Satan’s plan.”

Whatever his reason, what is important to note is: the only time Matthew uses “ὁ Σατανας” within the longer temptation narrative appears to be by his own ingenuity, otherwise, “ὁ διαβόλος” appears to be the terminology indigenous to Q.

The two instances where Matthew follows Mark regarding Satan appear in the parable of the sower and Jesus’ rebuke to Peter. These occurrences are minor but worth mentioning. Within the parable of the sower, Matthew simply substitutes Mark’s usage of ὁ Σατανας with “ὁ πονηρος,” meaning “the wicked one.” The meaning of the parable appears unchanged. Matthew’s exchange of terminology from “ὁ Σατανας” to “ὁ πονηρος” does imply that he equates “Satan” with “wickedness” and presumably his intended audience did as well. Matt. 16:22 and Mark 8:33 both include Jesus rebuking Peter, “Get behind me, Satan.” Matthew, however, adds, “for you are a stumbling block to me.” While Mark’s rebuke could be seen as more ambiguous, Matthew clarifies; this passage is not suggesting that Peter was actually possessed by Satan, but the literal meaning of Satan, an “obstacle” or “stumbling block,” pertains to this narrative. Again, it is analogous to 1 Samuel and 1 Kings insofar as Satan reflects a terrestrial adversary and

---

378 Wray & Mobley, 119. They do not specify what “Satan’s plan” includes.
is a representation of the presupposed “adversary” within various quarrels between people.\textsuperscript{379}

There are two unique narratives in Matthew relating to Satan, namely Matt. 13:36-43 and 25:31-46. In the former narrative, Jesus is explaining to his disciples the parable of the weeds. Verses 38-39 state, “the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.” Overall, this passage is strikingly similar to the theology of the Essenes relating to their “evil” figure Belial. The Essenes understood Belial to be the evil commander who led people away from the path of “righteousness.”\textsuperscript{380} They also believed that they were personally involved in a cosmic battle between Belial and God.\textsuperscript{381} The Essenes “saw the foreign occupation of Palestine – and the accommodation of the majority of Jews to that occupation – as evidence that the forces of evil had taken over the world and … infiltrated and taken over God’s own people, turning most of them into allies of the Evil One.”\textsuperscript{382}

As Pagels states, the Essenes detested “Israel’s traditional enemies, whom they call the \textit{kittim} (probably a coded epithet for the Romans); they struggle [, however,] far more bitterly against their fellow Israelites, who belong to the ‘congregation of Belial.’”\textsuperscript{383} In other words, the Essenes viewed themselves as the “sons of light,” and anyone who disagreed with their position was labelled with the pejorative label “sons of darkness.”\textsuperscript{384}


\textsuperscript{381} Wray & Mobley, 105.

\textsuperscript{382} Pagels, 57.

\textsuperscript{383} Pagels, 58.

\textsuperscript{384} Wray & Mobley, 106.
The Essenes also emphasized that they represented the “new” Israel. As Pagels states, “whoever wants to belong to the true Israel must join in a new covenant – the covenant of their own congregation.” The assertion that political and/or religious opposition members were possessed by demons is a powerful tool employed by sects in an attempt to invalidate their opponent’s beliefs and practices. It is conceivable that Matthew, inspired by the Essenes, constructed his own narrative, utilizing apocalyptic motifs, to illustrate the superiority of his perceptions and “world view.” As Pagels states, “within the ancient world … it is only Essenes and Christians who actually escalate conflict with their opponents to the level of cosmic war.”

The second unique narrative in Matthew relating to Satan is Matt. 25:31-46. This narrative describes how the “Son of Man” will “separate” people similar to a Shepherd separating sheep and goats. Verse 41 states, “Then he will say to those at this left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’” This verse is relatively simple and appears to reflect the same concept as Matt. 13:36-43. Overall, the general message appears to be that the “sons of darkness,” the “weeds,” and the “goats” will all be thrown into the eternal fire due to their allegiance to “the devil.” Again, Matthew is projecting his terrestrial conflicts into the celestial realm.

By examining Satan in Matthew, three hypotheses emerge. First, similar to Mark, Matthew does not appear to be overly troubled with a great cosmic enemy. Once again the main antagonists are concrete realities relating to conflicting social groups. Thus, Matthew’s primary concern is not “Satan” and his cosmic cohorts, but a tangible social group. Matthew’s “Satan” may be more developed than his predecessor Mark’s, but

---

385 Pagels, 59.
387 Pagels, 84.
overall he is still a peripheral character who is more a nuisance to Jesus than a main threat.

Secondly, the unique “Satan,” or “the devil,” narratives within Matthew reflect an extreme dichotomy between people. Matthew separates people into, usually two, classifications, “us” (God’s people) and “them” (Satan’s people). It is evident that Matthew is engaged in constructing a discourse of classification. Obviously, part of Matthew’s criteria is agreeing with his perceptions regarding Jewish law, Jesus, etc. as seen in Matthew 13:36-43, 25:31-46, and 12:30 – “Whoever is not with me is against me.” Matthew frames his taxonomies as legitimate, authoritative, and natural. Thus, Matthew’s constructed classifications are intended to portray the “natural order” of his social location ordained by the cosmos.388

Finally, Matthew, like Mark, was involved in myth-making by combining discourses. He combined various discourses and myths into a single unifying mythic biography. Matthew’s conglomerated myth, however, does appear to be a conscious endeavour due to the fact he combines two existing texts, namely Mark and Q. The author of Matthew, supposedly writing around Galilee or Antioch,389 was confronted with a dramatically changing social landscape with the Pharisees wandering into Galilee and possibly even further north into Syria.390 Additionally, according to the Romans, the Pharisees would “make ideal candidates for the successors to the old nation state, since they have already been part of a coalition government in the past.”391 With Matthew coming into contact with this new powerful and influential social group, it appears

390 Segal, 27.  
391 Segal, 27.
evident that conflict, in the form of debates, etc., ensued. Similar to Mark, the narrative character of Satan can be utilized, on a microcosmic level, to reveal Matthew’s attempt at myth-making. The ambiguity of the character “Satan,” “the devil,” etc. is its strength. Myth-makers can manipulate ambiguous characters, symbols, etc. to suit their needs as it aids their endeavour for unification and solidarity.\footnote{David I Kertzer, \textit{Ritual, Politics, and Power}, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1988), 69-70.} Even if Mark’s “Satan,” Q’s “the devil,” and Matthew’s unique “devil” are completely different discourses, combining them into a single discourse can effectively occur due to the ambiguous nature of the character Satan. Therefore, ambiguous symbols and characters, such as Satan, prove beneficial to myth-makers when they are confronted with traumatic incongruities such as war, new social hierarchies, etc., to exhibit, emphasize, and reinforce a perceived enemy. In times of social upheaval, ambiguous symbols and myths can be manipulated to draw lines of classification, “us” and “them” within a time period of uncertainty. By illustrating clear lines of distinction, the “other” is once again labelled and demonized.


For this section, I will discuss the narrative character of Satan and “the devil” within the narrative of Luke-Acts. The character of Satan within the gospel of Luke is arguably the most sophisticated and developed compared to the other synoptic gospels. As Elaine Pagels states, “Luke goes further than Mark and Matthew in making explicit what Mark and Matthew imply – connection between Jesus’ Jewish enemies and the ‘evil one,’ the devil.”\footnote{Elaine Pagels, \textit{The Origin of Satan: How Christians Demonized Jews, Pagans, and Heretics}, (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 89.} As this section, however, will demonstrate, even though the author of
Luke does utilize the character of Satan more than the other synoptic gospels, Satan does not appear to resemble the “ruler of Pandaemonium,” or the “incarnation of evil.” Instead, the author of Luke appears to employ Satan as absent during the period of Jesus’ ministry. This is congruent with Luke’s historical outlook as by banishing Satan, Jesus fulfills the Hebrew Bible’s promises to Israel as Luke imagines them.

Pagels suggests that the Gentile author of canonical Luke “agrees with Paul that God had always intended to offer salvation to everyone.”\textsuperscript{394} Luke’s concept of universal salvation invited people from various nations to identify themselves as “members of the ‘true Israel.’”\textsuperscript{395} One example is Luke 24:47: “and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem.” This new social group consisting of numerous “nations” considered themselves the “true heirs of Israel.”\textsuperscript{396} There is, however, one important point to note. Joseph B. Tyson presents a convincing explanation of canonical Luke’s composition. He argues that there was an “original Luke” that was composed after Mark around 70-90 C.E. and consisted of roughly Luke 3-23. Canonical Luke, based upon “original Luke,” was composed around 120-125 C.E. as a response to Marcion and added chapters 1-2 and 24.\textsuperscript{397} This would explain the two separate “introductions” present within Luke, namely Luke 1:1-5 and 3:1-2.\textsuperscript{398} Additionally, Tyson suggests that the post resurrection accounts in Luke 24 “may be read as an explicit rejection of the theological convictions of the Marcionites.”\textsuperscript{399} Although all the material regarding Satan, or the devil, in Luke occur in “original Luke,”

\textsuperscript{394} Pagels, 89.
\textsuperscript{395} Pagels, 89.
\textsuperscript{396} Pagels, 89.
\textsuperscript{398} See Tyson, 90-100.
\textsuperscript{399} Tyson, 108.
we only have access to this material within the framework of canonical Luke, so the
pericopes I will be examining should be thought in terms of the interests and agenda of
canonical Luke dated around 120-125 C.E., since we do not possess “original Luke.” The
Satan narratives themselves, however, could have been lifted from original Luke dated
circa 70-90 C.E.

There are only two occurrences where Luke utilizes Q regarding “the devil.” The
first one I will discuss is the Beelzebul accusation. Luke, similar to Matthew, employs
two additional verses before and after Mark’s framework. Luke 11:14 states, “Now he
was casting out a demon that was mute; when the demon had gone out, the one who had
been mute spoke, and the crowds were amazed.” This verse appears to be
inconsequential and merely acts as an introduction to the pericope. As John Kloppenborg
states, this introduction follows a typical pattern found in miracle stories: “description of
the illness, healing, confirmation and reaction of the crowd.” Luke, however, does not
include the verse “Can this be the Son of David?” found in Matthew 12:23. This lends
credence to the notion that this latter verse was a Matthean invention (see p.75-76).

Luke’s second addition to the Beelzebul accusation is Luke 11:19-23. Overall, the
scholarly interpretations of these verses are virtually identical to Matthean hermeneutics.
Again, Kloppenborg argues that these passages derive from Luke 11:23, or Q 11:23401 –
“Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.”

---

401 See Kloppenborg, 122-127.
Luke is stating “that there is no possibility of neutrality in the assessment of Jesus’ works.” As Kloppenborg states, both examples illustrate

That failure to recognize and accept the kingdom in Jesus’ preaching is tantamount to opposing the kingdom and allying oneself with Beelzebul … It is impossible to be free of demonic occupation if one has not positively responded to the kingdom.

Thus, “the parable threatens those who, having been delivered of a demon, invite it back by failing to respond positively [or recognize] divine power.” In general, these verses are suggesting the Beelzebul accusation is ludicrous and charges the accusers with failing to perceive the exorcism as divine works, and manifestations of God’s kingdom, which makes the accuser susceptible to God’s judgement. As Susan R. Garrett states, “one must either acknowledge that Jesus has routed Satan, thereby allying oneself with the one who has conquered and who will yet conquer, or else one allies oneself with the devil.”

In other words, “to reject the kingdom as proclaimed by its envoy and manifest his works is tantamount to demonic opposition to God, and will indeed meet with a severe judgement.”

The second occurrence where Luke utilizes Q regarding Satan is found in Luke 4:3-12. This narrative is an addition to the temptation narrative in Mark. Mark implies that Jesus was tested for forty days. Luke follows Mark by indicating that Jesus was tempted for forty days by the devil, whereas Matthew implies that the devil tempted Jesus after his forty day fast. Thus, using Q, verses 4:3-13 expand Mark’s “temptation” by suggesting how the devil tempted Jesus during those forty days. The first temptation

---

403 Kloppenborg, 127.
404 Kloppenborg, 127.
405 See Kloppenborg, 127
406 Garrett, 46.
407 Kloppenborg, 127.
consists of the devil suggesting that Jesus turn stones to bread. The second temptation consists of the devil suggesting Jesus bow down and worship him; in return, Jesus will rule all the kingdoms of the world. Within this second temptation, there is a phrase which is unique to Luke. Verse 4:6 states, “And the devil said to him, ‘To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please.’” This verse appears to indicate that the devil has been given authority over the world. T.J. Wray and Gregory Mobley suggest that “this passage typifies the language of the combat myth motif so common in apocalyptic literature (especially as seen in Qumran).”

Garrett suggests that Luke 4:6 “highlights Luke’s understanding of Satan as ‘the ruler of this world.’” Additionally, she compares this verse to Rev. 13:7b-8 in an attempt to emphasize Satan’s “authority” over the terrestrial realm. Despite being interesting interpretations, I do think they are a little exaggerated. As Garrett herself indicates, “Satan in subsequent literature: he tests, he accuses, and he leads astray.” Thus, this verse appears to correlate more with Job’s and Zachariah’s Satan, where the devil wanders the terrestrial realm, or with Mastema in the book of Jubilees, where his position is a type of Superintendent of Discipline; the devil tests Jesus’ resolve, dedication, and worthiness before Jesus begins his mission or journey. The final temptation consists of the devil suggesting Jesus throw himself off the pinnacle of the Temple to witness whether or not God’s angels would catch him. When Jesus overcomes the final temptation, Luke employs a distinct phrase. Luke 4:13 states, “When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.”

---

409 Garrett, 38.  
410 Garrett, 39.
degree, this implies that Luke’s devil is more insidious. Mark and Matthew simply state that the devil left Jesus alone without any plotting or inherent protest. Luke’s minute phrase has produced copious amounts of scholarly ink. For the vast majority of scholars,\textsuperscript{411} the devils “opportune” time occurs in Luke 22:3-4; “Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve; he went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers of the temple police about how he might betray him to them.”\textsuperscript{412} For Luke, the whole period of Jesus’ ministry is marked by Satan’s absence from Israel. Therefore, it is congruent with Luke that “the Devil” retreated from the world while Jesus’ ministry was taking place.

The longer temptation narrative of Luke is not just “a fanciful elaboration on the testing episode in Mark”\textsuperscript{413} as Henry Ansgar Kelly would suggest, but it is strikingly similar to Matthew in regards to the narrative being a dialogue, or midrash debate, between the devil and Jesus. Therefore, this narrative “turns Satan into a caricature of a scribe, a debater skilled in verbal challenge and adept in quoting the Scriptures for diabolic purpose.”\textsuperscript{414} Again, this “show-debate” interpretation does correlate with “testing” Jesus before he can undertake his mission. Luke’s devil is testing Jesus’ tenacity, merit, and authority. Consequently, by “winning” the hermeneutical challenge, Jesus is now able, and authorized, to commence his mission. Hence, “Satan acts as the obstacle that deflects Jesus from his messianic role. Satan’s temptations here have to do with power and address the nature and authenticity of Jesus’ mission.”\textsuperscript{415}

\textsuperscript{411} See Pagels, 90 and Wray & Mobley 120.
\textsuperscript{412} I will discuss this passage below.
\textsuperscript{414} Pagels, 81.
\textsuperscript{415} Wray & Mobley, 118.
The terminology that Luke employs for the Beelzebul accusation and the longer temptation narrative should be noted. Luke does not take any creative liberties regarding the terms Satan, the devil, and Beelzebul within these narratives. Luke utilizes the term Beelzebul exclusively within the Beelzebul accusation except for one instance where he follows Mark employing the term Satan. Interestingly, Luke even omits one phrase found in Mark 3:23 and Matthew 12:26 respectively: “How can Satan cast out Satan,” and “If Satan casts out Satan,…” There is no clear indication why Luke would omit this phrase but perhaps he was concerned about the redundancy of Jesus’ argument. More likely, since Luke believed Satan was absent during Jesus’ ministry, there was no need for Satan to cast out Satan. Regarding the longer temptation narrative, Luke utilizes the term “the devil” without exception. This could simply be due to the possibility that Luke was simply following Q’s indigenous terminology and designation for “the evil one,” namely the devil.416

The only instance where Luke derives a reference to Satan from Mark alone appears in the parable of the sower. Within this parable, Luke substitutes Mark’s usage of Satan with “the devil.” The meaning of the actual parable is unchanged. Luke’s substitution, however, appears to be a conscious effort. As I previously mentioned, Luke is very concerned with indicating that Satan was absent during the “special” time period of Jesus’ ministry. Therefore, Luke is careful where he utilizes the term Satan as one can witness with Luke’s “unique” Satan narratives.

The first unique narrative regarding Satan, or the devil, appears in Luke 10:17-20. Verse 18 states, “He said to them, ‘I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of

---

416 This follows my Matthew section where I argued that Q utilizes the term “the devil” and never employs any other designation, such as Satan.
lightning.” This verse is of course not describing “the Garden of Eden” scene in which Satan is cast out of heaven for tempting Adam and Eve. The concept of original sin is completely absent in the synoptic gospels and is anachronistic if applied to those gospel accounts. Traditional interpretations usually suggest that this pericope is modelled after Isaiah 14. 417 This chapter in Isaiah concerns the King of Babylon’s “desire for divine status [which] causes him to ‘fall from heaven.’” 418 This interpretation is supported by the fact that Luke alludes to Isaiah 14:11-15 “in his woe over Capernaum (Luke 10:15)” 419 According to this traditional interpretation, Jesus is suggesting that Satan’s “fall” had already taken place. 420 Joseph Fitzmyer, however, suggests that Jesus is referring to present circumstances, perhaps relating to the missionaries’ exorcisms. With Jesus’ presence now upon the earth, Satan’s authority has fallen like lightning. 421 Kelly, however, suggests that Jesus is describing a prophecy to “the seventy.” In other words, Satan’s “fall has not yet occurred, but it is imminent.” 422 Simon J. Gathercole provides a similar interpretation of Jesus’ vision which “alludes to the eschatological fall of Satan to take place in the future.” 423 Garrett, however, provides a more convincing explanation that is congruent with Luke’s perception of Satan and Jesus’ fulfilment of the Hebrew Bible. With Jesus’ salvific authority over the terrestrial realm, Satan can no longer wreak havoc and chaos since he is perceived as absent. As a result, Jesus’ followers are

417 Kelly, 98.
418 Garrett, 40.
419 Garrett, 50.
420 Garrett, 51.
422 Kelly, 99.
promised authority and protection from Satan’s assaults. Garrett states, “Jesus promises the seventy missionaries authority to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the Enemy, and assures them that the Enemy shall in no way harm them.” Garrett correlates Jesus’ “promise” to Psalm 91:13: “You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.” Garrett explains that Luke must have been familiar with this Psalm because Jesus quotes the two preceding verses within the longer temptation. Garrett, however, appears to be equating Luke 10:17-20 with the Beelzebul accusation. Once again, Jesus has demonstrated that his divine powers are prevailing over Satan’s perceived dominion.

This passage is indeed important, as Garrett suggests, because it clearly outlines Luke’s unique view of Satan: that he is absent during Jesus’ ministry because Jesus fulfills the Hebrew Bible’s promises to Israel.

Interestingly, there is practically no scholarly material regarding Luke’s second unique mention of Satan, namely Luke 13:10-17. This pericope is the healing of the crippled woman. Verse 16 states, “And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?” Satan’s role here is more marginal but worth mentioning. Luke appears to be simply linking Satan to a physical ailment. This pericope is strikingly similar to Job 2:7: “So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and inflicted loathsome sores on Job from the sole of his foot to the crown on his head.” Attributing physical ailments to a deity is not unique to Jewish and Christian traditions. As Jamsheed K. Choksy states, afflictions such as illness, ageing, “disease, decay, and death are perceived in the

---

424 See Garrett, 51 & 55.
425 Garrett, 55.
426 See Garrett, 56.
Zoroastrian ethos as vices created by the evil spirit Angra Mainyu and brought by him into the material world.” ⁴²⁷ The main focus of this pericope, however, does not appear to be Satan’s association with physical affliction but as an engagement with the issue of healing on the Sabbath. As Jonathan Z. Smith notes, myths “are not primitive attempts to explain natural phenomena. Myths may think with natural objects or categories; they are almost never about natural objects or categories.” ⁴²⁸ Instead, “myth is best conceived not as a primordium, but rather as a limited collection of elements with a fixed range of cultural meanings which are applied, thought with, worked with, experimented with in particular situations.” ⁴²⁹ Thus, this narrative is not suggesting an explanation of disease, illness, etc., but it is a critical engagement with a particular discourse which Luke perceives as important. Luke is more concerned here with the issue of the leader of a synagogue becoming indignant because Jesus was healing people on the Sabbath. The whole narrative of Luke 13:10-17 revolves around Jesus healing a crippled woman on the Sabbath, exerting his “authority” over the leader of the synagogue, and labelling the leader a hypocrite since the leader also accomplishes various tasks (untying a ox or donkey and leading it to water) on the Sabbath.

The third unique narrative to Luke regarding Satan occurs in Luke 22:3-6: “Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve.” Satan “entering” Judas could be the author of Luke’s attempt to signify a terrestrial temptation (money). However, the vast majority of scholarship links this narrative to Jesus’ temptation in the

wilderness. This is Satan’s “opportune time” to “defeat” Jesus. Satan has seen his opportunity to enter the world again after his prolonged absence and “defeat” Jesus.

The fourth and final unique narrative to Luke regarding Satan occurs in Luke 22:31-34: “Simon, Simon, listen! Satan had demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail.” Miguel A. De La Torre and Albert Hernandez suggest this narrative is paralleled with Job. First, Satan has to obtain permission to tempt Peter and God/Jesus grant Satan permission in order for Peter to better prepare “to face all future forms of trials and temptations.” De La Torre and Hernandez also suggest that this is not Peter’s first encounter with Satan. His other “ordeals” took place in order to humble him and make him “stronger and more resilient in doing the work of Christ.” The problem, however, with this interpretation is that De La Torre and Hernandez use Matthew as the “other” examples of Peter encountering Satan, namely Matt. 16:23: “Get behind me, Satan, for you are a stumbling block to me.” Luke, however, does not include Peter’s rebuke. Therefore, it appears De La Torre and Hernandez are constructing an interpretation that is simply not present within the individual gospel of Luke.

At first glance, it seems Luke 22:3-6 and 22:31-34 are attempting to absolve Judas and Peter for their “wrong doings.” With Satan “entering” Judas and “sifting” Peter, their “wrong doings” were the work of Satan and not of their conscious selves. A more likely explanation, however, derives from Luke’s attempt to link Satan with successful temptation. Both betrayed Jesus for terrestrial reasons, Judas for money and Peter

---

430 See Kelly, 101 & Pagels, 90, Wray and Mobley, 120.
432 De La Torre & Hernandez, 211.
attempting to distance himself from Jesus to avoid being arrested. The difference, however, between the temptations of Peter and Judas is that Peter is rehabilitated after his denial and later becomes a very prominent figure. Conversely, Judas’ treachery is not absolved, which results in his horrid demise. Pagels states, “Luke wants to show that those who reject Jesus accomplish Satan’s work on earth.” I would quibble slightly and instead suggest that Luke wants to indicate Satan is now present within the terrestrial world after his absence and is proceeding to tempt accomplices of Jesus.

Luke also employs four unique narratives about Satan within the text of Acts, namely Acts 5:3; 10:38; 13:10; and 26:18. Acts 5:3 states: “‘Ananias,’ Peter asked, ‘why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land?’” This passage has left certain scholars baffled by the apparent moral injustice. Peter was given a chance for rehabilitation after denying Jesus three times, yet he condemns Ananias to death for a type of real estate fraud. Kelly goes as far as to suggest Peter is acting more akin to Satan for his draconian punishment. J. Albert Harrill, however, “argues that the episode depicts divine judgement for perjury, a stock scene familiar in ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern cultures.” Within this pericope, Satan is treated similarly to Luke 22; he enters Judas’ and Ananias’ heart for the purpose of temptation. Both succumb to the temptation which leads to a betrayal of Jesus or the Holy Spirit, resulting in their ultimate demise.

The second reference to “the devil” within Acts appears in verse 10:38: “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing

---

433 Pagels, 98.
435 Kelly, 104.
436 Harrill, 353.
good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.” Andrew E. Arterbury suggests that Luke’s narrative “of the first conversion of a Gentile household is intimately bound up with the cultural custom of hospitality.” Peter’s mention of “the devil” occurs when he is communicating to Cornelius who Jesus was. The devil’s function within Peter’s narrative appears self-explanatory; the devil is associated with illness, probably referring to physical and emotional sickness. The devil, however, is, at best, second-nature within this narrative. The main thrust of the narrative is relating a myth regarding the conversion of the first gentile household.

Acts’ third reference to “the devil” appears in 13:10: “and said, ‘You [child] of the devil (υἱε διαβολου), you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?’” Within this passage, Paul is referring to “a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet, named Bar-Jesus” (Acts 13:6). Generally, Luke is stating that a Jewish man named Bar-Jesus was “deceitfully pretending to be a prophet, but actually [is] an idolatrous magician.” Additionally, this character named Bar-Jesus appears to have somehow interfered with Paul’s mission of proselytizing. Thus, Bar-Jesus can be seen as an obstructor. As Garrett states, “By making straight paths crooked – in other words, by interfering with Paul’s efforts to preach to Sergius Paulus that he might believe and be saved – Bar-Jesus acted according to the devil’s word-obstructing designs.” It is interesting to note the terminology in this passage. As I shall discuss later within this chapter, within Paul’s undisputed letters, he exclusively applies the designation “ό Σατανας.” He never refers to the title “ό

---

438 Garrett, 83.
439 Garrett, 81.
διαβολος.” If Paul did encounter a “magician” named Bar-Jesus, he would likely have labelled him “ό Σατανας,” rather than “υἱε διαβολου.” Overall, this narrative does appear congruent with Paul’s rhetoric against people obstructing him, but the language employed can be seen as a microcosmic example of Luke’s creativity recounting Paul’s travels.

The final reference to Satan occurs within Acts is 26:18: “‘to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’” This passage is a component of Paul’s speech to King Agrippa recounting his conversion experience. Within this passage, darkness and Satan are synonymous with unbelief.⁴⁴⁰ Therefore, again, Satan is employed as a type of tempter figure who shields people from Paul’s attempted evangelizations.

Two interesting points appear regarding Luke’s unique Satan narratives. First, whenever Luke is lifting narratives from other sources like Mark and Q, the terminology Luke employs is “ό διαβολος.” Throughout the entire temptation narrative and the parable of the sower, ό διαβολος is Luke’s preferred designation. The only exception is found within the Beelzebul accusation where ό Σατανας is only mentioned once. Luke’s unique narratives, however, exclusively employ the designation “ό Σατανας.” As I previously mentioned, this appears to be a conscious endeavour. Luke is very concerned with indicating that Satan was absent during the “special” time period of Jesus’ ministry. Therefore, Luke is careful where he utilizes the term ό Σατανας as one can witness with Luke’s “unique” Satan narratives.

⁴⁴⁰ Kelly, 106.
Secondly, Luke’s unique narratives regarding Satan do engage with Luke’s attempt to claim the legacy of Israel.\textsuperscript{441} Smith states “a myth is a ‘strategy for dealing with a situation.’”\textsuperscript{442} Hence, Satan plays a more central role in Luke to a degree. Pagels states, “spiritual warfare between God and Satan … intensifies throughout the gospel.”\textsuperscript{443} Additionally, Garrett states that “Satan plays a much more important role in the narrative world of Luke-Acts than is commonly supposed.”\textsuperscript{444} Finally, Wray and Mobley state “Satan’s role in Luke makes it clear that opportunistic evil forces are indeed active in the world and pose a threat to the Kingdom of God.”\textsuperscript{445} For Luke, Satan is more of a threat than Mark and Matthew. However, Satan is still relatively absent from the majority of the narrative simply because of Luke’s attempt to explicitly portray his absence. Therefore, one cannot grasp a fully developed character as Satan is still more ambiguous. As a result it is difficult to equate Luke’s Satan with the notion of a universalized absolute embodiment of evil and the “leader of Pandaemonium” as suggested by some scholars.\textsuperscript{446}

\textbf{John}

This section will focus on the Gospel of John’s depiction of the mythic character of Satan. The gospel of John’s representation of the mythic character of Satan is quite scarce. The author of John only mentions “the devil” on three separate occasions and mentions Satan by name only once. Additionally, there is no continuity between Mark and Matthew’s representation of Satan and John’s. John recounts four distinct narratives

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item See Pagels, 89.
\item Smith, “Map” In \textit{Map}, 299.
\item Pagels, 91.
\item Garrett, 57.
\item Wray & Mobley, 117.
\item See Introduction.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
involving Satan, namely John 6:70, 8:44, 13:2, and 13:27. This section will consist of an examination of each narrative depicting Satan separately. Throughout this examination, I will explain how each reference to Satan, or “the devil,” specifically refers to terrestrial adversaries. As Elaine Pagels states, “John never depicts Satan as a character on his own, acting independently of human beings, in John’s gospel it is people who play the tempter’s role.”

The first occasion where John mentions “the devil” is John 6:70-71: “Jesus answered them, ‘did I not choose you, the twelve? Yet one of you is a devil.’ He was speaking of Judas son of Simon Iscariot, for he, though one of the twelve, was going to betray him.” This passage appears to be straightforward. According to John, Jesus is already predicting, or foreseeing, his betrayer. Within this narrative, John is establishing an early undercurrent of tension between Jesus and Judas as the readers are now privy to the forthcoming ultimate betrayal. Additionally, Jesus is already aware of his “fate.” This is congruent with John’s high Christology where Jesus is always in control of his surroundings. Since Judas’ betrayal is already predicted, his motivation is not necessarily related to money but is more or less cosmically ordained. Within this pericope, “the devil” clearly represents a human adversary, not a celestial one. This, of course, is reminiscent of the terrestrial adversaries in 1 Samuel 29:4 and 1 Kings 11. Satan, or “the devil,” stands for humans in direct opposition to the main “hero(es),” or protagonist(s), of

---

449 Wray & Mobley, 128.
the particular narrative. Thus, Satan is a representation of the presupposed “adversary” within various quarrels between people.\textsuperscript{450}

The second occurrence of Satan in the Gospel of John is John 8:44: “You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” This passage is one of the more highly contested passages within the New Testament. It has a long history of being associated with anti-Semitism and the horrid atrocities that followed. The problem with examining this passage is that there are copious amounts of scholarly material from theologians and Christian apologetics attempting to distance themselves, or Christianity, from being inherently anti-Semitic.\textsuperscript{451} Richard A. Bondi states that “it is necessary today, more than ever, that the text of John be exegeted carefully in order to understand accurately what it says.”\textsuperscript{452} However, the exegetical goal of Bondi is to provide “a stronger basis on which to work toward that ‘mutual understanding and respect which is the first above all of biblical and theological studies, and of [human] dialogues’ that Nostra Aetate (Vatican II) recommends to us in the development of Jewish-Christian relations.”\textsuperscript{453} I would suggest there are two problems with this approach. First, it appears that Bondi is only engaging in this discourse simply because the Vatican “recommends” it. Secondly, the assertion that this passage will


\textsuperscript{452} Bondi, 473.

\textsuperscript{453} Bondi, 473.
enable Christians to become “more humble” is extremely unhelpful for a critical examination.

For a critical understanding of this passage, John’s usage of the term “the Jews” in this passage is irrelevant. As Pagels states, John uses “the Jews” not simply to designate people hostile to Jesus, but also to identify non-gentiles, people from the district of Galilee and Samaria, and Jesus himself (John 4:9; 18:34). Thus, John 8:44 is not making, and/or denouncing, an ethnic distinction since Jesus and all his disciples are Jewish as well. Additionally, the dichotomy between “the Jews” and Christians for the gospel of John is anachronistic. For John, composing his gospel circa 90-100 C.E., there was no clear distinction.

Henry Ansgar Kelly links the devil with Cain from Genesis. He states, “Jesus in John 8:44 is likening ‘the Jews’ to Cain, the son of the Devil, for wanting to kill Jesus, just as Cain killed his brother Abel.” Additionally, Kelly states that Clement of Rome also linked “the devil” with Cain. This would suggest that this type of discourse would have circulated during antiquity. Again, I would suggest this interpretation is problematic simply because Kelly is assuming that the author of John somehow resembles the discourse of latter rabbinic literature and Clement. It appears that Kelly is homogenising all the potential discourses surrounding the devil. He is assuming that if these discourses were present while John was composing his gospel, John would naturally reflect a similar view. Kelly’s interpretation should be viewed with scepticism simply due to the fact that

---

454 Bondi, 489.
455 Pagels, 103.
457 Kelly, 108.
Cain is completely absent from John’s gospel and the correlation with the devil in this pericope is highly speculative and ambiguous.

Paul M. Hoskins, however, provides an alternative interpretation. He associates John 8:31-47 with a Passover theme by stating that Jesus is suggesting that the people in opposition to him are “slaves to sin” which places them within another “household,” namely “the devils,” due to their deeds. Hoskins relates the notion of the “house of slaves” to Egypt and makes the devil correspond to the Pharaoh. Therefore, Jesus, like Moses, is someone whom God sent to “free” people from various bondages. Hoskins summarizes:

Jesus is warning this group of Jews that they are being unfaithful to their Father who redeemed them from Egypt and has sent his Son to redeem them from slavery to sin and the devil. In doing so, they are following the bad example of the devil rather than the good example of their father Abraham.

This interpretation is indeed interesting, but Hoskins is assuming that the author of John has a clear understanding of a malevolent supernatural deity who is directly related to “sin.”

Even though I find Hoskins’ correlation with the Passover a bit of a stretch, I do think he has some valid observations, namely suggesting Jesus’ enemies belonging to a different “household.” A rabbi by the name of Gamaliel II (80-115 C.E.) introduced the “benediction of the heretics” where curses were invoked upon “heretics” which included the Nazarenes. As Raymond Brown notes, it is conceivable that by the time the author of John had composed his gospel he had been expelled from the Jewish synagogues and

---

459 Hoskins, 56.
460 Hoskins, 59.
461 Hoskins, 60.
462 Pagels, 99.
told that he was unable to “worship” along with other Jews. A greater concern, however, was that the denunciation of the synagogue led to problems with the Roman authorities. Brown explains:

Judaism was a tolerated religion, and in principle the Jews were not forced to take part in public worship. As long as Christians were considered Jews, there was no specific legal reason for the Romans to bother them. But once the synagogues expelled them and it was made clear that they were no longer Jews, their failure to adhere to pagan customs and to participate in emperor worship created legal problems. Second-century Christians accused Jews of betraying them to Roman inquisitors. … Indirect participation in executions through expulsion from synagogues may have been part of the background for John’s charges against “the Jews.”

It seems apparent that Jesus’ harsh criticism of “You are from your father the devil” is referring to John’s perceived human adversaries as a “household.” This plays into John’s use of the Essenes’ symbolisms of the “sons of light” (John 12:35) and the “sons of darkness.” The “household” of “darkness” appears to reflect John’s attitude towards the local synagogue authorities who barred people from attending due to their outlook towards Jesus. As Pagels states: “John takes the primordial elements separated in creation-light and dark-and casts them in a human drama, interpreting them

---

463 Raymond E. Brown, The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times, (New York & Toronto: Paulist Press, 1979), 41. It is important to note that there appears to be conflicting views regarding the “benediction of the heretics.” One interpretation suggests that the “benediction of the heretics” is seen to strengthen Jewish communities after their unsuccessful revolt in 70 C.E. and not to exclude anyone. See Lawrence Schiffman, Who Was a Jew? Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism, Hoboken, N.J.:Ktav, 1985. If one adopts Raymond Brown’s interpretation, it correlates nicely with John’s criticism of local synagogue authorities expelling Jesus followers. If one adopts an interpretation such as Schiffman’s, John’s criticism cannot be directed towards synagogue authorities as synagogues were attempting to be more inclusive. However, it is still apparent; whatever interpretation of the “benediction of the heretics” one prefers that John’s criticism is directed against another, perhaps rival, “household.” This indicates that John’s Satan rhetoric is still being directed against tangible social realities. Thus, for the purpose of this thesis, the actual meaning of the “benediction of the heretics” is secondary. The issue of primary importance is that John’s usage of Satan in this passage is a symbolic representation of a terrestrial “household” in which John was hostile towards.

464 Brown, 43.
simultaneously in religious, ethical, and social terms. Overall, John’s perceived incongruity and angst over being separated from the local synagogues is represented through harsh rhetoric towards the authorities who displaced him.

The third and fourth mention of Satan and “the devil,” namely John 13:2; 13:27, appear within the same narrative. John 13:2 states: “the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him.” Likewise, John 13:27 states: “After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, ‘Do quickly what you are going to do.’” Similar to John 6:70, this narrative is dealing with Judas’ betrayal and a specific human adversary. This narrative is another example of John’s high Christology. John’s Jesus is always in control of his circumstances. He knows that he will be betrayed and he even knows by whom.

By examining the mythic character of Satan, or “the devil,” within John, it is apparent that the author of John is not really concerned about Satan, or “the devil.” The author is much more concerned with tangible adversaries. Similar to Matthew, John also includes three “temptation” scenes. Satan, however, does not appear directly. Within Matthew, Satan directly tempts Jesus with political authority over the world. John, however, depicts the people tempting Jesus to be their king (John 6:15). Secondly, within Matthew Satan tempts Jesus to turn stones to bread. By contrast, John describes the people citing Scripture and attempting to coax Jesus into producing bread (John 6:30-31). Finally, Matthew portrays the devil tempting Jesus to display his divine powers in public. Within John, however, Jesus’ own brothers tempt him to “brazenly flaunt his

---

465 Pagels, 100.
466 Wray & Mobley, 128.
467 Pagels, 101.
powers in Jerusalem, in full view of his enemies.”

Similar to Matthew, Jesus predictably passes all these temptations and identifies them as obstacles to his “true” mission.

By this point, it should be evident that “John does not depict Satan appearing as a freestanding supernatural being; rather, Satan appears in the guise of those people who oppose Jesus” and the author. John’s rhetoric is clearly directed against Judas and the Jewish authorities. Lyle Eslinger wrote an interesting article dealing with the human predisposition to combat myths and the Gospel of John. He suggests that the combat myth “pits hero against foe; the prize is victory, order and a new lease on life in a cosmos threatened by chaos.” Eslinger describes the Near Eastern combat myth evolving from the descendants of Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic concepts of eros and aggression. Additionally, in order to survive, people knew competition and combat with other life forms were necessary and inevitable. The Near Eastern people elevated these combat myths into the realm of the cosmos-gods duelling each other in order to gain order from chaos. Eslinger, however, states that “the devil, Satan, and the demons have prominent roles as rivals in every canonical Gospel but John. In their place, John offers puny human villains: the Jews, Caiaphas and Judas.” Then, Eslinger claims that John demythologizes cosmic combat and instead historicizes it. While I completely agree with Eslinger’s point of John historicizing his combat motifs and find his idea of people’s

---

470 Wray & Mobley, 127.
471 Wray & Mobley, 126.
473 Eslinger, 46.
474 Eslinger, 64.
475 Eslinger, 65.
476 Eslinger, 67.
477 See Eslinger, 66-73.
predisposition for combat myths as biologically inherent fascinating, his assertion that John is somehow a “unique” gospel by historicizing his quarrels is problematic. As I have indicated within the Mark and Matthew section, all the gospels historicize their tensions. As I have also noted, Satan in the gospels of Mark and Matthew is not the main antagonist. Mark and Matthew are more concerned with concrete enemies based in their social reality. Thus, Eslinger’s bold claim that “in all the gospels but John, Satan stands both as personified rival, foe of Jesus… In the gospel of John, the adversary role is played by a human, not a supernatural character” is inaccurate.

**Paul**

Paul’s letters (written between 50-64 C.E) to various assemblies mainly around Asia Minor and Greece are the earliest texts within the New Testament. The seven letters which were composed by Paul’s own hand (six more are attributed to him) include Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon. Within these seven letters, the character of Satan is only mentioned seven times, namely in 1 Thessalonians 2:18, Romans, 16:20, 1 Corinthians 5:5; 7:5, and 2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:14; 12:7. It is interesting to note that Paul exclusively uses the term “Satan;” he never mentions the designation “the devil.” Paul’s usage of Satan appears inconsistent and unclear. For these reasons, scholars have tended to ignore or “gloss over” his references. Upon closer examination, however, Paul’s Satan rhetoric appears to be more congruent than suggested. In this section I will examine Paul’s usage of the term

---

478 Eslinger, 49.
Satan as an obstructor, mainly referring to people who hinder, or undermine, Paul as an authority figure and a teacher. I will begin by examining 1 Thessalonians 2:18. Then I will discuss Romans 16:20. Finally, I will explore Paul’s Satan rhetoric to the assembly in Corinth, since the majority of his Satan references occur within 1 and 2 Corinthians.

1 Thessalonians 2:18 states: “For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, wanted to again and again—but Satan blocked our way.” This passage is self-explanatory; as Wray and Mobley state, “Satan is cited as the root cause of whatever unknown superficial factors led to Paul’s prolonged absence.”\(^{480}\) Within this passage, Satan appears as an obstructor, nothing more. Paul’s actual obstruction, however, is unclear. It could be numerous possibilities from physical problems, personal reasons, business related, etc. This does not, however, indicate that a malevolent supernatural being hindered Paul. At first glance, Satan’s function here appears to be more akin to his task in the Balaam narrative in Numbers 22:22-35; although, it is highly unlikely that Paul was referring to an actual angel blocking his path on the road to Thessalonica. Therefore, the Satan reference in 1 Thessalonians is not a substantial aid in understanding Paul’s discourse of the mythic character Satan.

Paul provides another brief reference to Satan in Romans 16:20: “The God of peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” It is worth noting that Romans 16 does not appear to be part of the original letter’s composition. Romans 15:30-33 reads like a “farewell,” or a concluding statement; for example verse 33 states: “The God of peace be with all you. Amen.” For the purpose of this study, however, I shall focus on the passage specifically dealing with

---

Satan which is labelled Roman 16:20. David N. Scholer describes this passage as an example of Paul’s apocalyptic eschatology, a cosmic battle between God and Satan. Additionally, Scholer claims that the “function of Rom. 16:20a is to provide to the people of God both hope and a sense of group or community empowerment.” A quick reading of Romans 16:20 seems to confirm Scholer’s apocalyptic theory. Although, within this narrative, Paul is warning his assembly to be watchful of people who cause dissension and opposition to his authority and teachings. Therefore, Satan is represented as a symbol of people who seek to disrupt Paul’s assembly.

The vast majority of Paul’s Satan references occur in his letters to the Corinthians, namely 1 Corinthians 5:5; 7:5, and 2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:14; 12:7. 1 Cor 5:5 refers to Paul’s judgement of excommunication on an assembly member. Satan’s function here resembles a corporal rehabilitator. 1 Cor 7:5 warns wedded people against extreme sexual asceticism due to a possible lack of sexual self-control. 2 Cor 2:10-11 speaks about forgiveness in order to “outwit” Satan. These passages indicate Paul’s attempt to promote social cohesion within the Corinthian assembly from outside and/or inside disrupters, slanderers, etc. In 2 Cor 11:12-15 Paul compares the righteousness of the “Super-Apostles” as an insidious method for false preaching by claiming that “even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.” Finally, 2 Cor 12:7 refers to Satan in a bizarre manner. Paul speaks about a messenger of Satan who came to keep him from being too υπεραιρωμαι, meaning being lifted up, or elated and/or prideful. This passage suggests

---

482 Scholer, 53.
483 Wray & Mobley, 130.
485 Kelly, 58.
486 Kelly, 60.
that the messenger, Satan, did a favour to Paul. Similar to Job’s and Zechariah’s Satan, the Satan in this narrative “enacts the desires of God.”

Mohan Uddin also believes that Paul is referring to a “satan” figure in 2 Corinthians 3-4. Uddin suggests that Paul developed a “satan” figure as the root of Jewish “unbelief” within a cosmic apocalyptic framework. He quotes 2 Corinthians 4:4 as a “prime” example for this “satan” figure: “In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” However, linking “the god of this world” to a “satan” figure is highly speculative and ambiguous. Additionally, as I will now discuss, it is not congruent with Paul’s usage of employing the term Satan.

Similar to Uddin, Jerome Neyrey suggests that Paul’s employments of Satan reflect his dualistic worldview where “the kingdom of Satan” battles God’s idyllic kingdom. From this examination, however, Paul’s references to Satan in 1 and 2 Corinthians never reflect a cosmological discourse. If Paul was concerned about depicting Satan as God’s cosmic antithesis, there would have been numerous opportunities for exposition; for example Rom 5; 8:38-39; 1 Cor 15; and 2 Cor 5. As Lee A. Johnson states, “the Corinthian references to Satan all occur within very particular social circumstances in Corinth. Furthermore, the setting for each of the references to Satan involves conflict between Paul and the community, either in their personal response...
to him or in his instructions.” Paul’s applications of Satan in the Corinthian letters have one desired outcome: “to align the Corinthians with Paul’s authority.” Thus, it is apparent that Paul is more concerned with his relationship to the Corinthians than a supernatural malevolent entity. From Paul’s rhetoric, it seems his position of authority was unclear and/or challenged. It is evident that Paul’s authority and/or position within the Corinthian assembly was challenged by other missionaries, or apostles, who diverged from Paul’s teachings, and by perceived disruptors within the Corinthian assembly itself. Therefore, as Johnson states:

Paul’s true enemies were his rivals, those who could unseat him in his position of authority in the [assemblies]. Satan language arises out of Paul’s scramble to cajole, threaten and inspire the Corinthians to dissociate themselves with other leaders and to define themselves as his people.

Overall, judging from Paul’s sporadic mentions of Satan, it is clear that he was not concerned about a cosmic nemesis. Instead, Satan is used in a similar manner to the characters in the Hebrew Bible. Scholars such as Neyrey, Uddin and Scholer suggest that Paul’s employment of Satan refers to his cosmic dualistic apocalypticism. Upon examination, however, it is evident that “Paul uses ‘Satan’ to refer to those who hinder—usually through undermining Paul’s teaching” and authority.

---

492 Johnson, 146.
493 Johnson, 152.
494 Johnson, 153.
495 Johnson, 146.
496 Johnson, 154.
497 Wray & Mobley, 129.


The Book of Revelation

This section will focus on the Book of Revelation’s depiction of the mythic character of Satan. The Book of Revelation was written between 81 and 96 C.E.\(^{498}\) by a man named John on the island of Patmos. Satan is mentioned in the Book of Revelation on seven occasions, namely Rev. 2:9, 2:13, 2:24, 3:9, 12:9, 20:2, and 20:7. Additionally, the devil is mentioned five times, Rev. 2:10, 12:9, 12:12, 20:2, 20:10. T.J Wray and Gregory Mobley state that the Book of Revelation provides Satan “his starring role as the Titan of Evil.”\(^{499}\) This perception of Satan within Revelation as the “Titan of Evil” is overstated. Throughout the majority of references, Satan can be seen in a similar fashion to other New Testament texts, namely as a symbolic representation of perceived terrestrial adversaries. I will first examine Satan and the devil as an “insider” threat. Next I will discuss Satan and the devil being seen as an “outsider” threat. Finally, I will discuss Satan and the devil being utilized as a method to evoke fear.

Revelation 2:9 and 3:9 discuss the “synagogue of Satan.” Wray and Mobley suggest that John is chastising certain leaders of the Jewish synagogue in Smyrna and Philadelphia for “Christian” persecution because “these Jews felt, among other things, that the Christians were luring away potential converts to Judaism to the less rigorous demands of Christianity.”\(^{500}\) Wray and Mobley also suggest that these passages could reflect John’s chagrin towards Christians who were pretending to be Jewish to avoid persecution.\(^{501}\) The problem with these interpretations is that, as Neil Forsyth states, within the time span in which Revelation was written, “Christians” still viewed


\(^{499}\) Wray & Mobley, 136.

\(^{500}\) Wray & Mobley, 138 - 139.

\(^{501}\) Wray & Mobley, 139.
themselves as Jews. Thus, Wray and Mobley’s interpretations can be considered anachronistic. More likely, these passages are reflecting some sort of intra-Jewish polemic. John is attempting to discredit competing Jewish discourses. David Frankfurter argues that John is not concentrating on the “Smyrna and Philadelphian Jews outside the Jesus movement but rather with a constituency within the Jesus movement who were claiming the label ‘Jew’ in a manner that John finds illegitimate.” Clearly, these passages reflect John’s concern about earthly matters relating to perceived terrestrial adversaries. Satan is utilized within these passages as a symbolic representation of these terrestrial adversaries.

Another example of John utilizing Satan as a symbolic representation for a perceived terrestrial adversary is found in Revelation 2:18-28. Nestor Paulo Friedrich claims that this letter is a critique of imperial powers and the basis of a call for resistance. Friedrich’s reading, however, does not appear to reflect the actual text. John is distressed that certain members of the ekklesia in Thyatira tolerate a self-proclaimed prophetess named Jezebel. He issues a scornful attack upon these members and labels Jezebel’s teachings as “the deep things of Satan” (Rev. 2:24). After, John proclaims his own status and declares that “to everyone who conquers and continues to do my works to the end, I will give authority over the nations … I also received authority from my Father” (Rev. 2:26-28). John is engaging in a scuffle with a rival “prophet” for

---

authority. As Wray and Mobley note: “we could be eavesdropping on a desperate, hate-filled, name-calling battle between rival denominations.”

John also utilizes Satan as a symbolic representation for perceived “outsider” threats. One example is found in Revelation 2:10: “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Beware, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison so that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have affliction.” John’s usage of the devil reflects Roman authorities dealing with the problem of persecution and the problem of apostasy. John is attempting to compose and comfort people who will be placed in prison to avoid one of John’s peeves, apostasy.

Another example of John utilizing Satan as a symbolic representation for perceived “outsider” threats occurs in Revelation 2:13: “I know where you are living, where Satan’s throne is. Yet you are holding fast to my name, and you did not deny your faith in me even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan lives.” This letter is addressed to Pergamum and identifies this city as the “throne of Satan.” As Wray and Mobley note, “this designation may stem from [John’s] assumption that Pergamum is the center of the imperial cult.”

Throughout Revelation, John continually denounces the imperial cult (i.e. Rev. 13:4, 13:8) as he perceived it as blasphemy. As Adela Yarbo Collins states, “the emperor was regularly associated with the gods and is often presented as a god himself.”

John’s connection of Satan with the Roman Empire in Revelation 2:13 is clear. John states that Satan does indeed have a throne, implying that Satan does have authority.

---

505 Wray & Mobley, 140.
506 Wray & Mobley, 139.
It is apparent that John is demonstrating the notion of “lost” native kingship. As Jonathan Z. Smith states, “the situation of apocalypticism seems … to be the cessation of native kingship.”508 The cessation of native kingship is also associated with a particular group’s “lost” socio-political status. The emphasis on a “lost” native kingship usually correlates with the recovery of that “lost” kingship and status. In other words, “the wrong king is on the throne”509 and the throne has to be restored to the “proper native kingship.”510 The cessation of native kingship in the book of Revelation clearly reflects the loss of the Jewish people’s autonomy and the destruction of the Temple. Since the Jewish people lived under Roman hegemony, they did not govern themselves and the highest political offices were occupied by Roman officials and governors. Thus, foreign powers were regulating how the Jewish people could live their lives. John’s desire is to restore the “lost” kingship to his perception of God’s terrestrial representatives. Within Revelation 2:13, John clearly utilizes Satan as a symbolic representation for the Roman Empire. Thus, John equating Pergamum with the city “where Satan’s throne is” and “where Satan lives” is perfectly predictable.

In Revelation 12:9 and 20:2, John also mentions Satan and the devil. Revelation 12:9, and also Revelation 12:12, are remarkably similar to the narrative found in 1 Enoch and Jubilees where the angels Semyaza, Azaz’el, and Mastema commanded a group of rebellious angels who fell to earth. Additionally, Revelation 20:2, and also Revelation 20:7 and 20:10, state that Satan will be thrown into a pit for a thousand years so that he could not deceive the nations any longer. The Satan in Revelation 20:2 can be perceived

509 Smith. In Imagining, 94.
510 Smith. In Imagining, 94.
as the Roman Empire or perceived false teachers, who, according to John, spread deceit and corruption among the nations.

Perhaps more intriguing is John’s equation of “the great dragon” with Satan and the devil. Wilfrid J. Harrington suggests that “in the Jewish tradition, the dragon, symbolized the power of evil, the principle of all the suffering of Israel.”

Throughout the Hebrew Bible, God continually destroys, or tames, the great chaotic serpent, or dragon, of the sea known as the Leviathan. Therefore, John’s readers would probably be familiar with the dragon imagery. Additionally, according to John, the Romans symbolized chaos. They were foreigners occupying their sacred land, who destroyed their sacred temple, and were guilty of idolatry. As Yarbo Collins states, “the book of Revelation manifests great antipathy to Rome.” By linking the great dragon with Satan, John’s attack rhetoric against his adversaries (Rome in this instance) gains more credence. He has equated his perceived terrestrial adversaries with imagery known for chaos, destruction, and perhaps even evil. The typology of comparison which John provides would induce fear upon certain people who are reading Revelation. Thus by employing fear tactics, John is able to invoke trepidation upon readers enabling him to present himself as an authoritative prophetic figure who, through his rhetoric, is able to guide people into the path of non-suffering.

In conclusion, the notion of Satan being the “Titan of Evil” within the Book of Revelation is overstated. John utilizes Satan as a symbolic representation, or an epithet, for his perceived terrestrial adversaries. Additionally, it is probable that John employed frightening cosmic Satan motifs as a mechanism to draw more people towards his

513 Yarbo Collins, 393-394.
assembly and away from competing *ekklesiai*. As Robert M. Royalty Jr. states, “the intra-Christian tension[s] and the violent rhetoric of Revelation suggest that John and his disciples were part of a radical prophetic community seeking to expand their influence and authority within the Christian communities of Asia Minor.” As indicated, John utilized Satan as a mechanism for symbolic representations, or epithets, to discredit his perceived terrestrial adversaries in order to obtain his goals.

**Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter, I have examined various first century representations of the mythic character Satan, namely through the gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke, John, the Pauline letters, and the Book of Revelation. From this examination, it is apparent that the mythic character of Satan, as the embodiment of evil and God’s arch nemesis is lacking from first century literature. Instead, throughout these narratives, Satan is utilized as symbol to represent the author’s perceived terrestrial adversaries or stumbling blocks to their goals. Additionally, God and Jesus have dominion over Satan. This indicates that he is still under God’s control and is not completely autonomous. This point has been reiterated throughout this chapter, but it is worth repeating. The main antagonists in these narratives are various groups of terrestrial opponents; Satan is a peripheral character who is more akin to his Hebrew Bible representations. By examining each reference to Satan individually, I was able to focus more on how each text portrays Satan. This approach avoids the problem of character homogenization. In Contrast, by interweaving various

---

pericopes, certain scholars, such as Jeffrey Burton Russell, Miguel A De La Torre, Albert Hernandez, Paul Carus, and Peter Stanford, constructed a conglomerated character profile of Satan which resembles certain contemporary discourses. In other words, these certain scholars’ representations of Satan within first century literature continue to elevate Satan into a position of God’s ultimate cosmic adversary whom the data actually suggests he was more of an afterthought and portrayed as a representation of terrestrial adversaries and/or a cosmic tester. It appears these scholars have fallen into a presumption fallacy; they are searching for a definitive celestial opponent within these narratives whereas one is simply lacking.

It is intriguing to hypothesize how and why these conglomerated discourses regarding first century Satan narratives are continually perpetuated today in scholarship. The simplest explanation appears to be that people read these first century texts with a twenty-first century lens. By reading Mark, Matthew, Luke-Acts, John, and Paul’s letters with contemporary predispositions, it would be easy for one to project their inclinations upon the literature. Therefore, Satan’s representations within first century texts emerge to be oddly reminiscent of contemporary discourses. However, the meaning of a specific text, character, etc. is a product of “the rules and structures inherent in a particular language or signifying system, and … these rules and structures are open to change.”

Thus, symbols, language, texts, etc. are given their specific meaning by their historical context. When the socio-historical contexts change, however, the meanings of the symbol, word, or text, etc. also change. In other words, these texts, symbols, etc. are continually reconstructed. The mythic character of Satan’s first century reconstruction is

---

not congruent with contemporary discourses, which highlights the need for examining each text’s representation of Satan without textual, and therefore character, homogenization.
Chapter 4: Second and Third Century Representations of Satan

“Sometimes the devil works on his own account; sometimes he does his mischief through the instrumentality of human beings.”
--- Aldous Huxley, The Devils of Loudun.

In this chapter, I will be examining second and third century Christian representations of Satan. To begin this chapter, I examine the Nag Hammadi texts and the Gnostic notion of the demiurge representing a Satanic figure. Next, I will examine Satan within the Ante-Nicene Fathers literature. This section will not cover all the representations of all the Ante-Nicene Fathers; instead it will propose an overall general frame of their Satan rhetoric directed against perceived “outside” and “inside” threats against their ecclesiastical institution and structures. To conclude this section, I will propose that the Ante-Nicene fathers addressed their immediate concerns, such as “heretics,” “outside” threats, and “pagans,” through a symbolic measure, specifically through their representations of Satan. Thus, they were able to construct how “outsiders,” “pagans,” and “heretics” were agents of Satan.

The Nag Hammadi Texts and the Demiurge

The Nag Hammadi library consists of twelve to thirteen codices and was discovered around December 1945 by Muhammad Ali near Nag Hammadi Egypt. These texts are “are fourth-century translations in various dialects of Coptic, the language of Christian Egypt, based on the Greek originals of the second or third century.” These texts have been described as belonging to a Gnostic Christian group. The definition of

Gnosticism is extremely difficult and contested. Since “Gnosticism” is not relevant for this topic, to begin, I will only be providing a brief definition of “the Gnostics.” Next, I will explore the only two occurrences of the character Satan within the entire Nag Hammadi corpus. Then, I will discuss the figure of the Demiurge as a satanic figure.

The Gnostics believed that they were pneumatic or “spiritual” groups of people who “had superior knowledge of God which they had received from Jesus.” Terrance Tiessen summerizes the Gnostics’ mythology nicely:

For during a period of eighteen months on earth after the resurrection, Jesus had secretly taught the clear truth to a few disciples who had the capacity to understand such mysteries. These men, in turn, had handed on that knowledge. By making a sharp distinction between the God revealed by the prophets and the one revealed by Jesus, the Gnostics established their distinctiveness in relation to the Jewish religion. Moreover, by claiming superior knowledge of the teachings of Jesus through oral traditions handed down from the apostles they set themselves above the teaching of the church as represented by Irenaeus.

It is worth to take note of Tiessen’s last point, as it will extremely relevant within the next section. The Gnostics do not necessarily deal with the character of Satan. Evil is brought upon the spiritual and material world by a Creator figure named the Demiurge. Additionally, the Gnostics suggest that “evil is to be opposed and defeated through self-examination, insight, and knowledge.”

As I previously mentioned, the character of Satan appears only twice within the Nag Hammadi corpus, namely within the Secret Book of James and The Book of Allogenes. The Secret Book of James chapter 4 states:

I answered and said to him, “Master, we can obey you if you wish, for we have forsaken our fathers and our mothers and our villages and have followed you.

---

519 Tiessen, 342-343.
520 Meyer, Gnostic Discoveries, 99.
Give us the means not to be tempted by the evil devil.” The master answered and said, “What good is it to you if you do the Father’s will, but you are not given your part of his bounty when you are tempted by Satan? But if you are oppressed by Satan and persecuted and do the Father’s will, I say he will love you, make you my equal, and consider you beloved through his forethoughts, and by your own choice.”

This passage appears to be referring to a tempter Satan, probably dealing with terrestrial issues. The message here seems self-evident: continue doing God’s work in the face of opposition and temptations and you will be rewarded.

The second reference to Satan in the Nag Hammadi corpus appears in The Book of Allogenes:

After the Stranger uttered these words, Satan appeared on earth … he said, … “and help yourself to what is my world, and eat of my good things, and take for yourself silver, gold, and clothes.” The Stranger answered and said, “Get away from me, Satan, for I do not seek you but my Father, who is superior to all the great realms. For I have been called the Stranger because I am from another race. I am not from your race.” Then the one who is in control of the world said to him, “We ourselves … Come … in my world.” The Stranger answered and said to him, “Get away from me, Satan, go, for I don’t belong to you.” Then Satan left him, after he had angered him many times but had been unable to fool him. When he had been overcome, he retreated to his own place in great shame.

This passage is remarkably similar to the temptation narrative in Matthew and Luke. A “stranger” is isolated on a mountain called Tabor and Satan appears in order to tempt him with the world’s luxuries. This temptation is also similar to Luke’s account regarding Satan controlling the world. Luke 4:6 states, “And the devil said to him, ‘To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please.’” The Book of Allogenes is analogous to Luke by stating that Satan is “the one who is in control of the world.” Additionally, similar to Matthew and Luke’s account, Satan is unsuccessful in his temptation and is therefore forced to retreat.

---

522 Meyer, Nag Hammadi Scriptures, 774-775.
Immediately after this temptation narrative, the Stranger’s prayers have been heard and he is surrounded by a cloud of light. Unfortunately, the remainder of *The Book of Allogenes* is very fragmented leaving the rest of the narrative incomprehensible.\(^523\) However, the temptation appears to act in the same manner as the temptation narrative in Matthew and Luke. The protagonist undergoes a trial in order to indicate that he/she is capable and authorized to commence on their “task,” “journey,” “role,” etc.

The Gnostic notion of the Demiurge as a satanic figure is complex. When discussing the Demiurge, the necessary starting point is with Plato. Plato maintains “that whatever can be perceived by sight and touch, including in this category even this entire cosmos, is not ultimate; strictly objects of sense cannot be said to be but at most to have become, or to occur in a condition of becoming; but that entails that they have been caused (*Timaeus*, 28b6-c3).”\(^524\) During the creation process, “‘everything that was visible’ was in disorderly motion until the Demiurge ‘took it over and led it from disorder to order’ (30a2-6; cf.68e3).”\(^525\) This transition was dependent upon an intervention of a divine creator.\(^526\) Plato asserted that the “Demiurge is the artificer, the artisan who gives order to matter that is, by itself, without spirit; he injects into it a form that is superior to it.”\(^527\) Sarah Broadie notes that “this doctrine rests on Plato’s fundamental tenet that his cosmos is as good, beautiful, and orderly as any empirical entity could be. … The cause that brought this cosmos into being must be of a sort that could from the beginning have

---

\(^{523}\) See Meyer, *Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, 773.
\(^{525}\) Broadie, 8.
\(^{526}\) Broadie, 9.
\(^{527}\) Filoramo, 77.
been reliably counted upon to produce what is as good and beautiful as possible.”

Therefore, the Demiurge is seen as the Creator “of a harmonious, beautiful cosmos.”

Conversely, the Gnostics employed a more pessimistic view of created matter. As Birger A. Pearson states, “the Gnostics saw evil as something inherent in the material creation itself. Therefore the created order cannot be the product of the transcendent God but must have been created by a lower divine being.”

The Secret Book of John describes the “fall” of Sophia and addresses the origin of evil. Sophia was split into two manifestations, namely higher and lower Sophia. Lower Sophia, wanting to create a figure like herself, gave birth to a revolting being who resembled a lion-faced serpent and named him Yaldabaoth. Yaldabaoth’s name is usually interpreted as “Child of Chaos” and he grows up to be the creator of the world, the Demiurge. Thus, Sophia is viewed as the mother of the Demiurge. It is interesting to note that within The Secret Book of John, the archon actually has three names. Yaldabaoth is the most common, but the archon is also named Saklas and Samael. Pearson notes that “Sammael is the name traditionally given to the ‘angel of death’ in Jewish tradition, and Sammael can also be taken as an equivalent of the Devil or Satan.”

---

528 Broadie, 9.
529 Filoramo, 54.
531 See Meyer, Nag Hammadi Scriptures, 107-132.
532 Meyer. Gnostic Discoveries, 96.
533 Pearson, 110.
534 Pearson, 111.
535 Pearson, 57.
536 Meyer, Gnostic Discoveries, 99.
537 Pearson, 110.
538 Pearson, 107.
Since creation was inherently evil, the Gnostics split the biblical God into two categories: the benevolent, transcendent God above creation, and the lower Demiurge.\(^{539}\) The Gnostics claimed that the Creator God in Hebrew tradition was the lower Demiurge. Therefore, “the biblical Creator has been demoted in Gnostic tradition to an ignorant, blind, arrogant, even demonic being.”\(^ {540}\) Derived from Exodus 20:5 and Isaiah 45:5, the arrogant and ignorant Yaldabaoth states, “I am a jealous God and there is no other God besides me.”\(^ {541}\) This is known as the blasphemy of the Demiurge. According to the Gnostics, the Demiurge “has created a world under the misapprehension that he is the only true artificer.”\(^ {542}\)

The Gnostics also had various myths that “spelt out the variety of Demiurge strategies in the course of salvation history from Genesis onwards to keep the divine element – the power of the Mother, Sophia, present in all souls – trapped.”\(^ {543}\) The Gnostics thought that originally, “humans were pure spirit, but entrapped by the evil eon, they became earthly creatures imprisoned in matter.”\(^ {544}\) Therefore, it is the responsibility of every person to liberate their pure spirits from their fleshy earthly bodies.\(^ {545}\) In order to overcome the power of the Demiurge, the Gnostics employed baptism to the “higher” God, not the lower Demiurge,\(^ {546}\) in order to “seal” their “senses from this lower visible

\(^{539}\) Pearson, 105-106.  
\(^{540}\) Pearson, 108.  
\(^{541}\) See Pearson, 107.  
\(^{542}\) Filoramo, 82.  
\(^{545}\) Russell, 56.  
\(^{546}\) Logan, 80.
world dominated by the Demiurge and his archontes."\textsuperscript{547} Usually, this "sealing" of the senses resulted in an ascetic lifestyle.

There were disagreements between the Gnostics regarding the demiurge; Jeffrey Burton Russell notes that

The most extreme dualist among them claimed that two independent spiritual principles existed in eternal oppositions to each other, that the evil spirit was independent of and wholly different from the good Lord. The more moderate Gnostics assumed that the creator of the world was a spirit who had originally been good but who had devolved or fallen into evil. This ignorant, blind, corrupt spirit they often identified with the Devil. In Hellenistic Gnosticism he was often called ‘Demiurge,’ ‘partial mover,’ as opposed to the prime mover, God.\textsuperscript{548}

The texts of \textit{The Tripartite Tractate}, \textit{The Gospel of Philip}, \textit{The Nature of the Rulers}, \textit{On the Origin of the World}, \textit{Zostrianos}, \textit{Valentinian Exposition with Valentinian Liturgical Readings}, \textit{Three Forms of First Thought}, and \textit{The Gospel of Judas}\textsuperscript{549} within the Nag Hammadi corpus all represent Yaldabaoth, or the Demiurge, in a similar “satanic” fashion. He is a creator of matter separate from the higher benevolent God, ignorant, narcissistic, and arrogant. Moreover, derived from Yaldabaoth is “all the lower world’s evils and demonic forces.”\textsuperscript{550} Overall, the Demiurge is the creator of the evil matter, a point which the Gnostics stressed. This correlates with certain later Christian discourses which suggest that “Satan is the lord of matter and flesh as opposed to spirit.”\textsuperscript{551} Conversely, in general, the “orthodox” position insists that everything is inherently good since it was all created by God.\textsuperscript{552}

The Gnostic Demiurge resembles certain contemporary discourses and scholarly reconstructions of Satan. He is purely evil and is the creator of all evil materials.

\textsuperscript{547} Logan, 82.
\textsuperscript{549} See Meyer, \textit{Nag Hammadi Scriptures}, 87, 185, 196, 204, 550, 672-673, 726, and 766.
\textsuperscript{550} Pearson, 57.
\textsuperscript{551} Russell, \textit{Early Tradition}, 27.
\textsuperscript{552} Russell, \textit{Early Tradition}, 27.
Additionally, Yaldabaoth is the “lord,” leader, and creator of all the world’s demonic forces. With this in mind, the Gnostic Demiurge appears to have had a greater impact on later Satan discourses and reconstructions than early orthodox and New Testament Christian literature explicitly referring to Satan. Thus, later Christian discourse utilizes and prefers more of a cosmic dualism akin to Zoroastrianism and Gnosticism instead of a celestial tester or tempter. Additionally, the Gnostics “solved” the problem of theodicy. Evil is not derived from the “higher” God or humanity; it was present through the evil creation of the ignorant Demiurge which resulted in the fall of humanity. One significant difference, however, between the Gnostics and later Christian discourses is the solution to defeating evil. The Gnostics promoted an ascetic lifestyle focused on self-examination and knowledge, while “orthodox” Christianity, in general, believed that God will eventually destroy Satan, a scene reminiscent of the Book of Revelation. Overall, the conglomerated “Satan in the New Testament” which many scholars subscribe to is more analogous to the Gnostic Demiurge than the New Testament and early church fathers’ views of Satan.

**Ante-Nicene Fathers**

Frustratingly, there is virtually no scholarly literature written regarding the Ante-Nicene fathers and Satan. This section is by no means comprehensive but an overall general depiction, especially of people such as Justin, Tatian, Origen, Irenaeus, and Tertullian. It appears their Satan rhetoric is utilized in two concurrent ways. First, people like Justin and Origen employ Satan rhetoric against external forces: to a certain degree, Roman persecution and idolatry of the pagan gods and goddesses. Secondly, and to a larger degree, people like Ignatius and Tertullian utilize Satan rhetoric against internal
forces; mostly against the perceived Gnostic threat to “orthodoxy.” To begin this section, I will examine the Ante-Nicene Fathers’ treatment of external forces. Finally, I will discuss the Ante-Nicene Fathers’ treatment of internal forces.

Justin was born circa 100 C.E. in Samaria and came to Rome around 140 C.E. He is the first Ante-Nicene father to provide some interesting details regarding Satan. First, Justin indicates that Satan is the “prince of the wicked spirits.” This indicates he acknowledges Satan’s power over other devils and demons. When Justin was baptised he renounced Satan, his pomp, and his demons three times. Additionally, Justin provides his etymology on the word Satan: he states, “For ‘Sata’ in the Jewish tongue means apostate; and ‘Nas’ is the word from which he is called by interpretation the serpent, i.e., according to the interpretation of the Hebrew term, from both of which there arises the single word Satanas.” According to Justin, “the devil is ever at hand to resist us, and anxious to seduce all to himself; yet the Angel of God, i.e., the Power of God sent to us through Jesus Christ, rebukes him, and he departs from us.” Hence, for Justin, Jesus breaks the devil’s power and hold on the world through his Passion and Incarnation. Justin also views “magicians” as agents of the devil: he states

After Christ’s ascension into heaven the devils put forward certain men who said that they themselves were gods; and they were not only not persecuted by you, but even deemed worthy of honours. There was a Samaritan, Simon, … [who] did mighty acts of magic, by virtue of the art of the devils operating in him.”

556 Pagels, 118.
558 Dialogue With Trypho 116.
559 Russell, 67.
560 1 Apology 26.

128
Justin states that Simon is under the influence of “devils” and that his miracles, or “magic,” were derived from evil spirits.\textsuperscript{561} This suggests that Justin also condemned “false prophets” who were “tricking” people into deifying them.

Perhaps more intriguing, however, is Justin’s antagonism towards pagan deities. He states,

\begin{quote}
We, who out of every race of people, once worshiped Dionysus the son of Semele, and Apollo the son of Leto, who in their passion for human beings did things which it is shameful even to mention; who worshiped Persephone and Aphrodite … or Asklepios, or some other of those who are called gods, now, through Jesus Christ, despise them, even at the cost of death … We pity those who believe such things, for which we know that the daimones are responsible.\textsuperscript{562}
\end{quote}

Justin is indicating that he now perceives every pagan deity as an ally of Satan.\textsuperscript{563}

Reading the gospels, Justin’s interpretation proposes that Satan and his horde of demonic allies were always opposing Jesus until his death. These same forces now focus and coordinate their attacks upon Jesus’ followers.\textsuperscript{564} As Elaine Pagels states, “The gospels show Justin how spiritual energies, demonic and divine, can dwell within human beings, often without their knowledge, and drive them toward destruction – or toward God.”\textsuperscript{565}

Justin’s student Tatian, a Syrian covert, declares that the devil is the first-born angel and that he is the leader of the celestial demonic horde.\textsuperscript{566} He announces: “but that first-begotten one through his transgression and ignorance becomes a demon; and they who imitated him, that is his illusions, are become a host of demons.”\textsuperscript{567}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{561} Russell, 71. \\
\textsuperscript{562} 1 Apology 25. \\
\textsuperscript{563} Pagels, 120. \\
\textsuperscript{564} Pagels, 123. \\
\textsuperscript{565} Pagels, 123. \\
\textsuperscript{566} Russell, 74. \\
\end{flushleft}
demons’ objective is to obstruct Jesus’ salvation, “all evil and misery come from demons, who wish to subjugate and corrupt humanity.”

Tatian agrees with Justin on identifying pagan deities as evil spirits and equates the devil with Zeus. Throughout his address to the Greeks, Tatian ridicules pagan divinities, calls them false-healers, and mocks Greco-Roman festivals dedicated to the pagan deities. He also rejects all forms of Greco-Roman legislation and advocates one common policy due to the “unjust” treatment of Christians. For these reasons, Tatian affirms that Christians must be wary of the Greeks and Romans because they are demon-worshipers.

Another Ante-Nicene father, Origen, an Egyptian Christian, was born in Alexandria in 185 C.E. to an Egyptian mother and Roman father, both Christians. Origen witnessed firsthand Christian persecution; his father was beheaded and several of his students were executed. In Contra Celsum, Origen proclaims

It is not irrational to form associations contrary to the existing laws, if it is done for the sake of the truth. For just as those people would do well who enter a secret association in order to kill a tyrant who had seized the liberties of a state, so Christians also, when tyrannized … by the devil, form associations contrary to the devil’s laws, against his power, to protect those whom they succeed in persuading to revolt against a government which is barbaric and despotical.

Origen is indicating that all laws and people hostile to Christianity are demon-inspired.

---

568 Russell, 74.
569 Pagels, 131.
570 Address, 8.
571 Address, 10.
572 Address, 18.
573 Address, 23.
574 Address, 28.
575 Address, 27.
576 Russell, 75.
577 Pagels, 135.
578 Pagels, 136.
Origen believed that “God created everything good, including the Devil, but the Devil freely chose to prefer nonbeing and purposelessness to real being and true purpose.” 580 Origen developed the concept of Satan being the first perfect angel who fell from God due to pride. The other angels who followed him became his legions of demons. 581 Moreover, Origen developed a connection between his Satan and various Hebrew Bible traditions. He explained that Lucifer from Isaiah 14:12, the Prince of Tyre in Ezekiel 28:12-19, and the Leviathan in Job 41:1-2 were all manifestations of Satan. 582

This rhetoric against “pagans” and the Greco-Roman order is directed against people like Celsus. The Platonist philosopher, Celsus, indicates that the Christians’ greatest ignorance is constructing a being, named the Devil or Satan, opposed to God. According to Celsus, this dualism is “blasphemous” against the highest and greatest God. He accuses the Christians of sedition by inventing a rebellion in the celestial realm to incite and justify rebellion within the Greco-Roman world. 583

During the second century, new questions were raised about what is required to be considered a “Christian.” Debates arose regarding the nature of social and family relationships and various interpretations of “the gospels.” 584 Circa 180 C.E. the bishop of Lyon, named Irenaeus, “wrote a massive five-volume attack on deviant Christians—whom he called heretics – attacking them as secret agents of Satan.” 585 Irenaeus states false believers teach blasphemy against Christ and “use the name of Christ Jesus as a kind

582 See Beginning of the World, 1.5.1-5, 3.2.1, found in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 10, p. 79-91, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004 (1884)).
583 Contra 6:42.
584 Pagels, 149-150.
585 Pagels, 155.
of lure,’ in order to teach doctrines inspired by Satan, infecting the hearers with the bitter and malignant poison of the serpent, the great instigator of apostasy.”

These perceived “heretics,” to whom Irenaeus was probably referring, were likely Valentinian Gnostics.587 *The Testimony of Truth*, found in the Nag Hammadi texts, states: “For many have sought for the truth but have not been able to find it, because the old leaven of the Pharisees and scribes of the law has overcome them.”588 Additionally, the unknown author of the *Testimony* states:

Foolish people have it in their minds that if they simply make the confession, “We are Christians,” in words but not with power, and ignorantly give themselves up to a human death, they will live. But they are in error and do not know where they are going or who Christ really is. Instead, they are hastening toward the principalities and the authorities. They fall into their clutches because of the ignorance that is in them.589

The author is insisting “that the great majority of Christians – those who accept the kind of leadership and domesticated morality advocated by the ‘apostolic father’ — have fallen into moral error.”590 Moreover, the author is projecting his own interpretation of Mark 8:15, “beware of the leaven of the scribes and Pharisees,” as a warning against other Christian teachers.591

It is apparent that the issue of power comes to the forefront within this inter-Christian polemic. The gospels which Irenaeus endorsed aided in institutionalizing the Christian “church,”592 unlike the *Gospel of Philip*, for example, which states that “the

587 Pagels, 156, 166, and 169.
590 Pagels, 156.
591 Pagels, 158.
592 Pagels, 70.
doctrine and moral structures of the institutional church have become secondary” to
striving for self-enlightenment. Therefore, the Gnostic communities did not have a need
for an institutional church. Schuyler Brown states that “the root of the conflict between
gnosis and the emerging Catholic church was not so much ‘heretical’ teaching as it was
the challenge to ecclesiastical power.” Within Against Heresies, Irenaeus launches a
contemptuous attack which superbly relays his thoughts: “Let those persons, therefore,
who blaspheme the creator, either by openly expressed disagreement … or by distorting
the meaning [of the Scriptures], like Valentinians and all the falsely called Gnostics, be
recognized as agents of Satan by all who worship God.”

Another Ante-Nicene father who rallied against “heretics” was Tertullian, a North
African convert from Carthage (circa 180 C.E.). Tertullian suggests that evil, or sin,
within the world derives from people’s choices and “is not the work of an evil creator or
demiurge, as the Gnostics say.” According to Tertullian, God created everything
good including the angel who turned himself into the Devil due to envy and became
corrupt. Similar to Irenaeus, Tertullian composes a scornful assault on perceived
“heretics.” Tertullian advocates that all Christians “speak and think the selfsame

593 Pagels, 174.
594 Schuyler Brown, “Gnosis, Theology, and Historical Method,” Hellenization Revisited: Shaping a
Christian Response within the Greco-Roman World, Ed. Wendy Helleman, (Lanham, Maryland: University
595 Pagels, 163.
596 Russell, 90.
597 The Shows, or De Spectaculis, 2, found in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., Ante-Nicene
Fathers, Vol. 3, p. 79-92, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004 (1884)).
598 Against Marcion, 2.10, found in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., Ante-Nicene Fathers,
Vol. 3, p. 269-476, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004 (1884)).
599 See Prescription Against Heretics, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., Ante-Nicene Fathers,
Vol. 3, p. 243-268, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004 (1884)).
thing." According to Tertullian, being a homogenous entity will ensure group unity and combat heresy.

Inter-Christian polemics between the Gnostics and Ante-Nicene Fathers such as Irenaeus appear to be the cause of the Satan rhetoric being used to “other” each other. Jonathan Z. Smith suggests “the other” “is a matter of relative rather than absolute difference.” Basically, this suggests that people are more suspicious of their “near neighbour,” or someone who is “too-much-like-us.” Smith explains his logic by indicating that “‘otherness’ is a relativistic category inasmuch as it is, necessarily, a term of interaction.” Generally, “the other” is determined by the “relation to the way in which we think, situate, and speak about ourselves.” If people encounter an incongruent situation, such as a Christian Gnostic sect who do not subscribe to the “united” “orthodox” view in regard to “the other,” they process the data in relation to their own contextual data. In this respect, the “other” is not considered “just the world outside the church but those within the church that disagree with the Church Fathers.”

Irenaeus and Tertullian understood the Gnostic groups to be dividing the “Christian” community. They viewed Gnostic preaching to be “dangerous to the mission of the church not only because it was theologically erroneous; it was socially subversive.” Thus, the Gnostics were considered “an insidious group [who] threatened the fragile

---

600 Prescription Against Heretics, 5.
602 Smith, 275.
603 Smith, 258.
604 Smith, 276.
structure of organizational and moral consensus through which leaders like Irenaeus were attempting to unity Christian groups throughout the world.”

**Conclusion**

It appears that the character of Satan in second and third century Christian literature has, to a degree, developed from a symbolic representation of a terrestrial adversary or celestial tempter to a more active malevolent entity, especially with respect to the Gnostic Demiurge but also the Ante-Nicene Fathers concern with unity and persecution. Satan, in one way or another, is active and present within the material world due to perceived “outside” and “inside” threats. The Ante-Nicene fathers do make attempts to add to the mythologies surrounding the character of Satan. They engage with questions relating to the origin of Satan and theodicy. The majority of their Satan rhetoric, however, is directed against perceived “outside” and “inside” threats to the establishment and preservation of their ecclesiastical movement. It appears they found a title for their perceived enemies by reading through first century “Christian” literature, namely a perceived celestial adversary who antagonized Jesus named Satan. William Arnal states that “variegated second century efforts … conceive[d] of a common Christian tradition by invoking and laying claim to a scattering of earlier texts or the stories and figures contained in them as somehow ancestral to groups these innovators sought to sculpt.” By drawing from first century literature, the Ante-Nicene fathers were able to apply a symbolic title to their immediate concerns. Thus, they were now

---

607 Pagels, 169.
609 Arnal, 193-216
able to construct a profile and title for “outsiders” and “heretics.” Through their attack rhetoric, they aided in the development of the Satan character. By elevating his importance, they turned Satan from a second-rate antagonist in first century literature to a mischievous insidious celestial force working through false teachers, Roman authorities, etc., which people had to be warned and safeguarded against. Similar to first century literature, Satan still does not appear to be the universal malevolent primary foe of God in second and third century literature. His importance is indeed elevated in the second and third century, but he is still utilized in a similar fashion as a symbolic representation of terrestrial adversaries. However, the second and third century literature expanded upon Satan’s biography from the Hebrew Bible and first century literature. This gave Satan a constructed etymology, or back story, which he sorely lacked in first century literature. Additionally, with so many warnings against perceived enemies, such as the Roman authorities, heretics, etc., Satan is indubitably perceived as more present within the terrestrial world attempting to accomplish professed devious goals.

Overall, as I previously mentioned, the Ante-Nicene Fathers provide a “deeper” characterization of Satan albeit to a limited degree. Conversely, the Gnostic Demiurge provides a type of malevolent deity figure who is more akin to the later discourses and reconstructions surrounding Satan. Gerd Theissen explains that the Gnostics, facing the problem of theodicy, reconcile the problem of evil with the quintessential explanation of cosmic dualism; “Since the Gnostics are unable to attribute the evil in the world, or rather, ‘the evil world,’ to God, they place this burden on the demiurge who, in turn,

---

610 For example, see my discussion on Origen.
demands divine worship for himself.”

As Vos argues, people are seen to be guided by the demiurge who created the human body from “diabolical” matter. Additionally, the demiurge was not believed to have become active only after Adam had fallen, but was already present within creation.

Ironically, and perhaps amusingly, the Gnostic notion of the Demiurge is more akin to the contemporary discourses and certain scholarly reconstructions of “Satan within the New Testament” than the actual Satan of the “orthodox” Ante-Nicene Fathers. The latter is a more developed mischievous character, but still acts through human agency. The former is a cosmic universal “evil” creator deity who is responsible for all the malevolency within humanity and the cosmos. I am sure the Ante-Nicene Fathers would be quite dismayed to discover that one of the “heresies” they fought against, such as a supreme powerful malevolent creator deity, has become a common reconstruction for the character of Satan. For example, Tertullian states that God created everything good.

The demise of the “evil one” in contemporary reconstructions is also more analogous to the Gnostics’ beliefs than the “orthodox.” Origen even believed that “the devil himself and his angels … should be delivered from their torments, and associated with the holy angels” This is known as “universalism,” or Apocatastasis. Conversely, the view of Marcion, a perceived Gnostic, of the annihilation of Satan and the “unjust

---

612 Vos, 28.
613 Vos, 28.
614 The Shows, or De Spectaculis, 2.
Hebrew Bible’s god\textsuperscript{616} appear to resemble popular contemporary discourses and reconstructions. For Marcion, the “evil” god’s “time has been curtailed by the mission of Jesus Christ, and in the end he will be defeated by the good God and will disappear along with the cosmos he created.”\textsuperscript{617} Augustine of Hippo\textsuperscript{618} provides an example of how later Christian discourse diverged from Tertullian and Origen and is more analogous to Marcion on this matter. Augustine states:

I must now, I see, enter the lists of amicable controversy with those tender-hearted Christians who decline to believe that any, or that all of those whom the infallibly just Judge may pronounce worthy of the punishment of hell, shall suffer eternally, and who suppose that they shall be delivered after a fixed term of punishment … But the Church, not without reason, condemned him [Origen] for this and other errors.\textsuperscript{619}

This sort of discourse provided by Augustine of Hippo, and to a degree Marcion, would eventually become the dominant discourse in Christianity surrounding the eventual demise of Satan, and his cosmic cohorts. Overall, this example of Marcion’s, Tertullian’s, Origen’s, and Augustine’s view of “the evil one’s” demise provides an illustration of the general notion that later discourses surrounding Satan are more akin to the Gnostic Demiurge than to the “orthodox” positions of the Ante-Nicene Fathers.

\textsuperscript{616} According to Tertullian, \textit{Adversus Marcionem}, 2.10 & 2.28, Marcion thought the “evil” creator god, also known as the Demiurge, was the creator of the Devil and allowed the Devil to exist within the world causing chaos.


\textsuperscript{618} I also discuss Augustine in the Conclusion.

\textsuperscript{619} Augustine of Hippo, \textit{City of God}, 21.17.
Conclusion

“We are each our own devil, and we make this world our hell.”

--- Oscar Wilde.

Throughout this paper, I have examined the narrative character of Satan through his early Greek and Near Eastern “roots,” and within the Hebrew Bible, Intertestamental discourses, Mark, Matthew, Luke-Acts, Q, the Book of Revelation, the Nag Hammadi texts, and the Ante-Nicene Fathers. Three important conclusions emerge. First, the data suggest that the narrative character of Satan within the Hebrew Bible, Intertestamental, and early Christian literature was not the “incarnation of evil,” or God’s absolute celestial enemy. Second, second and third century “orthodox” Christian literature constructed a more developed Satan through representations of “outsiders” and “heretics” being agents of Satan. Finally, the Gnostic demiurge is more analogous to contemporary reconstructions of Satan than the first, second, and third century Satan in orthodox sources.

In the first chapter, I discussed numerous tempter, monster, and trickster figures within ancient Mesopotamian, Canaanite, Egyptian, Greek, and Persian mythologies. I suggested three common characteristics within this narrative with discourses surrounding Satan. First, the characters are always subordinate to a “higher” God, meaning they are not autonomous. Secondly, they usually represent some form of chaos and death. Finally, they all appear to dwell, guard, and/or represent a mysterious and/or unpleasant, location. This indicates that Satan is not a unique character as there appears to be a shared set of cross-cultural characteristics for describing death, evil, etc. Thus, Satan is a clear example of a mythic character generated through bricolage.
For the second chapter, I described “Satan” within the Hebrew Bible representing terrestrial adversaries and/or having a specific role in a divine council as a cosmic tester and/or accuser. I also discuss numerous “satanic” figures present within the Intertestamental period and examine various possibilities why the term “satan” became predominant over the other “evil” designations.

In chapter 3, I examined first century “Christian” narratives surrounding Satan. I concluded that the mythic character of Satan, as the embodiment of evil and God’s arch nemesis, is lacking from first century literature. Throughout these narratives, Satan is utilized as symbol to represent the author’s perceived terrestrial adversaries or stumbling blocks to the author’s perceived “goals.” The mythic character of Satan’s first century reconstruction is not congruent with certain scholars’ reconstructions of the “New Testament Satan,” which highlights the need for examining each text’s representation of Satan to avoid the problem of character homogenization.

In chapter 4, I discussed second and third century Christian discourses surrounding the Gnostic demiurge and the Ante-Nicene Fathers’ Satan. The Gnostic demiurge is a malevolent creator who is arrogant, ignorant, and the creator of all evil matter. The Gnostic notion of evil, related through the demiurge, suggests a dualistic approach to the world and cosmos. The Ante-Nicene Fathers’ suggest that Satan is active and present within the material world due to perceived “outside” pagan deities and Roman persecution, and “inside” heretical, threats. The rhetoric of the Ante-Nicene Fathers still locates Satan primarily within the terrestrial world operating through their perceived adversaries. I suggested that the Gnostic notion of the Demiurge is more analogous to certain scholarly reconstructions of Satan within the New Testament than the Satan of the “orthodox” Ante-Nicene Fathers. The Ante-Nicene Fathers’ Satan is a
more developed character than within first century “Christian” literature, but he still acts through human agency. Conversely, the Gnostic demiurge is a cosmic universal “evil” creator deity who is responsible for all the malevolence within humanity and the cosmos.

The notion of Satan as a cosmic universal enemy appears to surge in the beginning of the fourth century. There was a radical change in the social topography in the fourth century with the Greco-Roman population rapidly converting to Christianity and the Roman Empire’s hostilities waning. Roman attitudes towards Christianity, of course, changed with Constantine. Within the late third and early fourth century, Rome was aspiring to be the universal, or the “Eternal City.” Garth Fowden states that Greco-Roman polytheism was more concentrated locally and lacked a central authority.

Caracalla attempted to proclaim that Zeus alone holds all the power. Additionally, Aurelian worked to situate Sol, the Sun, as a universal deity to restore cohesion to the Roman world. Conversely, Christianity “aimed to embrace all places in one universal Church, and did not think to be confined by the bounds of the Roman or any other empire.”

People like Caracalla and Aurelian aided in “the Christian doctrine of empire forged by Constantine and formulated by Eusebius: one god, one empire, one emperor.” Under Constantine, Rome was now considered the “sacred center” for the Christian dispensation. Churches were built over temples, to erase memories of the “other” Greco-Roman gods.

---

622 Fowden, 51.
623 Fowden, 50.
624 Fowden, 51.
625 Fowden, 49.
like Augustine argued that the older gods were defeated within the “center” and “it must also be attacked in its limbs, the provincial cities.” With this change of social topography, the “outside” threats are disappearing and the insider threats are becoming more ostracized and started declining.

In the West, Gnosticism faded by the end of the third century and was sporadic in the Near East during the fourth century. Edwin M. Yamauchi suspects that the anti-Gnostic rhetoric of Irenaeus and Tertullian affected the diminishing numbers of Gnostics by excluding them from the “orthodox” Christian “communities.” Terrance Tiessen, however, offers perhaps a more plausible explanation: Gnosticism started diminishing due to “its failure to develop an integrated (social) structure like that of the Orthodox Church.” It is conceivable that within this new social location, people started to “universalize” a perceived cosmic enemy, namely Satan. With a “Christianized” Rome and perceived heretics diminishing, the problem of theodicy now moved from terrestrial “outsider” and “insider” threats to a quintessential notion of a universal cosmic dualism.

One quick example of a Christian author writing in the late third and early fourth century is Augustine of Hippo, circa 386 C.E. – 430 C.E. Augustine does not take the devil lightly. He combines elements of the orthodox, such as Origen’s concept of original sin with Gnostic positions on the devil. As Jeffrey Burton Russell notes, Augustine “synthesized existing diabolology and, adding new insights, constructed a relatively

---

Fowden, 49.
Russell, 53.
coherent approach to the problem of evil.”

Augustine holds that “this world was ruled by hostile ‘powers,’ above all, by the ‘Lord of this world,’ the Devil.” Therefore, his perceived enemy was an external and specific force. Besides this external force, however, there was an internal struggle within each individual as well; “the Devil is not to be blamed for everything: there are times when a man is his own devil.” One can plainly perceive the Gnostic influence upon Augustine’s thoughts here as they are remarkably similar to the Gnostic demiurge. Augustine also believed that “God was restraining this supernatural creature, whose aggressive force was so great that he would obliterate the whole Christian church when released.”

Additionally, humanity is under constant attacks from the devil. As Brown notes:

*Now this Devil will cast his shadow over [humanity]: the human race is “the Devil’s fruit tree, his own property, from which he may pick his fruit,” it is a “plaything of demons.” … Small babies are exposed to “invasion” by them in the form of fits, and [people] in general, to every imaginable temptation, disease and natural catastrophe.*

Generally, Augustine of Hippo displays the devil in a more developed fashion. It appears that Augustine does indeed have a perceived “universalized” enemy in mind.

Augustine’s doctrines “dominated medieval, Protestant, and post-Reformation Catholic theology. Both Protestant and Catholic traditions still base many of their assumptions upon the thought of Augustine.” Thus, the doctrines of Augustine have played a significant role in dominating various Christian doctrines and discourses. His concepts regarding Satan appear to follow this trend, even within some scholarly circles.
Jonathan Z. Smith’s essay “Here, There, and Anywhere”\textsuperscript{638} provides a useful analysis to understand how a transmission from a “local” enemy to a “universalized” enemy can occur. Within his essay, Smith proposes a topography in terms of three spatial categories: (1) the “here” of domestic religion, located primarily in the home and in burial sites; (2) the “there” of public civic and state religions, largely based in temple constructions; and (3) the “anywhere” of a rich diversity of religious formations that occupy an interstitial space between these other two loci, including a variety of religious entrepreneurs and ranging from groups we term “associations” to activities we label “magic.”\textsuperscript{639}

Smith claims that in Late Antiquity, the “anywhere” religions came into prominence and offers three explanations of why this occurred, specifically a new geography, a new cosmography, and a new polity.\textsuperscript{640} A new geography occurs when people have been dislocated, or dispersed; as Smith states: “the religion of ‘here’ has been detached from its roots.”\textsuperscript{641} The solution for dislocation is two-fold. The first solution is sociological: “the association as a socially constructed replacement for the family.”\textsuperscript{642} Now group identity is seen as contractual, not genealogical.\textsuperscript{643} The second solution is mythological: “dislocation is cosmologized by a new, vertical myth, which overlays the horizontal reality.”\textsuperscript{644} People are dislocated from their “heavenly” homes into human bodies. Hence people perform rituals that transcend this perceived distance. Within later discourses and certain reconstructions, Satan is viewed as separating humanity from God (the fall).

Now, our earthly bodies are seen as weak, susceptible to physical and mental illnesses,


\textsuperscript{639} Smith, \textit{Relating}, 325.

\textsuperscript{640} Smith, \textit{Relating}, 330.

\textsuperscript{641} Smith, \textit{Relating}, 330.

\textsuperscript{642} Smith, \textit{Relating}, 330.

\textsuperscript{643} Smith, \textit{Relating}, 333.

\textsuperscript{644} Smith, \textit{Relating}, 330.
decay, and death. Thus, through ritual, for example, praying, baptism, and the Eucharist, Christians attempt to overcome this dislocation from the “heavenly” realm.

A new cosmography suggests a transition from a two-story cosmos (above/below), or three-story cosmos (above/earth/underworld) into a cosmos in Late Antiquity where

The earth was now conceived as a sphere, surrounded by the circular orbits of other planetary spheres which either comprised or were transcended by divine realms … the vast expanse of celestial space rendered the earth small, the human activities on its surface were seen as miniscule, as insignificant. 645

Since human activities were now seen as miniscule, the problem of theodicy is apparent. With the perception of an all-powerful benevolent God, a universal purely malevolent entity is essential for the explanation of “evil.” Additionally, within later discourses, Satan is not perceived of as strictly an underworld entity, but present in all realms attacking the “perfect” creation of God.

A new polity is described thus:

The new political ideologies, post-Alexander, are the result of the total cessation of native kingship. The unique, mediating role of the king was one of the foundations of the religion of “there.” His removal from the scene was decentering. In some Late Antique traditions, the old forms of kingship became idealized objects of nostalgia, as in messianism. At the same time, archaic combat myths were revisioned as resistance myths to foreign kings resulting in new religious formations such as apocalypticism and millenarianism … The model of the distant emperor, mediated by satraps, governors, or vassal kings, played a significant role in the elaboration of the new formations of monotheism, along with the king-god’s ubiquitous attendant subordinate and secondary divinities, principalities, and powers. All of these actors were capable of being readily assimilated to the new, expanded cosmography. 646

By the early fourth century, when the Roman Empire became Christianized and a structured “orthodox” Church was becoming established, a new political identity had

645 Smith, Relating, 331.
646 Smith, Relating, 332.
been formed. Therefore, perceived “insider” and “outsider” threats were declining. For Christians, no longer was the “wrong” king upon the throne of the empire. Resistance myths, or apocalyptic myths, had to be reconstructed from a “wrong” king on the terrestrial throne to a universal chaotic entity attacking God’s ordered society.

Overall, Smith states: “We may distinguish between religions of ‘santification,’ which celebrate the present ordered world, having as their goal its maintenance and repair, and religions of ‘salvation,’ which seek to escape the structures and strictures of this world through activities having as their goal a constant working toward transcendence.”

It is conceivable that the mythic character of Satan in first and second century “Christian” literature can be seen as a “sanctified” figure, represented as a tempter or stumbling block to maintenance and repair of terrestrial matters. However, with the changing social topography, Satan also changed to a type of “salvation” figure, represented as a cosmic chaotic malevolent entity. Overall, the decentering of the perceived “there,” or “outsider,” threats, Rome, and the “here,” “insider,” heretical, threats turned Satan into an “anywhere,” a cosmological universalized threat.

I propose that the mythic character of Satan’s development parallels Smith’s essay. Satan within the Hebrew Bible, interestamental literature, and early Christian discourses was mainly seen as a “here” threat; a threat emanating from within and antagonizing “family” members. Additionally, other discourse from early Christian literature portray Satan as a “there” threat; a threat deriving from pagan deities and Roman persecutions. However, with the Christians’ social topography rapidly changing in the late third and early fourth century, a new polity is created. As Smith states, “associations, as religions of ‘anywhere,’ may be understood primarily as re-placements

---

647 Smith, Relating, 334.
of the religions of ‘here’ in modes appropriate to the new world order.” Within this new world order, “outsider” and major “insider” threats are evaporating. With these threats fading away, the Christians would have to re-imagine their perceived enemy and threats. Thus, the “here,” and “there” enemy has now been re-constructed into a “universal,” or “anywhere,” enemy, a threat that will come to dominate later Christian discourse. Smith summarizes this thought pattern nicely:

To understand these phenomena is to think through the dynamics of religious persistence, reinterpretation, and change; to think through the ways in which a given group at a given time chose this or that mode of interpreting their traditions as they related themselves to their historical past and to their social and political present.649

As the understanding of “what is Christian” developed with a set of more cohesive dogmatics, rituals, and myths, Satan grew alongside it. Satan’s escalation from “here” “local,” and “there” pagan deities and Roman persecution adversary into an “anywhere,” God’s “universal” celestial enemy resulted from the changing Christian social topography of the early fourth century.

Overall, certain scholars’ homogenized reconstructions of the “New Testament Satan” as the universalized incarnation of evil and God’s absolute cosmic enemy are absent from early first, second, and third century “orthodox” Christian literature. The homogenized perception of the “New Testament Satan” is more indicative of the popular discourses of today. Thus, such a reconstruction, as some scholars have attempted, is an anachronistic reading of the first, second, and third century data. By examining various texts from early “Christian” authors individually, we can conclude that Satan represents a pejorative term used to describe terrestrial, tangible, and concrete social realities.

648 Smith, Relating, 332.
649 Smith, Relating, 324.
perceived of as adversaries. The cosmic dualist approach to Satan as God’s absolute cosmic enemy and the pure incarnation of evil resulted from the changing social topography of the early fourth century where Christian “insider” and “outsider” adversaries were diminishing. With these threats fading, Christians universalized a perceived chaotic cosmic enemy, namely a Satan influenced by the Gnostic demiurge, who disrupts God’s terrestrial and cosmic order.
Bibliography

Argyle, A.W. “Accounts of the Temptation of Jesus in Relation to the Q-Hypothesis.” *Expository Times* 64. Vol. 64. 1952-53. 382.


Brown, Raymond E. *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates*


