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A Trickster in Disguise:  
Reading a New Type of Satan in 2 Corinthians

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Capstone Essay  
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### **Abstract**

This capstone paper examines three brief mentions of Satan in 2 Corinthians by comparing them with representations in two longer pseudepigraphal texts: the *Testament of Job* and the Greek *Life of Adam and Eve*. Although the Satan of 2 Corinthians is often read in tandem with other mentions of an apocalyptic evil figure, I argue that this Satan bears a greater resemblance to the Satan portrayed in the *Testament* and the *Life*. In these three texts, Satan's moral alignment is ambiguous: although he often acts for nefarious purposes, he does not oppose God on a cosmic scale as apocalyptic Satan figures do. Instead, this Satan tests and tricks humans, often using disguises. The trickster Satan is not the diametric opposite of the apocalyptic Satan; in fact, the two portrayals sometimes appear within the same text, indicating a gradual evolution of the figure of Satan during the early Christian period.<sup>1</sup>

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1 I would like to thank my advisors in the Religion and Classics Departments, Cindy Chapman and Drew Wilburn, and my second reader Corey Barnes, whose unwavering support made this paper possible. I would also like to thank the Religion Department Capstone Colloquium seminar and my family and friends, whose comments and critiques helped refine my capstone paper into what you see today.

Throughout his missionary career in the Mediterranean, Paul sent many letters to the churches he had helped to found, encouraging them to stand by the spiritual teachings he had imparted to them. One of these correspondences, with a Christian community in Corinth, has been preserved in the New Testament as epistles 1 and 2 Corinthians. 2 Corinthians in particular is difficult to interpret: it is fragmented and disparate, possibly compiled from multiple letters dating from between 54 and 56 CE. The letter as a whole serves both to chide the Corinthian church for ongoing sinfulness and to advocate for reconciliation after previous conflicts between Paul and the church. It also contains three brief references to Satan<sup>2</sup> that are especially complex, but that have been overlooked by most scholars, who rely on two other references to evil figures in 2 Corinthians to characterize Satan: a “god of this world” in chapter 4 and “Beliar” in chapter 6. Both the “god of this world” and “Beliar” resemble apocalyptic descriptions of Satan, such as those in the Book of Revelation or the Qumran texts. The Satan of 2 Corinthians is thus generally read as the same Satan portrayed in contemporaneous apocalyptic texts: an archenemy of God who currently rules over this world, but who will be defeated in a battle with God during the end of days.

However, the figure explicitly named Satan (ὁ σατανᾶς) in 2 Corinthians actually bears little resemblance to this apocalyptic Satan. Instead, the Satan of 2 Corinthians shares many characteristics with Satans from two other early Greek Jewish or Christian texts: the *Testament*

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<sup>2</sup> The named references to Satan in 2 Corinthians occur in 2:11 (Satan “outwitted” Christians), 11:14 (Satan “disguises himself as an angel of light”), and 12:7 (Satan sends a messenger to act as a “thorn” that “torment[s]” Paul). These citations, as well as all other English biblical citations in this paper, come from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, unless otherwise noted.

of *Job* and the Greek *Life of Adam and Eve*. While the *Testament* and the *Life* do not predate Paul's epistles, they date from a similar time period (the first three centuries CE) and originated in similar communities: Greek-speaking Jewish or Christian groups around the Mediterranean. Unlike 2 Corinthians' brief references to Satan, both the *Testament* and the *Life* consist of lengthy narratives in which Satan plays a primary role. They are thus illustrative of stories and characterizations of Satan that were likely to have been circulating during Paul's time and in his communities. In all three texts, Satan is not necessarily a direct enemy of God. Although he tricks, tests, and torments humans, particularly those who are weaker than others, he sometimes operates with God's approval. This trickster Satan's powers are primarily deceptive in nature, and in 2 Corinthians and the *Testament*, Satan's key trait is deceitful disguise, or μετασχηματίζω. His moral compass is ambiguous; it is unclear whose side he is on, other than his own.

In this paper, I will be comparing these three texts—2 Corinthians, the *Testament of Job*, and the Greek *Life of Adam and Eve*—both in the original Greek and in translation, through a historical/textual lens. Through this comparison, I hope to gain a fuller understanding of the multiple ways in which Satan was characterized during the early Christian period. Previous scholars have analyzed all three texts in their historical context and have embarked upon thorough grammatical studies of the Greek used in the texts. However, previous textual analyses have tended to approach these works individually, rather than as a collection of texts that can illuminate one another. There are a few exceptions to this rule, but such exceptions tend to compare merely two of the texts at once, and often center their analyses on the characters of Adam and Eve.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, many scholars—for example, James Tabor and David Abernathy—

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<sup>3</sup>For instance, Geert van Oyen, “The Character of Eve in the New Testament: 2 Corinthians 11:3 and 1 Timothy 2:13-14,” in *Out of Paradise: Eve and Adam and Their Interpreters*, ed. Bob Becking and Susanne Hennecke (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011). This article

tend to conflate multiple representations of evil in 2 Corinthians into one, interpreting them all as a unitary force who is oppositional to God in a near-apocalyptic manner.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the understanding of the role Satan plays in 2 Corinthians may be insufficiently developed. I argue that limited comparative treatments, coupled with the prevailing scholarly assumption that all mentions of personified evil in 2 Corinthians refer to a single Satan figure, have overlooked an important point of connection between the three texts: the presence of a trickster Satan of liminal morality who uses the strategy of disguise to achieve his own ends.<sup>5</sup>

This trickster Satan is not a polar opposite to the apocalyptic Satan of Qumran or Revelation. In fact, the Greek *Life*, like other early Christian narratives of Satan, depicts a Satan who is both an apocalyptic enemy of God and a more earthly deceiver of humanity. Therefore, while I may seem to be simply presenting another overly-determined picture of Satan in opposition to the apocalyptic Satan, that is not my aim. Rather, I hope to show through the case study of 2 Corinthians that the figure of Satan in the first century is presented in complex and multivalent ways, and cannot be neatly distilled into just one type of character. While my analysis of 2 Corinthians, the *Testament*, and the *Life* rests on a solid foundation of previous

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compares Eve's portrayal in 2 Corinthians with that of the *Life*, yet never mentions the similarity between Satan in the two texts.

4 James D. Tabor, *Things Unutterable: Paul's Ascent to Paradise in its Greco-Roman, Judaic, and Early Christian Contexts* (Boston: University Press of America, 1986); David Abernathy, "Paul's Thorn in the Flesh: A Messenger of Satan?", *Neotestamentica* 35 (2001): 69-79.

5 Scholars have recently begun to critique the use of the term "trickster" to describe figures outside of a specific archetype found in African or Native American folktales; I admit that I may be using this term outside of its traditional anthropological constraints. However, I have chosen to employ the term "trickster" throughout this paper not as an attempt to reject these criticisms, but because there does not exist any better word to describe a type of character whose power is based primarily upon trickery or deception, but who is also morally ambiguous. I urge the reader to thus consider not the African or Native American tricksters when encountering the word "trickster" in my work, but to think instead of trickster figures in Greek and Roman texts, such as Odysseus or Prometheus, who bear greater resemblance to the trickster Satan I propose here.

academic work in the field, I hope that my exploration of meaningful intertextual connections will open up more nuanced ways of thinking about evil during the birth of Christianity.

I will begin with a discussion of the depiction of Satan in 2 Corinthians, and will explore why the passages that mention Satan—and those that mention other evil but non-Satanic figures—prove so difficult to explicate. I will further expand upon this difficulty by comparing 2 Corinthians' Satan to apocalyptic portrayals of Satan, including the Satan in Revelation and Beliar in the Qumran texts, to highlight the ways in which 2 Corinthians' Satan does not precisely fit this apocalyptic type. I will then present the alternative model of Satan that emerges in the *Testament of Job* and the Greek *Life of Adam and Eve* and explain, through a revisiting of 2 Corinthians, how and why the trickster Satan who appears in both texts better resembles 2 Corinthians' Satan. I will conclude with brief examinations of other texts from the time period, such as the New Testament synoptic gospels, in order to demonstrate that early Christians did not hold definitively to either the apocalyptic or the trickster Satan, but relied on both types to adequately portray the range of different evils they may have confronted in their own lives. By using the *Testament* and the *Life* to shed light on the presence of a trickster Satan in 2 Corinthians, I hope to contribute to a better understanding of how Paul may have conceived of his demonic opponents.

## The Problem of Satan in 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians is one of the few New Testament epistles definitively attributed to Paul. Although Jerome Murphy-O'Connor claims that 2 Corinthians had a co-author in addition to Paul, which led to a more well-rounded rhetoric,<sup>6</sup> Paul's authorship is not in dispute. However, the letter's composition is in fact disjointed and it contains numerous abrupt transitions in theme and tone, leading many scholars to conclude that 2 Corinthians is in fact composed of multiple different letter fragments addressed to the congregation in Corinth and then compiled together as 2 Corinthians.<sup>7</sup> Although scholars disagree about the chronological order of these letter fragments, the general consensus is that they were all sent to the Corinthian church in response to a specific confrontation between Paul and another group of missionaries. The letter fragments also exhibit an overall coherence in that they all touch on Paul's view of sin, redemption, and reconciliation with the church as a whole.<sup>8</sup> Regardless of their different views concerning the order of the fragments within, scholars agree that the entire letter can be dated to between 54 and 56 CE.<sup>9</sup>

Chapters 10 to 13 of the letter consist of Paul's defense of his own ministry, and a critique of the opposing missionaries as false and disingenuous. According to Murphy-O'Connor, this section probably originated as a self-contained, individual letter without a co-author. He bases this conclusion on the idiosyncratic nature of what he describes as its "heightened feeling and intensely personal tone."<sup>10</sup> Chapters 10-13 also include one of the more revealing mentions of

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<sup>6</sup>Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Keys to Second Corinthians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.

<sup>7</sup>John T. Fitzgerald, "The Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians," in *The Harper-Collins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 2006), 1956.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 1957.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 1958.

<sup>10</sup>Murphy-O'Connor, *Keys to Second Corinthians*, 9.



Satan in 2 Corinthians: a passage where Satan is included as part of a larger comparative statement made by Paul in which he criticizes his apostolic rivals. These “false apostles” (2 Corinthians 11:13) have been preaching a gospel different from Paul’s; while Paul believes the adoption of Jewish law to be unnecessary for Gentile Christian converts, his opponents have been preaching the opposite to the Corinthian congregation. In a strong denunciation of them, Paul thus claims:

For such boasters are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if his ministers also disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness. Their end will match their deed (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

Paul uses the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew title *haśśāṭān*, or “the adversary” to name Satan: ὁ σατανᾶς. However, since in Greek names were traditionally accompanied with articles and were not capitalized, it is impossible to know whether ὁ σατανᾶς was originally intended to be a proper noun naming a specific adversarial figure, or a more general title of someone fulfilling a role or position as the adversary, as it is in Hebrew. This ambiguity is reflected in the fact that the capitalization of the first letter to denote a proper noun in modern editions of Greek texts varies among modern Greek New Testaments; it is rendered as both ὁ σατανᾶς and ὁ Σατανᾶς.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the contrast between the apostles who are compared to Satan and the “apostles of Christ” mentioned in the previous verse seems to imply that Satan in this case should be perceived as an individual entity, not as a representation of an impersonal role

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<sup>11</sup> For instance, the Nestle Greek Text as referenced in Alfred Marshall, *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* (Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, MI, 1972) uses a lowercase sigma. Murray J. Harris’s Greek commentary on 2 Corinthians, in *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, MI, 2005) uses an uppercase sigma.

or position. If we therefore envision this Satan as personalized, we must then determine what sort of an individual he is.

In 2 Corinthians 11, Satan performs one primary action: he disguises himself [μετασχηματίζεται]. In its middle form as in 2 Corinthians, μετασχηματίζω denotes changing one's form or disguising oneself. Μετασχηματίζω does not necessarily have malicious or evil connotations; both Plato and Aristotle used it in its active form to straightforwardly describe the changing states of natural elements.<sup>12</sup> Murray J. Harris maintains that in the middle voice, μετασχηματίζω generally “has the negative sense of *pretend to be someone/hypocritically act as someone/masquerade as someone*.”<sup>13</sup> But Paul in fact uses μετασχηματίζω in the middle voice to describe his own actions in 1 Corinthians 4:6. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) translates this verse as: “I have applied all this to Apollos and myself for your benefit, brothers and sisters....” However, the verb translated as “applied” is in fact a form of μετασχηματίζω, and here refers to the ways in which Paul has changed himself to serve as an example to the Corinthian church (corresponding to a definition of μετασχηματίζω in Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon: “to transfer as in a figure”<sup>14</sup>). Although μετασχηματίζω is often translated metaphorically, such as in the NRSV, David R. Hall argues that “...it is a principle of sound exegesis to understand Greek words in accordance with their normal usage unless there are cogent reasons to do otherwise,”<sup>15</sup> and that we should therefore read 1 Corinthians 4:6 as employing a standard use of μετασχηματίζω. A more accurate translation of this passage,

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12 Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 504.

13 Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 773.

14 Liddell and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, 504.

15 David R. Hall, “A Disguise for the Wise: μετασχηματισμός in 1 Corinthians 4:6,” *New Testament Studies* 40 (1994): 149.

corresponding to the standard use of μετασχηματίζω advocated by Hall, could thus be “I have transformed Apollos and myself for your benefit....” If Paul is willing to use the term as descriptive of himself, it seems reasonable to conclude that μετασχηματίζω on its own might be neutral in connotation, and might not therefore imply an evil deception on Satan’s part, or even necessarily a pejorative description of Satan.

However, in the context of 2 Corinthians, Paul is certainly not representing μετασχηματίζω by either the rival apostles or by Satan as a positive action. Not only does he pejoratively describe the apostles who disguise themselves as being “false apostles” (ψευδαπόστολοι) and deceitful workers (ἐργάται δόλοι; “deceitful” therefore not being etymologically related to μετασχηματίζω), but he also states that they are disguising themselves as “ministers of righteousness,” implying that they are not naturally righteous (for if they were, there would be no need of disguise). This description of the false apostles simultaneously convicts Satan, because the false apostles are also labeled “his ministers,” δῖακονοι αὐτοῦ—that is, ministers of Satan. If they are not righteous, it would follow that their master is not righteous either. And just as the false apostles attempt to disguise themselves as their good counterparts (ministers of righteousness), Satan attempts to disguise himself as his own positive counterpart, “an angel of light,” ἄγγελον φωτός. In contrast to the Hebrew Bible, which implies that Satan is a member of God’s heavenly court,<sup>16</sup> Satan is now characterized as merely taking on the disguise of an angel—and is thus as far away from being a true angel as the false apostles are from being truly righteous.

Yet the characterization of Satan in 2 Corinthians is further complicated by the fact that any “evil” actions undertaken by Satan are representative of “earthly” rather than cosmic

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<sup>16</sup> Satan is mentioned as being part of God’s heavenly court in Job 1:6-12, 2:1-7.

machinations. For instance, in 2 Corinthians 2:11, Satan “outwits” (πλεονεκτηθῶμεν) Christians. In the New Testament, πλεονεκτέω is generally used to mean “overreaching” or “defrauding”—actions that seem more attuned to the marketplace than to the heavens.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, its use in classical Greek also may be earthly rather than cosmic in scope; for example, when used by Thucydides or Xenophon, it sometimes suggests having an advantage over someone, but not necessarily in a negative way.<sup>18</sup> Thus, πλεονεκτέω may imply Satan’s cleverness and craftiness, but these qualities may not be pejorative in nature.

At some points Satan’s actions even seem sanctioned by God. In 2 Corinthians 12:7, Paul notes that Satan has messengers that serve as a “thorn in the flesh” for Paul “lest [he be] too elated.” David Abernathy interprets this image of the messenger of Satan as a thorn in Paul’s flesh (σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί, ἄγγελος σατανᾶ) as an indication that “Satan, through a demonic agent, was determined to oppose and punish [Paul] in order to discourage and hinder his ministry in every possible way.”<sup>19</sup> This implies that Satan is an antagonistically evil figure who is directly opposed to Paul’s godly work. However, Paul does not denounce the evil of Satan’s messenger; he only credits this “thorn” with the positive effect of prodding him towards humility in his ministry and giving him obstacles to overcome. This is clearly an important element in Paul’s conception of his faith, as can be seen when he says in verse 9, “So I will boast all the more gladly of my weakness, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.” Paul thus recognizes that his own inadequacy and struggles lead him closer to the glory of God. In the case of the “thorn,” Paul’s torment seems to be sent by, or at least approved by, Christ, who refuses to remove it so that Paul can be strengthened by having to struggle against this obstacle. Victor Paul Furnish

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<sup>17</sup> Liddell and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, 645.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 645.

<sup>19</sup> Abernathy, “Paul’s Thorn in the Flesh,” 77.

connects this to Satan's appearance in the Book of Job where Satan acts at God's behest to test Job's faith. Furnish notes that here, too, Satan functions "as an agent of God's purposes."<sup>20</sup> Paul thus could be seen as viewing Satan's messenger as a test of his perseverance, his humility, and the grace of Christ. While he does not welcome whatever ailment, physical or supernatural, the "thorn" represents, he comes to accept it as something that is sanctioned by God for godly purposes.

Paul is thus somewhat ambiguous in 2 Corinthians regarding Satan's true moral valence. However, the majority of scholars nevertheless assume that Paul is suggesting a characterization of Satan as an unequivocally evil agent. For instance, Furnish's interpretation of 2 Corinthians 11 highlights the way in which Paul's description of his rivals emphasizes that they are "false" and have been preaching erroneously to the Corinthian congregation. Just as crucially, the false apostles have been disguising themselves as good workers and "apostles of Christ," and since they are nothing of the sort, "they are guilty of a deliberate deception."<sup>21</sup> Paul's explicit comparison between the false apostles and Satan is presumably used to reinforce this accusation of deception, and Furnish claims this comparison is a reference to "certain Jewish traditions" of "Satan, the master deceiver."<sup>22</sup> However, such a tradition is not in fact evident in the Hebrew Bible, where Satan is generally portrayed as a member of the divine council, or one of the "sons of God."<sup>23</sup> Although it is possible that Furnish could be alluding to extra-biblical narratives, Furnish nonetheless admits that "not many of the Gentile Christians in Corinth may have been

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<sup>20</sup> Victor Paul Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1984), 547.

<sup>21</sup> Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, 510.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 510. Furnish does not refer to any specific texts in making this claim.

<sup>23</sup> For instance, in Job 1:6 and 2:1, where Satan is included as one of the "sons of God" who present themselves before God.

familiar with these stories,”<sup>24</sup> and so any reference to a “master deceiver” would likely not have resonated with them.

If we thus cannot adequately interpret Paul’s Satan within the framework of the Hebrew Bible and related traditions as Furnish and other scholars suggest, how can we read this Satan of 2 Corinthians?

### **Satan in Apocalyptic Texts**

Most scholars who comment on 2 Corinthians, such as James D. Tabor, have made interpretive leaps and characterized Satan as an evil agent diametrically opposed to godly works. They read the three mentions of Satan (2 Corinthians 2:11, 11:14, 12:7) in tandem with passages that point to an unequivocal force of evil antagonistic to God, and conclude that Paul considered Satan to embody this oppositional evil.<sup>25</sup> However, the passages that allude to the evil that Tabor and other scholars such as David Abernathy<sup>26</sup> identify with Satan never actually mention Satan himself. For example, 2 Corinthians 4:4 condemns an unspecified “god of this age” (ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου), but this “god” is never identified by name, and is nowhere connected with Satan. The ambiguity of the genitive τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου further calls into question the identification of the “god of this age” as Satan; as Murray J. Harris notes, the passage could also be translated as “their god, which is this age” or “the one whom the unbelievers of this age have as their god.”<sup>27</sup> Such translations would connote either a hedonistic worship of the present or

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<sup>24</sup>⌕Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, 510.

<sup>25</sup>⌕Tabor, *Things Unutterable*, 119.

<sup>26</sup>⌕See Abernathy, “Paul’s Thorn in the Flesh.” Throughout his article, Abernathy relies on the assumption that Paul conceived of Satan as this type of unequivocal evil.

<sup>27</sup>⌕Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 328.

pagan gods worshipped in the Roman Empire, but not necessarily the figure of Satan. The assumptions made by Tabor and Abernathy thus seem to be overly determined, not sufficiently taking into account alternative interpretations that may undermine a conflation of all figures of evil in 2 Corinthians into one.

It is nonetheless the case that the phrasing in this passage implies a dualistic view contrasting “this age” and “the age to come,” when Jesus Christ will rule. This dualism is congruent with mentions of Satan and other evil figures in apocalyptic texts, such as the book of Revelation that appears later in the New Testament. “Apocalypticism,” referring to both a literary genre and a theological worldview originating in the Hellenistic Jewish period, derives its name from the Greek ἀποκάλυψις, or revelation. Thus, when applied to a text, it suggests a work that constitutes a revelation of special knowledge to a prophet. However, the significance of an apocalyptic narrative extends beyond its revelatory status. James D. Newsome lists ten “primary theological principles” and literary features characteristic of apocalyptic texts: discussions of “the nature of evil, the certainty of judgment, and the course of future events,” as well as “an extensive angelology and demonology (theological dualism), the figure of the messiah, belief in the resurrection of the dead, the periodization of history, an extensive use of symbols, the attribution of individual apocalyptic writings to earlier heroes of faith (pseudonymity) and a reliance upon dreams and visions as media of revelation.”<sup>28</sup> In considering the figure of Satan, the most significant elements in Newsome’s list of apocalyptic elements concern the nature of evil and the dualistic vision of cosmic forces arrayed in opposition against one another.

The Revelation in the New Testament is a standard example of an apocalyptic narrative:

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<sup>28</sup>James D. Newsome, *Greeks, Romans, Jews: Currents of Culture and Belief in the New Testament World* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1992), 66.

presented as a “revelation” or “apocalypse” from Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:1), it details a great battle between good and evil during the end of days, when the dead will be resurrected and Christ as the messiah will defeat the forces of evil who rule over the present day. Satan is said to lead these forces, and is described as “the great dragon...that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.” He is thus depicted as a figure of formidable power and cosmic significance. However, Satan is eventually defeated by the archangel Michael and thrown into a pit with “his angels” (Revelation 12:9).

The dualism present in 2 Corinthians 4:4 is suggestive of the dualism inherent in the struggle between God and Revelation’s apocalyptic Satan. A dualistic world view also emerges in the contrast between the apostles of Christ and the apostles of Satan in 2 Corinthians 11. However, Revelation’s Satan and the unnamed “god” of 2 Corinthians 4 are both represented as being considerably more powerful than the Satan of 2 Corinthians 11. In 2 Corinthians 11, Satan has to use disguise even to be seen as an angel, whereas in Revelation, Satan is a “great dragon” with an army of angels at his command, capable of deceiving not only individual human beings, but “the whole world.” In 2 Corinthians 4, the figure gains even greater power, as the oppositional evil is designated as a “god.”

Similarly, 2 Corinthians 6:15 contrasts the goodness of Christ with the malevolence of “Beliar,” an evil figure also represented as God’s opponent in the Qumran texts whose original Hebrew name, *beliya’al*, means “worthlessness” or “destruction.”<sup>29</sup> Harris acknowledges that “Paul’s usual word for the devil is (ὁ) Σατανᾶς,”<sup>30</sup> but he nonetheless merges Beliar and Satan into a single diabolical figure without offering any justification for doing so other than the

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 502.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 502.



citations in the Qumran texts and various other pseudepigraphal works that also mention Beliar. This conflation thus seems insufficiently supported, and in fact there are noteworthy differences between the two figures that further suggest that they should not be seen as congruent. In the Qumran texts, Beliar does not disguise himself as an angel of light to trick people as 2 Corinthians' Satan does, but instead leads an "army" of both "angels of his dominion, and all the men of his forces"—the "Sons of Darkness."<sup>31</sup> He is thus a more powerful figure, openly arrayed in battle rather than acting through subterfuge. The "Sons of Darkness" battle the "Sons of Light" in a cosmic war that is analogous to the dualism Paul sets forth in 2 Corinthians 6 between righteousness and unrighteousness, light and darkness, and Christ and Beliar. However, although the texts' author joyfully notes Beliar's eventual destruction after a fearsome and bloody battle,<sup>32</sup> no apparent benefit results from the war in the Qumran texts—unlike the case of Satan's messenger goading Paul in 2 Corinthians 12, where a direct good emerges for Paul as a result of Satan's actions.

Apocalyptic Satan figures—whether the Satan of Revelation, the "god of this age" of 2 Corinthians, or the Beliar of the Qumran texts and 2 Corinthians—thus serve very different roles from the Satan of 2 Corinthians. They do not trick or test individual human beings as 2 Corinthians' trickster Satan does, but violently oppose God himself, often in a large battle during the end of days. For the most part, the apocalyptic Satan works on a cosmic scale, in direct opposition to the forces of God, whereas 2 Corinthians' Satan appears to work on a more worldly or human scale, frequently intervening in the lives of individuals through subtler means.

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<sup>31</sup>Michael Wise, Martin Abegg Jr., and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1996), 152.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 152.

Although they share some traits, and occasionally the same name,<sup>33</sup> they do not seem to be the same character.

### **Satan in the Testament of Job: A New Model?**

If the Satan of 2 Corinthians does not resemble the apocalyptic model, how then should we interpret him? The *Testament of Job* presents a useful alternative model: a trickster Satan who is described using many of the same conceits referred to in 2 Corinthians. The *Testament* is a retelling of the original Book of Job from the Hebrew Bible converted into a “testament” form, in which the main character (in this case, Job) narrates portions of his life to his children before he dies. The earliest copies of the *Testament of Job* are Coptic manuscripts dating to about the fifth century CE.<sup>34</sup> Its existence is not mentioned by any other authors until the sixth century CE,<sup>35</sup> but its original composition is generally dated by scholarly consensus to the late first century or early second century CE,<sup>36</sup> around the same time or shortly after the composition of 2 Corinthians. The text possibly originated in monastic and contemplative Jewish communities like those of the Therapeutae sect—an inference based on the worshipful singing of Job’s daughters at the end of the *Testament*.<sup>37</sup> William Gruen suggests a place of origin in Egypt due to

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33 Despite the differences between these two types of Satans, their similar traits and names could imply why different evil figures eventually coalesced into one Satan/Devil figure in later Christian literature and art.

34 William ‘Chip’ Gruen III, “Seeking a Context for the *Testament of Job*,” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 18.3 (2009): 167.

35 Russell P. Spittler, “The Testament of Job: A History of Research and Interpretation,” in *Studies on the Testament of Job*, ed. Michael A. Knibb and Pieter W. van der Horst (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 7.

36 R.P. Spittler, “Testament of Job,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, edited by James H. Charlesworth (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983): 833.

37 Gruen, “Seeking a Context for the *Testament of Job*,” 165.

similarities between the description of Job's destruction of the idolatrous temple and accounts of religious riots that occurred in Alexandria in the mid-first century.<sup>38</sup> Still, no matter the place of origin, scholars agree that the *Testament* was originally written in Greek and in parallel with the Septuagint copy of the Book of Job, suggesting composition in a Greek-speaking Jewish or Christian community.<sup>39</sup>

Yet despite the parallels between the two versions of the Job narrative, their representations of Satan diverge. Unlike Satan in the original Book of Job, Satan in the *Testament* is not an emissary of God. Rather, he is a trickster figure estranged from God and associated with idolatry, whose role in the universe is to be the figure "by whom human nature is deceived" (3:3).<sup>40</sup> Satan is able to torment Job and Job's wife, Sitis, through the use of disguises and deception. However, God is in the end more powerful than Satan, and Job is assured that no matter what torments ensue, Job's ability to withstand them can earn him lasting glory, and God's power will always triumph. The narrative, in fact, starts with this assurance. After Job investigates an idolatrous temple said to be "the place of Satan" (ὁ τόπος τοῦ Σατανᾶ, 3:6)<sup>41</sup> and destroys it on God's orders, an angel promises him that "...[Satan] will rise up against you with wrath for battle. But he will be unable to bring death upon you.... But if you are patient, I will make your name renowned in all generations of the earth till the consummation of the age" (4:3-6). The action begins with Job's curiosity about the temple rather than with an ongoing cosmic conflict—which, as Bradford Kierkegaard notes, suggests that "the opposition between Satan

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>39</sup> Spittler, "The Testament of Job: A History", 9.

<sup>40</sup> This and all other English citations of the *Testament* are from Spittler, "Testament of Job."

<sup>41</sup> This and all other Greek citations of the *Testament* are from *Texts and Studies: Contributions to Biblical and Patristic Literature*, ed J. Armitage Robinson, vol. 5 no 1, *Apocrypha Anecdota II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891).

and Job is not present at the outset of the narrative.”<sup>42</sup> The *Testament* does not depict a grand battle between good and evil, but merely a testing of Job’s patience. Satan may trick and try Job, even so far as to ruin his life, but the outcome is predetermined and does not in any way threaten the cosmic balance between good and evil.

Satan’s attack on Job begins with the adoption of a disguise, as with Satan in 2 Corinthians. After being warned about Satan’s retaliation, Job secures his doors against any intrusion. But as Job explains to his sons, “...while I was inside Satan knocked at the door, having disguised himself as a beggar. And he said to the doorman, ‘Tell Job I wish to meet with him.’ When the doorman came and told me these things, she heard me say to report that I had no time just now” (6:4-6). Although the doorman wishes to give the “beggar” some bread, Job, despite his usual generosity, refuses. Just as in 2 Corinthians, Satan’s chief weapon is his power of disguise, and the author of the *Testament* uses the same word as in 2 Corinthians: μετασχηματίζω. And just as Paul’s righteousness gives him the capacity to see through Satan’s disguises when the Corinthian church cannot, Job’s piety and good favor with God give him the power to penetrate Satan’s disguise.

Others, however, who are weaker or more vulnerable than Job, are taken in by the deception. As Kierkegaard notes, “Job, presumably thanks to some heavenly insight, easily sees through Satan’s deceptions...the people surrounding Job are clearly affected by Satan’s ability to deceive, and react to him in perfectly normal and praiseworthy fashions, as if he were a normal human.”<sup>43</sup> The doorman’s charity towards the beggar becomes a misstep rather than a virtue

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<sup>42</sup> Bradford A. Kierkegaard, “Satan in the *Testament of Job*: A Literary Analysis” in *Of Scribes and Sages: Early Jewish Interpretation and Transmission of Scripture*, ed. Craig A. Evans (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 5.

<sup>43</sup> Kierkegaard, “Satan in the *Testament of Job*,” 7.

because she is unable to identify correctly whom she is intending to be charitable towards. She thus attempts to provide what Kierkegaard describes as a “food offering,” as if she were treating Satan as a god to be worshipped and honored by offerings.<sup>44</sup> Satan thus not only deceives the doorman into thinking that he is a beggar who needs charity—in a sense, he also disguises himself as a heavenly power to whom one might make offerings, much as Satan disguises himself as a heavenly power in 2 Corinthians.

Also as in 2 Corinthians, the employment of μετασχηματίζω is not presented as inherently good or evil. In the *Testament*, although he is not sent directly by God, Satan in fact receives express permission from God to torment Job, just as in the canonical Book of Job. After Satan tries to trick the doorman twice more, Job says that Satan “implored the Lord that he might receive authority over my goods. And then, when he had received the authority, he came and took away all my wealth” (8:2-3). Although Satan’s use of disguise, such as when he tricks the doorman, is not explicitly sanctioned in the same way as the destruction of Job’s property, this process of divine approval indicates that all of Satan’s tricks, no matter how immoral they may seem, are somehow in line with God’s intentions for Job. Satan is thus almost allied with God during Job’s tests in the *Testament*.

After Satan receives authority from God, he begins destroying Job’s property, revealing a level of power not demonstrated in 2 Corinthians: “Satan—when he had received the authority—came down unmercifully and torched 7,000 sheep...the 3,000 camels, and the 500 she-asses, and the 500 yoke of oxen” (16:2-4). It is uncertain exactly how Satan destroyed these animals, but he is clearly able to kill extensively when he is willing and when God allows it. When he moves on to kill Job’s children, however, Satan does not only exert brute force; he takes on a new disguise,

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 8.

that of the King of Persia, once again making use of his power of μετασχηματίζω: “καὶ μετασχηματισθεὶς εἰς βασιλέα τῶν Περσῶν...” (17:2). The King of Persia is a figure who would be regarded as foreign, alien, and occasionally threatening to a Jewish, Christian, or even Gentile Greek audience. If we assume an Egyptian authorship, the incorporation of this specific figure may allude to particular animosities between Egypt and Persia, according to William Gruen.<sup>45</sup> Kierkegaard interprets this disguise differently, as representing “a rival power capable of claiming rulership of the area”<sup>46</sup> by killing Job’s children. Such interpretations may be seen as almost irrelevant, however, because Satan does not actually use this disguise to kill Job’s children; he “smashed the house down upon [Job’s] children and killed them” (18:1), wielding the same raw power he had employed in the destruction of Job’s livestock. This disconnect between the adoption of the disguise and the accomplishment of the killing implies that while the adoption of the Persian disguise was not necessary to the development of the overall narrative, the action of disguise, of μετασχηματίζω, was a trait of Satan important enough to preserve in the text, for otherwise it might have been removed during subsequent redactions.

However, Job’s faith is unwavering, and soon Satan is given authority by God to strike Job with a plague. Satan again displays superhuman powers not witnessed in 2 Corinthians, but still he continues to use the strategy of disguise—this time as a whirlwind, “a common image of Yahweh in the Hebrew Scriptures.”<sup>47</sup> This disguise is reminiscent of Satan’s disguise as an angel of light in 2 Corinthians; in both instances he takes on a resemblance to that which is holy in order to fulfill nefarious purposes, implying that he is not entirely holy himself, but also that those who correctly identify him are all the more powerful. Job’s ability to see through Satan’s

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<sup>45</sup> Gruen, “Seeking a Context for the *Testament of Job*,” 177.

<sup>46</sup> Kierkegaard, “Satan in the *Testament of Job*,” 9.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 10.

disguise and correctly identify Satan, rather than God, as the source of his miseries makes him appear remarkable. This is especially evident when Job's perception is contrasted with the way in which his wife Sitis perceives Satan during Satan's final attempt to break Job's faith. Satan

...disguised himself [μετασχηματίσθη] as a bread seller. It happened by chance that my wife went to him and begged bread, thinking he was a man. And Satan said to her, 'Pay the price and take what you like.... Now then if you have no money at hand, offer me the hair of your head and take three loaves of bread.... Then he took scissors, sheared off the hair of her head, and gave her three loaves, while all were looking on. When she got the loaves, she came and brought them to me. Satan followed her along the road, walking stealthily and leading her heart astray (23:1-11).

Like the doorman, Sitis is taken in by Satan's disguise. Also like the doorman (who was acting from charitable impulses), her motives are good (she wishes to nourish Job through his plague). However, in spite of her good intentions, her failure to correctly identify Satan serves as her undoing. Having been successfully deceived and humiliated by Satan, she begs Job to abandon his faith in God.

While the female characters in the Testament, like Sitis or the doorman, are consistently taken in by Satan's disguises,<sup>48</sup> Job never succumbs to the deceptions of Satan and refuses to abandon his faith in God, once more showcasing his impressive powers of perception. He instead

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48 Notably, the main victims of Satan in the *Testament of Job* are women: Job's doorman and his wife. Job sees through Satan's disguises in both cases; he orders the doorman to turn away Satan-as-beggar despite his legendary charity and he identifies Satan during the climactic scene although Sitis has been fooled. Susan Garrett (as cited in Nancy Klancher, "The Male Soul in Drag: Women-as-Job in *The Testament of Job*," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 19.3 [2010], 230) suggests that the fallibility of women in the *Testament* marks them as "agents of Satan." On the other hand, John Collins (as cited in Klancher, "The Male Soul in Drag," 299) holds that "the women are not really aligned with Satan, only deceived by him," and are redeemed at the end of the narrative when Job's daughters are restored to him and held up as even greater examples of piety. The *Testament of Job* seems torn between portraying Sitis, Job's daughters, and his servants as dutiful and loyal women, and emphasizing the extent to which women are more easily led astray by Satan's disguises.

correctly identifies Satan, standing disguised behind Sitis: “Do you not see the devil standing behind you and unsettling your reasoning so that he might deceive me too?” (26:6). When Job sees past Satan’s disguise, it is as if a spell is broken and Satan’s power is lost. Satan weeps, and tells Job, “Look Job, I am weary and I withdraw from you, even though you are flesh and I a spirit” (27:2). Although Satan identifies himself as nonhuman and naturally superior to Job’s mortal fallibility, μετασχηματίζω is ultimately his most powerful skill. When he is unable to deceive Job, Job passes the test and Satan is vanquished.

Yet this supernatural battle between Satan and Job is only part of the entire *Testament*. Chapters 1 through 27, which consist of the Satan narrative discussed here, are distinctly separate from the rest of the *Testament*, and the two may have emerged from separate sources or communities.<sup>49</sup> The rest of the *Testament* is devoted to a series of speeches by Job’s friends and then an ultimate restoration of Job’s lost property and family, as occurs in the Book of Job. The tone is quite different from that seen in chapters 1 through 27, with references to Jewish mysticism and only a few references to Satan. For instance, Elihu, one of the speech-givers, is said to be “imbued with the spirit of Satan” (41:5). However, in contrast to the first half of the *Testament*, in the latter portion Job attributes all of his misery to the hand of God, not Satan. As Kierkegaard remarks, “the sole responsibility for Job’s suffering being placed upon God, with no reference to Satan’s role, is much more in keeping with the [Septuagint or Masoretic Text] traditions of Satan as an extension of God’s court, than with the clear adversarial role which Satan occupies in the first section of *T. Job*.”<sup>50</sup> There are so few references to this Satan that it is hard to characterize him, but his relative absence in the second half of the *Testament* reinforces

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<sup>49</sup> Gruen, “Seeking a Context for the *Testament of Job*,” 167.

<sup>50</sup> Kierkegaard, “Satan in the *Testament of Job*,” 17.



the hypothesis of disparate composition.

The Satan of the first half of the *Testament of Job* bears a striking resemblance to the Satan of 2 Corinthians. He disguises himself in order to fool the humans he tricks, but he is not able to deceive the holiest among them. He torments and tests humans, but is ultimately subject to God's powers, and whatever tests he subjects his victims to actually serve to strengthen them. Also like the Satan of 2 Corinthians, it is difficult to definitively label the Satan of the *Testament* as either good or evil; he does not seem to be entirely one or the other. Both Satans engage in activities that seem to form a new category separate from the apocalyptic portrayals: the trickster Satan.

### **Satan in the Greek Life of Adam and Eve**

The Greek *Life of Adam and Eve* also seems to present the model of a trickster Satan, though here Satan's powers are extensively expanded beyond those depicted in 2 Corinthians or the *Testament*: he is depicted as preying upon gullible women as he does in the *Testament*, but he uses almost magically persuasive language and an ability to possess the serpent and Eve in order to achieve his goals. Furthermore, these goals are not necessarily in accord with God's goals. At times, Satan seems to be deliberately working against God, and is presented as an eternal "enemy" to humankind, unlike the case of his divinely-sanctioned tricks in 2 Corinthians and the *Testament*.

The Greek *Life of Adam and Eve*, also known as the *Apocalypse of Moses*, narrates Adam and Eve's attempts, along with their children, to repent for the Fall while Adam is on his

deathbed. The structure of this narrative marks the outer frame of the *Life* as a testament,<sup>51</sup> but its inner story of the temptation in the Garden of Eden and the eventual Fall seems to employ the conventions of other genres: it has been compared by J.R.C. Cousland to “rewritten Bible, midrash, apology, apocalypse, and bios (ancient biography).”<sup>52</sup> It is one of several pseudepigraphal books that relate the story of the Fall with fundamental similarities but with some narrative and thematic differences: along with the Greek *Life*, there are also the Latin and Slavonic *Lives*, the Armenian *Penitence of Adam*, the Georgian *Book of Adam*, and a Coptic fragmentary text. The *Life*’s authorship and dating is highly disputed. General scholarly consensus is that the Greek *Life* was the original version; no Hebrew or Aramaic originals predated it.<sup>53</sup> However, the use of various Semiticisms in the *Life* suggests that the authors of the *Life* were at the very least influenced by Hebrew and Aramaic Eden narratives, if not by speakers of Semitic languages themselves.<sup>54</sup>

The *Life* is also considered by some scholars to be Christian; there is no similar narrative found among the Qumran texts,<sup>55</sup> and it bears more thematic similarities with early Christian than with Jewish writings.<sup>56</sup> Yet despite traces of Christian redaction,<sup>57</sup> the text bears no clear marks of either Jewish or Christian theology. Michael Stone notes “the absence of any Christian

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51 Marinus De Jonge, *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament as Part of Christian Literature: The Case of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and the Greek Life of Adam and Eve* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2003), 231.

52 J.R.C. Cousland, “None of the Above? The Genre of the GLAE,” in *...And So They Went Out: The Lives of Adam and Eve as Cultural Transformative Story*, ed. Daphna Arbel et. al. (Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2010), 99.

53 De Jonge, *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 183; Michael E. Stone, *A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 42.

54 Michael E. Stone, *A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve* (Atlanta: Scholars’ Press, 1992), 43.

55 De Jonge, *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 234.

56 Ibid., 234.

57 Ibid., 184.

references, particularly from those points in the narrative of Adam and Eve which played a central role in the Christian economy of salvation,” which would imply Jewish authorship. However, the *Life* lacks any explicitly Jewish references.<sup>58</sup> Daphna Arbel concludes that “the complete, redacted GLAE does not seem to be completely controlled by any specific group or ideology. Rather, its overall discourse appears to juxtapose a number of overlapping and, at times, conflicting possibilities.”<sup>59</sup> The *Life* could thus be attributed to either Jewish or Christian origins.

Moreover, the date of the *Life* is even less clear, and is a subject of extensive scholarly debate. Some scholars have dated it to the first century CE, thereby making it contemporaneous with 2 Corinthians; this dating is based on thematic similarities with various texts including 1 Corinthians.<sup>60</sup> Other scholars, such as Marinus de Jonge, have argued for a later date of composition at the end of the second century CE due to comparisons with early Christian writers such as Irenaeus and Tertullian.<sup>61</sup> Daphna Arbel dates the *Life* to between 100 and 300 CE,<sup>62</sup> which would make it about 50 to 250 years later than 2 Corinthians, and Michael Stone places it “in the first centuries C.E., probably before 400 CE.”<sup>63</sup> Yet even if the *Life* represents a later stage in the development of Satan, it most likely drew from “common or similar traditions” as the New Testament,<sup>64</sup> and it shares many thematic similarities with 2 Corinthians and the *Testament of Job*.

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58 Stone, *A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve*, 57-58.

59 Daphna Arbel, “Introduction” in ...*And So They Went Out: The Lives of Adam and Eve as Cultural Transformative Story*, ed. Daphna Arbel et. al. (Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2010), 5.

60 De Jonge, *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 184.

61 Ibid., 199.

62 Arbel, “Introduction,” 3.

63 Stone, *A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve*, 53.

64 De Jonge, *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 239.

Satan is introduced midway through the *Life*. Adam orders Eve to tell their children the story of the Fall—or, as Eve puts it, “how our enemy deceived us” (15:2),<sup>65</sup> instantly characterizing the narrative as one not only of deception, but of combat with an enemy (ὁ ἐχθρός).<sup>66</sup> With this one phrase, two different conceptions are brought together in the figure of Satan: the trickster quality of subterfuge, and the apocalyptic, dualistic quality of battle against a cosmic enemy.

This enemy is named in the same verse as ὁ διάβολος, the devil—a rough translation of the Hebrew *haśśāṭān* which highlights different qualities of Satan. Just as *haśśāṭān* denotes an “adversary” or a “stumbling block,” ὁ διάβολος means a “slanderer”: both are titles which describe Satan’s functions in the narrative. Satan is alternately referred to by these other two primary titles (enemy and devil) throughout the text. Unlike in 2 Corinthians, the consistent narrative of the *Life* indicates that it is almost certain that all three titles are referring to the same figure. Therefore Satan in this case is not only perceived as opposed to humanity, but the use of the Greek διάβολος seems to further divorce the *Life*’s Satan from his original portrayal in the Hebrew Bible and to mark him as a distinct character.

This devil is linked not only with disguise as in 2 Corinthians and the *Testament of Job*, but also with further powers of deceit, trickery, and persuasive language. His first act in the narrative is to persuade the serpent with flattery, insinuating that he can free the serpent from Adam’s rule and restore him to a deserved position of power: “I found you greater than all the beasts, and they associate with you; but yet you are prostrate to the very least.... Rise and come

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65 This and all other English citations of the *Life* are from “The Life of Adam and Eve,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, edited by James H. Charlesworth (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983).

66 This and all other Greek citations of the *Life* are from Johannes Tromp, *The Life of Adam and Eve in Greek: A Critical Edition* (Boston: Brill, 2005).

and let us make [Adam] to be cast out of Paradise through his wife” (16:2-3). Yet beyond his eloquent skill in persuasion, just like Satan in 2 Corinthians, the devil's main power is shown to be his skill in disguise. He persuades the snake to become his “vessel,” and while the Greek word used, ὁ σκεῦος, generally denotes a concrete household good,<sup>67</sup> it appears here that the devil is taking on the snake's body as a sort of costume in order to enable him to deceive Eve. Despite relying on supernatural powers and trickery, this plot is never sanctioned by God as Satan’s actions are in the *Testament of Job*; Satan acts completely independently, for his own independent purposes.

The *Life* further elaborates on the story in Genesis by presenting a three-part narrative of possession that unfolds successively after the devil reveals his plans to the snake. First, the devil—now named ὁ Σατανᾶς as in 2 Corinthians—arrives in Eden “in the form of an angel,” a fairly literal translation from the Greek, ἐν εἰδει ἀγγέλου (16:2).<sup>68</sup> This evokes the portrayal of Satan in 2 Corinthians, who disguises himself as an angel of light: Satan has the transformative powers to take on the form of an angel, and he is a distinct type of creature who takes on the shape of God's agents for his own purposes. In his angelic form, Satan confirms Eve's identity, but for the temptation itself, he speaks “through the mouth of the serpent” (16:5). This use of the serpent as a vehicle suggests not only Satan’s shape-shifting powers, but also his ability to completely possess creatures and the importance of his eloquence in persuasion. The text further highlights this importance by not describing Satan as physically taking the form of the serpent in the same way as he did the form of an angel, but instead having him speak through the mouth of the

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<sup>67</sup>Liddell and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, 732.

<sup>68</sup>Although two different names are used, the narrative seems to imply that the Devil and Satan are the same character—the later actions of the Devil rely on him having taken on the disguises that Satan uses. It is not particularly suspect that the author uses the two terms interchangeably, as διάβολος is merely a translation of the title Satan.

serpent while he himself is presumably still watching the encounter as a separate being, in his angelic form. However, when Eve finally goes to fetch the fruit, the text does not specify whether she is led there by the snake or by Satan, though masculine pronouns are specified (“And I said to *him*,” ἐγὼ δὲ εἶπον αὐτῷ, emphasis my own). It is thus unclear how much Satan can control the snake's body, but it is nonetheless apparent that Satan is ultimately directing the action.

Satan's power over the temptation through his use of disguise and his possession of other entities is further emphasized through his final possession: that of Eve. This possession is used to trick Adam into eating the fruit as well, as Eve explains: “...when [Adam] came, I spoke to him unlawful words of transgression such as brought us down from great glory. For when he came, I opened my mouth and the devil was speaking...” (21:2-3). Admittedly, it is not apparent whether the image of the words being those of the devil is merely used metaphorically to suggest Eve's sinfulness, or whether she is actually being possessed by Satan in the same way the serpent had been. There is no mention of her becoming ὁ σκεῦος, though Daphna Arbel concludes that the similarities between Satan's command to the serpent that “I will speak through your mouth words to deceive them” and Eve's statement that “I opened my mouth and the Devil was speaking” indicates “a fusion between the Devil, the serpent, and Eve.”<sup>69</sup> However, the Greek is very straightforward: “ἤνοιξα τὸ στόμα μου καὶ ὁ διάβολος ἐλάλει.” The only noteworthy word choice is the use of λαλέω for “to speak”; it connotes “chattering” or “babbling” rather than straightforward speech and is sometimes used to contrast the sounds of animals with those of

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<sup>69</sup> Daphna Arbel, “Traditions of Sin and Virtue—Competing Representations of Eve in the GLAE,” in *...And So They Went Out: The Lives of Adam and Eve as Cultural Transformative Story*, ed. Daphna Arbel et. al. (Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2010), 10.

humans.<sup>70</sup> λαλέω therefore implies that Eve's words have become inhuman somehow. However, it is difficult to tell merely through the text whether her words are inhuman because she is being possessed like the snake, or whether she has been tempted into speaking words that have gone beyond the bounds of humanity because they are so evil. Either way, Eve's words are somehow originating from Satan, and the entire scene of temptation has been masterminded by him. This is made even more apparent by the text's emphasis on the way in which Eve “persuaded” Adam with words (21:5), just as Satan had persuaded both the serpent and Eve a few verses earlier.

As in the *Testament*, Satan in the *Life* uses vulnerable women, along with his usual weapons of deception and disguise, to achieve his goals. The direct contact between Satan and Eve in the *Life* seems to place more blame upon Eve for the fall than upon Adam, and Eve can thus be read as almost an agent of Satan, as the serpent was. Geert van Oyen ties this to a pattern in 2 Corinthians, and in Hellenistic-Jewish texts in general, where the blame for the Fall is slowly transferred from Adam to Eve, with the serpent as the primary tempter. Van Oyen notes that Eve is characterized as the primary transgressor in 2 Corinthians 11:3 as in the *Life*, and that both texts link the serpent and Satan.<sup>71</sup> The two texts are tied together not only by their depictions of Satan as a deceptive figure, but also by the relationship they portray between Eve and Satan, where Satan (as the serpent) uses Eve and is culpable for his deception, but where Eve is nonetheless also culpable for the ease with which she is deceived. The *Life*'s critique of Eve, where she is blamed for a mistake she cannot truly help to avoid, is reminiscent of the depiction of the doormaid and Job's wife Sitis in the *Testament of Job*. All three women unwittingly work

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<sup>70</sup> Liddell and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, 463.

<sup>71</sup> Geert van Oyen, “The Character of Eve in the New Testament: 2 Corinthians 11:3 and 1 Timothy 2:13-14,” in *Out of Paradise: Eve and Adam and Their Interpreters*, ed. Bob Becking and Susanne Hennecke (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011), 19.

on behalf of Satan when they cannot see through his disguises, consequently accept his false appearance, and then attempt to persuade men to believe in the disguise as well. Yet while Satan tricks Sitis under God's auspices in the *Testament*, the *Life's* Satan uses Eve for his own purposes without any sanction from God.

The Greek *Life of Adam and Eve* therefore expands Satan's powers from those depicted in Paul's brief mentions of Satan in 2 Corinthians and even from those expressed in the fuller narrative presented in the *Testament of Job*. Satan in 2 Corinthians and the *Testament* works almost entirely through disguises, though he can also trick people in other ways, command messengers, and use supernatural destructive powers. In the *Life*, while Satan causes the Fall through his powers of disguise and deception, he also seems to be able to possess both humans and animals, or at least to control their speech. This expansion of powers suggests at least some influence from the portrayal of the apocalyptic Satan, which is further highlighted by Satan's role as the "enemy" in the *Life*. While Satan in 2 Corinthians and the *Testament* works under tacit, if not explicit, approval from God, the *Life's* Satan works in direct opposition to God. The *Life's* Satan thus exemplifies both the trickster Satan and the apocalyptic Satan: the two types come together to create a Satan who is an enemy of God and humanity, but who relies primarily on deception and deceit.



### **Conclusion: The Two Satans**

While the *Testament* and the *Life* are both later than 2 Corinthians, the type of Satan portrayed in the texts presents a useful model for reading 2 Corinthians' Satan, especially given how poorly 2 Corinthians' Satan seems to fit the apocalyptic model. All three texts portray a trickster Satan who uses disguise and deception to test humans, frequently with authority granted by God. Rather than a cosmic evil who battles God during the end of days, the trickster Satan is involved in humans' everyday lives like the Satan of the Book of Job. This implies that Paul conceived of malevolent spirits being just as prevalent and active in his life as benevolent angels and the Holy Spirit were. Due to the chronology of the texts, Paul would not have been directly influenced by either the *Testament* or the *Life*, but the similarities between all three texts show that the trickster Satan was a well-known type among Jewish and Christian groups during the first centuries. The circulation of oral narratives similar to the ones recorded in the *Testament* and the *Life* may have also promulgated the character of the trickster Satan across different first-century Jewish communities.

Yet as seen in the *Life*, first-century texts do not adhere purely to the mutually exclusive categories of the trickster or apocalyptic Satans. Rather, these two Satans represent two extremes in the depictions of Satan, and even texts that may seem to skew one way often have elements of the other. Although the *Life*'s Satan appears predominantly to be a trickster Satan with some apocalyptic elements, texts such as the New Testament synoptic gospels tend to portray an apocalyptic Satan with some trickster elements. While all the gospels contain apocalyptic elements, such as a focus on the end times and Jesus's godly opposition to demons, Jesus's chief encounter with Satan in the synoptic gospels is in the temptation scene where Satan tries to trick

Jesus in order to test him. Not only does this emphasis on testing and tricking seem to evoke the trickster Satan, Jesus's temptation also seems to be sanctioned by God, for all three synoptic gospels specify that Jesus was "led by the Spirit" into the wilderness (Mark 1:12, Matthew 4:1, Luke 4:1). Thus like Paul in 2 Corinthians, the gospel writers did not conceive of *only* an apocalyptic or a trickster Satan; rather the types were complementary ways of perceiving Satan during the first centuries and the purpose and agenda of the writer dictated which aspects of Satan were foregrounded in the text.

Although many scholars read 2 Corinthians in tandem with portrayals of apocalyptic Satans, these readings undervalue the nuances in the text, and neglect the ways in which the Satan of 2 Corinthians more closely resembles the Satan of the *Testament of Job* and the Greek *Life of Adam and Eve*: predominantly a trickster, often in disguise, who tests humans with or without God's approval. This trickster Satan is not the diametric opposite of the apocalyptic Satan of Revelation and the Qumran texts, for the two portrayals sometimes appear within the same text. One could read and understand Satan in 2 Corinthians as merely being an apocalyptic evil; the literal meaning of Paul's words would not necessarily be obscured by such an interpretation. Yet perceiving the trickster Satan in 2 Corinthians suggests new ways of looking at evil in the Pauline epistles and early Christianity more broadly: Paul may have perceived of Satan as partially an apocalyptic figure, but did not discount Satan's presence in his own life or God's own involvement in testing and tormenting humanity. Although apocalyptic end-times concerns did preoccupy many of the first churches that Paul communicated with, the depiction of a trickster Satan indicates that just as many people—including Paul—were concerned about evil's presence in their own lives. Satan was not only the figure who directed cosmic armies, but

also the one who could give you aches and pains, cause a house to fall on your children, or trick you into making the wrong decision.

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