

DEREK R. BROWN

# The God of This Age

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen  
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

409

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**Mohr Siebeck**

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# The God of This Age

Satan in the Churches and Letters  
of the Apostle Paul

Mohr Siebeck

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## Preface

This book is a lightly revised version of my doctoral dissertation, which was submitted to the School of Divinity at the University of Edinburgh. It is my privilege to acknowledge and honor those who in various ways supported and contributed to this project. If not for the roles played by the following people, this project would not exist.

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I cannot stress enough how instrumental my time at Regent College (Vancouver, BC) was in shaping me as a person and a scholar; it truly is a greenhouse for the mind and the spirit. Among the faculty there I wish to thank the following people: Dr. Iain Provan for his excellent lectures and equally valuable lessons on how to be an equitable, yet gracious scholar during my time as his TA; Dr. Rikk Watts, who makes it impossible for students to escape Regent College without studying the use of the OT in the NT, ancient rhetoric, and sentence flowing. His industrious scholarly habits and passion for biblical studies and history are contagious; and Dr. Sven Soderlund, whose gracious character is matched only by the wisdom which he lovingly imparts to his life's work – his students. I can hope only to have gleaned the smallest of grains from these fine scholars.

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*Soli Deo Gloria*

*May 2015*

*Derek R. Brown*

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## Chapter 1

# Introduction

### 1.1 Reasons for the Present Study

The letters of Paul are rife with references to evil powers and figures, including “principalities” (ἀρχαί), “powers” (δυνάμεις), “authorities” (ἐξουσίαι), angels (ἄγγελοι), “rulers” (οἱ ἄρχοντες), “elemental spirits” (τὰ στοιχεῖα), demons (τὰ δαιμόνια), and Satan (ὁ σατανᾶς). In these references the Apostle Paul variously attributes considerable influence to malevolent forces at work in the cosmos. Of these many powers and figures, Paul’s references to the figure of Satan are especially interesting since they are directly related to the Pauline churches and Paul’s missionary efforts. That is, in contrast to powers such as “principalities” and “authorities” which figure only in a generic sense and without concrete referents in the Pauline letters, whenever Paul mentions Satan he does so with respect to Satan’s actions against either himself or his churches.

Despite Paul’s distinct depiction of Satan in comparison to other evil powers and figures, no study to date has offered a comprehensive examination of the Pauline references to Satan which seeks to elucidate his characterization of Satan as an adversary of his apostolic work and of his churches. A brief glance at two examples from Paul’s letters will demonstrate how Paul portrayed Satan as an opponent of his apostolic work, including his missionary travels and his labors for the churches which he founded.

#### *1.1.1 Examples of Satan’s Significance in Paul’s Letters*

In 1 Thess 2:17–3:5 Paul recounts his unsuccessful attempts to return to Thessalonica subsequent to his untimely departure: “for we wanted to come to you – certainly I, Paul, wanted to again and again – but Satan hindered (ἐνέκοψεν) us” (2:18). As Paul continues his narrative, he again mentions Satan’s activity in relation to his sending of Timothy to the Thessalonian church: “for this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith; I was afraid that somehow the tempter had tempted you (ἐπείρασεν ὑμᾶς ὁ πειράζων) and that our labor had been in vain” (1 Thess 3:5). In this passage Paul seems to take for granted Satan’s opposition to the people of God in a general sense. That is, Paul assumes that Satan – the adversary *par excellence* – puts “obstacles in the path of the people of God, to

prevent the will of God from being accomplished in and through them.”<sup>1</sup> What is often overlooked by scholars, however, is the contextual nature of Paul’s references to Satan in 1 Thess 2:18 and 3:5. In both verses Paul depicts Satan’s activity as opposition to his apostolic relationship with the Thessalonian church. In doing so, Paul betrays his fear that his apostolic labor for the gospel would be rendered in vain by the work of Satan. In other words, Paul’s concern for Satan’s activity in these two verses is born out of his role as founding apostle of the Thessalonian community.

Another example can be seen in 2 Cor 4 where Paul, in his description of the ministry (διακονία, v. 1) given to him by God, refers to Satan as ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου (“the god of this age,” v. 4) who blinds the minds of “the unbelievers” (τῶν ἀπίστων) from comprehending the gospel. Scholarship on the verse tends to focus, not without reason, on the theological implications of Satan’s ability to inhibit belief and the translation and identity of τῶν ἀπίστων. What frequently goes unnoticed because of these emphases is that Paul portrays his entire apostolic ministry, which is fundamentally concerned with bringing the gospel to people, as antithetical to Satan’s desire to prevent people from understanding the very gospel which Paul proclaimed (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν, vv. 3–4). In other words, Satan appears in 2 Cor 4:4 not simply as the generic opponent of all God’s people (or even of “the unbelievers”) but *also* as the adversary of Paul and his apostolic ministry.

Far from being reticent to speak about Satan,<sup>2</sup> this quick glimpse at two of the Pauline references to Satan illustrates Paul’s willingness to attribute serious activity and authority to Satan. For in just these two passages Paul refers to Satan by the apocalyptic epithet “the god of this age” while charging him with “blinding” the minds of people, and, crucially, identifies Satan as the acting agent behind two concrete historical events: Paul’s thwarted efforts to return to his fledgling church and the tempting of the faith of the Thessalonian congregation. Thus Witherington is correct to suggest that “Paul has a clearly formed notion of the Satan.”<sup>3</sup> In view of 1 Thess 2:18–3:5 and 2 Cor 4:4, Paul’s notion of Satan apparently included his belief that Satan specifically opposed his work as a pioneer missionary and an apostle called to preach the gospel and establish communities of faith.

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<sup>1</sup> F. F. Bruce, *First and Second Thessalonians* (WBC 45; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1982), 55.

<sup>2</sup> Against Richard H. Bell (*Deliver us from Evil: Interpreting the Redemption from the Power of Satan in New Testament Theology* [WUNT 216; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007], 232), who, in support of this assertion, cites Wilhelm Bousset (“Die religionsgeschichtliche Herkunft der jüdischen Apokalyptik,” in *Apokalyptik* [eds. Klaus Koch and Johann Michael Schmidt; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982], 143): “Im allgemeinen tritt freilich in der paulinischen Theologie die Gestalt des Teufels stark zurück.”

<sup>3</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Paul’s Narrative Thought World: The Tapestry of Tragedy and Triumph* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 19.

The following questions are worth raising at this point: why did Paul believe that Satan was targeting him, whether directly as in 1 Thess 2:18 or indirectly through his church as in 1 Thess 3:5? How is Satan understood and portrayed in the writings and theology of Jewish and Christian traditions contemporaneous with Paul, and to what degree did Paul share, reflect, or differ from these traditions? Why did Paul consider Satan to have significant power in the present age? Why did Paul believe that Satan was at work against his churches throughout the Mediterranean basin? What caused Paul to believe that the capitulation of one of his churches would result in the failure of his apostolic labor? In what ways did Paul's self-understanding as the Apostle to the Gentiles shape his characterization of Satan's activity?

These questions help illustrate that Paul's references to Satan, although often made in passing and without any theological explanation, are nevertheless interconnected with Paul's apocalyptic theology as well as his self-understanding as an apostle. A survey of scholarship on the figure of Satan and powers of evil in Paul will show that such questions have not been directly or satisfactorily addressed.

### 1.1.2 Relevant Scholarship on Satan and Paul

To various degrees Paul's understanding of Satan has been discussed by several scholars. A work exclusively devoted to the topic is yet to be published, with most discussions on Satan being found in studies on "principalities and powers" or "powers of evil" in either Paul or the NT as a whole. Our aim will be two-fold in the section below: 1) to locate the present investigation within the context of previous research on Satan in Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity, Paul's self-understanding, and the references to Satan in Paul; and 2) to establish the need for a study focused solely on Paul's references to Satan by virtue of the absence of scholarship which adequately engages the aforementioned questions on Paul and Satan.

#### 1.1.2.1 General Studies on Satan

The first category of relevant research contains works devoted solely to the figure of the devil.<sup>4</sup> Although the scope of most of these studies goes well

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<sup>4</sup> Among the many studies in this category are Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987); Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Satan: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Edward Langton, *Satan, a Portrait: A Study of the Character of Satan through all the Ages* (London: Skeffington, 1945); Ragnar Leivestad, *Christ the Conqueror: Ideas of Conflict and Victory in the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1954); Trevor Oswald Ling, *Significance of Satan: New Testament Demonology and Its Contemporary Relevance* (London: SPCK, 1961); Bent Noack, *Satan's und Soteria: Untersuchungen zur neutestamentlichen Dämonologie* (Copenhagen: Gads, 1948); Elaine H. Pagels, *The Origin of Satan: The New Testament*



beyond the Pauline corpus – and for some even beyond early Christianity – most provide at least a section on Satan in the letters of Paul, though typically with insubstantial findings. For example, Paul Carus’ 1900 study on the history of the devil devotes a single chapter to the devil in early Christianity but fails to examine a single Pauline text or discuss Paul’s overall presentation of Satan.<sup>5</sup> More helpfully, in his work on the “combat myth” Neil Forsyth argues that “every time Paul uses the word Satan he is referring to the opponent of human salvation, not to the figure who does battle with Michael in the book of Revelation. Satanic opposition takes the form of opposition to Paul, so completely does Paul identify himself with the Christian message.”<sup>6</sup> Still, Forsyth’s assertions concerning Paul’s view of Satan are unsubstantiated and, ultimately, overstated in that they cannot be applied to each of Paul’s references to Satan. Henry Kelly’s analysis of the Pauline Satan texts in his “biography” of Satan elucidates the various roles of Satan but fails to provide a concluding synthesis of Paul’s portrayal of Satan.<sup>7</sup> Bent Noack’s study, *Satanás und Sotería*, is similar in this respect.<sup>8</sup> Trevor Ling too lacks a cogent account of Paul’s depiction of Satan, defaulting to a generic description of Satan in Paul as a powerful and malevolent spirit who tempts Christians.<sup>9</sup>

Elaine Pagels, whose primary interest is the way in which the early Christians invoked Satan to explain their conflicts and to characterize their enemies, suggests that Paul reflects “traditionally Jewish” view of Satan as God’s agent of testing, not of corruption.<sup>10</sup> Through her sociological approach Pagels also interprets Paul’s characterization of his rivals as “servants of Satan” in 2 Cor 11:13–15 as an attempt to demonize his opponents. Jeffrey Burton Russell’s four volumes on Satan in the history of the Christian tradition are impressive. In *The Devil* Russell discusses the roles of Satan within the NT,<sup>11</sup> but unfortunately his focus is too broad to help the proposed focus of the present study.

Several of these generic studies on Satan provide worthwhile insights to the references to Satan in the Pauline letters. A few of them even argue for a

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*Origins of Christianity’s Demonization of Jews, Pagans and Heretics* (New York: Random House, 1995); Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977); idem, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981); idem, *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986).

<sup>5</sup> Paul Carus, *The History of the Devil and the Idea of Evil* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trüber & Co., 1900).

<sup>6</sup> Forsyth, *The Old Enemy*, 260.

<sup>7</sup> Kelly, *Satan*, 53–79.

<sup>8</sup> Noack, *Satanás und Sotería*, 92–113.

<sup>9</sup> Ling, *The Significance of Satan*, 36–53.

<sup>10</sup> Pagels, *The Origin of Satan*, 183.

<sup>11</sup> Russell, *The Devil*, 221–49.

specific understanding of Paul's view of Satan. However, their shortcomings consist in discussing Paul's references to Satan apart from their connection to other areas of Pauline theology and thought. For this reason, these widely-focused studies on Satan are unable to offer serious contributions to our main research question.

### 1.1.2.2 Satan in the Hebrew Bible

As a second category of relevant scholarship, there are a number of studies on the emergence and evolution of (the) Satan in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>12</sup> The most notable of these studies is Peggy Day's *An Adversary in Heaven*, an examination of four Hebrew Bible passages (Num 22:22–35; Zech 3:1–7; Job 1–2; 1 Chr 21:1–22:1) which the Hebrew שָׂטָן allegedly refers to the figure of Satan. In her study Day concludes that there “is not one celestial *śāṭān* in the Hebrew Bible, but rather the potential for many.”<sup>13</sup> Marvin Tate arrives at a similar position: “No passage in the Old Testament has to do directly with Satan (or the Devil) in the sense of later literature and Christian theology ... In this sense there is no Satan in the Old Testament.”<sup>14</sup> Although these contributions are helpful in determining how the figure of Satan developed in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Jewish texts, they are not helpful for the present study. For our interest in the Hebrew Bible references to Satan is not in the development of the figure, but in how Jews and early Christians would have perceived Satan in the first century C.E.

A more valuable study on the development of Satan in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Jewish traditions is Paulo Sacchi's *Jewish Apocalyptic and its History*.<sup>15</sup> In his work Sacchi devotes an entire chapter to the devil in

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<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., Gustav Roskoff, *Geschichte des Teufels* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1869); Rivkah Schärf Kluger, *Die Gestalt des Satans im Alten Testament* (Zürich: Rascher Verlag, 1948); Herbert Haag, *Teufelsglaube* (Tübingen: Katzmann, 1974); Peggy L. Day, *An Adversary in Heaven: Satan in the Hebrew Bible* (HSM 43; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988); Florian Kreuzer, “Der Antagonist: der Satan in der Hebräischen Bibel – eine bekannte Größe?” *Bib* 86, no. 4 (2005): 536–44.

Also important for the study of Satan in the Hebrew Bible are articles on the origin and development of the Hebrew term שָׂטָן: Charles Fontinoy, “Les noms du Diable et leur étymologie,” in *Orientalia: J. Duchesne-Guillemin Emerito Oblata* (Acta Iranica 9; Leiden: Brill, 1984), 157–70; Cilliers Breytenbach and Peggy L. Day, “Satan,” in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter Willem van der Horst; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 726–32; Daniel E. Gershenson, “The Name Satan,” *ZAW* 114, no. 3 (2002): 443–45.

<sup>13</sup> Day, *An Adversary in Heaven*, 15.

<sup>14</sup> Marvin E. Tate, “Satan in the Old Testament,” *RevExp* 89, no. 4 (1992): 461–74 (471).

<sup>15</sup> Paulo Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic and its History* (trans. William J. Short; JSPSup 20; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); idem, *The History of the Second Temple*

the Jewish traditions of the Second Temple period. His aim in the chapter is to trace two distinct traditions of the devil in the relative literature: (1) the devil as the principle of evil and (2) the devil as a rebellious will “continuously active in history.” In particular, Sacchi is interested in how these two “radical understandings” of the devil can be integrated in various texts and even nuanced to establish a relationship between the devil and God (e.g., in *T. Job*). Sacchi’s study will figure highly in our analysis of Satan in the biblical and Second Temple Jewish traditions.<sup>16</sup>

### 1.1.2.3 Satan in the New Testament

Three recent contributions have been made to the study of Satan in the NT.<sup>17</sup> First, a popular-level publication on the “biblical roots” of the devil by Wray and Mobley devotes a section in its chapter on the devil in the NT to “Satan in the Pauline Epistles.”<sup>18</sup> They describe Satan’s primary role in the Pauline letters as an “obstructor” of Paul’s missionary efforts and churches. In this respect their analysis is useful. Unfortunately, Wray and Mobley are less convincing on two points. First, they speak of Paul’s “use” of the word “Satan” in his letters to refer to his human opponents. Second, they claim that *every* mention of Satan in the Pauline letters involves Satan working through human agents against Paul and his churches.<sup>19</sup> This is simply not the case. To note just one example, when Paul claims that Satan hindered his return to Thessalonica in 1 Thess 2:18 he does so without any explanation as to the means of hindrance. In the end, Wray and Mobley fail to offer a nuanced

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*Period* (trans. Thomas Kirk; JSOTSup 285; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 329–54.

<sup>16</sup> See now the intriguing proposal in Ryan E. Stokes, “Satan, Yhwh’s Executioner,” *JBL* 133, no. 2 (2014): 251–70.

<sup>17</sup> One also finds studies on the roles and significance of Satan in the rest of the NT outside of the Pauline corpus. For instance, Susan Garrett has published a work on the “demeanor of the devil” in Luke and Acts entitled, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke’s Writings* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1989); cf. Jennifer Ann Glancy, “Satan in the Synoptic Gospels” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1990). Several articles have also been published on the devil in the Gospel of John (e.g., Ronald A. Piper, “Satan, Demons and the Absence of Exorcisms in the Fourth Gospel,” in *Christology, Controversy, and Community: New Testament Essays in Honour of David R. Catchpole* [eds. David Horrell and Christopher M. Tuckett; NovTSup 99; Leiden: Brill, 2000], 253–78; Wendy E. Sproston, “Satan in the Fourth Gospel,” in *StudBib 1978*, 2 [JSNTSup 2; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980], 307–11).

<sup>18</sup> T. J. Wray and Gregory Mobley, *The Birth of Satan: Tracing the Devil’s Biblical Roots* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 129–36.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

description of Paul's references to Satan.<sup>20</sup> Second, Sydney Page analyzes the Pauline references to Satan in greater depth in his study on Satan and demons in the biblical tradition.<sup>21</sup> Page's exegesis of the Pauline texts is often helpful, but in the end the study only deals with the verses individually without relating them to other aspects of Pauline theology.

More recently, Richard Bell has published a volume entitled *Deliver Us from Evil* on the NT motif of redemption as deliverance from Satan. To address this issue, Bell attempts to establish a complicated philosophical framework in which to analyze the relevant NT texts. Bell's framework draws on the distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal worlds (derived from Kant and Schopenhauer) – including how myth relates to the noumenal – in order to interpret redemption in the NT in terms of deliverance from “the grip of Satan.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, in Bell's view Satan is fundamentally a theological (=noumenal) figure (concept?) within Pauline theology. In particular, Bell argues that Paul understood the death and resurrection of Christ as the defeat of Satan, though, Bell claims, this is usually implied rather than made explicit in Paul's references to Satan. Unfortunately, Bell's thesis, that redemption in the NT should be interpreted as deliverance from Satan, cannot readily be applied to each of Paul's references to Satan. Bell attempts to establish his position by connecting Satan with sin so that being under the dominion of sin is tantamount to being under “the tyranny of the devil,”<sup>23</sup> but this connection is absent in Paul. And Bell's claim that “Rom. 5.12–21 implies the work of the devil who through Adam brings disobedience and death in to the world” is equally unfounded.<sup>24</sup> For these reasons I consider Bell's analysis to be highly limited when it comes to questions concerning the historical Paul's depiction of Satan within his letters.

#### 1.1.2.4 Principalities and Powers

The subject of “principalities and powers”<sup>25</sup> in Paul has received considerable scholarly attention. In general, “principalities and powers” is shorthand for a

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<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Wray and Mobley curiously omit the reference to “the god of this age” in 2 Cor 4:4 (ibid., 132–33), a title which virtually all scholars identify as a reference to Satan.

<sup>21</sup> Sydney H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans; Leicester: Apollos, 1995), 183–221

<sup>22</sup> Bell, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 241.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>25</sup> Note also the related category of the so-called “powers of evil” in the NT. See, e.g., Samson Eitrem, *Some Notes on the Demonology in the New Testament* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1966); Everett Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984); René Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001); Edward Langton, *Essentials of Demonology*:

number of terms used in the Pauline letters and NT to refer to a variety of cosmological forces.<sup>26</sup> Defining the meaning of the category “principalities and powers” with any precision has proved a difficult and widely disputed task. Despite numerous publications on the topic throughout the twentieth century, no scholarly consensus exists regarding the interpretation of principalities and powers in the Pauline letters.<sup>27</sup> Here we consider the main contributions on the matter relevant to the present study.

One of the most notable interpretations of principalities and powers was that of Rudolf Bultmann, whose existential hermeneutic led him to interpret principalities and powers as mythic projections of human forces.<sup>28</sup> Oscar Cullmann, writing in the wake of World War II, interpreted principalities and powers in passages such as Rom 13:1–7; 1 Cor 2:6–8; and 1 Cor 6:1–6 as

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*A Study of Jewish and Christian Doctrine, its Origin and Development* (London: Epworth Press, 1949); Roy Yates, “The Powers of Evil in the New Testament,” *EvQ* 52 (1980): 97–111. In addition to the terms used to refer to principalities and powers, these studies typically include angels and demons as part of their discussion. Unfortunately, works focused on the powers of evil fail to give due attention to Paul’s view of Satan since their focus is typically too broad.

<sup>26</sup> Included are the following terms: ἀρχαί (Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 15:24; cf. Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:10, 15); ἀρχοντες (1 Cor 2:6, 8; cf. Rom 13:3; Mark 3:22 par.; also see LXX Dan 10:20 and 12:1); ἐξουσία (1 Cor 15:24; cf. Eph 1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:10, 15); δυνάμεις (Rom 8:38; cf. Eph 1:21); κυριότητες (Col 1:16; Eph 1:21); θρόνοι (Col 1:16); κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου (Eph 6:12); στοιχεῖα (Gal 4:3, 9; Col 2:8, 20); ἄγγελοι (Rom 8:38; cf. 1 Cor 6:3; Col 2:18).

<sup>27</sup> E.g., see the following interpretations: Clinton E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul’s Letters* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992); idem, “Returning to the Domain of the Powers: *Stoicheia* as Evil Spirits in Galatians 4:3,9,” *NovT* 38, no. 1 (1996): 55–76; Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers* (2d ed.; Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1977); Matthew Black, “Πᾶσα ἐξουσία αὐτῷ ὑποταγῆσονται,” in *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of Charles K. Barrett* (ed. Morna D. Hooker and S. G. Wilson; London: SPCK, 1982), 74–82; G. B. Caird, *Principalities and Powers: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956); Oscar Cullmann, *The State in the New Testament* (New York: Scribners, 1956); Ronn A. Johnson, “The Old Testament Background for Paul’s Use of ‘Principalities and Powers’” (Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2004); Jung Young Lee, “Interpreting the Demonic Powers in Pauline Thought,” *NovT* 12, no. 1 (1970): 54–69; G. H. C. MacGregor, “Principalities and Powers: The Cosmic Background of Paul’s Thought,” *NTS* 1, no. 1 (1954): 17–28; Clinton Morrison, *The Powers That Be: Earthly Rulers and Demonic Powers in Romans 13, 1–7* (SBT 29; London: SCM Press, 1960); Peter T. O’Brien, “Principalities and Powers: Opponents of the Church,” in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church* (ed. D. A. Carson; Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1984), 110–50; Heinrich Schlier, *Principalities and Powers in the New Testament* (*QD* 1/3; Freiburg: Herder; Edinburgh: Nelson, 1961); John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1972).

<sup>28</sup> E.g., Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. Kendrick Grobel; vol. 1; New York: Scribners, 1952), 257–59.

both spiritual forces and civil authorities.<sup>29</sup> Hendrikus Berkhof's *Christ and the Powers* represented another shift in the interpretation of principalities and powers. Berkhof downplayed the theological aspect of principalities and powers in Paul, arguing instead that in early Christianity they represented several types of earthly structures – whether economic, judicial, or technological – which had been “Christianized” (or “neutralized”).<sup>30</sup>

Perhaps the boldest interpretation of the principalities and powers that has been proposed is that of Wesley Carr.<sup>31</sup> Contra Berkhof, who had argued that Paul's references to principalities and powers are to be distinguished from his references to angels,<sup>32</sup> Carr's main contention is that Paul's references to principalities and powers are allusions, not to demonic forces or socio-political structures, but to either positive human forces or benevolent angels. Carr's thesis has been received with varying degrees of criticism.<sup>33</sup>

Walter Wink's three-volume study of principalities and powers, of which volume one is devoted to principalities and powers in the NT, is the most extensive on the subject.<sup>34</sup> In *Naming the Powers*, Wink concludes that in the NT “the ‘principalities and powers’ are the inner and outer aspects of any given manifestation of power.”<sup>35</sup> According to Wink, Paul's “unique manner” of dealing with such principalities and powers was to replace “quasi-hypostatized” words such as “flesh,” “sin,” and “death” with terms drawn from the Jewish apocalyptic tradition such as “Satan,” “evil spirits,” and “demons.”<sup>36</sup> To be sure, an ontological understanding of principalities and powers in Paul is not altogether denied, but for Wink there is a strong degree of demythologization of principalities and powers in Paul.

<sup>29</sup> Thus, in reference to Rom 13:1f. Cullmann claims that “The word ‘powers’, then, exactly like the word ‘rulers’ in I Cor. 2:8 has a double meaning. It means here at once ‘angelic powers’ and ‘State’” (*The State in the New Testament*, 65).

<sup>30</sup> Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*, 45–54.

<sup>31</sup> Wesley Carr, *Angels and Principalities: The Background, Meaning and Development of the Pauline Phrase *hai archai kai hai exousiai**, (ed. R. McL. Wilson and M. E. Thrall; SNTSMS 42; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); idem, “Rulers of this Age: 1 Corinthians 2:6–8,” *NTS* 23, no. 1 (1976): 20–35.

<sup>32</sup> Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*, 18–20.

<sup>33</sup> E.g., see O'Brien, “Principalities and Powers,” 125–8, and (more positively) Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (vol. 1 of *The Powers*; Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1984), 6–8, 21–35, 47–60.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.; idem, *Naming the Powers; Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine Human Existence* (vol. 2 of *The Powers*; Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1986); idem, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (vol. 3 of *The Powers*; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1992).

<sup>35</sup> Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 5.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 100.

Several other publications on principalities and powers in Paul can be found.<sup>37</sup> Related to the present study, however, the fundamental problem with these scholarly contributions is that if they discuss Paul's references to Satan at all, they do so only as a subsidiary subject to "powers and principalities" in Paul.<sup>38</sup> The net result of framing the discussion in this manner is that Satan is either interpreted in the same fashion as principalities and powers (e.g., Wink) or virtually disregarded (e.g., Berkhof). That is, Satan is either confused with, or separated from, the broader category of "principalities and powers." Therefore, though such examinations of principalities and powers have made valuable contributions to the topic, they have not given satisfactory attention to Paul's understanding of Satan as a topic in and of itself.

### 1.1.2.5 Satan in the Pauline Letters

Despite a strong interest in principalities and powers and evil forces in the biblical tradition in the scholarship of the twentieth century, there is no study solely devoted to the Pauline references to Satan. There are, of course, many studies on the individual references to Satan in Paul, but these typically focus on a single verse without connecting them to other Satan references or aspects of Paul's theology.<sup>39</sup> That said, significant contributions have been made toward understanding Paul's theology of the devil, angelic beings, and other evil forces, or what might be typically called demonology.<sup>40</sup>

One of the earliest and most important contributions to the study of Satan in Paul in modern biblical scholarship is Otto Everling's 1888 volume, *Die*

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<sup>37</sup> E.g., see Chris Forbes, "Paul's Principalities and Powers: Demythologizing Apocalyptic?" *JSNT* 82 (2001): 61–88; idem, "Pauline Demonology and/or Cosmology? Principalities, Powers and the Elements of the World in their Hellenistic Context," *JSNT* 85 (2002): 51–73.

<sup>38</sup> To be sure, I am not suggesting that Paul's view of Satan should be interpreted apart from the powers of evil in Paul; rather, my point is that by discussing Satan in Paul's letters only as a part of the broader category "principalities and powers" these studies have not given full consideration of a distinct Pauline view of Satan.

<sup>39</sup> See, e.g., K. H. Ostmeyer, "Satan und Passa in 1. Korinther 5," *ZNW* 5, no. 9 (2002): 38–45; Per Bilde, "2 Cor 4:4: The View of Satan and the Created World in Paul," in *Apocryphon Severini* (ed. Per Bilde, Helge Kjær Nielsen, and Jørgen Podemann Sørensen; Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1993): 29–41 (Bilde's gnostic interpretation of Paul's soteriology as anti-cosmic and anti-somatic is unconvincing); David M. Scholer, "'The God of Peace Will Shortly Crush Satan under your Feet' (Romans 16:20a): The Function of Apocalyptic Eschatology in Paul," *ExAud* 6 (1990): 53–61; Peter W. Macky, "Crushing Satan underfoot (Romans 16:20): Paul's Last Battle Story as True Myth," in *Proceedings, Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies, 1993), 121–33.

<sup>40</sup> A good starting point is Pierre Benoit, "Pauline Angelology and Demonology: Reflexions on Designations of Heavenly Powers and on the Origin of Angelic Evil according to Paul," *RSB* 3, no. 1 (1983): 1–18.

*paulinische Angelologie und Dämonologie*.<sup>41</sup> Everling took as his starting point the dismissal of the importance of angelology and demonology in Paul by scholars such as F. C. Baur, remarking that “es scheint die vollständig untergeordnete Bedeutung dieses Teiles der Gedankenwelt des Paulus zu sehr allgemeines Axiom geworden zu sein, als dass man sich darauf einlassen konnte.”<sup>42</sup> Responding to this scholarly lacuna, Everling set out to investigate the angelology and demonology of Second Temple Judaism. Everling concluded that Paul’s thought is heavily indebted to his Jewish ancestors and, moreover, that angels, demons, and Satan are essential features of Paul’s cosmology and soteriology.<sup>43</sup>

In 1909 Martin Dibelius published his well-known work *Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus*, which remains the single largest volume on the subject.<sup>44</sup> Building on Everling’s study, Dibelius made two primary contributions beyond Everling. First, in addition to the Jewish background texts considered by Everling, Dibelius investigated the “spirit world” (Geisterwelt) in Rabbinic sources and those commonly examined by the religionsgeschichtliche Schule. Second, and more importantly for the present study, Dibelius sought to demonstrate that the “spirit world” was central to both Pauline theology – especially eschatology and Christology<sup>45</sup> – and the life and faith of the Christian community. Dibelius claimed the latter point was the main goal of his study: “Die Bedeutung der Geisteranschauungen im Glauben des Paulus nachzuweisen – das gilt als letztes Ziel dieser Untersuchung. Es war die Verbindung herzustellen zwischen dem Geisterglauben und anderen religiösen und theologischen Gedanken des Paulus.”<sup>46</sup>

Although Dibelius correctly stresses the importance of the “spirit world” for Paul’s “theological thought” (theologischen Gedanken) and also rightly

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<sup>41</sup> Otto Everling, *Die paulinische Angelologie und Dämonologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1888). That Everling’s work marks the first serious contribution to the subject, see Johannes Woyke, *Götter, “Götzen”, Götterbilder: Aspekte einer paulinischen Theologie der Religionen* (BZNW 132; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 7; Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians: Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians in Light of its Historical Setting* (SNTSMS 63; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 42. Similarly, Albert Schweitzer (*Paul and his Interpreters: A Critical History* [London: A. and C. Black, 1912], 55) notes that Everling was unable to cite a previous study on angels and demons in Paul.

<sup>42</sup> Everling, *Die paulinische Angelologie und Dämonologie*, 4.

<sup>43</sup> So Schweitzer, *Paul and his Interpreters*, 57.

<sup>44</sup> Martin Dibelius, *Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1909). For more on early contributions to the subject, see Derek R. Brown, “The Devil in the Details: A Survey of Research on Satan in Biblical Studies,” *CBR* 9, no. 2 (2011): 200–27.

<sup>45</sup> Dibelius, *Die Geisterwelt*, 5.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 4. Dibelius goes on to cite Everling’s failure to do the same as the primary weakness of Everling’s work.



emphasizes the significance of the spirit world for the life and faith of the early Christian community, his study is limited in that it only discusses Paul's "spirit world" in relation to the theological categories of eschatology and christology. Nonetheless, several of Dibelius' observations regarding the Pauline references to Satan – especially those regarding the nature of the concentration of Satan references in the Corinthian correspondence – will be instructive for the present study.

Critically, the works of Everling and Dibelius brought to the fore the uniqueness of Paul's view of demonology, while simultaneously demonstrating that such ideas do not belong to the periphery of Pauline theology but are part and parcel of Paul's theology and worldview. In this sense the present study is an extension of their work, though it seeks to move beyond the scope of their inquiries by examining the relation of Paul's understanding of Satan to his apocalyptic theology and self-understanding.

More recently, in a 1990 essay Susan Garrett examined Paul's understanding of his sufferings vis-à-vis his Corinthian opponents.<sup>47</sup> Garrett's essay included a sustained, albeit brief, consideration of "Paul's view of Satan" which analyzed the references to Satan in the two Corinthian letters with special attention to the Jewish background to Satan and the Hellenistic background to Paul's rhetorical ploys to link his opponents with the work of Satan.<sup>48</sup> Garrett's central claim is that Paul was "willing to characterize his hardships as Satan's assaults on him."<sup>49</sup> Garrett persuasively makes the point that Paul charged his opponents at Corinth with being under the authority of Satan and was then able to "discern the spirit" by "identifying the authority behind his human opponents."<sup>50</sup> In arguing that Paul employed the literary motif of the portrait of the afflicted sage "to persuade his readers that they ought to be proud of him" in light of his sufferings,<sup>51</sup> Garrett seeks to explain Paul's accusations that his rivals were in fact Satan's servants (2 Cor 11:13–15). To a certain extent this implies – wrongly in my opinion – that Paul's references to Satan are little more than rhetoric ("satanic lore"<sup>52</sup>).

In a 1999 article, Lee Johnson also investigated the concentration of references to Satan in the Corinthian letters.<sup>53</sup> Johnson's main contention is that Paul's references to Satan in the Corinthian correspondence are not allusions

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<sup>47</sup> Susan R. Garrett, "The God of this World and the Affliction of Paul: 2 Cor 4:1–12," in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (ed. David L. Balch; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1990), 99–117.

<sup>48</sup> E.g., *ibid.*, 106–09.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>53</sup> Lee A. Johnson, "Satan Talk in Corinth: The Rhetoric of Conflict," *BTB* 29 (1999): 145–55.

to an actual figure of his worldview or theology, but rhetorical language which the apostle employs in order to “cajole, threaten and inspire the Corinthians” to re-submit to his authority.<sup>54</sup> Drawing on anthropological studies of the use of witchcraft language among various tribes and peoples, Johnson concludes that Paul’s allusions to the figure of Satan have little, if anything, to do with his theological understanding of Satan or his cosmology.<sup>55</sup>

There is much to be commended in Johnson’s article. For example, the question which she addresses – why does Paul refer to Satan so often in 1–2 Corinthians? – is far too often overlooked in Pauline studies. She also rightly stresses the contextual and literary nature of Paul’s references to Satan in the Corinthian correspondence. That said, neither Johnson’s methodology nor her argument is without problems. First, Johnson’s portrayal of Satan as an unimportant figure in Paul is only tenable by ignoring 2 Cor 4:4 (ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου=Satan) and by isolating these texts from Rom 16:20; 1 Thess 2:18; and 3:5. Second, although comparisons between the witchcraft case studies and the Pauline references to Satan may yield a helpful and illustrative analogy, it is far from certain whether they are useful for determining an *historical* explanation of the references to Satan in the Corinthian correspondence. Finally, Johnson applies her sociological-rhetorical analysis of the references to Satan in the Corinthian letters at the expense of a theological interpretation of Satan. In sum, although Johnson addresses a similar question to the one we are concerned with in the present study, her argument and conclusions remain unpersuasive.

The relatively recent studies by Becker, Woyke, and Williams have each made valuable contributions to the scholarly conversation on Paul’s understanding of spiritual powers (including Satan).<sup>56</sup> However, none of these studies offers a sustained discussion of Satan’s place within Pauline theology and the overarching function of Satan within Paul’s letters.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Michael Becker, “Paul and the Evil One,” in *Evil and the Devil* (LNTS 481; eds. Erkki Koskeniemi and Ida Fröhlich; London; New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013), 127–41; Guy Williams, *The Spirit World in the Letters of Paul the Apostle: A Critical Examination of the Role of Spiritual Beings in the Authentic Pauline Epistles* (FRLANT 231; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), and Woyke, *Götter*, “Götzen”, *Götterbilder*.