

Satan and Demons in the Apostolic Fathers: A Minority Report

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The Marginalization of Demons and Exorcism in the Apostolic Fathers

The “Apostolic Fathers,” a group of Christian texts written from the late first century to the early second century,¹ are recognized as unusual in their era for their paucity of references to demons, demon possession, exorcism, and illness caused by demons;² additionally, rejection of supernatural evil beliefs has also been noted in texts such as the *Didache*.³ The fact that a number of texts in the Apostolic Fathers contain explicit reference to supernatural evil, typically a figure identified as Satan,⁴ makes it more remarkable that other texts in the same corpus do not contain any such references.

Although texts without references to supernatural evil are a minority report (rather than a growing trend) within early Christian literature, this distinctive feature of these other texts is even more apparent when they are compared with the Christian texts from the mid-second century onwards, which demonstrate a significant development in the role of supernatural evil within Christian theology; the introduction of exorcism and repudiation of Satan at baptism,⁵ enlargement of Christian demonology,⁶

¹ The list of works in this group has changed over time as some of the texts have been re-dated, but generally includes the *Epistle of Barnabas*, *Didache*, 1 *Clement*, 2 *Clement*, *Shepherd of Hermas*, *Ignatius*, *Fragments of Papias*, *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, *Polycarp’s Letter to the Philippians*, *Epistle to Diognetus*, and *Quadratus* (Schoedel 1992, 313).

² Twelftree 2007; Ferngren 2009.

³ Jenks 1991, 308; Milavec 2003a, 63.

⁴ *Epistle of Barnabas*, *Epistles of Ignatius*, *Shepherd of Hermas*, and possibly *Polycarp’s Letter to the Philippians*.

⁵ Russell, 1987, 61.

⁶ Ferngren 2009, 51.

adoption of the concept of Satan as a fallen angel,⁷ and the identification of fallen angels with demons.⁸

Lack of consensus on the reason for the absence of demons and exorcism from these texts prompts this study. It is proposed that certain texts among the Apostolic Fathers corpus exhibit a significant marginalization of Satan and demons, and that the cause of this is an etiology of evil which is anthropogenic rather than supernatural. Specifically, it is argued that the writers of the Didache, 1 Clement, Shepherd of Hermas, Martyrdom of Polycarp, and 2 Clement, identify humans as the origin and cause of evil, rather than Satan or demons.

Supernatural Evil in the Apostolic Fathers: Scholarly Approaches

Scholarly reference works typically simply assume the Apostolic Fathers believed in a supernatural evil being which they referred to as “satan” or “the devil,” without analyzing these texts in detail; Bamberger asserts “[t]hese Apostolic Fathers simply affirm the existence of Satan, seemingly as a reflection of their own inner experience,”⁹ Schäferdiek likewise says “the existence and activity of Satan are presupposed and there is no independent reflection or speculation about this,”¹⁰ and Russell says “[t]he Devil was generally believed responsible for the attitude of both the government and the mob.”¹¹

Russell’s standard work on Satan in early Christianity examines 1 Clement, the letters of Ignatius, the Epistle of Barnabas, the Martyrdom of Polycarp and letter of Polycarp to the Philippians, the Shepherd of Hermas, and the fragments of Papias.¹² Russell finds various beliefs in supernatural evil in each of these texts (though he considers Hermas to be ambiguous), but does not synthesize the data. Russell consistently assumes all instances of *satanas* and *diabolos* refer to a personal supernatural evil being, and provides little commentary on each work; his entire review of the seven texts takes up just twelve pages. In addition to the lack of any

⁷ Cohn 2011, 21.

⁸ Martin 2010, 657.

⁹ Bamberger 2010, 82.

¹⁰ Schäferdiek 1985, 164.

¹¹ Russell, 1987, 37.

¹² Russell, 1987, 30–50.

comparative textual or lexical analysis, another significant weakness of his study is the fact that the *Didache* and the *Letter to Diognetus* are referred to extremely briefly, in a single footnote.

Conclusions drawn predominantly (or even exclusively) from the presence or absence of satanological terminology in a text are vulnerable. Satanological terminology is used in some Second Temple Period and early Christian texts to refer either to humans or supernatural beings, and an examination of the broader context is necessary to determine the referent. Conversely, lack of satanological terminology in a text is not necessarily a reliable indicator that the writer was deliberately marginalizing or rejecting belief in supernatural evil.

A writer may be avoiding satanological terminology to facilitate communication with their audience. For example, Löfstedt proposes that Paul “adjusts his language to his audience”¹³ in three ways; by reducing his use of satanological terminology, by demythologizing satanological terminology (using *satanas* as a synonym for the “evil inclination,” the natural human impulse to sin, rather than as a reference to supernatural evil), and by presenting an anthropogenic etiology of sin (rather than a satanological etiology).

Löfstedt argues that Paul does this because those he is addressing “do not have as dualistic a worldview,”¹⁴ and because “[s]ome of Paul’s Roman readers may not have believed in the existence of Satan”.¹⁵ Nevertheless, this does not necessarily provide an understanding of what Paul himself thought about Satan (in fact Löfstedt himself believes Paul took for granted the existence of a supernatural evil Satan).

This illustrates the difficulties arising from attempting to determine the personal beliefs of a writer on the basis of what they did or did not write. However, it also provides guidance towards a more constructive approach; determining what the writer wanted the audience to believe by assessing their use of language, and comparing it with proximate writings which indicate more clearly the beliefs of their writers.

In the case of *Leviticus*, Milgrom argues that the Priestly writer has deliberately minimized satanological terminology, demythologized the few satanological terms he has used, and presented an anthropogenic etiology of sin, specifically to teach his audience that “[t]he world of demons is

¹³ Löfstedt 2010, 126.

¹⁴ Löfstedt 2010, 127.

¹⁵ Löfstedt 2010, 127.

abolished; there is no struggle with autonomous foes because there are none.”¹⁶ The aim of the Priestly writer, in Milgrom’s assessment, is to reassure his audience that “humans have replaced the demons.”¹⁷ Given the radical difference between this teaching and the beliefs common to the era, a good case can be made that the Priestly writer did not believe in demons and did not want his audience to believe in them either.

In the case of Romans, Löfstedt argues that even though Paul uses satanological terminology he does not do so because he wishes his audience to believe in Satan; instead Paul demythologizes the terminology because he wishes his audience to be aware of the danger of the evil inclination (rather than a supernatural evil being). By doing so Paul reinforces his audience’s non-belief in a supernatural evil being, which sheds at least some light on his own satanological beliefs; whether he believes in a supernatural evil being called Satan or not, he clearly sees such a being as extraneous to the etiology of evil and uses language calculated to preserve his audience’s non-belief in such a Satan.

Atomistic studies focusing merely on individual instances of satanological terminology¹⁸ without considering the broader textual and socio-historical context, remain common. There is little or no study of the etiology of evil within the Apostolic Fathers, which would provide a useful background against which to assess the terminology they use. Since satanological terminology may not always refer to an agent of supernatural evil, instead of deriving a writer’s etiology of evil from the individual satanological terms they may or may not use, this study of the Apostolic Fathers first seeks to establish each writer’s etiology of sin, and then reads the writer’s use of satanological terminology in that context. The next section of this study explains how this approach has proved useful in studies of Second Temple Period etiologies of sin.

¹⁶ Milgrom 1991, 43.

¹⁷ Milgrom 1991, 43.

¹⁸ Brief reviews typically rely on Gokey 1961 without further analysis (more detailed treatments cite Gokey infrequently, or not at all), though Gokey’s work (now over fifty years old and cited as an example of “[b]asic research in some of these areas” by Boyd 1975, 17), has been criticized for its deference to traditional theology and its lack of scope; a contemporary review included the criticisms that “[t]he point of view is traditional,” “the research moves entirely on the conventional horizontal level,” and (referring to the bibliography), “[t]here is only a limited number of books specifically on the subject of his study” (McCasland 1963, 465).

Second Temple Period Etiologies of Sin

Texts in both Second Temple Period Judaism and early Christianity often attempted to articulate an etiology for evil in the forms of temptation and personal sin, the presence of evil in the world, the persecution of the righteous, sickness, and eschatological conflict. Jewish and Christian texts exhibit three main sources of evil: God,¹⁹ humans, and Satan and evil spirits (such as demons or fallen angels). These are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and a text may exhibit more than one etiology. However, although Second Temple Period etiology of sin and evil was far from uniform, non-belief in supernatural evil is a recognized trend in Second Temple Period Judaism. Though belief in supernatural evil was prevalent, it did not necessarily involve a satanic figure,²⁰ and belief in supernatural evil was rejected directly by some Jewish teachers.²¹

There is general agreement that within Second Temple Period Judaism, two conflicting etiologies of evil emerged; the Adamic (an anthropogenic etiology which identified humans as the source of evil, deriving from the sin of Adam), and the Enochic (a satanological etiology which identified supernatural evil beings as the source of evil, through temptation, possession, and affliction with illness).²² Unlike other etiologies of evil, these etiologies do not co-exist in Second Temple Period texts; they appear as mutually exclusive.

Additionally, there is evidence in Second Temple Period Judaism for a distinct (though marginal) trend of marginalization or non-mythological use of satanological terminology. In literature of this period the term “satan,” whether in Greek (*satanas*) or Hebrew (*śāṭān*), is predominantly used as a common noun rather than a personal name, the term “the devil” (*ho diabolos*), is rarely if ever used to refer to a supernatural evil being, and the terms “the tempter” (*ho peirazōn*) and “the evil one” (*ho ponēros*) have no pre-Christian witness with such a meaning.

Despite many references to demonological entities,²³ Qumran literature uses the Hebrew *śāṭān* rarely, and only as a common noun.²⁴ Contrary to

¹⁹ Whether directly or through obedient (non-evil), supernatural angelic agents.

²⁰ Williams 2009, 88.

²¹ Bamberger 2006, 42.

²² Arbel 2012, 439.

²³ Though it must be noted that scholarly consensus on the Qumran texts has shifted away from the previously held view of ubiquitous cosmic dualism, and there is now recognition that some passages speaking of “evil spirits” are using the language of psychological or ethical dualism rather than referring to supernatural evil; see in particular Xeravits 2010.

suggestions that it is used as a proper noun in the Prayer of Deliverance (11Q5 XIX, 13–16),²⁵ the context of the passage and comparison with related texts indicates it is not used as a proper noun or name here,²⁶ in fact Tigchelaar has argued that here it is used of the evil inclination.²⁷

The term “the devil” (*ho diabolos*) is virtually never used in pre-Christian Second Temple literature outside the Old Greek texts of the Hebrew Scriptures. In the Old Greek texts it is found in 1 Chron 21:1 (of the adversary which attacks Israel, prompting David’s census), Esth 7:4; 8:1 (of Haman), Psalm 108:6 (of a human slanderer), Job 1:6–9, 12; 2:1–4, 6–7 (of Job’s adversary), and Zech 3:1–2 (of the accuser of Joshua); in each case it translates the Hebrew term *śāṭān*,²⁸ indicating *śāṭān* was not understood as a personal name at this time.

Even in Job and Zechariah (where some scholars consider *śāṭān* to refer to an angelic servant of God), it is not used of a supernatural evil being, still less a tempter.²⁹ It appears once in 1 Maccabees (1:36), used of human adversaries. It appears once in Wisdom of Solomon (2:24), where death is said to have entered the world due to the envy of the devil. The lack of any other use of the term in this work represents a challenge to its interpretation, but it is significant that it is interpreted in 1 Clement as a reference to Cain,³⁰ which many scholars believe is the meaning here.³¹

When accompanied by an Adamic etiology of sin, use of satanological terminology with only human referents is an indicator of non-belief in Satan and demons. In Sir 21:27 (“When the ungodly curses the satan he curses himself”), *satanas* is used as a reference to the evil impulses within humans; “Ben Sira means that Satan, is, therefore, nothing but an individ-

²⁴ Hamilton 1992, 988; Kelly 2006, 43; Stuckenbruck 2013, 62–63.

²⁵ Stuckenbruck 2013, 63.

²⁶ Kelly 2006, 43–44; Goldingay 2006, 55.

²⁷ Tigchelaar 2008, 350–51.

²⁸ Breytenbach and Day 1999, 244.

²⁹ Job’s satan is identified as a personal adversary, but is described as inciting God to destroy Job (Job 2:3), rather than tempting Job to sin; unlike the serpent of Genesis 3, the satan of the Synoptic wilderness temptation pericope, and the Satan of the Talmudic literature who tempts rabbis to sin, there is no personal interaction between Job and the satan (in fact Job appears entirely unconscious of the satan’s existence, attributing his misfortunes exclusively to God), the satan is never described as a tempter, and the satan’s aim is to influence God to destroy Job rather than to corrupt Job by tempting him into sin.

³⁰ Byron 2011, 223.

³¹ Davies 1987, 56; Kelly 2006, 78; Clifford 2013, 21; Byron 2011, 220; Bouteneff 2008, 19.

ual's impulse to evil and does not exist as a material being who can act in this world according to his own decision."³² Given Ben Sira's completely anthropogenic etiology of evil, Sacchi concludes that his use of *satanas* exhibits non-belief in a supernatural evil adversary; "For Ben Sira then, the devil does not exist; Satan is only a metaphor for our worst instincts."³³ Boccaccini likewise comments, "In Ben Sira's worldview, there is no room for devils, fallen angels, or evil spirits, not even for a mischievous officer of the divine court as the satan of Job, or for a domesticated demon as the Asmodeus of Tobit."³⁴

The presence of the Adamic etiology in a text, together with the marginalization or complete absence of satanological terminology, is a combination of positive and negative evidence which many scholars have considered decisive in determining whether or not the writer held to a worldview in which Satan and demons were a cause of evil. This combination of evidence has led many scholars to conclude that a number of Second Temple Period Jewish texts exhibit non-belief in Satan or demons, the most widely recognized of which are Apocalypse of Baruch,³⁵ Wisdom of Ben Sira,³⁶ and 4 Ezra.³⁷

First-Century Christian Literature

The term "satan," whether in Greek (*satanas*) or Hebrew (*śāṭān*), is used rarely in pre-Christian literature³⁸ and never as a proper name.³⁹ Consequently, Laato notes that "we lack an established tradition whereby the name of the personal Evil or the leader of demons is Satan."⁴⁰

Additionally, throughout the first century the Adamic etiology of sin gradually became increasingly prominent in Jewish texts, to the extent that (according to Boccaccini) even Enochic Judaism "moved away from

³² Capelli 2005, 142.

³³ Sacchi 2000, 351.

³⁴ Boccaccini 2008, 36.

³⁵ Emmel 2014, 127; Bamberger 2001, 43; Arbel 2012, 439; Sacchi 1990, 231; Forsyth 1989, 216, 217; Helyer 2002, 424.

³⁶ Bamberger 2001, 42; Boccaccini 2008, 36; Capelli 2005, 142; Di Lella 2003, 254; Helyer 2002, 424; Sacchi 2000, 351.

³⁷ Hogan 2008, 119; Sacchi 1990, 231; Eve 2002, 255; Helyer 2002, 424.

³⁸ Breytenbach and Day 1999, 730.

³⁹ Jenks 1991, 134.

⁴⁰ Laato 2013, 4.

blaming evil on fallen angels towards blaming it on the fall of Adam,”⁴¹ so that “the fallen angels and evil spirits have entirely fallen out of sight, leaving innate human sinfulness as the central problem.”⁴² Consequently, “[i]n Jewish writings of the end of the first century the devil suddenly disappears.”⁴³

Emerging within this Second Temple Period background, first-century Christian belief in supernatural evil was similarly non-uniform. According to Löfstedt, there is “some disagreement as to how real the devil was for John,”⁴⁴ with some commentators believing the devil in John is “a literary personification of sin rather than as an independently acting being.”⁴⁵ Thomas notes John never uses satan and demons as an etiology of illness, and “shows no real interest in the topic”;⁴⁶ he also says “[n]either James nor John give any hint that the Devil or demons have a role to play in the infliction of infirmity.”⁴⁷

Caird says “it is a matter of some delicacy to determine how far the New Testament writers took their language literally,”⁴⁸ and proposes satan may have been a personification to some in the early church (including Paul), rather than a person.⁴⁹ Dunn has argued that in Romans “Paul himself engaged in his own demythologization,”⁵⁰ and that Paul used satanological terminology not because of a personal belief in supernatural, but to accommodate his audience; “the assurances at the points cited above were probably largely *ad hominem*, with a view to reassuring those for whom such heavenly powers were all too real and inspired real fear.”⁵¹

The historical context of the Apostolic Fathers therefore does not consist of a monolithic and uniform belief in supernatural evil; there is a distinct trend of Adamic etiology of sin, correlating with the marginalization of some forms of belief in supernatural evil, in Second Temple Period Jewish literature during the first century.

⁴¹ Eve 2002, 173.

⁴² Eve 2002, 173.

⁴³ Sacchi 1990, 231

⁴⁴ Löfstedt 2009, 54.

⁴⁵ Löfstedt 2009, 58.

⁴⁶ Thomas 1998, 162.

⁴⁷ Thomas 1998, 301.

⁴⁸ Caird 1995, 110.

⁴⁹ Caird 1995, 110.

⁵⁰ Dunn 1998, 110.

⁵¹ Dunn 1998, 109.

This historical context, together with a lack of evidence for uniform beliefs in supernatural evil in first century Christian literature, and evidence for Christian marginalization of, or even non-belief in, Satan and demons, is good reason for not simply assuming that satanological terminology in the Apostolic Fathers necessarily refers to supernatural evil beings.

This study proposes that the lack of satanological and demonological references in certain of the texts of the Apostolic Fathers is explained efficiently by a trajectory within early Christian thought which inherited from Second Temple Period Judaism an Adamic etiology of sin (and consequently developed an anthropogenic etiology of evil), but which was eclipsed in the second century by the Enochic etiology of sin and evil which became dominant in early Christianity.

Methodology

The same etiological analysis which scholars have previously applied to Second Temple Period literature, will be applied here to the Didache, 1 Clement, Shepherd of Hermas, Martyrdom of Polycarp, and 2 Clement. These texts have been chosen for their length and the scope of their subject matter (as opposed to the short fragments and incomplete texts of the Apostolic Fathers which provide little material to analyze), for the paucity of their use of satanological terminology, and for the fact that their satanological terminology has been discussed widely in the literature, with some scholars arguing for a marginalization or even rejection of belief in supernatural evil beings in these texts.

The aim of the analysis will be to determine whether or not the writers of these texts communicated to their audience concerns about supernatural evil beings such as Satan and demons. To what extent does their writing describe, warn about, and provide advice on how to deal with, such beings? The following content will be looked for specifically.

1. Does the writer communicate an Adamic (anthropogenic) etiology of sin, or an Enochic or Satanic (mythological) etiology of sin?
2. Does the writer exhibit marginalization or demythologization of satanological terminology?
3. Does the writer show concern with cosmic dualism (the world is controlled by opposing supernatural forces of good and evil), eth-

ical dualism (opposition between groups of people, self-identifying as righteous and “othering” their opponents as unrighteous), or psychological dualism (internal conflict between opposing impulses within the human psyche), or some combination of these dualistic views?

A combination of minimizing or avoiding satanological terminology, demythologizing satanological language, a psychological or ethical dualism and an anthropogenic etiology of sin (rather than a supernatural etiology), would suggest strongly that the writer wishes the audience to think about the etiology of evil in a non-mythological way. This is even more likely when proximate texts present strong belief in supernatural evil beings such as Satan and demons.

This method of assessing texts and their use or non-use of satanological terminology on the basis of their etiology of evil avoids arguments from silence and places conclusions on the firm basis of positive evidence with complementary negative evidence. Instead of drawing unconfirmed conclusions from negative evidence (the mere absence of satanological terminology), this method bases conclusions on positive evidence (the writer’s explicitly expressed etiology of sin), to which any negative evidence is supplementary. Conclusions based primarily on what the writer has said have a stronger evidential basis than conclusions based on what the writer has not said.

Didache

Scholarly consensus dates the Didache at the end of the first century. Although the Didache shares a Jewish “Two Ways” textual source with the Epistle of Barnabas⁵² (represented in Qumran texts such as the “Community Rule” or “Manual of Discipline”; 1QS, 4QS^{a-j}, 5Q11, 5Q13), it has treated this source very differently to Barnabas. Whereas Barnabas adopted and amplified the supernatural evil found in the Two Ways text, the Didache has eliminated it. This is immediately apparent from a comparison of the opening of the Didache to its parallels in 1QS 3:17–21 and Barn. 18.1.

⁵² Jefford 1989, 91.

Both 1QS and Barnabas see the two ways as presided over by the angels of God and the angels of satan. In contrast, the Didache has completely removed any reference to satan and his angels.⁵³ This deliberate anti-mythological approach is followed consistently throughout the Didache.⁵⁴ The Didache does not use any of the satananological terminology found in the Epistle of Barnabas or in proximate Jewish and Christian texts; terms such as *satanas*, *diabolos*, Beliar, “the Black One,” “the lawless one,” and “the Worker [of evil]” never appear.⁵⁵ Although the term *tou ponērou* is used (8.2), there is no evidence it refers to a supernatural evil being; such usage has no pre-Christian witness,⁵⁶ and the Didache’s demythologizing agenda makes such an interpretation counter-intuitive.

Strong evidence for a generic rather than personal referent for the “evil” of 8.2 is the fact that there are no references to “the evil one” anywhere else in the Didache, only generic references to evil; “flee every kind of evil” (3.1, not “flee the evil one”), and “Remember your church, Lord, to deliver it from all evil” (10.6, not “deliver it from the evil one”).⁵⁷ Consequently, modern translations of the Didache typically render its use of *tou ponērou* as generic: “rescue us from evil” (Kraft),⁵⁸ “deliver us from evil” (van den Dungen),⁵⁹ “do not lead us into the trial [of the last days] but deliver us from [that] evil” (Milavec),⁶⁰ and “deliver us from evil” (Johnson).⁶¹

The Didache never refers to evil angels, demons, evil spirits, unclean spirits, demonic possession, or exorcism. Most significant is the fact that no reference is made even when discussing topics in which they are typically used as an explanatory recourse by proximate texts. In contrast with Justin Martyr (*1 Apol.* 9), the Didache condemns idolatry without reference to demons (6.3),⁶² and says explicitly that the reason for rejection of idol food is “it is the worship of dead gods” (6.3), in keeping with the Didache’s consistent warning that pagan practices lead to idolatry (not to

⁵³ Jefford 1995, 97.

⁵⁴ Milavec 2003a, 63.

⁵⁵ Jenks 1991, 308.

⁵⁶ Black 1990, 333.

⁵⁷ Hare 2009, 70.

⁵⁸ Kraft 2009.

⁵⁹ Van den Dungen 2001.

⁶⁰ Milavec 2003b, 21.

⁶¹ Johnson 2009, 37.

⁶² Russell 1987, 46.

involvement with demons);⁶³ instead the Didache excludes any association of idols with demons (6.3).⁶⁴

Likewise, unlike later Christian texts, the Didache's detailed pre-baptismal instruction (7.1–4) lacks any renunciation of satan,⁶⁵ in fact the Didache never speaks of demonic possession at all. Additionally, although the Didache differentiates between true and false prophets (11.5–10), there is no suggestion that the prophets are speaking with two different spirits (a divine spirit and a demonic spirit).⁶⁶

Both the true and false prophet are using the same spirit, which is why the Didache advises that behavior (rather than differentiating between spirits) is the way to differentiate between true and false prophets (11.8);⁶⁷ the false prophets' action is described as an abuse of the Spirit of God, not described as being possessed by an evil spirit or demon.⁶⁸ Rather than speaking under the influence of satan or a demon, the false prophet is a prophet either abusing the gift of speaking "in the [Holy] Spirit," or else claiming to speak "in the [Holy] Spirit" when in fact he is not.⁶⁹ There is no reference in the Didache to the prophets using two different spirits at all. The false prophet is not said to have a false spirit, or a demonic spirit, or a spirit of satan, or a spirit of Belial, or an evil spirit, or any other satanological or demonological term; no such concept is indicated here. Nor is the false prophet said to be possessed, nor is there any suggestion of exorcism of the false prophet, nor is the false prophet said to be a messenger or satan or the devil. There is no suggestion that supernatural evil of any kind motivates the words and actions of the false prophet.

In its eschatological passage the Didache refers to "the world deceiver" (16.4), using a Greek term unattested before the Didache itself.⁷⁰ Peerbolte believes this is a reference to Satan,⁷¹ but the suggestion that the Didache (which to this point has avoided all satanological and demonological terminology), would at this point introduce Satan using a unique term not

⁶³ Niederwimmer 1998, 123.

⁶⁴ Milavec 2003a, 63.

⁶⁵ Twelftree 2007, 219.

⁶⁶ Tibbs 2007, 317–18.

⁶⁷ Schöllgen 1996, 54.

⁶⁸ Schöllgen 1996, 55.

⁶⁹ Witherington 2003, 94; Guy 2011, 34; Hvidt 2007, 87; Freyne 2014, 253; Burkett 2002, 402.

⁷⁰ Peerbolte 1996, 181; Niederwimmer 1998, 219.

⁷¹ Peerbolte 1996, 181.

used in any earlier Jewish or Christian texts (instead of using one of the several standard satanological terms), is unlikely in the extreme. Jenks speaks of the “satanic connections” of the world deceiver, whilst differentiating him from Satan.⁷² Runions concludes that the Didache is one of a number of Christian texts identifying an evil eschatological figure as human rather than satanic.⁷³ Similarly, Milavec and Balabanski both note that this figure is differentiated from Satan.⁷⁴ Garrow observes that the world deceiver is “portrayed as a human persecutor,” and not of the devil.⁷⁵ Draper understands the world deceiver to be “an embodiment of a division within the community itself.”⁷⁶ Kobel likewise describes this section as speaking of “evil emerging from inside the community.”⁷⁷

The Didache was elaborated on considerably by later Christians who modified its content in alignment with their own theology. The third century Teaching of the Apostles (*Didascalia apostolorum*), and the late fourth century Apostolic Constitutions (*Constitutiones apostolicae*), both used material from the Didache. Both added explicit cosmological dualism and satanological references typical of the theology of their era, which are entirely absent from the Didache. These expansions illustrate the fact that the Didache’s text was deemed an inadequate expression of the dualism of later Christians, emphasizing the difference between its demythologized content and their strongly mythological views.

In particular, Const. ap. 7.32 includes an eschatology which borrows the Didache’s apocalyptic material but modifies it to agree with fourth century beliefs in supernatural evil, adding the term *diabolos* to identify the “world deceiver” (Did. 16.4) as the devil.⁷⁸ The fact that this term was added deliberately indicates (at the least) that the compilers of the Apostolic Constitutions felt the Didache had not identified the world deceiver explicitly as satan, and may be evidence that the Didache’s demythologized character was recognized by later Christians.

The expansion of the Didache’s apocalypse in the Apostolic Constitutions prompts Niederwimmer to suggest it is evidence for a lost ending of

⁷² Jenks 1991, 310.

⁷³ Runions 2012, 83.

⁷⁴ Milavec 2003a, 64; Balabanski 1997, 195.

⁷⁵ Garrow 2013, 56–57.

⁷⁶ Draper 1995, 284.

⁷⁷ Kobel 2011, 167.

⁷⁸ Niederwimmer 1998, 226.

the Didache,⁷⁹ whilst expressing caution saying the text “is (if at all) a very loose reproduction of the Didache.”⁸⁰ Consequently, he foregoes any attempt to reconstruct any such ending.⁸¹ Verheyden advises it is not possible to substitute the end of the Constitutions for that of the Didache, and says it is wiser to characterize the apocalypse of the Constitutions as a paraphrase of the Didache’s.⁸² Jefford notes that the Epistle of Barnabas (which shared a Two Ways source with the Didache), did not contain an apocalypse at all, making any suggestion that the Didache had a lost apocalyptic conclusion “mere speculation.”⁸³

Sorensen suggests tentatively that demons may be alluded to in Did. 3.1; 6.1, whilst acknowledging “it is just as conceivable that humans are intended here.”⁸⁴ He further suggests 8.2; 10.5; 16.4 are “ambiguous passages” which may refer to a satan figure.⁸⁵ However, he concludes that the Didache “offers little suggestion that demons play a direct role in contrary human actions.”⁸⁶ This is an understatement; the deliberate avoidance of any such language in the Didache and its elimination when using a source which included it indicates otherwise. Draper claims the Didache is tacitly aware of demonic forces,⁸⁷ but presents no evidence for this. Since there is no reference in the Didache to any demonic forces at all, and since the Didache has followed a systematic program of demythologizing its source which repudiates such beliefs, such speculation does not contribute to an understanding of the text.

The Didache’s etiology of sin is thoroughly Adamic. Humans are the cause of evil in the form of sin (3.2; 6.1) and the persecution of the righteous (16.3–4a). A detailed eschatological pericope (16.1–8) concerns signs of the return of Jesus and the appearance of “the world-deceiver,” but no cosmic battle involving good and evil angels, or satan and demons. Consequently, scholarly commentary typically describes the Didache as explicitly demythologized. Suggs observes “[t]he Angels/Spirits have disappeared from the very brief introduction,” describing the Didache’s

⁷⁹ Niederwimmer 1998, 226.

⁸⁰ Niederwimmer 1998, 227.

⁸¹ Niederwimmer 1998, 227.

⁸² Verheyden 2005, 207.

⁸³ Jefford 1989, 89.

⁸⁴ Sorensen 2002, 199.

⁸⁵ Sorensen 2002, 199.

⁸⁶ Sorensen 2002, 199.

⁸⁷ Draper 1995, 285.

Two Ways passage as “[r]elatively demythologized and ethicized.”⁸⁸ Kloppenborg contrasts the redactional source of Barnabas with that of the Didache, characterizing Barnabas as explicitly mythological, and the Didache as radically demythologized,⁸⁹ observing the Didache has replaced the cosmological dualism of its source with ethical and psychological dualism.⁹⁰ Sandt and Flusser suggest the Didache’s “significant reduction of the cosmic dualism in the earlier Two Ways” may be a deliberate demythologization,⁹¹ while Milavec declares it was definitely deliberate.⁹²

The intentional nature of the Didache's demythologization is even more apparent when it is compared with three other texts using the Two Ways material. Milavec notes that the first-century BCE Qumran Manual of Discipline, the second-century Epistle of Barnabas, and the third-century Teaching of the Apostles (*Didascalia Apostolorum*) all contain an explicit mythological dualism which the Didache has clearly avoided.⁹³ The markedly different treatment of the Two Ways material in these texts indicates the presence of two different traditions in early Christianity; one dualistic (found in the Teaching of the Apostles, and *Apostolic Constitutions*), the other non-dualistic (found in the Didache). Concurring with this model, Rordorf traces the dualistic tradition from sources such as the Community Rule (*Manual of Discipline*, 1QS), and the non-dualistic tradition from the “sapiential and synagogal teaching of Judaism.”⁹⁴

Brock likewise positions the Didache’s non-dualistic view within a tradition drawn directly from the Palestinian Targums, and the dualistic view of Barnabas and the Teaching of the Apostles as influenced by the “intrusion of the non-Biblical moral opposition” found in the Community Rule.⁹⁵ Tomson also characterizes the Didache as non-dualistic, and belonging to the tradition found in the New Testament and the Palestinian Tannaite sage Yohanan ben Zakkai;⁹⁶ Tomson further describes the Dida-

⁸⁸ Suggs 1972, 71.

⁸⁹ Tite 2009, 177.

⁹⁰ Kloppenborg 1995, 95.

⁹¹ Schwiebert 2008, 124.

⁹² Milavec 2003a, 63.

⁹³ Milavec 2003a, 65.

⁹⁴ Rordorf 1996, 153.

⁹⁵ Brock 1990, 143.

⁹⁶ Tomson 2001, 383.

che as non-dualistic, Barnabas as semi-dualistic, and the Community Rule as completely dualistic.⁹⁷

The Didache is therefore witness to a late first-century Christian community which preserved traditional Jewish ethical teaching within a non-dualistic framework, deliberately avoiding all references to supernatural evil and replacing them with a psychological dualism locating temptation and sin within the heart. It is not merely non-mythological but explicitly demythological, teaching an anthropogenic Adamic etiology of sin, in contrast to the belief in supernatural evil found in proximate Jewish and Christian sources.

First Clement

Typically dated to the end of the first century, 1 Clement uses no satanological terminology. There is one use of the present participle of the verb *antikeimai*, “adversary” (51.1). Although this verb is applied to the man of sin in 2 Thess 2:4, the New Testament never uses it of Satan, but does use it of human opponents in Luke 13:17; 21:15; 1 Cor 16:9; Gal 5:17; Phil 1:28; 2 Thess 2:4; and 1 Tim 1:10, which last usage makes its use in 1 Tim 5:14 most likely to be human as well.⁹⁸ Consequently there is no Second Temple Period precedent for it referring to Satan in 1 Clement. Although neither *satanas* nor *diabolos* appear in 1 Clement, there is clear evidence for the author understanding *diabolos* with a human referent, in a passage which quotes Wisdom of Solomon:

For this reason “righteousness” and peace “stand at a distance,” While each one has abandoned the fear of God and become nearly blind with respect to faith in Him, neither walking according to the laws of His commandments nor living in accordance with his duty toward Christ. Instead, each follows the lusts of his evil heart, inasmuch as they have assumed that attitude of unrighteous and ungodly jealousy through which, in fact, “death entered into the world.” (1 Clem. 3.4)⁹⁹

Here is evidence for Clement’s anthropogenic etiology of sin; like James, he attributes sin to the lusts of the evil heart. Reference to the entry

⁹⁷ Tomson 2014, 94.

⁹⁸ Arichea and Hatton 1995, 122; Towner 2006, 356–57; Hendriksen and Kistemaker 1953, 177–78; Guthrie 1990, 118; Delling 1985, 655.

⁹⁹ Holmes 1999, 33.

of death into the world is a quotation from Wisdom of Solomon (2:24), where death's entry is attributed to the envy of the *diabolos*. Clement interprets the *diabolos* here as a reference to Cain,¹⁰⁰ which many scholars believe is the meaning intended.¹⁰¹ This is more likely than a supernatural referent, since "[t]he notion that the devil was motivated by envy is likewise not attested before the first century CE, at the earliest."¹⁰² The fact that Clement understands *diabolos* here as a reference to Cain is evidence for an Adamic etiology of sin, and differentiates him sharply from the many later Christian commentators who read it as a reference to Satan. Either no such tradition existed in Clement's era, or he was ignorant of it, or he was deliberately rejecting it.

To summarize the evidence in Clement, the writer used a verb the New Testament uses for human adversaries (instead of using a proper name or proper noun for Satan), and did not use either *satanas* or *diabolos*, his only reading of *diabolos* interprets it as a human adversary rather than a supernatural being, and he does not refer to demons, evil spirits, fallen angels, demonic possession, or exorcism. Clement's etiology of sin is anthropogenic (Adamic), rather than Satanic; temptation and sin are the products of the human heart. Clement encourages readers to view evil and sin in non-mythological terms.

Shepherd of Hermas

Complications in the textual tradition, and inconsistencies in the internal evidence, have prevented firm consensus on the dating of Hermas. It is cited as a complete work by Irenaeus nearly the end of the second century (c. 175), but a possible reference to Clement of Rome in the earliest part of the work, may indicate an earlier date of initial composition; consequently, there is a tendency in the literature to regard Hermas as a composite document.¹⁰³

Early theories of multiple authorship have given way to a return to acceptance of a basic literary unity resulting from a single author writing over time, followed by several redactions.¹⁰⁴ Apart from a general consen-

¹⁰⁰ Byron 2011, 223.

¹⁰¹ Davies 1987, 56; Kelly 2006, 78; Clifford 2013, 21; Byron 2011, 220; Bouteneff 2008, 19.

¹⁰² Collins 1998, 190.

¹⁰³ Holmes 1999, 330–31.

¹⁰⁴ Osiek 1999, 10.

sus that Visions 1–4 constitute the cohesive work of a single author and represent the earliest material, there is comparatively little agreement on the composition of the rest of the text.¹⁰⁵ Evidence that Visions 1–4 and Vision 5 were circulating as complete works at an early date (before the remainder of the text was written)¹⁰⁶ gives grounds for treating these sections independently from the rest of *Hermas*. Use of the work by late second-century and early third-century Christian writers quoting from multiple sections of *Hermas* indicates the text was circulating as a united composition by the end of the second century.¹⁰⁷

Satanological terminology is distributed unevenly throughout the three sections of *Hermas*: Visions 1–4; Vision 5 and Mandates (typically considered one section); Parables.¹⁰⁸ No satanological terminology is found in Visions 1–4, which has a consistently non-mythological character; there are no evil spirits, demons, or fallen angels. Satanological terminology is found frequently in Vision 5 and Mandates, but there is only one use of *diabolos* in Parables.

Visions 1–4 forms a type of apocalypse, but *Hermas* does not introduce supernatural evil into his eschatological pericope; there is no cosmological warfare between angels, nor any satanological end time figure, and the multi-colored beast which appears in 4.1.5–10 is explained in 4.3.1–6 as representing the world, the destruction of the world, the salvation of the righteous, and the age to come, not as a supernatural evil being. This is a strongly anthropogenic etiology of evil. The persecution of the righteous, sometimes mentioned in an eschatological context, is said to contribute to salvation (3.2.1), but supernatural evil is never cited as an etiology for this suffering. The etiology of evil is strictly anthropogenic rather than supernatural; sinful humans are responsible for the evil in the world (2.2.2). The cause of sin is also consistently non-supernatural, temptation and sin being attributed to human passions; evil rising up in the heart (1.1.8), evil desire (1.2.4), evil thoughts producing transgression and death (2.3.2), being led away by riches (3.6.6), licentious desires (3.7.2), and fleshly weaknesses (3.9.3). The way of salvation in Visions 1–4 is likewise non-mythological; rather than recourse to supernatural powers, or battles with cosmological foes, salvation is achieved through ethical instruction

¹⁰⁵ Osiek 1999, 10; Holmes 1999, 331.

¹⁰⁶ Osiek 1999, 3; Holmes 1999, 330.

¹⁰⁷ Osiek 1999, 4.

¹⁰⁸ Sometimes referred to in the literature as Similitudes, from the Latin name.

(1.3.2), self-control (2.2.3), repentance (2.2.4), ethical behaviour (2.3.2), confession and prayer (3.1.6), charity and almsgiving (3.9.5). This part of Hermas, therefore, which was first circulated independently as a complete work, contains no satanological language at all and presents an entirely non-mythological character.

The majority of Hermas is contained in Mandates 1–12 and Parables 1–10, written later than Visions 1–4 and describing a complex etiology of sin in allegorical terms. Most notable is Hermas' repeated emphasis on an internalized dualism of the human heart, which is ruled by one of two spirits, the "holy spirit" and the "evil spirit," which influence an individual's behaviour according to their attitude (Herm. Mand. 5.1–2). However, for Hermas these spirits are secondary influences on behaviour; it is the individual who must encourage the "holy spirit" by cultivating good thoughts, or risk encouraging the "evil spirit" by succumbing to bad temper (Herm. Mand. 5.1). Unlike demonic possession, the individual is not at the mercy of these spirits.

Hermas presents a Two Ways dualism (introduced in Visions 1), which is similar to 1QS and the Epistle of Barnabas, but in which angels and spirits are said to reside in the heart as integral to the psyche ("There are two angels with man, one of righteousness and one of wickedness," Herm. Mand. 6.2), rather than as independent beings acting externally. The two angels found in 1QS and Barnabas have been internalized by Hermas, so that they exist as two impulses within the human heart, like the "evil inclination" and the "good inclination" of rabbinical hamartiology.¹⁰⁹ Consequently, Wiley notes that Hermas attributes the origin of evil to the *yetzer hara*, the "evil inclination."¹¹⁰

This dualism is described with a range of terms, including "spirits" (Herm. Mand. 5.1–2), "angels" (Herm. Mand. 6.2), and "doublemindedness" (Herm. Mand. 9–11), the last of which corresponds to the evil inclination of Second Temple Period Judaism. Hermas' concept of doublemindedness has clear New Testament roots; the exhortation to pray without doublemindedness and the failure of prayer by the doubleminded man (Herm. Mand. 9.4–6), obviously borrows directly from Jas 1:5–8. Boyd says Hermas' references to spirits, angels of the Lord, and angels of satan all represent abstractions rather than realities; for Hermas demons "are personified vices rather than spirits that lead independent existenc-

¹⁰⁹ Stroumsa and Fredriksen 1998, 203.

¹¹⁰ Wiley 2002, 29.

es”;¹¹¹ grief, for example, is described as “the most evil of all the spirits” (Herm. Mand. 1.2). However, Boyd considers some of Hermas’ language suggests evil spirits are independent beings,¹¹² and does not believe the devil in Hermas is a personification.¹¹³

Similarly, Russell says it is unclear whether Hermas’ two angels are in fact independent cosmic beings, or personifications of the impulses within the human heart (the rabbinic *yetzarim*).¹¹⁴ He notes Hermas’ use of heavily allegorical language to personify vices “as spirits or demons,” while observing the differentiation between literal and figurative is not always distinct.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, he characterizes the dualism of Hermas as ethical rather than cosmological.¹¹⁶

Rousseau believes Hermas’ dualism is psychological, with human passions and vices personified as evil spirits and demons.¹¹⁷ Rosen-Zvi likewise says Hermas has internalized dualistic forces.¹¹⁸ This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that Hermas never describes exorcism as the means of dealing with these “spirits.” Instead the reader is instructed to deal with them precisely as if they were impersonal vices and character flaws; through repentance, faith, self-control, and moral self-renewal (Herm. Mand. 8.1–12; 9.10–12; 10.1–3; 12:1–3).¹¹⁹

Although Twelftree characterizes this as “a way of dealing with the demonic without resorting to exorcism,”¹²⁰ it would be more accurate to say that it is a replacement of cosmological dualism and supernatural exorcism, with psychological dualism and non-supernatural remedy. The fact that Hermas uses a non-supernatural remedy which is applied by the individual to themselves demonstrates that he is not thinking of a cosmological struggle between the individual and external supernatural force, which can only be remedied by recourse to a third party exercising supernatural power (such as exorcism). Consequently, the remedy Hermas proposes for these “demons” is exactly the same remedy for non-supernatural

¹¹¹ Boyd 1975, 50.

¹¹² Boyd 1975, 50.

¹¹³ Boyd 1975, 51.

¹¹⁴ Russell 1987, 43.

¹¹⁵ Russell 1987, 45.

¹¹⁶ Russell 1987, 44.

¹¹⁷ Rousseau 1999, 137.

¹¹⁸ Rosen-Zvi 2011, 56.

¹¹⁹ Twelftree 2007, 213.

¹²⁰ Twelftree 2007, 214.

evil impulses within the human heart; repentance, faith, and moral self-renewal.

Hermas has not attributed human passions and vices to demonic possession, he has used the language of demonism to characterize human passions and vices, which nonetheless remain non-supernatural evil impulses. Twelftree's description of this process as "self-applied moral or intellectual exorcism"¹²¹ unintentionally emphasizes the fact that Hermas saw no need to invoke a supernatural response to what he describes as demons and evil spirits, and treated them in the same way as human passions and vices. Unlike the apologists who were his contemporaries, Hermas speaks of idolatry without speaking of demons; idolatry is simply the practice of substituting another authority for God, whether by consulting a false prophet (Herm. Mand. 11.4), or by actually worshipping idols (Herm. Sim. 9.21.3).

Despite the ambiguity of his allegorical language therefore, Hermas advocates a response to "demons" which is consistently non-supernatural, psychological, and moral, rather than supernatural, cosmological, and spiritual. Though he uses the demonological terminology of second century apologists such as Justin Martyr (First Apology, Second Apology), Hermas has deliberately demythologized the language of evil spirits and demons, re-applying it to human passions and vices.¹²² Consequently, Hermas' use of *diabolos* as an apparent reference to a supernatural evil tempter (Herm. Mand. 12.5.4) appears anomalous. Given Hermas' consistent demythologization of demonological language, a case could be made that he is using *diabolos* in the same way. However, a simpler and more cautious approach would be to conclude that Hermas still wishes his readers to view the *diabolos* as an independent being despite having demythologized demons and evil spirits. Nevertheless, the sharp contrast between the entirely demythologized Visions 1–4 and the only partially demythologized Mandates and Parables (especially Mandates, with its extensive use of repurposed demonological terminology and its repeated use of *diabolos*), requires more than superficial analysis.

Earlier commentary proposed theories of multiple authorship to address inconsistencies in Hermas and evidence that portions of the text were circulated independently of the whole.¹²³ Current scholarship views Hermas

¹²¹ Twelftree 2007, 214.

¹²² Boyd 1975, 137.

¹²³ Knust 2013, 135.

as a work composed by one author over time, incorporating multiple sources and redactions.¹²⁴ There is general agreement that the earliest section (Visions 1–4) was written and circulated as complete document around the end of the first century,¹²⁵ and that the entire work was completed around the middle of the second century.¹²⁶ This conclusion provides a firm basis on which to advance an explanation of why Visions 1–4 has a strong demythological character which is so unlike the rest of the work.

A simple explanation for the fact that Visions 1–4 reflects the same demythologized content as the *Didache* and 1 *Clement*, whereas the rest of the work is very similar (but still not identical) to the mythological views of evil common to the mid-second century, is that the author's own personal views changed during the 30–40 years separating the writing of Visions 1–4 and the later composition of Vision 5, Mandates, and Parables. The proposal that Visions 1–4 reflects the views of the author at an early date, and that the rest of *Hermas* was written together at a later date (and then appended to Visions 1–4), after the author's views changed, is certainly more parsimonious than more complicated suggestions of multiple redaction and editing over several decades which are found in the literature.

Evidence that *Hermas*' theological views changed over time is found in the difference between his original and later approach to repentance. In Visions 1–4 *Hermas* teaches that those who had been baptized have a second chance of forgiveness at the eschaton, but in *Herm. Mand.* 3.3.1–7 he says only new converts have a second chance. Another example of *Hermas*' change of theological perspective is the fact that Visions 1–4 lacks any reference to the approach to repentance described in the rest of the work (especially Mandates 12–13 and Parable 9), which clearly indicates mid-second-century practice.¹²⁷

A change in theological views provides an efficient and evidence based explanation as to why the etiology of sin of Visions 1–4 matches the demythologized and Adamic perspective of its contemporary the *Didache*, while the etiology of sin in the rest of *Hermas* is much closer to the mythological view of the mid-second century apologists with which it was

¹²⁴ Knust 2013, 135; Maier 2002, 56.

¹²⁵ Rankin 2006, 34.

¹²⁶ Nielsen 2012, 169; Rankin 2006, 34–35; Baynes 2011, 172.

¹²⁷ Osborne 2001, 55.

contemporary. When writing Visions 1–4 at the end of the first century, the author held a strongly demythologized view, whereas by the mid-second century his views had shifted, resulting in the inclusion of some mythological terminology which he demythologized (rejecting a belief in literal demons and applying demonological language to human vices), but also the inclusion of mythological views which he had adopted (accepting a belief in a supernatural evil tempter, the devil).

The witness of Hermas is therefore mixed, due to its composite nature. However, what can be said with confidence is that Visions 1–4, written at the end of the first century, represents a strongly demythologized work reflecting the same anthropogenic etiology of sin as the *Didache*, whereas even the later sections of Hermas represent a weak mythological view in which demons are nothing more than personifications of human vices, though the *diabolos* is an independent supernatural tempter.

In summary, in Visions 1–4 the writer of Hermas uses demythologized language to warn readers of their susceptibility to an anthropogenic dualism which they themselves can influence directly by exercising personal self-control. This is an Adamic etiology of sin. The writer does not warn his audience of possession by forces of supernatural evil, nor does he recommend exorcism or magical means of addressing their internal dualism. If at this point he had any belief in a supernatural devil or demons as independent beings, he shows no evidence for it in Visions 1–4. In contrast, Mandates 1–12 and Parables 1–10 show evidence of a theological shift towards supernatural evil in the form of an independent devil figure, whilst still making no mention of demons, demonic possession, or exorcism.

Martyrdom of Polycarp

The Martyrdom of Polycarp is typically dated to the late second century. The extant textual tradition consists of seven Greek manuscripts dating from the tenth to the twelfth century, one thirteenth century manuscript, Codex Mosquensis (the Moscow Manuscript, which is notable for its

many unique readings),¹²⁸ quotations in Eusebius, and a Latin translation.¹²⁹ Chapters 21 and 22 contain comments by later writers, and are themselves likely to be later additions to the original text.¹³⁰

A brief reference to eschatological events makes no mention of satan, demons, or fallen angels, despite its reference to “the fire of the coming judgment and eternal punishment which is reserved for the ungodly” (11.2), where reference to “the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt 25:41, New English Translation), might at least be expected.

There is one use of *diabolos* (2.4), and one use of *ho ponēros*, “the evil one,” or “the evil” (17.1), both as the reason for Christian martyrdom. A single instance of *satanas* (23.2) appears in a chapter which was not part of the original text, is found only in the Moscow Manuscript,¹³¹ and consequently need not be considered. The variety of renderings in both the scholarly English translations and the critical editions of the Greek text reflects the underlying inconsistencies of the textual tradition, due to poorly preserved manuscripts,¹³² textual variants and interpolations,¹³³ and the grammatical uncertainty of various passages.¹³⁴

Comparison of the extant manuscripts reveals various forms of editing, redaction, and interpolation, reducing the integrity of the available textual witness.¹³⁵ This is particularly the case with regard to 2.4 and 17.1, the only passages in which satanological terminology is used. Although these recognized textual inconsistencies, interpolations, and ambiguities do not suggest that either *ho ponēros* or *diabolos* have no place in the text, they do indicate that these passages have been subjected to modifications intended to alter the intended meaning of these terms by changing their referents. Standard English translations of 2.4 typically obscure the underlying textual difficulty.

And in a similar manner those who were condemned to the wild beasts endured terrible punishments: they were forced to lie on sharp shells and afflicted with various other forms of torture in order that he might, if possi-

¹²⁸ Ehrman 2003, 363.

¹²⁹ Holmes 1999, 302.

¹³⁰ Koester 2000, 300.

¹³¹ Hartog 2013, 334.

¹³² Hartog 2013, 167.

¹³³ Gibson 2003, 152.

¹³⁴ Setzer 1994, 115.

¹³⁵ Gibson 2003, 150.

ble, by means of the unceasing punishment compel them to deny their faith; for the devil tried many things against them. (Mart. Pol. 2.4)¹³⁶

A footnote advises that the reading “in order that he might” is only supported by one manuscript in the textual tradition, the Moscow Manuscript,¹³⁷ all the other textual witnesses read *ho turannos*, “the tyrant.”¹³⁸ Brannan’s English translation reads “tyrant,” following Kirsopp Lake’s Greek text;¹³⁹ Lieu also notes the variant.¹⁴⁰ The interpretive implications of the original reading will be addressed shortly. Likewise, the text of 17.1–2 historically caused both copyists and interpreters great difficulty.

Although the “evil one” is said to incite Nicetes, it is unclear whether the direct quotation which follows are the words of the “evil one” or Nicetes. The Greek text is even more obscure, since the word for “the adversary” (*antikeimenos*) may refer either to a human or supernatural agent.¹⁴¹ Gibson notes that the grammar of 17.1 can be parsed in a range of ways, making it “unclear who or what this ‘evil one’ is,”¹⁴² and that “strained syntax” in 17.2b results in uncertainty as to who it was that expressed concern that the Christians might abandon Jesus and worship Polycarp.¹⁴³ She further observes that these ambiguities of grammar and syntax “coincide with instability in the textual tradition.”¹⁴⁴ This suggests that copyists of the text struggled with its original lack of clarity and sought to correct it with modifications of their own, resulting in further difficulties for later copyists; Gibson herself notes significant editing in the manuscript tradition at this place in the text, with two manuscripts completely omitting 17.2d and 17.3 altogether.¹⁴⁵

There is strong evidence that the lack of clarity as to the role of the “evil one” was responsible for the confusion of subsequent copyists, and the consequent instability of the text. Although “the evil one” is the initial subject of the passage, Nicetes is introduced later as the agent of opposition against the Christians wishing to recover the body of Polycarp, then

¹³⁶ Holmes 1999, 229.

¹³⁷ Designated “m” in the footnote.

¹³⁸ Holmes 1999, 229.

¹³⁹ Brannan 2011.

¹⁴⁰ Lieu 2005, 145.

¹⁴¹ Lunn-Rockliffe 2015, 123.

¹⁴² Gibson 2003, 154.

¹⁴³ Gibson 2003, 154.

¹⁴⁴ Gibson 2003, 155.

¹⁴⁵ Gibson 2003, 155.

finally the Jews are held responsible for instigating the opposition,¹⁴⁶ in a way which makes them appear to be responsible for Nicetes' decision, rather than "the evil one."

Eusebius edited the text in the process of copying it,¹⁴⁷ addressing the ambiguity of the text by making a specific effort to connect "the Jews" with "the evil one."¹⁴⁸ Instead of the ambiguous reading "he incited Nicetes," Eusebius wrote "certain ones suggested Nicetes," and changed the syntax of the paragraph to fit.¹⁴⁹ The consequence is a text from which the influence of "the evil one" has been removed completely, so that the opposition originates from human opponents instead of from "the evil one."¹⁵⁰ The significance of this is that Eusebius saw this as a valid interpretation of the text, despite the presence of "the evil one" at the start of the paragraph. Following Eusebius, Rufinus likewise retained the reference to "the evil one" while reading the remainder of the text as a description of human opponents preventing the removal of Polycarp's body.¹⁵¹

These revisions by Eusebius and Rufinus not only illustrate the inherent ambiguities and textual difficulties of the text as they received it, but also the challenge of identifying "the evil one" as responsible for influencing Nicetes to petition the magistrate not to surrender Polycarp's body. Aside from the grammatical ambiguity, it is also possible that neither Eusebius nor Rufinus (both of whom most likely understood "the evil one" to be the devil of their theology), could understand why Satan would not want Christians to abandon their devotion to Christ. However, Eusebius' text results in the Jews fearing that the Christians would renounce Christ in favour of Polycarp, which hardly seems more credible, and is possibly the reason why Rufinus removed all reference to the Jews completely, making Nicetes the one expressing concern for the potential shift in Christian loyalty.

Comparison with the Maccabean literature points towards a simple solution to the identity of "the evil one." It is widely agreed that the Martyrdom of Polycarp has been modeled on the Jewish martyrdom tradition, in particular the martyrology of 4 Maccabees.¹⁵² Use of both 2 and 4 Macca-

¹⁴⁶ Lunn-Rockliffe 2015, 123.

¹⁴⁷ Koester 2000, 348.

¹⁴⁸ Gibson 2003, 155.

¹⁴⁹ Lunn-Rockliffe 2015, 123.

¹⁵⁰ Lunn-Rockliffe 2015, 124.

¹⁵¹ Lunn-Rockliffe 2015, 123–25.

¹⁵² deSilva 1998, 150–51; Clements 2013, 216; Campbell 1992, 227.

bees has been noted by Perler, Baumeister, and Lieu, with Lieu arguing the parallels with Maccabean literature are stronger than those with biblical literature or contemporary Christian influences such as Ignatius.¹⁵³ The writer's familiarity with the Maccabean literature is an interpretive key to the understanding of the *diabolos* in 2.4 and the "evil one" in 17.1.

As noted previously, the majority reading of the textual tradition in 2.4 is *ho turannos*, "the tyrant." The Moscow Manuscript lacks *ho turannos*, making *ho diabolos* the subject, instead of the majority reading in which *ho turannos* is the subject and interprets *diabolos*. There are several reasons for preferring the majority reading. On internal considerations, it seems less likely that a copyist would add *ho turannos* ("the tyrant"), to a martyrological passage in which the subject was already identified clearly as *ho diabolos* ("the devil"). It is more likely that a copyist would consider *ho turannos* to cause an unnecessary confusion of the subject by rendering the identity of *ho diabolos* ambiguous, and wish to remove it in order to ensure the presence of the devil is made explicit.

It also seems less likely that a copyist would add *ho turannos*, which would be unusual in this context since "it is not a common term in Christian martyrologies."¹⁵⁴ Even more significantly, *ho turannos* is used of earthly persecutors in Jewish martyrology and was used extensively in 4 Maccabees, the very text on which Martyrdom of Polycarp was modeled.¹⁵⁵

With the reading *ho turannos*, the *diabolos* in 2.4 then becomes a term for the earthly persecutor, the Roman proconsul mentioned in the very next passage (3.1). Further evidence for this is the fact that *ho diabolos ponēros* ("the evil enemy") is used in 1 Macc 1:36 of the opponents of the Jews under Apollonius,¹⁵⁶ providing a possible source for *ho ponēros* in Mart. Pol. 17.1.

Summarizing the external evidence, the extensive use of Maccabean literature by Martyrdom of Polycarp, the fact that *ho turannos* is used in the text on which it was most dependent, and the fact that *ho diabolos ponēros* is found in 1 Maccabees as a reference to human persecutors, gives good reason to maintain the reading *ho turannos* in Martyrdom of

¹⁵³ Avemarie and van Henten 2005, 95; Lieu 1996, 79–80.

¹⁵⁴ Lieu 2005, 145.

¹⁵⁵ Lieu 2005, 145; Rajak 1997, 53.

¹⁵⁶ καὶ ἐγένετο εἰς ἔνεδρον τῷ ἀγιάσματι καὶ εἰς διάβολον πονηρὸν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ διὰ παντός (Kappler 1967, 52).

Polycarp, and understand both 2.4 and 17.1 as referring to the Roman proconsul. This harmonizes with the description of the “evil one” in 17.1 as “jealous and envious,” which makes sense as a polemical description of the proconsul, who not only wishes to turn the martyrs from worshipping Jesus to worshipping Caesar (thus “jealous” of the worship received by Jesus), but who would also be concerned by the Christians merely transferring their veneration of Jesus, to Polycarp.

Support from this is found in 1 Clement, in which human jealousy is cited repeatedly as the motivation for the persecution of Christians by Roman rulers (5.1–6.2), making this an established martyrological motif. In contrast, it seems considerably less likely that a Christian writer would consider the devil to be jealous of worship (since he is never the subject of worship even by his followers), and dismayed by Christians abandoning their devotion of Jesus for the idolizing of Polycarp. Further evidence for this interpretation is the fact that the “evil one” does not oppose the Christians directly, but seeks the aid of a human assistant, who is then used to petition the magistrate.¹⁵⁷ This seems more than a little clumsy if a supernatural evil being is involved, who could simply move the magistrate directly to oppose the Christians.

Finally, when the centurion eventually burns Polycarp’s body, his action is not connected in any way with the “evil one”; instead the Jews are held to blame (18.1), and the devil is not identified as either the proximate or ultimate cause. If the reader is intended to understand that the devil was in fact attempting to obstruct the Christians, it is curious that his carefully orchestrated scheme involving three different people is abruptly dropped from the narrative, and a Roman soldier is successful instead. If the “evil one” is the proconsul, it is more comprehensible that the centurion’s independent action, prompted by Jewish opposition to the Christians, pre-empt the plan of his superior.

The paucity of satanological language in the Martyrdom of Polycarp is remarkable given the genre of the work, especially in comparison with the explicitly supernatural references in Ignatius’ descriptions of martyrdom (*Ign. Rom.* 5.3; 7:7; *Magn.* 1.2). Although the writer’s etiology of sin is not developed systematically in this text, the emphasis throughout is on humans as the proximate and ultimate source of the persecution of the righteous, rather than Satan and demons.

¹⁵⁷ Gibson 2003, 154.

Second Clement

Traditionally listed in the Apostolic Fathers, 2 Clement is now recognized as a pseudepigraphal work of the mid-second century at earliest. There is one use of *diabolos* in 2 Clement, a reference to “the tools of the devil” (18.2). Although this appears to be a natural reference to a supernatural evil being, the preceding text (17.4–7) presents an ethical dualism in an eschatological context, without any reference to supernatural evil.

This eschatological commentary uses material from Isa 66:18, 24; Matt 3:12; 13:37–43; 25:31–46; Mark 9:43, 48; and Luke 3:17, but there is no reference to the devil and his angels, despite the use of Matt 25:31–46. This is not evidence that the writer did not believe in a supernatural devil with attendant fallen angels, but the absence is remarkable if he did. Similarly, when the writer speaks of the pagan worship he followed prior to conversion to Christianity, he speaks of worshipping idols as the handwork of men, not worshipping idols behind which were demons (1.6).

This is significant, given that later Christian commentators from at least Justin Martyr onwards would claim the idols were actually dangerous tools of the demons which inherited them (*1 Apol.* 9).¹⁵⁸ The writer of 2 Clement shows no knowledge of such ideas; he wishes his audience to know that idols are merely the “works of men” (1.6), and there is no reference anywhere in 2 Clement to fallen angels, demons, or evil spirits.

Likewise, the writer's etiology of sin is grounded in a non-supernatural “two ways” ethical and psychological dualism which is thoroughly anthropogenic; temptation and sin are products of the human heart, and humans are the only external tempters referred to; in particular 6.1–4;¹⁵⁹ 10:1–5; 11:1–5,¹⁶⁰ especially the advice about self-discipline and controlling one's flesh and spirit in 14–15.¹⁶¹ Numerous passages of Scripture are cited on this theme, but no passages containing any reference to Satan or demons. What is also remarkable is that as in 1 Clement, there is no use in 2 Clement of *satanas* as a proper name; instead there is simply one use of *ho diabolos* in 2 Clem. 18.2, which reads naturally as a referent to non-supernatural opposition.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Williams 2009, 148.

¹⁵⁹ Matt 6:24; 16:26; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25; 16:13; 2 Pet 1:4; 2:12, 19 are all cited.

¹⁶⁰ Num 30:15; Matt 5:8; 1 Tim 1:5; 2 Tim 2:22; Jas 1:8; 2 Pet 1:19; 2:8 are all cited.

¹⁶¹ Gen 1:27; Ps 72:5; Isa 58:9; Jer 7:11; Matt 12:18; 21:12; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46; Jas 5:20 are all cited.

¹⁶² Tuckett 2012, 289.

To summarize the evidence in 2 Clement, the writer exhibits a theology which is consistently at odds with that of the second century Apologists, treats temptation and sin using a non-supernatural “two ways” psychological and ethical dualism, uses eschatological material from Matthew which he has stripped of its references to “the devil and his angels,” describes idols as inert “works of men” rather than conduits of demons, and makes no reference at all to demons, possession, or exorcism. The text contains demythologized terminology and an anthropogenic etiology of sin. The writer shows no interest in warning his audience of the danger of supernatural evil forces, but does show considerable concern with psychological dualism. On the basis of its theological similarity to 1 Clement and complete contrast with the apologists, it very likely originated within the same Christian community as the earlier letter.

Comparison with Proximate Texts

The distinctive treatment of evil in the texts of the Apostolic Fathers under examination in this study becomes more apparent when they are compared with proximate Jewish and Christian texts written both before and after them. Texts presented here for the purpose of this comparison have been selected because they contain detailed treatments of evil and sin, and because they are chronologically very close to the texts examined by this study.

Earlier Jewish, Christian, and composite Jewish-Christian texts such as Jubilees, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Books of Enoch,¹⁶³ and the Qumran Book of Giants and Genesis Apocryphon (some of which influenced early Christianity) not only contain an Enochic etiology of sin but also repeatedly use a variety of personal names for a satan figure, fallen angels (or their offspring), or demons (such as Shemihazah, Azazel, Sammael, Mastema, Ohyah, Hahyah, Mahaway, Gilgamesh, Hobabish, Ahiram, and Belial).¹⁶⁴ An angelic rebellion or fall into sin is also present in these earlier Enochic texts.¹⁶⁵ Yet the writings of the Apostolic Fathers examined in this study are markedly different from these texts; they never

¹⁶³ Including the Book of the Watchers, Book of Dreams, Astronomical Book, and the Epistle of Enoch.

¹⁶⁴ Laato 2013, 4.

¹⁶⁵ Reed 2005, 82, 96.

mention any of these names for satan, fallen angels, or demons, nor do they ever refer to an angelic rebellion or fall.

The texts examined in this study also show distinct differences in comparison with other texts in the Apostolic Fathers, especially the Epistles of Barnabas and the epistles of Ignatius. Written between 70 CE and 135 CE, with an early second-century date typically preferred, the Epistle of Barnabas presents clear evidence of strong mythological belief, drawing on an earlier Jewish textual source.¹⁶⁶ Though *diabolos* is never used and *satanas* is used only once, it is used explicitly of a supernatural evil referent accompanied by his own angels and presented as God's opponent (18.1); the satan's angels are incorporated into an etiology of sin (18.1–2), though neither demons nor exorcism are mentioned.

Barnabas also refers to this satanic figure as “the Worker [of evil]” (2.3), “the evil one” (2.10; 19.11; 21.3), “evil ruler” or “prince of evil” (4.13), “the lawless one” (15.5), and “the black one” (20.1), describing him as currently in power (2.1; 15.5; 18.2), and as an eschatological enemy of Christ, who will destroy him at his return (15.5). This satan is the primary explanatory recourse for Barnabas' etiology of evil and sin (2.1; 4.9; 15.5), and features in his eschatology (15.5). Barnabas clearly wishes his audience to think of evil and sin in mythological terms.

Typically dated between 110 and 117 CE, seven epistles of Ignatius are recognized as genuine,¹⁶⁷ with the “middle recension” (quoted by Eusebius), considered the most reliable.¹⁶⁸ Ignatius uses the satanological terms “ruler of this age” (Ign. *Eph.* 17.1; 19.1; *Magn.* 1.1; *Trall.* 4.2; *Rom.* 7.1; *Phld.* 6.2), “satan” (Ign. *Eph.* 13.1), and “the devil” (Ign. *Eph.* 10.3; *Trall.* 8.1; *Rom.* 5.3, *Smyrn.* 9.1).

Ignatius treats the *diabolos* as a supernatural evil being. In Ign. *Eph.* 19.1 he speaks of the birth of Jesus being concealed from the devil, and whilst this could be read as a reference to a human ruler (such as Herod, who was unaware of Jesus' birth until informed by the wise men from the east), it would not explain why Ignatius speaks of the devil also being ignorant of Mary's virginity, a passage which seems to indicate Ignatius' struggle to explain the devil's involvement in Christ's death (Ign. *Eph.* 9), despite the fact that this would result in the devil's own destruction. Schoedel discusses two attempts by early Christians to solve this problem,

¹⁶⁶ Flusser 2009, 233.

¹⁶⁷ Russell 1987, 34.

¹⁶⁸ Holmes 1999, 132.

and suggests Ignatius' prefers the view that "[t]he powers did not know with whom they were dealing when they persecuted Jesus since he eluded detection when he descended through the heavens."¹⁶⁹

Such a reading would also fail to explain Ignatius' warning against "the teaching of the ruler of this age" in Ign. *Eph.* 17.1. Likewise, when Ignatius speaks of his fear that Christians would be deceived into attempting to prevent his martyrdom (Ign. *Rom.* 3:1; 5:3; 7:1), it makes little sense to attribute this deception to a human adversary; "Ignatius has the devil in mind."¹⁷⁰

Ignatius exhibits a strong dualistic warfare between the church and the devil at the individual and corporate level (Ign. *Eph.* 13.2). He exhorts the Romans not to take the side of the "ruler of this age" (Ign. *Rom.* 7.1), and counsels the Ephesians that their frequent congregational meeting thwarts the devil's schemes (Ign. *Eph.* 13.1). This is a further indication that his understanding of the devil is of a supernatural opponent rather than an internal struggle against personal impulses to evil which would indicate a non-mythological perspective.

Ignatius has frequent recourse to the devil or "ruler of this age" in his etiology of evil and sin (Ign. *Phld.* 6.2; *Magn.* 1.2; *Rom.* 5.3), and his description of the way of salvation (Ign. *Eph.* 17.1). His consistent use of the devil as an explanation for all forms of evil and wrongdoing illustrates its importance to his theology, and reinforces the conclusion that for him the devil is a supernatural evil being rather than a personification of sin or sinful impulse. Rather, Ignatius seemingly takes every opportunity to emphasize the satanic and mythological nature of temptation and sin, including a reference to the occult practice of the "evil eye."¹⁷¹

Curiously, Ignatius makes no mention of demons or exorcism, though his attribution to Jesus of the saying "Take, handle me, and see that I am not a bodiless demon" are thought to indicate an existing tradition of belief in demons as bodiless spirits.¹⁷² This is further evidence that Ignatius held to an Enochic etiology of sin.

The Epistle of Barnabas and the epistles of Ignatius demonstrate how the writers of Didache, 1 Clement, Shepherd of Hermas, Martyrdom of Polycarp, and 2 Clement could have communicated to their audience a

¹⁶⁹ Schoedel 1985, 89.

¹⁷⁰ Schoedel 1985, 180.

¹⁷¹ Schoedel 1985, 184.

¹⁷² Schoedel 1985, 226.

Satanic etiology of evil in terms which obviously had currency within the Christian community at the time. Yet the treatment of evil in these texts differs significantly from the treatment found in Barnabas and Ignatius, even to the point of avoiding or demythologizing satanological terminology which both Barnabas and Ignatius use.

The texts analyzed in this study show even greater theological distance from the writings of the mid- to late-second-century apologists who introduced new satanological ideas.¹⁷³ Justin Martyr was the first to identify the serpent of Genesis 3 as Satan (*Dial.* 79),¹⁷⁴ a novelty which was adopted by other second-century apologists.¹⁷⁵ Justin also introduced an explicitly Enochic etiology of evil (borrowed from Jewish apocryphal writings),¹⁷⁶ in which fallen angels are the origin of evil and sin.

Such borrowing was not unique to Justin; Russell documents how the second-century apologists imported satanological concepts from apocryphal Jewish and Christian texts, even while they opposed their authors.¹⁷⁷ More theological innovation soon followed. Theophilus of Antioch not only identified Satan as a demon and as responsible for the fall of Adam and Eve, but also described demons as the source of temptation and sin.¹⁷⁸ Tatian likewise drew his demonology from a belief in the rebellion of Satan, and developed further the concept of demons seeking to deceive and entrap Christians.¹⁷⁹

The *Didache*, 1 Clement, Shepherd of Hermas, Martyrdom of Polycarp, and 2 Clement not only show no evidence of such beliefs, they also show evidence of reinforcing an Adamic etiology of sin and demythologization of satanological terminology, differentiating them from the clearly Enochic etiology of later second century writings, and identifying them as belonging to an earlier Christian tradition.

Two other texts of the Apostolic Fathers warrant mention. The extant fragment of Quadratus (early second century), contains no satanological terminology at all, and people are said to have been “healed of their diseases” and “healed,” without any reference to demon possession or illness resulting from affliction by Satan or demons; the text itself is completely

¹⁷³ Carr 2005, 152.

¹⁷⁴ Kelly 2014, 24; De La Torre 2011, 70.

¹⁷⁵ Kelly 2006, 177.

¹⁷⁶ Russell 1987, 64; Carr 2005, 150.

¹⁷⁷ Russell 1987, 62.

¹⁷⁸ Rogers 2000, 68.

¹⁷⁹ Carr 2005, 161.

non-mythological. This is remarkable for a text written during an era in which Christian demonology had become well developed and demonic possession was a common etiology of illness. The Epistle to Diognetus (late second century), similarly contains no satanological terminology,¹⁸⁰ has an Adamic etiology of sin,¹⁸¹ cites the serpent in Eden without identifying it with Satan,¹⁸² and notably describes the gods and idols of the heathen as dead, without any reference to demonic beings behind them (completely contrary to his contemporaries).¹⁸³

Brief as they are, these two writings nevertheless exhibit signs of an Adamic etiology of sin and non-mythological etiology of illness, whilst containing no satanological terminology at all. This differentiates them significantly from most of their contemporaries, whilst identifying them closely with the texts of the Apostolic Fathers under examination here, and provides evidence complementing (if not directly in support of) the argument made in his study.

Conclusion

The writers of the *Didache*, 1 Clement, *Shepherd of Hermas*, *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, and 2 Clement consistently identify humans as the origin and cause of evil, rather than Satan or demons. Showing no interest in demons, possession, or exorcism, they exhibit a strong concern with ethical and psychological dualism, and recommend that evil impulses be overcome with internal self-control supplemented by prayer and good thoughts. These texts show a distinct marginalization or even demythologization of satanological terminology, differentiating them sharply from Christian texts immediately proximate or written shortly after. In Second Temple Period literature, use of such language to speak of sin and evil is associated strongly with non-belief in Satan and demons. This should also be considered as an efficient explanation for the content of these texts in the Apostolic Fathers.

However, regardless of whether the writers of these texts personally believed in a supernatural Satan and demons, it is necessary to explain why

¹⁸⁰ Edwards 2012, 62.

¹⁸¹ Jefford 2013, 68.

¹⁸² Jefford 2013, 102; Russell 1987, 46.

¹⁸³ Ehrman 2003, 126; Jenott 2011, 50; Richardson 1995, 215.

they do not demonstrate the same concern with supernatural evil beings which is found in the writings of their contemporaries.

The content of the texts analyzed in this study suggests that even if these writers were modifying their language for the benefit of their audience, they did so because their audience either did not believe in such beings or considered them of negligible theological or practical importance.

This study makes three contributions. One is a synthesis of the evidence for, and scholarly commentary on, a strong trend of Adamic etiology of sin within the Apostolic Fathers, as opposed to an Enochic etiology which attributed sin to supernatural evil forces. A second is the evidence it presents for a first century demythological Christianity which survived well into the second century, though only as a minority report. A third is a systematic application of lexicographical and etiological analysis to early Christian satanology, which should be of interest to other researchers in this field.

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