

Jesus' followers did not invent the practice of demonizing enemies within their own group. In this respect, as in many others, as we shall see, they drew upon traditions they shared with other first-century Jewish sects. The Essenes, for example, had developed and elaborated images of an evil power they called by many names—Satan, Belial, Beelzebub, Mastema ("hatred")—precisely to characterize their own struggle against a Jewish majority whom they, for reasons different from those of Jesus' followers, denounced as apostate. The Essenes never admitted Gentiles to their movement. But the followers of Jesus did—cautiously and provisionally at first, and against the wishes of some members. But as the Christian movement became increasingly Gentile during the second century and later, the identification of Satan primarily with the Jewish enemies of Jesus, borne along in Christian tradition over the centuries, would fuel the fires of anti-Semitism.

The relationship between Jesus' followers and the rest of the Jewish community, however, especially during the first century, is anything but simple. Mark himself, like the Essenes, sees his movement essentially as a conflict within one "house"—as I read it, the house of Israel. Such religious reformers see their primary struggle not with foreigners, however ominously Roman power lurks in the background, but with other Jews who try to define the "people of God."⁴⁸ Yet while Mark sees the Jewish leaders as doing Satan's work in trying to destroy Jesus, his own account is by no means anti-Jewish, much less anti-Semitic. After all, virtually everyone who appears in the account is Jewish, including, of course, the Messiah. Mark does not see himself as separate from Israel, but depicts Jesus' followers as what Isaiah calls God's "remnant" *within Israel* (Isaiah 10:22–23). Even the images that Mark invokes to characterize the majority—images of Satan, Beelzebub, and the devil—paradoxically express the *intimacy* of Mark's relationship with the Jewish community as a whole, for, as we shall see, the figure of Satan, as it emerged over the centuries in Jewish tradition, is not a hostile power assailing Israel from without, but the source and representation of conflict *within* the community.

II

THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF SATAN: FROM THE HEBREW BIBLE TO THE GOSPELS

The conflict between Jesus' followers and their fellow Jews is not, of course, the first sectarian movement that divided the Jewish world, a world whose early history we know primarily from the Hebrew Bible, a collection of authoritative law, prophets, psalms, and other writings assembled centuries before the four gospels and other Christian writings were brought together in the New Testament. Who assembled this collection we do not know, but we may infer from its contents that it was compiled to constitute the religious history of the Jewish people, and so to create the basis for a unified society.¹

Excluded from the Hebrew Bible were writings of Jewish sectarians, apparently because such authors tended to identify with one group of Jews against another, rather than with Israel as a whole. Christians later came to call the writings of such dissidents from the main group the *apocrypha* (literally, "hidden things") and *pseudepigrapha* ("false writings").²

But the writings collected to form the Hebrew Bible encourage identification with Israel itself. According to the foundation story recounted in Genesis 12, Israel first received its identity through election, when "the Lord" suddenly revealed himself to Abraham, ordering him to leave his home country, his family, and his ancestral gods, and promising him, in exchange for exclusive loyalty, a new national heritage, with a new identity:

shall see, most often used them to characterize what they charged was the "fall into sin" of human beings—which usually meant the dominant majority of their Jewish contemporaries.

As Satan became an increasingly important and personified figure, stories about his origin proliferated. One group tells how one of the angels, himself high in the heavenly hierarchy, proved insubordinate to his commander in chief and so was thrown out of heaven, demoted, and disgraced, an echo of Isaiah's account of the fall of a great prince:

How are you fallen from heaven, day star, son of the dawn!
How are you fallen to earth, conqueror of the nations! You
said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven, above the stars of
God; I will set my throne on high . . . I will ascend upon the
high clouds. . . ." But you are brought down to darkness [or:
the underworld, *sheol*], to the depths of the pit (Isa.
14:12–15).

Nearly two and a half thousand years after Isaiah wrote, this luminous falling star, his name translated into Latin as Lucifer ("light-bearer") was transformed by Milton into the protagonist of *Paradise Lost*.

Far more influential in first-century Jewish and Christian circles, however, was a second group of apocryphal and pseud-epigraphic stories, which tell how lust drew the angelic "sons of God" down to earth. These stories derive from a cryptic account in Genesis 6, which says:

When men began to multiply on the earth, and daughters were
born to them, the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that
they were fair.

Some of these angels, transgressing the boundaries that the Lord had established between heaven and earth, mated with human women, and produced offspring who were half angel, half human. According to Genesis, these hybrids became "giants in the earth . . . the mighty men of renown" (Gen. 6:4). Other sto-

rytellers, probably writing later,²⁰ as we shall see, say that these monstrous offspring became demons, who took over the earth and polluted it.

Finally, an apocryphal version of the life of Adam and Eve gives a third account of angelic rebellion. In the beginning, God, having created Adam, called the angels together to admire his work and ordered them to bow down to their younger human sibling. Michael obeyed, but Satan refused, saying,

"Why do you press me? I will not worship one who is younger
than I am, and inferior. I am older than he is; he ought to wor-
ship me!" (*Vita Adae et Evae* 14:3).

Thus the problem of evil begins in sibling rivalry.²¹

At first glance these stories of Satan may seem to have little in common. Yet they all agree on one thing: that this greatest and most dangerous enemy did not originate, as one might expect, as an outsider, an alien, or a stranger. Satan is not the distant enemy but the intimate enemy—one's trusted colleague, close associate, brother. He is the kind of person on whose loyalty and goodwill the well-being of family and society depend—but one who turns unexpectedly jealous and hostile. Whichever version of his origin one chooses, then, and there are many, all depict Satan as an *intimate* enemy—the attribute that qualifies him so well to express conflict among Jewish groups. Those who asked, "How could God's own angel become his enemy?" were thus asking, in effect, "How could one of *us* become one of *them*?" Stories of Satan and other fallen angels proliferated in these troubled times, especially within those radical groups that had turned against the rest of the Jewish community and, consequently, concluded that others had turned against them—or (as they put it) against *God*.

One anonymous author who collected and elaborated stories about fallen angels during the Maccabean war was troubled by wartime divisions among Jewish communities. He addressed this divisiveness indirectly in the *Book of the Watchers*, one of the apocryphal books that would become famous and influential, especially among Christians, by introducing the idea of a division

"I will make you a great nation, and I will make your name great . . . and whoever blesses you I will bless; and whoever curses you I will curse" (Gen. 12:3).

So when God promises to make Abraham the father of a new, great, and blessed nation, he simultaneously defines and constitutes its enemies as inferior and potentially accursed.

From the beginning, then, Israelite tradition defines "us" in ethnic, political, and religious terms as "the people of Israel," or "the people of God," as against "them"—the (other) nations (in Hebrew, *ha goyim*), the alien enemies of Israel, often characterized as inferior, morally depraved, even potentially accursed. In Genesis 16:12, an angel predicts that Ishmael, although he was Abraham's son, the progenitor of the Arab people, would be a "wild ass of a man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him; and he shall live at odds with all his kin." The story implies that his descendants, too, are hostile, no better than animals. Genesis 19:37–38 adds that the Moabite and Ammonite nations are descended from Lot's daughters, which means that they are the illegitimate offspring of a drunken and incestuous union. The people of Sodom, although they are Abraham's allies, not his enemies, are said to be criminally depraved, "young and old, down to the last man," collectively guilty of attempting to commit homosexual rape against a party of angels, seen by the townspeople as defenseless Hebrew travelers (Gen. 19:4). These accounts do not idealize Abraham or his progeny—in fact, the biblical narrator twice tells how the self-serving lies of Abraham and Isaac endangered their allies (Gen. 20:1–18; 26:6–10). Nevertheless, God ensures that everything turns out well for the Israelites and badly for their enemies.

The second great foundation story is that of Moses and the Exodus, which also confronts "us" (that is, "Israel") with "them" (that is, "the nations") as Moses urges Pharaoh to let the Hebrews leave Egypt. Yet the narrator insists that it was God himself who increasingly hardened Pharaoh's heart, lest he relent and relieve the suffering of Moses and his own people—and why? God, speaking through Moses, threatens Pharaoh with devastat-

ing slaughter and concludes by declaring, "but against any of the Israelites, not a dog shall growl—so that you may know that the Lord makes a distinction between the Egyptians and Israel." (Exod. 11:7; my emphasis).

Many anthropologists have pointed out that the worldview of most peoples consists essentially of two pairs of binary oppositions: human/not human and we/they.³ Apart from anthropology, we know from experience how people dehumanize enemies, especially in wartime.

That Israel's traditions deprecate the nations, then, is no surprise. What is surprising is that there are exceptions. Hebrew tradition sometimes reveals a sense of universalism where one might least expect it. Even God's election of Abraham and his progeny includes the promise of a blessing to extend through them to all people, for that famous passage concludes with the words, "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). Furthermore, when a stranger appears alone, the Israelites typically accord him protection, precisely because they identify with the solitary and defenseless stranger. Biblical law identifies with the solitary alien: "You shall not wrong or oppress a stranger; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exod. 22:21). One of the earliest creeds of Israel recalls that Abraham himself, obeying God's command, became a solitary alien: "A wandering Aramean was my father . . ." (Deut. 26:5). Moses, too, was the quintessential alien, having been adopted as an infant by Pharaoh's daughter. Although a Hebrew, he was raised as an Egyptian; the family of his future in-laws, in fact, mistook him for an Egyptian when they first met him. He even named his first son Gershom ("a wanderer there"), saying, "I have been a wanderer in a foreign land" (Exod. 2:16–22).

Nevertheless, the Israelites are often aggressively hostile to the nations. The prophet Isaiah, writing in wartime, predicts that the Lord will drive the nations out "like locusts" before the Israelite armies (Isa. 40:22). This hostility to the alien enemy seems to have prevailed relatively unchallenged as long as Israel's empire was expanding and the Israelites were winning their wars against the nations. Psalms 18 and 41, attributed to King David, builder

of Israel's greatest empire, declare, "God gave me vengeance and subdued the nations under me" (Ps. 18:47), and "By this I know that God is pleased with me—in that my enemy has not triumphed over me" (Ps. 41:11).

Yet at certain points in Israel's history, especially in times of crisis, war, and danger, a vociferous minority spoke out, not against the alien tribes and foreign armies ranged against Israel, but to blame Israel's misfortunes upon members of its own people. Such critics, sometimes accusing Israel as a whole, and sometimes accusing certain rulers, claimed that Israel's disobedience to God had brought down divine punishment.

The party that called for Israel's allegiance to "the Lord alone," including such prophets as Amos (c. 750 B.C.E.), Isaiah (c. 730 B.C.E.), and Jeremiah (c. 600 B.C.E.), indicted especially those Israelites who adopted foreign ways, particularly the worship of foreign gods.⁴ Such prophets, along with their supporters, thought of Israel as a truly separate people, "holy to the Lord." The more radical prophets denounced those Israelites who tended toward assimilation as if they were as bad as the nations; only a remnant, they said, remained faithful to God.

Certain of these prophets, too, had called forth the monsters of Canaanite mythology to symbolize Israel's enemies.⁵ Later (sixth century) material now included in the first part of the book of the prophet Isaiah proclaims that "the Lord is coming to *punish the inhabitants of the earth*; and the earth will disclose the blood shed upon her, and will no more cover the slain" (Isa. 26:21; emphasis added). The same author goes on, apparently in parallel imagery, to warn that "in that day, the Lord with his great hand will *punish the Leviathan, the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea*" (Isa. 27:1; emphasis added). The author of the second part of Isaiah also celebrates God's triumph over traditional mythological figures—over Rahab, "the dragon," and "the sea"—as he proclaims God's imminent triumph over Israel's enemies. Thereby, as the biblical scholar Jon Levenson observes, "the enemies cease to be merely earthly powers . . . and become, instead or in addition, cosmic forces of the utmost malignancy."⁶

Certain writers of the sixth century B.C.E. took a bold step further. They used mythological imagery to characterize their struggle against some of their fellow Israelites. But when Israelite writers excoriated their fellow Jews in mythological terms, the images they chose were usually not the animalistic or monstrous ones they regularly applied to their foreign enemies. Instead of Rahab, Leviathan, or "the dragon," most often they identified their Jewish enemies with an exalted, if treacherous, member of the divine court whom they called the *satan*. The *satan* is not an animal or monster but one of God's angels, a being of superior intelligence and status; apparently the Israelites saw their intimate enemies not as beasts and monsters but as *superhuman* beings whose superior qualities and insider status could make them more dangerous than the alien enemy.

In the Hebrew Bible, as in mainstream Judaism to this day, Satan never appears as Western Christendom has come to know him, as the leader of an "evil empire," an army of hostile spirits who make war on God and humankind alike.⁷ As he first appears in the Hebrew Bible, Satan is not necessarily evil, much less opposed to God. On the contrary, he appears in the book of Numbers and in Job as one of God's obedient servants—a messenger, or *angel*, a word that translates the Hebrew term for messenger (*mal'āk*) into Greek (*angelos*). In Hebrew, the angels were often called "sons of God" (*benē 'elōhīm*), and were envisioned as the hierarchical ranks of a great army, or the staff of a royal court.

In biblical sources the Hebrew term the *satan* describes an adversarial role. It is not the name of a particular character.⁸ Although Hebrew storytellers as early as the sixth century B.C.E. occasionally introduced a supernatural character whom they called the *satan*, what they meant was any one of the angels sent by God for the specific purpose of blocking or obstructing human activity. The root *štn* means "one who opposes, obstructs, or acts as adversary." (The Greek term *diabolos*, later translated "devil," literally means "one who throws something across one's path.")

The *satan's* presence in a story could help account for unexpected obstacles or reversals of fortune. Hebrew storytellers

often attribute misfortunes to human sin. Some, however, also invoke this supernatural character, the *satan*, who, by God's own order or permission, blocks or opposes human plans and desires. But this messenger is not necessarily malevolent. God sends him, like the angel of death, to perform a specific task, although one that human beings may not appreciate; as the literary scholar Neil Forsyth says of the *satan*, "If the path is bad, an obstruction is good."⁹ Thus the *satan* may simply have been sent by the Lord to protect a person from worse harm. The story of Balaam in the biblical book of Numbers, for example, tells of a man who decided to go where God had ordered him not to go. Balaam saddled his ass and set off, "but God's anger was kindled because he went; and the angel of the Lord took his stand in the road as his *satan*" [*le-sāṭān-lō*]—that is, as his adversary, or his obstructor. This supernatural messenger remained invisible to Balaam, but the ass saw him and stopped in her tracks:

And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand; and the ass turned aside out of the road, and went into the field; and Balaam struck the ass, to turn her onto the road. Then the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on each side. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she pushed against the wall, so he struck her again (22:23–25).

The third time the ass saw the obstructing angel, she stopped and lay down under Balaam, "and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the ass with his staff." Then, the story continues,

the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me three times?" And Balaam said to the ass, "Because you have made a fool of me. I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you." And the ass said to Balaam, "Am I not your ass, that you have ridden all your life to this very day? Did I ever do such things to you?" And he said, "No" (22:28–30).

Then "the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand, and he bowed his head, and fell on his face." Then the *satan* rebukes Balaam, and speaks for his master, the Lord:

"Why have you struck your ass three times? Behold, I came here to oppose you, because your way is evil in my eyes; and the ass saw me. . . . If she had not turned away from me, I would surely have killed you right then, and let her live" (22:31–33).

Chastened by this terrifying vision, Balaam agrees to do what God, speaking through his *satan*, commands.

The book of Job, too, describes the *satan* as a supernatural messenger, a member of God's royal court.¹⁰ But while Balaam's *satan* protects him from harm, Job's *satan* takes a more adversarial role. Here the Lord himself admits that the *satan* incited him to act *against* Job (2:3). The story begins when the *satan* appears as an angel, a "son of God" (*ben 'elōhīm*), a term that, in Hebrew idiom, often means "one of the divine beings." Here this angel, the *satan*, comes with the rest of the heavenly host on the day appointed for them to "present themselves before the Lord." When the Lord asks whence he comes, the *satan* answers, "From roaming on the earth, and walking up and down on it." Here the storyteller plays on the similarity between the sound of the Hebrew *satan* and *shūt*, the Hebrew word "to roam," suggesting that the *satan*'s special role in the heavenly court is that of a kind of roving intelligence agent, like those whom many Jews of the time would have known—and detested—from the king of Persia's elaborate system of secret police and intelligence officers. Known as "the king's eye" or "the king's ear," these agents roamed the empire looking for signs of disloyalty among the people.¹¹

God boasts to the *satan* about one of his most loyal subjects: "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is no one like him on earth, a blessed and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" The *satan* then challenges the Lord to put Job to the test:

"Does Job fear God for nothing? . . . You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased. But put forth your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face" (1:9-11).

The Lord agrees to test Job, authorizing the *satan* to afflict Job with devastating loss, but defining precisely how far he may go: "Behold, all that belongs to him is in your power; only do not touch the man himself." Job withstands the first deadly onslaught, the sudden loss of his sons and daughters in a single accident, the slaughter of his cattle, sheep, and camels, and the loss of all his wealth and property. When the *satan* appears again among the sons of God on the appointed day, the Lord points out that "Job still holds fast to his integrity, although you incited me against him, to harm him without cause." Then the *satan* asks that he increase the pressure:

"Skin for skin. All that a man has he will give for his life. But put forth your hand now, and touch his flesh and his bone, and he will curse you to your face." And the Lord said to the *satan*, "Behold, he is in your power; only spare his life" (2:4-6).

According to the folktale, Job withstands the test, the *satan* retreats, and "the Lord restored the fortunes of Job . . . and he gave him twice as much as he had before" (42:10). Here the *satan* terrifies and harms a person but, like the angel of death, remains an angel, a member of the heavenly court, God's obedient servant.

Around the time Job was written (c. 550 B.C.E.), however, other biblical writers invoked the *satan* to account for division within Israel.¹² One court historian slips the *satan* into an account concerning the origin of census taking, which King David introduced into Israel c. 1000 B.C.E. for the purpose of instituting taxation. David's introduction of taxation aroused vehement and immediate opposition—opposition that began among the very army commanders ordered to carry it out. Joab, David's chief officer, objected, and warned the king that what he was propos-

ing to do was evil. The other army commanders at first refused to obey, nearly precipitating a revolt; but finding the king adamant, the officers finally obeyed and "numbered the people."

Why had David committed what one chronicler who recalls the story regards as an evil, aggressive act "against Israel"? Unable to deny that the offending order came from the king himself, but intent on condemning David's action without condemning the king directly, the author of 1 Chronicles suggests that a supernatural adversary within the divine court had managed to infiltrate the royal house and lead the king himself into sin: "The *satan* stood up against Israel, and incited David to number the people" (1 Chron. 21:1). But although an angelic power incited David to commit this otherwise inexplicable act, the chronicler insists that the king was nevertheless personally responsible—and guilty. "God was displeased with this thing, and he smote Israel." Even after David abased himself and confessed his sin, the angry Lord punished him by sending an avenging angel to destroy seventy thousand Israelites with a plague; and the Lord was barely restrained from destroying the city of Jerusalem itself.

Here the *satan* is invoked to account for the division and destruction that King David's order aroused within Israel.¹³ Not long before the chronicler wrote, the prophet Zechariah had depicted the *satan* inciting factions among the people. Zechariah's account reflects conflicts that arose within Israel after thousands of Jews—many of them influential and educated—whom the Babylonians had captured in war (c. 687 B.C.E.) and exiled to Babylon, returned to Palestine from exile. Cyrus, king of Persia, having recently conquered Babylon, not only allowed these Jewish exiles to go home but intended to make them his allies. Thus he offered them funds to reconstruct Jerusalem's defensive city walls, and to rebuild the great Temple, which the Babylonians had destroyed. Those returning were eager to reestablish the worship of "the Lord alone" in their land, and they naturally expected to reestablish themselves as rulers of their people.

They were not warmly welcomed by those whom they had left behind. Many of those who had remained saw the former

exiles not only as agents of the Persian king but as determined to retrieve the power and land they had been forced to relinquish when they were deported. Many resented the returnees' plan to take charge of the priestly offices and to "purify" the Lord's worship.

As the biblical scholar Paul Hanson notes, the line that had once divided the Israelites from their enemies had separated them from foreigners. Now the line separated two groups *within Israel*:

Now, according to the people who remained, their beloved land was controlled by the enemy, and although that enemy in fact comprised fellow Israelites, yet they regarded these brethren as essentially no different from Canaanites.¹⁴

The prophet Zechariah sides with the returning exiles in this heated conflict and recounts a vision in which the *satan* speaks for the rural inhabitants who accuse the returning high priest of being a worthless candidate:

The Lord showed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and the *satan* standing at his right hand to accuse him. The Lord said to the *satan*, "The Lord rebuke you, O *satan*! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you" (Zech. 3:1-2).

Here the *satan* speaks for a disaffected—and unsuccessful—party against another party of fellow Israelites. In Zechariah's account of factions within Israel, the *satan* takes on a sinister quality, as he had done in the story of David's census, and his role begins to change from that of God's agent to that of his opponent. Although these biblical stories reflect divisions within Israel, they are not yet sectarian, for their authors still identify with Israel as a whole.

Some four centuries later in 168 B.C.E., when Jews regained their independence from their Seleucid rulers, descendants of Alexander the Great, internal conflicts became even more

acute.¹⁵ For centuries, Jews had been pressured to assimilate to the ways of the foreign nations that successively had ruled their land—the Babylonians, then the Persians, and, after 323 B.C.E., the Hellenistic dynasty established by Alexander. As the first book of Maccabees tells the story, these pressures reached a breaking point in 168 B.C.E., when the Seleucid ruler, the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes, suspecting resistance to his rule, decided to eradicate every trace of the Jews' peculiar and "barbaric" culture. First he outlawed circumcision, along with study and observance of Torah. Then he stormed the Jerusalem Temple and desecrated it by rededicating it to the Greek god Olympian Zeus. To enforce submission to his new regime, the king built and garrisoned a massive new fortress overlooking the Jerusalem Temple itself.

Jewish resistance to these harsh decrees soon flared into a widespread revolt, which began, according to tradition, when a company of the king's troops descended upon the village of Modein to force the inhabitants to bow down to foreign gods. The old village priest Mattathias rose up and killed a Jew who was about to obey the Syrian king's command. Then he killed the king's commissioner and fled with his sons to the hills—an act of defiance that precipitated the revolt led by Mattathias's son Judas Maccabeus.¹⁶

As told in 1 Maccabees, this famous story shows how those Israelites determined to resist the foreign king's orders and retain their ancestral traditions battled on two fronts at once—not only against the foreign occupiers, but against those Jews who inclined toward accommodation with the foreigners, and toward assimilation. Recently the historian Victor Tcherikover and others have told a more complex version of that history. According to Tcherikover, many Jews, especially among the upper classes, actually favored Antiochus's "reform" and wanted to participate fully in the privileges of Hellenistic society available only to Greek citizens.¹⁷ By giving up their tribal ways and gaining for Jerusalem the prerogatives of a Greek city, they would win the right to govern the city themselves, to strike their own coins, and to increase commerce with a worldwide network of other Greek

cities. They could participate in such cultural projects as the Olympic games with allied cities and gain the advantages of mutual defense treaties. Many wanted their sons to have a Greek education. Besides reading Greek literature, from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to Sophocles, Plato, and Aristotle, and participating in public athletic competitions, as Greeks did, they could advance themselves in the wider cosmopolitan world.

But many other Jews, perhaps the majority of the population of Jerusalem and the countryside—tradespeople, artisans, and farmers—detested these “Hellenizing Jews” as traitors to God and Israel alike. The revolt ignited by old Mattathias encouraged people to resist Antiochus’s orders, even at the risk of death, and oust the foreign rulers. After intense fighting, the Jewish armies finally won a decisive victory. They celebrated by purifying and rededicating the Temple in a ceremony commemorated, ever since, at the annual festival of Hanukkah.

Jews resumed control of the Temple, the priesthood, and the government; but after the foreigners had retreated, internal conflicts remained, especially over who would control these institutions. These divisions now intensified, as the more rigorously separatist party dominated by the Maccabees opposed the Hellenizing party. The former, having won the war, had the upper hand.

Ten to twenty years after the revolt began, the influential Hasmonean family gained control of the high priesthood in what was now essentially a theocratic state. Although originally identified with their Maccabean ancestors, successive generations of the family abandoned the austere habits of their predecessors. Two generations after the Maccabean victory, the party of Pharisees, advocating increased religious rigor, challenged the Hasmonians. According to Tcherikover’s analysis, the Pharisees, backed by tradespeople and farmers, despised the Hasmonians as having become essentially secular rulers who had abandoned Israel’s ancestral ways. The Pharisees demanded that the Hasmonians relinquish the high priesthood to those who deserved it—people like themselves, who strove to live according to religious law.¹⁸

During the following decades, other, more radical dissident groups joined the Pharisees in denouncing the great high priestly family and its allies. Such groups were anything but uniform: they were fractious and diverse, and with the passage of time included various groups of Essenes, the monastic community at Kîrbet Qûmran, as well as their allies in the towns, and the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. What these groups shared was their opposition to the high priest and his allies and to the Temple, which they controlled.

The majority of Jews, including the Pharisees, still defined themselves in traditional terms, as “Israel against ‘the nations.’” But those who joined marginal or more extreme groups like the Essenes, bent on separating Israel radically from foreign influence, came to treat that traditional identification as a matter of secondary importance. What mattered primarily, these rigorists claimed, was not whether one was Jewish—this they took for granted—but rather “which of us [Jews] really are on God’s side” and which had “walked in the ways of the nations,” that is, adopted foreign cultural and commercial practices. The separatists found ammunition in biblical passages that invoke terrifying curses upon people who violate God’s covenant, and in prophetic passages that warn that only a “righteous remnant” in Israel will remain faithful to God.

More radical than their predecessors, these dissidents began increasingly to invoke the *satán* to characterize their Jewish opponents; in the process they turned this rather unpleasant angel into a far grander—and far more malevolent—figure. No longer one of God’s faithful servants, he begins to become what he is for Mark and for later Christianity—God’s antagonist, his enemy, even his rival.¹⁹ Such sectarians, contending less against “the nations” than against other Jews, denounce their opponents as apostate and accuse them of having been seduced by the power of evil, whom they call by many names—Satan, Beelzebub, Semihazah, Azazel, Belial, Prince of Darkness. These dissidents also borrowed stories, and wrote their own, telling how such angelic powers, swollen with lust or arrogance, fell from heaven into sin. Those who first elaborated such stories, as we