

Is There a SUPERNATURAL DEVIL?

**AN EXAMINATION OF ARGUMENTS
COMMONLY OFFERED
AGAINST
A SPIRIT DEVIL AND DEMONS**

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1 Language and Personification

Those who believe there is no invisible personal Devil explain “Satan” and “Devil” by reference to the basic meaning of the words, “resister (satan)” and “slanderer (devil).” Sometimes Satan (or the Devil) is understood as sinful human nature, the sinful propensity within a person. We will call this an ‘internal’ use because Satan is viewed as if it were inside a person.

In other cases Satan is understood to be a particular (human) resister, perhaps an individual or even an organization. In this study we call this an ‘external’ use when Satan is thought to refer to the whole person rather than to something ‘internal.’

Satan the Devil is certainly spoken of in a very *personal* way in Scripture. Those who deny an invisible personal Devil explain this by saying that in the internal cases sin nature is merely a personification, not actually a person, while in the external cases the satans were persons but never an invisible fallen angel.

1.1 Internal or External?

We will examine firstly whether Satan is the internal opposer, sin in the flesh. There is not a single example in the Hebrew-Aramaic Scriptures (the ‘Old Testament’) of an internal satan. Christadelphian J. Burke makes the following comment.

“Whilst it is true that the ‘satans’ of the Old Testament are all external, it is also clear that there is no one single ‘satan’ referred to consistently in the Old Testament.”- “Satan and Demons: A reply to criticism of the Christadelphian position (part 1)”

Note the concession that *every* ‘Old Testament’ satan is external, not internal.

Revelation 12:9 says (the) Satan the Devil was present in the Genesis Garden of Eden account. It calls Satan “that *old* [ancient] serpent.” The serpent in Eden was clearly not Eve’s sin nature. It was something that spoke from outside, a personality who spoke and reasoned subtly with her. Likewise, the ‘satans’ of the Hebrew Scriptures at Numbers 22:22 (an angel); 1 Samuel 29:4 (David); 2 Samuel 19:22 (the sons of Zeruiah); 1 Kings 5:4 (a human opposer); 11:14 (Hadad the Edomite), 23 (Rezon), 25 (Rezon); 1 Chronicles 21:1 (a person, either a human or God); Job 1:6-9 (a person), 12 (a person); 2:1-4 (a person), 6 (a person); Psalm 109:6 (a human opposer); Zechariah 3:1, 2 (a person) were without exception individuals, *persons*, ‘satans’ in an external sense and never as the sin principle. Wicked Haman is called *diabolos*, ‘devil,’ in the Greek *Septuagint* at Esther 7:4 and again the devil in his case is a *person*, not an internal sin nature. We will consider this text again later. The same is true in the Christian Scriptures (the ‘New Testament’). And yes, as Burke says, they were different satans in each case.

To say that “Satan” in the Christian Scriptures simply means the internal human sin propensity is to ignore the background testimony of the Hebrew Scriptures, which teach consistently that Satan is an external person, not any personification of sin. It was not in the Jewish or Christian mind-set based on Scripture to conceive of a *satan* that was internal. It is therefore surprising that anyone should propose that the Devil of Matthew chapter 4, for example, is internal sin nature. The very notion imposes an alien idea upon Scripture.

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At Matthew 16:23; Mark 1:13; 4:15; 8:33; Luke 8:5, 12; Revelation 12:9 all would likely agree that Satan (or “the Devil”) is external. For example, in the parable of the sower “the fowls of the air” ate the seed that fell by the road. Explaining, Jesus says “then *cometh* the devil, and *taketh away* the word.” (Lu 8:5, 12; cp. Mr 4:15) Jesus gives no suggestion that the birds represent the sin nature that already exists within a person. Rather, the Devil is someone coming from outside and taking something away.

It is true that there are texts in the Christian Scriptures that some might apply to an internal Satan. Examples might be Lu 13:16; 22:3, 31; John 13:27; Acts 5:3; 26:18; Romans 16:20; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 7:5; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; 1 Timothy 1:20; 5:15; Revelation 2:9, 13, 24; 3:9; 20:2, 7. What can we say of these texts? This first, that each of them could just as easily be understood of a personal, invisible Satan. Not one of them can be *proven* to be an internal Satan. Those who explain them that way must still account for the fact that *all* Hebrew-Aramaic Scripture satans were external and then explain why we should understand the matter differently in the Christian Scriptures.

Wherever *satan* is used without the definite article (“the”) in reference to individuals other than a spirit Satan, it is made perfectly clear to whom they refer. (Mt 16:23; Joh 6:70, 71) This also true of *diabolos* at 1 Timothy 3:11; 2 Timothy 3:3; Titus 2:3. But it is always true that they refer to a person, not to some internal tendency.

1.2 Personification?

Consider now the question of whether the very personal descriptions of “the Satan” might only be personifications. Of course, inanimate things are sometimes personified in the Scriptures, sin, death, wisdom and the holy spirit being examples. However, they are usually presented impersonally. Personification for these is exceptional, not the norm.

The reverse is true of (“the”) Satan the Devil. Satan is usually presented as a person; it is the norm for him. The personal presentation of Satan is as widespread as of any real person. To cite but a few examples: He has authority (Ac 26:18), tempts (Mt 4:1; 1Co 7:5), has designs (2Co 2:11), is able to misrepresent himself and have ministers who are themselves real persons who do likewise (2Co 11:14), is able to dwell more specifically in one place than another (Re 2:13), misleads (Re 12:9; 20:8), gets angry (Re 12:12), is a father with desires, was once in the truth (Joh 8:44), was a murderer and the father of the lie (and so was responsible for the serpent’s original lie) before sin existed in any human (Joh 8:44), is crafty (Eph 6:11), is not blood and flesh (Eph 6:11, 12), is able to flee (Jas 4:7), can sin and perform works (1Jo 3:8), has a will of his own (2Ti 2:26), delegates authority (Mt 4:9; Re 13:2), is the ruler of the world (Joh 13:31; 14:30; 16:11) and its god. - 2Co 4:4.

Any one of these, or even several, might be explained as personifications, but all of them? The Bible’s presentation of Satan the Devil as a person is widespread and overwhelming. This is not the case with things that are personified, like sin, death, wisdom or the holy spirit. For them, personification is exceptional. For Satan the Devil it is not.

The Jews of Jesus' day believed in a *personal* Satan, or Devil, and demons. Christadelphian writer Robert Roberts, for example, acknowledges that it was

“the notion universal in the world at that time, that madness was due to the presence of malignant *beings* [emphasis ours].” - *Nazareth Revisited*, page 155.

As Jesus, his apostles and other Bible writers referred to Satan the Devil or demons there is no record that they made any attempt to correct the “universal” belief as if it were incorrect. But today, at a time when belief in a personal Satan is also common, Christadelphians who deny a personal Devil almost always move immediately into a refutation presentation whenever the subject arises.

When Jesus spoke about the Devil or demons, he accepted the common language of the day *without redefining its meaning or arguing it down*. This is significant. He and his disciples would hardly fail to deny belief in an invisible personal Devil or at least to clarify what Satan and the Devil really were if the common beliefs were not true.

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2 Is the Devil Sin Nature?

Most often the argument against a personal Devil begins from Hebrews 2:14 so we will examine this text first. We have highlighted some key points that will be discussed.

“5. For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.

6. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?

7. Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:

8. Thou hast put **all things** [*panta*] in subjection under his feet. For in that **he** [God] **put all** [*panta*] **in subjection under him**, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now **we see not yet all things put under him**.

9. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, **crowned with glory and honour**; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

10. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

11. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

12. Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

13. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

14. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of **flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;**

15. And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

16. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

17. Wherefore **in all things** [*panta*] **it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren**, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

18. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” - He 2:5-18.

The no-personal-Devil argument is that Jesus became like his spiritual brothers *in all respects*, including the possession of a “Devil,” a sin nature, and that in dying he annihilated the Devil within himself. This Devil is thus explained to be *within* Jesus, internal to himself, rather than a separate external person. The writer of Hebrews was

likely Paul. Does he mean that Jesus was like his brothers in absolutely all things? Need this include sin nature?

2.1 “Blood and Flesh” and Sin Nature

Let us examine the passage closely. From Hebrews 2:5, Paul’s focus switches from a *contrast* between the Son of God and angels (He 1:5–2:9) to *similarities* between the Son and his followers on earth. (He 2:10-18) Among the similarities, Christians are his “brothers” and “sharers of blood and flesh.” - He 2:11, 12, 14.

Christadelphians propose that to share “blood and flesh” with those brothers Jesus had to share their sin nature. Otherwise, he would not have been like them “in *all* respects.” (He 2:17) However, the context offers no definition of “blood and flesh” that necessarily includes sin, nor does the wider Scriptural context. The text merely says Christ’s disciples are “sharers of blood and flesh” and that Christ partook of these elements. The “spirit” of angels (He 1:14) is contrasted with the “blood and flesh” of Christ and his brothers. The contrast should not be missed because it suggests that “blood and flesh” is the opposite of “spirit.” This can be confirmed by studying other occurrences of “blood and flesh” (“or, “flesh and blood”) in the Christian Scriptures.

For example, at Ephesians 6:12 “blood and flesh” is *contrasted* with spirit, this time “wicked spirit forces.” The meaning of “wicked spirit forces” may be debated, but there is no evidence that “blood and flesh” here means the sin nature. Again, at Matthew 16:17 “flesh and blood” is *contrasted* to God in heaven, a reference simply to humans on earth but without any mention of sin. And at 1 Corinthians 15:50 “flesh and blood” is part of a *contrast* between two kinds of bodies, one “from the earth” and the other “out of heaven,” one “physical [‘soulical,’ Greek]” and the other “spiritual.” (1Co 15:44, 45) It is not until the second half of verse 50 that sin, “corruption,” is mentioned as a factor in addition to (as indicated by “neither”) the comment about “flesh and blood” rather than in explanation of it. Finally, at Galatians 1:16 there is no indication that “flesh and blood” means anything but ‘humans.’ There is not a single place where blood and flesh unambiguously refers to sin nature. For Christ to partake of blood and flesh simply means he was born a human.

2.2 “In All Things ... Like Unto His Brethren”

Does the statement that ‘in all things he was like unto his brethren’ require that Jesus had a sin nature like his brothers? “All respects” translates the Greek *panta*, a word that very often has a limited application. For example, in the immediate context, at Hebrews 2:8, we read a quote from Psalm 8:6:

“Thou hast put all things [*panta*] in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all [*panta*] in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things [*panta*] put under him.”

Paul quotes the same text at 1 Corinthians 15:27 and shows that “all things [*panta*]” can allow for exceptions.

“For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.”

If “all” does not mean absolutely all at Hebrews 2:8 why must it mean absolutely all just 9 verses later at Hebrews 2:17, especially since there are many respects in which Christ was not like his brothers? He was not born as a result of normal marital relations as they were. He was not an imperfect sinner as they were. He was never sick or grew old or

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died normally as his brothers did. Obviously, there were many “respects” in which Jesus was not absolutely their equal.

“In all things [*panta*]” must therefore have an application limited to the subject under discussion. Verse 14 provides the contextual limit, saying: “forasmuch then as the children are partakers of *flesh and blood*, he also himself likewise took part of *the same*.” The “all things” therefore refer to his “blood and flesh” condition, his humanity. Actually, Christadelphians should not use the word “all” at Hebrews 2:17 as if it were all-inclusive. In other contexts they point out that it is not. For example, R. Abel, says in explanation of John 5:28:

“‘All’ is frequently qualified by the context in which it occurs. The following are examples:.. Lk. 2:1 .. Jn. 10:8 .. Rom. 1:7.” - *Wrested Scriptures*, p. 147.

Yet in “all” at Hebrews 2:17 they see evidence that Christ had a sin nature like his brothers. There is no proof in the context that it need be so inclusive, especially in view of Hebrews 2:8.

2.3 Identifying the Devil at Hebrews 2:14

Christadelphians point to the words: “him that had the power of death, that is, the devil,” arguing that the Devil must be sin in the flesh because only sin is the cause of death. The conclusion is that Christ had a sin nature (the Devil) in him and that, by remaining perfect and never sinning, he brought the Devil, his own personal Devil, to nothing.

2.4 The ‘Devil in Christ’ Concept

Note first that the Christadelphian argument is that the Hebrews 2:14 Devil was in Jesus Christ and had “the power [*kratos*, “might,” Greek] of death.” It had the power to kill him. This Devil was supposedly the sin *nature*, but not actual, committed sin. They accept that Christ was “without sin [actually committed].” - He 4:15.

But note this: If the Christadelphian application is correct the text would be saying the sin nature *alone* had the power to cause Christ’s death. It would imply that Jesus did not need *actually* to sin to be deserving of death. This means that if he had not been executed, he would eventually have died a natural death. Is this Scriptural? Can a person who does not commit sin die? It flatly contradicts the passage at James 1:14, 15:

“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, *it bringeth forth sin*: and sin, when it is *finished*, bringeth forth death.”

Christadelphians often quote this passage, but it argues against their explanation of Hebrews 2:14. James says “finished” sin, actual sin, brings forth death. But our opponents’ sin-in-the-flesh Devil at Hebrews 2:14 has “the power of death” without actually finishing or committing sin. Can uncommitted sin have the power to cause death? The problem is in the Christadelphian dichotomy between sin nature and actual, committed sin. They believe one can exist without the other, at least in the case of Christ.

There is no Scriptural basis for this position. The Bible certainly speaks of the sin principle in imperfect humans. (Ro 5:17, 18, 21; 1Co 15:22) It also speaks of specific sinful acts. But where does the Bible ever say one can exist without the other in any human? The Scriptures do not teach that sin nature of itself has the power to cause death. The Christadelphian Devil of Hebrews 2:14 only had the *potential* of death, not the actual power of death as the text requires.

The texts used by Abel to link the Devil with sin, such as Romans 5:21; 6:23; 7:17, 18; Hebrews 9:26 certainly show that sin causes death. "Sin ruled as king with death ... the wages sin pays is death ... sin that resides in me." (*Wrested Scriptures*, page 162) But by quoting these texts to explain the Devil at Hebrews 2:14, Abel is really saying that Christ sinned because all of those texts refer to "sin," not sin nature. His argument places sin in Christ. And all of these texts are speaking about the sin in persons other than Christ. (He 9:28) Note too that none of them speak of a kind of sin that exists only as a principle without being manifested as actual, committed sin. Both the sin principle and actual sin are present in all humans, with just one exception. Jesus Christ was "without sin." (He 4:15) He "did not know sin." - 2Co 5:21.

This illustrates that Christadelphians are applying Bible references to sin arbitrarily. They use the word "sin" at Romans 5:21; 6:23; 7:17, 18; Hebrews 9:26 to explain the Hebrews 2:14 Devil as if it meant not sin but sin *nature*. Why? Because they would not want to attribute *actual* sin to Christ. But they do not consistently apply other references to sin like the ones at Hebrews 4:15; 2 Corinthians 5:21 to the Hebrews 2:14 "Devil" because they mean actual, committed sin, as Christadelphians agree. If they were to read this meaning for sin back into the Hebrews 2:14 Devil, they would be saying Christ was a sinner. (Isa 53:5, 8) Abel's texts cannot fairly be used to explain the Devil at Hebrews 2:14.

2.5 Could a Personal Devil Cause Death?

The phrase "the power [*kratos* "might"] of death" seems particularly convincing to some. The premise is that this could not possibly be said of a personal Devil when the Scriptures teach that sin causes death. So our opponents move quickly from Hebrews 2:14 to texts that show that sin causes death. But is the premise true?

An individual, any person, might have the power to cause death. It is obvious that anyone who kills another has the means (or, might) to cause physical death. So the Scriptures say that Joab and Abishai "slew Abner." (2Sa 3:30) Saul "slew the Gibeonites." (2Sa 21:1) Of course, their victims were sinners and their sins were leading them to death in the natural course of things, but still their untimely deaths were caused by, and attributed to, sinful humans. No one would argue that Joab, Abishai and Saul were 'sin in the flesh' just because they had the power to cause death. Similarly, the Devil might perhaps be a person with the power of death without eliminating sin as the ultimate cause of death. Any murderer demonstrates the might to cause death, but this does not make him sin in the flesh. The premise of the argument is therefore invalid.

There is nothing in Hebrews 2:14 that *requires* us to understand the Devil to be sin nature. The verse itself does not clearly say so. Neither does the Bible *clearly* establish a connection between the Devil and sin elsewhere. As shown above, the link made between this text and others is invalid. Perfect Adam had the ability or potential to sin but he did not have a sinful human nature. (1Co 5:21; 1Pe 2:22) He demonstrated that a person with a perfect human nature can ultimately sin. We are being asked by Christadelphians to

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accept that the reverse was true of Christ - that he had a sinful human nature but did not sin - a proposition that cannot be demonstrated in Scripture.

The only sin (or, sin nature) of any kind that the Bible teaches that Christ carried in his death was that of others. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. Who his own self bare *our sins* in his own body on the tree." "Who his own self bare *our sins* in his own body on the tree." (Isa 53:4, 5; 1Pe 2:24) "So Christ was once offered to bear the *sins of many*." (He 9:28).

2.6 Did Jesus Christ Die For His Own Sinfulness?

It cannot be established from Hebrews 2:14 that Christ also carried his own 'sin in the flesh' in death. Some say, though, that the Law of Moses contains types indicating that, as high priest, Christ had to provide a sacrifice for his own sin nature. They point to the fact that Israel's high priests sacrificed for themselves. Hebrews 5:1-3, for example, says the high priest sacrificed "*for himself*." Hebrews 7:27 says: "*for his own sins*." Hebrews 9:7 agrees: "*for himself*."

According to the wording of the Law:

"Moses said unto Aaron, Go unto the altar, and offer thy sin offering, and thy burnt offering, and make an atonement *for thyself*, and for the people: and offer the offering of the people, and make an atonement for them; as the LORD commanded. Aaron therefore went unto the altar, and slew the calf of the sin offering, which was *for himself*." - Le 9:7, 8.

"Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is *for himself*, and make an atonement *for himself*, and for his house... Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is *for himself*, and shall make an atonement *for himself*, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is *for himself*." - Le 16:6, 11.

Is there a type of Christ in this? First, not every aspect of the priesthood takes place in the antitype. As Christadelphian Robert Roberts observes:

"There are not many particulars given to us in the apostolic writings as to the antitypical meaning in detail. Several general clues are supplied which we are left to work out. The working out of these general clues is interesting and profitable, *provided analogies are not carried too far, and meanings evolved that were probably never intended*. We must not forget that the law, though 'a shadow of good things to come,' is 'not the very image thereof.' (Heb. 10:1) *Some people work it out as if it were 'the very image' of the things signified, which is a mistake tending in the direction of those 'strivings about the law' which Paul in another place declares to be unprofitable and vain.*" - *The Law of Moses*, page 107, emphasis added.

Could it be that the sacrifices that the high priest made for his own sins were among those things that should not be carried “too far” and which should not be pressed to a meaning probably never intended?

There is something significant that suggests so. When the Israelite high priest sacrificed for himself, it was “to offer for sins,” not just ‘sin nature.’ (He 5:3) Hebrews 7:27 is specific: the high priest sacrificed “for *his own sins*.” The high priest was a sinner. If his sacrifice “for himself” is typical of the sacrifice by Christ, Christ must have been a *sinner*, a conclusion even Christadelphians cannot suffer. Such is the logical consequence of viewing the high priest’s actions in this respect as typical of Christ.

Actually, Hebrews 7:26 is *contrasting* Christ with the Israelite high priest in this respect. He was “separate from sinners.” He was “without sin.” (He 4:15) So Christadelphians need to explain how the very reason that the high priest needed to sacrifice for himself, namely his own “sins” (including, but not restricted to, his sin *nature*), applied in antitype to Christ. They did not and could not if he were “without sin.” The only possible reason the high priest had to sacrifice first for himself was to have a clean standing for his special role in the rest of the sacrificial ritual, because he was a sinner both by nature by sin actually committed. There would have been no need for a sacrifice on his own behalf if he were not. He could not be typical of the clean, perfect Christ until his own sin was covered. There was no need for such a sacrifice in Christ’s case. He was no sinner.

So what is Paul arguing at Hebrews 7:26-28? The passage reads:

“Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.”

The error has arisen in supposing that the Jewish priest *paralleled* Christ in this matter and in overlooking the fact that much of Hebrews serves to *contrast* rather than parallel certain features of the Law with the antitype. Hebrews 7:26-28 is part of such a *contrast* of Christ with the high priests of Israel. The writer of Hebrews uses *kreitton* (“better”) 13 times to stress the *contrasting* superiority of the Christian system of worship. Although the Mosaic priesthood was the type and the Christian priesthood the antitype not every feature was exactly parallel.

Paul repeatedly points to contrasts between type and antitype. He describes, for example, how the Israelite high priest entered the Most Holy once a year, but how by *contrast* Christ entered once for all time and how in the type the priest offered blood that was not his own but that of an animal, whereas by *contrast* Christ as high priest offered his own blood. (He 9:7, 12-14) In the type the Most Holy was on earth, but in the antitype in heaven. (He 9:1, 24) So when the author of Hebrews describes for us the earthly priesthood and its functions, he is emphasizing its inferiority. Christ’s is, by *contrast* “better.” At Hebrews 7:5, 6, 11, 13, 14 Christ was not a descendant of Aaron in the tribe of Levi but “after the order of Melchisedec;” another point of *contrast*. (He 6:20, *KJ*) In He 7:23, 24, Christ had no successors. Israelite high priests did; another *contrast*.

Hebrews 7:26-28 is a continuation of this series of contrasts. Consider some of them. It presents Christ as “separate from sinners” in *contrast* to their “infirmity.” Logically, he

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did not need “to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins,” sins he did not have. (He 7:27) He sacrificed “once” in *contrast* with their “daily” sacrifices. So it should not be supposed that Paul’s point at verse 27 is that Christ as high priest is *similar to* the Israelite high priest in respect to offering his sacrifice “first for his own sins.” Instead, this is another contrast and Christ was *different to* the high priest in this respect.

However, Christadelphians may counter: ‘Paul adds, “*This* he did once, when he offered up himself.” The word “this” includes two things: (1) sacrificing for “his own sins” and (2) sacrificing for those of the people.’ What could we say in response? *Touto* (“this”) can as easily refer to the phrase to which it is closest, “for those of the people,” certainly a more logical conclusion in the face of the considerations we have just discussed.

Focus now on the sacrifice itself. It is inconsistent with the types of Mosaic Law sacrifices to conceive of a “sinful” (to compare with a ‘sin nature’) animal or person dying for a sinner. Sacrificial animals had to be of the highest quality, “without blemish” (Ex 12:5; Le 4:3, 28; Le 22:20; De 15:21) and Christ corresponded to the Mosaic pattern in this respect exactly. (He 9:14; 1Pe 1:19) There is nothing in the pattern of the sacrificial animals to typify the ‘sin nature’ in Christ, or of a sinful person (in any sense) dying for someone sinful (in any sense). A sinner could not atone for a sinner.

Some have pointed to Hebrews 9:12 which says Christ “obtained eternal redemption” and to the fact that the verb “obtained” (*heuramenos*, Greek) is in the middle voice. The middle usually indicates the involvement of the subject in the action of the verb. So the contention is that Christ obtained deliverance *for himself*. This usage is usually described as “the direct middle.” However, as stated by H.E. Dana and J.R. Mantey on page 158 of *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*:

“Any analysis of the uses of the middle is of necessity more or less arbitrary. No rigid lines of distinction can in reality be drawn.”

There is also an “indirect middle” described by Dana and Mantey. The indirect middle

“lays stress upon the agent as producing the action rather than participating in its results.”

The first example they give of this usage is this very text at Hebrews 9:12. Others are 1 Corinthians 13:8; 2 Timothy 4:15 and Acts 20:24. M. Zerwick also writes of this indirect use of the middle voice, which, he says, indicates “that the subject acts of itself,” rather than for itself. (*Biblical Greek*, page 75) So it is by no means certain that at Hebrews 9:12 the meaning was that the Christ died for his own deliverance or benefit.

Such a thing would be inconsistent with the types for another reason. No sacrificial animal ever died in its own behalf. There is simply nothing to typify Christ in this respect.

Some believe that Hebrews 13:20 is evidence that Jesus Christ died for his own sin nature. Here we read of “the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.” This is thought to mean that Jesus was raised “through,” using the value of, his own

blood and thus dying for his own sin nature. There are problems with this explanation too.

The Greek is *en haimati*, literally “in blood.” So what does *en* mean at Hebrews 13:20? First, the “everlasting covenant” should be understood as the new covenant, since this is the covenant the book of Hebrews has been explaining. (He 7:22; 8:6, 8, 10, 13; 9:15; 10:16, 29; 12:24) The “blood of the covenant” is the blood that Jesus shed that corresponded to the blood of animals under the Law covenant. (He 9:20; 10:29) Again, the wider context is very helpful. The writer of Hebrews has already argued that the high priest entered “into the second [tabernacle compartment] .. alone once every year, *not without blood.*” (He 9:7) This means the priest entered the Most Holy *with* (= “not without”) the blood of animals. He did not leave the blood in the Holy, but physically carried it through the curtain right into the Most Holy.

The wording of Hebrews 9:25 is vital to our enquiry at this point. “The high priest entereth into the holy place every year *with blood* of others.” *En haimati* in this verse refers to the carriage of blood into the Most Holy. The sense is not ‘through the blood’ but “*with the blood.*” The Greek is *en haimati*, exactly as at Hebrews 13:20. With the dative case *en* can have various meanings including “by means of” and “because of.” But H.E. Dana and J.R. Mantey also give “with” as valid translation for what they called the *en* of “Association.” (*A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, page 114) Similarly, C.F.D. Moule suggests that Hebrews 13:20 be rendered “with the blood.” (*An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, page 78) And F. Blass and A. Debrunner expand on the word *en* with the “associative dative” case and mention many examples, among them Matthew 16:28; 1 Corinthians 4:21; 2 Corinthians 10:14 and, significantly, Hebrews 9:25, which is in the wider context of Hebrews 13:20. We shall shortly see that it is likely that they are directly related. - *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, page 106.

Hebrews 9:12 explains how, in the antitype, the high priest, Jesus Christ “by his own blood .. entered in once into the holy place [plural, Greek, meaning the Most Holy].” This was right inside the antitypical Most Holy, inside “the veil, that is to say, his flesh.” (He 10:20) “Christ is .. [entered] .. into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” - He 9:24.

To parallel the Israelite high priest, Christ is viewed in the antitype as if he carried his blood beyond “the veil,” that is, beyond the sacrifice of his fleshly body, and offered it to God in heaven. Of course, Jesus did not literally take his shed blood with him to heaven, just as the altar of sacrifice, the curtain and the movements of the high priest around the tabernacle were figurative. Still, as high priest he appeared before God, “not without blood,” not empty-handed, but with the value of his sacrificial blood. The proximity of the reference to *en haimati* at Hebrews 9:25 when discussing the very same subject certainly suggests that “with” is the correct rendering at Hebrews 13:20. To miss this is to miss the contrast the writer of the letter is making. The Israelite priest entered *with* the blood of others but Jesus *with* his own blood.

Nothing in Hebrews 13:20 proves that Jesus died for his personal sin propensity. The text does not even refer to his death. It refers to his resurrection. If *en* did mean “through,” it would relate to the resurrection. It would not mean that Jesus’ death was in some way the wages of his sinfulness. More likely, and in harmony with the wider context, the point is that Jesus was raised from the dead “with” the blood of the new covenant and that, as

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high priest, he presented its value to God in heaven. No Bible text teaches that Jesus died for his own sin propensity in any sense.

2.7 Objections to the Personal Devil at Hebrews 2:14

We get an even better understanding by examining objections to our belief that a personal ‘external’ spirit Devil is in view in Hebrews 2:14. As already mentioned, there is actually nothing in the text or context to define the Devil in an ‘internal’ sense, so it is usually ‘established’ by an attack on our view. Consider now the objections against the view that the Devil at Hebrews 2:14 is really an ‘external’ spirit person.

2.7.1 ‘A Strange Preparation’

It is firstly objected that to take on flesh and blood was a strange preparation for fighting a superhuman Devil. Really, though, taking on flesh and blood was the perfect preparation for that purpose. Hebrews 2:10 says it was fitting that Jesus experience sufferings that would “perfect” him. His experiences in “blood and flesh” enabled him to defeat the Devil, because the perfection gained resulted in “glory and honour.” (He 2:9) Jesus himself asked: “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, *and to enter into his glory?*” (Lu 24:26) Really, it was no “strange preparation” at all. The glorified Lord is perfectly equipped to abyss and finally annihilate a superhuman Devil.

2.7.2 ‘A Strange Way to Defeat a Personal Devil’

It is further objected that death was a strange way to defeat a personal Devil. But Hebrews 2:14 states that “*through* [*dia*, Greek] ... death,” not *in* death, Christ would destroy the Devil. “Through” does not imply the immediate annihilation of the Devil at Jesus’ death. When, later in the same Bible book, we read: “he appeared to put away sin by [same Greek word, *dia*] the sacrifice of himself,” are we to conclude that the expression “by the sacrifice” implies that sin was immediately and finally disposed of forever at Jesus’ death? (He 9:26) No, even after the sacrifice sin remained, as is obvious to all. Yet, in the course of time and based on the sacrifice of Christ, sin will ultimately be eliminated. It was one of the purposes of his death and resurrection that Christ “might be Lord both of the dead and living.” (Ro 14:9) It was *after* the resurrection that Jesus said “all authority has been given me in heaven and on the earth.” (Mt 28:18) Passing “through death” (including the resurrection process), he was uniquely positioned to defeat a living personal Devil.

The fact that the death of Christ was a first important step through which the Devil would ultimately, but not immediately, be destroyed, is well illustrated by the Greek word for “destroy” that is used. The verb is *katargeo* and Hebrews 2:14 uses it in the form *katargese*. Does it require immediate destruction? The same verb is used at 2 Timothy 1:10, which says: “our Saviour Jesus Christ .. hath abolished [*katargesantos*] death.” But people still die, as is clear for all to see. Still, the death of Christ “hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” This abolishing of death was not immediately accomplished but is ultimately certain.

Actually, there is no need to guess because we are given a clue to the timing of the bringing to nothing of the Devil in the second half of the same sentence, at Hebrews 2:15. Consider the whole sentence, both verses 14 and 15.

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that [1] through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And [2] deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

This means there are two things Christ’s death accomplishes, not one: the first, to bring the Devil to nothing, and the second, to free those captive to fear of death. Christadelphians argue that the first of these took place immediately, at the death of Christ. Did the second occur immediately, at the death of Christ? Were humans immediately delivered from the bondage to the fear of death? Even for his own apostles, there was no *immediate* appreciation of the full liberating effect of his death on the very day that Jesus died. And for subsequent generations of Christians emancipation from fear of death has taken place over many years as people previously in such bondage have learned the truth about Christ’s sacrifice. If the second effect was not immediate, there is no necessity to view the first as taking place immediately at the death of Christ either.

2.7.3 ‘The Devil Should Be Dead by Now’

Another objection is that if in Jesus’ passing through death the Devil is destroyed, the Devil ought by now to be dead, yet he is presented as still alive. But we must remember that the text in no way restricts its reference to a Devil in Jesus, an internal Devil. “The Devil” (with the definite article) *invariably* refers to an external Devil, a person, in the Christian Scriptures. But, whoever or whatever the Devil is, his destruction was not completed at Jesus’ death, for Romans 16:20 speaks of the crushing of “Satan under your feet *shortly*.” Of course, some would maintain this to be a different Satan from the one Christ destroyed when he died. But ‘*the Satan*’ and ‘*the Devil*’ are the same person as we shall see shortly.

What about this argument that any personal Devil should have been dead after Christ’s death? Other texts explain how it is possible for the Devil to remain alive after Christ’s death. For example, when 1 John 3:8 uses similar language, saying, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, *that he might destroy the works of the devil*,” are we to conclude that those works were *immediately* destroyed at the death of Christ? Surely it is clear that the “works” of the Devil exist even after the death of Christ, so the wording of 1 John 3:8 does not point to the immediate destruction either of the Devil or his works. We do not find Christadelphians arguing from this text that the works of the Devil should have been finally and completely broken up by the time of Christ’s manifestation. The text is pointing to the breaking up of the Devil’s works as the certain eventual result of Christ’s earthly manifestation. The language allows for this and the language at Hebrews 2:14 is no different. It does not imply that the Devil was immediately brought to nothing at the death of Christ but rather that, in time, the final result would be to bring the Devil to nothing.

Is there any contextual evidence that the expression “he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” at Hebrews 2:14 actually refers to an effect *future* from Christ’s death? The answer is found in the context at Hebrews 2:8, 9. Having just quoted Psalm 8:6, Paul says:

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“For in that he put all in subjection under him, he [God] *left nothing that is not put under him. But now* [in the first century, after Christ’s death] *we see not yet all things put under him.* But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”

On the one hand everything is said to be subject to Christ by virtue of his glorious position. On the other hand, “now [at present]” this is not fully achieved. So it is possible to speak of a situation as having taken place that is really a future certainty. Just 5 verses later, the Devil is one of the “all things” awaiting full subjugation. Actually, then, there is no proof that the Devil perished at the death of Christ.

2.7.4 ‘That Would Make the Devil God’s Policeman’

A further objection is that it is wrong to view a personal Devil as having the “power of death;” and that such would make him ‘God’s policeman.’ This objection is curiously inconsistent, for it could equally be applied to the Christadelphian view. If the Devil were sin in the flesh and had the power of death, by the same argument sin nature could be viewed as ‘God’s policeman.’ In fact, though, neither the Devil nor sin is God’s policeman.

The objection assumes that the Devil’s having the “power of death” means the Devil is the *only* one responsible for human death. As mentioned above, anyone having the ability to kill has the power to cause death. A text quoted in support of the no-personal-Devil theory actually works against it. At Deuteronomy 32:39 God says “I kill.” Is God, then, the Devil? If not, then Hebrews 2:14 is not saying the Devil *alone* has the power of death, and since God is one obvious exception with the power of death, why not others? Job 9:23 speaks of “a flash flood *causing death.*” “Death ... [is] in the power of the tongue.” (Pr 18:21) If it be argued that ultimately sin causes even these things, it must be said that, even so, the Bible attributes to the person – the sinner - such power. The personal Devil being a sinner who has caused death, it is certainly proper to describe him as having the “power of death.” As an example of this, while in Satan’s “hand” Job’s children were killed. (Job 1:12, 19) At Hebrews 2:14, Paul neither states nor implies that Satan has *ultimate or sole power* over death. Rather, he is pointing to Satan’s ability or potential to cause death.

2.8 “In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh”

Paul’s comment that God sent “his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and concerning sin” does not mean that Christ had a sin nature in any sense. (Ro 8:3) “Likeness” is the crucial expression. James 3:9 says we are in the “*likeness* of God” but of course there are great differences between ourselves and God. For one thing, God is sinless and we are sinful. Yet we are still in his “likeness.” “Likeness” must therefore allow for qualitative differences. Similarly, Jesus was like sinful flesh but was not exactly equal to it. His situation is explained adequately by Hebrews 4:15, that he “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

Hebrews 2:14 is usually considered a strong starting point for proving that the Devil is sin in the flesh. We have found that, in fact, it teaches nothing of the kind. Who, then, is Satan the Devil? An important starting point is the fact that the nouns Satan and Devil are most often preceded by the Hebrew and Greek definite articles.

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3 The Definite Article

Although it is possible to show that “Satan” and its related verb applied at times to angels and humans in an ‘external’ sense (Nu 22:22, 32; 1 Sa 29:4; 2 Sa 19:21, 22; 1Ki 5:4; 11:14, 23, 25), at other times the Hebrew particularizes the word by using the definite article with Satan (literally, “the Satan”). Interestingly, although God opposes others, he is never called “the” Satan, that is, Satan with the article. There is no reason to call for all Hebrew references to “Satan” to be treated the same when the Hebrew text itself adds the article in some cases and not in others. *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar* (GK), §126 *d* and *e*, states:

“The article is, generally speaking, employed to determine a substantive wherever it is required by Greek and English; thus: . . . (*d*) When terms applying to whole classes are restricted (simply by usage) to particular individuals . . . or things, e.g. . . . *adversary*, . . . *the adversary*, *Satan* . . .”

Notice that the difference between just any adversary and a particular Satan is the Hebrew article, “the.” This is true, for example, of Adam, whose name means “Man.” It is used over 560 times in the Scriptures in reference to individuals and to mankind in general. But it is also used as a proper name and in these cases it has the article, “the Adam.” Evidently, then, with the addition of the article a common noun can be used as a proper noun indicating a particular person.

The same is true of the common noun *satan*. As with Adam, it is correct grammatically to capitalize Satan and treat it as a name at Job chapters 1 and 2 and at Zechariah chapter 3 because in these cases it bears the article (“the Satan,” Hebrew). It is also correct to translate differently another nine instances of *satan*, even rendering the word according to its basic meaning, “resister” or similar (an ‘external’ use), because in these cases the Hebrew lacks the article. (Nu 22:22; 1Sa 29:4; 2Sa 19:21, 22; 1Ki 5:4; 11:14, 23, 25; 2Ch 22:1) No one will deny that there are occurrences of the term “satan” in the Hebrew Scriptures where a human adversary is intended, just as in the Christian Scriptures *diabolos* (devil) can occasionally refer to human accusers. (1Ti 3:11) But what is meant by “the Satan” or “the Devil” in Job and Zechariah and some sixty times in the Christian Scriptures?

When Matthew introduces terms like “*the* kingdom of God” and “*the* kingdom of heaven,” he assumes that his readers are familiar with these phrases. He is referring to a *particular* kingdom. They were familiar with these kingdom concepts from the Hebrew Bible. When he introduces *the* Devil (Mt 4:11), using the article, he similarly uses a title already well recognized by his readers. He does not use the anarthrous form as if the Devil were *a* tempter or *an* accuser. If we realize the importance of the definite article here our subject can be clarified without further difficulty. A.T. Robertson, states:

“The definite article is never meaningless in the Greek... The article is associated with gesture and aids in pointing out like an index finger... Wherever the article

occurs, the object is certainly definite.” - *Grammar of Greek New Testament*, page 756.

Thus *a* saviour may be one of many saviours, but *the* Saviour means the one particular Saviour. *An* “ecclesia” is an assembly of people gathered for many different reasons, but no one would consider confusing this with *the* Ecclesia, the Church. (Ac 19:32, 39, 41) Similarly, “the Satan,” “the Devil,” is the particular and well-known Satan not requiring definition because the writer knows that his readers understand who is meant. Will anyone deny that *a* book carries a very different meaning from *the* book?

Notice now how one author who denies the personal existence of an invisible Satan confuses the issue.

“The word Satan...simply means *an* adversary, as will be evident to the least instructed from the following instances of its use: ‘The Lord stirred up *an* adversary (a ‘satan’) unto Solomon, Hadad, the Edomite’ (I Kings 11:14). ‘Lest in battle he (David) be *an* adversary to us’ (I Sam. 29:4)...There are New Testament instances, such as where Jesus addresses Peter as ‘Satan,’ when he opposes Christ’s submission to death (Matt. 16:23); where Pergamos, the headquarters of the enemies of truth is described as Satan’s seat (Rev. 2:13). Now if Satan means adversary we will read the scriptures intelligently if we read adversary wherever we read Satan” - *The Evil One*, Robert Roberts, page 12.

Note, however, that this author carelessly mixes texts which use the anarthrous form, ‘satan’ without the article “the” (1Ki 11:14; 1Sa 29:4; Mt 16:23), with the text at Revelation 2:13 which uses the articular form, ‘*the* Satan,’ as if there is no difference. Yet “the Satan” is very different from the ‘satans’ he cites at 1 Kings 11:14 and 1 Samuel 29:4, both of which lack the definite article. His argument then proceeds as follows.

“The trial of Jesus is usually cited in opposition to our conclusions. The great feature of the narrative relied upon is the application of the word ‘devil’ to the tempter: but this proves nothing. If Judas could be *a* devil, and yet be a man, why may the tempter of Jesus not have been *a* man? His being called ‘devil’ proves nothing” - *Ibid.*, page 19.

But again this author is not comparing like with like. Actually, the tempter of Jesus is not called *a* devil (anarthrous) like Judas at John 6:70, but “*the* Devil,” meaning the particular Devil with whom the reader was already familiar. (Mt 4:5, 8) Continuing with the fallacy, he adds:

“‘Devil’ proves that it was one who busied himself to subvert Jesus from the path of obedience. Who it was it is impossible to say because we are not informed.” - *Ibid.*, page 19.

It may be impossible for those who deny Satan’s personal existence to know the identity of this Satan because, unlike Matthew’s first-century readers for whom the definite article was a pointer back to their existing pool of knowledge that included their common belief that the Devil was a wicked spirit person, they have no such pool of knowledge. This has led to endless conjecture as to his identity, some believing it to be a human tempter and others believing it to be an incorrect notion in Jesus’ mind. Scripturally, the pointer is to “*the* Satan,” *the* adversary, the same ‘external’ personality who tempted Job. So the writer’s conclusion is entirely invalid:

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“Why may not the tempter of Jesus have been *a man*? His being called ‘devil’ proves nothing.”

Matthew does not, however, call him ‘devil,’ but “*the Devil*.” The author has effaced the word “the” from the text, and by implication from the sixty or more occurrences of the Satan and the Devil throughout the New Testament. It is easy for him to make this error because translators must render the Hebrew and Greek “the Satan” or “the Devil” into English without the article: “Satan” and “Devil.” But the article must certainly be taken into consideration and never effaced when formulating doctrine.

In his *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: an Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, D.B. Wallace outlines nine categories of the usage of the article, as follows.

- (1) Simple identification: To distinguish one individual from another
- (2) Anaphoric: To refer back to a previous instance of a noun, which was usually introduced without the article
- (3) Kataphoric: To refer forward to a definition of the noun which is about to be supplied
- (4) Deictic: To point out an object or person present at the moment of speaking, as in ‘this’
- (5) Par excellence: To point out a noun that is in a class by itself; the only one deserving of the name
- (6) Monadic: To identify a one-of-a-kind or unique noun
- (7) Well-Known: To identify a well-known object that has not been mentioned in the preceding context, but is not par excellence or monadic
- (8) Abstract: To define more closely a particular abstract noun (in such cases, the article should usually not be translated into English)
- (9) Generic (Categorical): To distinguish one class from another (as opposed to identifying a particular object belonging to a larger class)

Which of these apply when the article is used with “Satan” or “Devil”? Let us consider these passages by way of example.

“And [Jesus] was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.” - Mk 1:13.

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” - Jas 4:7.

In both of these texts *satanas* and *diabolos* occur with the article. Why? Both are too brief to categorize them under the first three functions mentioned by Wallace above, and there is no contextual cue for the fourth. The ninth function is also impossible since *satan* and *diabolos* are not classes of objects. All of the remaining possibilities fall into the category of an object that is already known to the reader. Mark has never before mentioned a *satan*, and James has never before mentioned a *diabolos*. Regardless of

which of these functions we choose, the writer assumes that the reader is already familiar with the entity he is talking about. In a similar way, at Mark 1:13, Mark assumes the reader is familiar with angels and with wild animals in the wilderness.

In view of the definite article, *satanas* with the article would be ‘the well-known Satan.’ What well-known Satan? Mark expects his readers to be able to answer from their existing pool of knowledge without further explanation. Therefore he must be referring to an entity that was well understood in the Judaism of the day. The same is true of James’ *diabolos*. The Satan and the Devil they knew was the Satan mentioned repeatedly in the ‘Old Testament.’

To justify the Christadelphian approach, which would require an abstract function for the article, we would need first to establish that Mark’s and James’s readers already understood *satan* and *diabolos* as abstract nouns. Since they are not used abstractly in the ‘Old Testament,’ one would have to show that the ‘Old Testament’ usage had changed drastically by the first Christian century. This cannot be established.

It is true that *diabolos* occurs with the article at Esther 7:4; 8:1 in the *Septuagint* and that it refers to Haman, a mere man. Why? Actually, the Hebrew does not have the article in these verses. It does not even use the normal word for “Satan.” The *Septuagint* usually renders the Hebrew *sathan* with the Greek *diabolos*, but not here where it translates another Hebrew word. So it should be clear that the Esther texts are not referring to the same *ho diabolos* as those in the ‘New Testament.’ How can we explain the articles with *diabolos* in these verses, though? As mentioned above by Wallace, the definite article has several uses. Two of them were “(3) Kataphoric: To refer *forward* to a definition of the noun which is about to be supplied” and “(2) Anaphoric: To refer *back* to a previous instance of a noun, which was usually introduced without the article.” (Emphasis ours.)

The context shows that the article at Esther 7:4 (*Septuagint*) is kataphoric (3, above), referring *forward* to Esther 7:6 where Haman is identified as the *diabolos*. At Esther 8:1, on the other hand, the article is anaphoric (2, above), referring *back* to the same verse, Esther 7:6.

Christadelphian writer J. Burke points out that Satan in Matthew chapter 4 is also described as “the Tempter.” (Mt 4:3) He argues that there is no concept of a satan who is a tempter in the ‘Old Testament.’ (“Satan and Demons: A reply to criticism of the Christadelphian position [part 1]) Perhaps not, but we do not need to show a connection between the descriptor “Tempter” and the Hebrew Scriptures because Matthew adequately introduces and identifies the person who approached Jesus by using the article in verse 1, “*the Devil*.” Then, having identified him, Matthew could choose to add the extra descriptor “the Tempter” because that is what *this* Satan was. It will not do to say that he could only be tempted by the sin nature because ‘external’ persons can tempt too. - Mt 16:1; Lu 11:16.

3.1 Satan the Devil and the Mystery

Although the name Satan (“*the Satan*,” with the definite article) appears more than 50 times in the Bible, it occurs only 18 times in the Hebrew Scriptures and then only in the books of 1 Chronicles, Job, and Zechariah. Why? Does this indicate that the subject evolved slowly and therefore points to a concept rather than a person? No, the reason is connected with the “mystery,” or “sacred secret” that started in Eden and finds final fulfilment in the Revelation.

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The judgment in Eden posed a “mystery” when God said to the serpent: “I will put enmity between [1] *thee* and [2] *the woman*, and between [3] *thy seed* and [4] *her seed*; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Thus, four main characters were in view. -Eph 5:32; Ge 3:15.

The Revelation prophecies that point to the fulfilment of Genesis 3:15 can be seen especially at Revelation 10:7; 11:15; 12:1, 3, 5, 9, 10, 17; 20:1-3, 10. So the Genesis 3:15 “mystery” and its characters are slowly unveiled over thousands of years. As an example, the Hebrew Scriptures provided relatively few and cryptic references to the identity of “the seed.” Parallel to this, the Hebrew Bible contained few comments on the role of Satan. But with the coming of Jesus, Satan was exposed as he took direct action against the promised Seed, Jesus Christ. In the Christian Scriptures, the roles of “the woman” and of the Seed, Jesus Christ, were clarified. At the same time, the role of Satan, “that old serpent,” was brought more fully into the open. The first Christian century was the special time for the unmasking of Satan. (Re 12:1-9; Mt 4:1-11; Ga 3:16; 4:26) Thus, the first detailed presentation of Satan occurs in the Gospel accounts. - Joh 12:28-31; 14:30.

The apostle Paul wrote extensively about “the mystery of Christ.” (Eph 3:2-4; Ro 11:25) It had to do with the true “seed” that would eventually crush the original serpent, Satan the Devil. Paul indicates that the “mystery” had to do with the Genesis 3:15 prophecy, not just with the Abrahamic promise. (Ro 16:20, 25) The secret involved the fact that Jesus was the first and primary member of that “seed” but that he would be joined by others, “joint-heirs,” first from the Jews and then from the Gentiles, to complete the number of that “seed.”—Ro 8:17; Ga 3:16, 19, 26-29; Re 7:4; 14:1.

Paul explains:

“the mystery .. in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.” - Eph 3:3-6.

Or as he put it to the Colossians:

“the mystery .. hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.” - Col 1:25-27.

Logically, if the secret regarding the “seed” was finally revealed, it would also involve the complete unmasking of “that old serpent” and the identification of the other members of the Genesis 3:15 “mystery.”

Evidently, Jehovah did not choose to make the issue with Satan paramount until the coming of the Messiah. And who better to unmask Satan than the Seed, Christ Jesus himself? Consistent with this, the Gospels reveal much about the Devil and his works. - Eph 3:8, 9; Col 1:26.

As indicated at Revelation 10:7, the “mystery” is completed in connection with the blowing of the seventh trumpet. According to Revelation 11:15, at that time the announcement is made: “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.” The completion of the

mystery therefore has to do with the establishment of God's kingdom with Christ, the Seed, as king.

As part of the events that follow as a result of this trumpet blast, Revelation chapter 12 brings into clear focus all four Genesis 3:15 characters in one place. [1] "You" (the serpent) appears in Revelation 12:9, 15; [2] "the woman" in verses 1, 2, 5, 6; [3] "your seed" (the serpent's agents) in verse 15; and [4] "her seed" (Jesus Christ and his brothers) in verses 5, 10, 13, 17. Thus, the clear identification and full exposure of Satan and his methods was not to be expected at least until the coming of the true Seed in the first Christian century.

In harmony with this, in the Gospels alone, Satan and the demons are referred to at least 116 times, with another 70 references to the devil in the remainder of the Greek Scriptures. At least 23 of the 27 books of the Christian Scriptures contain references to Satan or demons. With such exposure, identification should be possible. In all of the texts cited in this section of our investigation, Satan and Devil are consistently used with the definite article "the" to denote one particular person.

We will focus next on common objections raised against a personal spirit Satan the Devil in certain well-known accounts.

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4 Satan the Devil in Eden

Revelation 12:9 speaks of “that *old* serpent, called the Devil and Satan.” This is a reference to the serpent in Genesis chapter 3. So whoever or whatever Satan the Devil is, he/it lasted at least the 4000 years of human history from Eden to the first Christian century, and even beyond, since the Revelation is prophetic. The serpent in Eden lied to Eve *before* she or Adam had sinful human natures, demonstrating that the “Devil and Satan” in the garden was nothing ‘internal’ to Adam or Eve. In fact, as mentioned earlier, there is not a single reference in the Hebrew/Aramaic Scriptures to Satan as an ‘internal’ tempter. It is not sufficient therefore to argue that the Devil in Eden was the ‘internal’ sinful propensity in the serpent. The anarthrous ‘satans’ (those without the definite article) of the Hebrew Scriptures who opposed were *invariably* ‘external’ persons.

This identification is well known in the writings of Paul’s contemporaries. It is clearly made in Revelation 12:9; 20:2. The very fact that the Serpent of Genesis is to be crushed by the Seed of the woman alerts us to the fact that the Serpent continued to exist until the times of the Messiah. (Ge 3:15) The implications of Revelation 12:9 are that the same ‘external’ person that existed in Eden must still be in existence at the time of the fulfilment of the Revelation prophecy.

It cannot be argued that the same ‘internal’ sinful tendencies present in the serpent will be present in the character that fulfils Revelation 12:9. Not only would such an explanation run counter to the absence of any evidence of ‘internal’ Satans in the Scriptures, but it would also mean that, at least in this case, the Devil and Satan do not mean sinful *human* nature at all, because the *original* serpent was no human.

4.1 Alternative Explanations

What, then, about the serpent in Eden? If no spirit Satan spoke through the serpent in Eden, who gave the serpent powers of reason and speech? There are but three possible scenarios.

The first is that God gave the serpent speech and reason with the intention of testing Adam and Eve, actually inserting wicked intent and lies into the serpent. But let us test this option. The Scriptures are clear that, while God does test people, he does this by simple tests of obedience. (Ge 22:1; Ex 15:25, 26; 16:4) Yet the Scriptures are clear at James 1:13 that he does not try anyone with evil things. Malice and evil intent are evident in the serpent’s lying words recorded at Genesis 3:4, 5, the first recorded lie in history. Jesus’ comment at John 8:44 regarding the Devil’s history as a liar shows that he was “*the* [not merely ‘a’] father of it.” This shows that the Devil existed in some form in the garden of Eden when the first lie was told and, of course, Revelation 12:9 confirms this. But there is neither proof, nor likelihood, that God placed such a Devil in the serpent.

A second scenario is that, still with the intention of testing Adam and Eve, God gave the serpent a pure moral character but that the serpent somehow went bad of itself. What can we say of this? God’s creative activity is perfect. (De 32:4) Given that all of his

intelligent creation had proven perfect to that point, a strong likelihood existed that any reasoning serpent would also have proven righteous, defeating the very purpose for which it was given speech. The notion that a perfect serpent, created in the hope of defecting, chose to go bad at precisely the moment required to test Adam and Eve surely challenges even the most credulous mind. We can dismiss this as highly unlikely.

A third scenario might be that, without the intention of the serpent playing any role in testing Adam and Eve, God for some unknown reason gave this particular serpent the power of speech and logic and that of itself it went bad and the test was purely of its own making. Is this reasonable? There is no evidence that any animal was created with the power of speech and reason. To suggest otherwise is to exchange the apparent difficulty some have with the notion of a supernatural Devil speaking through a serpent for the even greater difficulty of a naturally talking serpent just happening to turn bad at the very time that God was imposing a test on the first couple. Angels can at least speak and reason for themselves. The Bible says nothing of any animal having, or ever having had, this ability.

Even in the closest comparable case, Balaam's ass that spoke is called "the *dumb* ass speaking with *man's* voice." The ass was dumb, having no voice of its own. The Source of the voice was an invisible person, God himself. "The LORD opened the mouth of the ass." (Nu 22:28) When it spoke, it spoke "with man's voice," not with its own voice. (2Pe 2:16) Since God is not a man (Ho 11:9), he gave the ass a man's voice to suit his purpose on that occasion. One writer tries to use this account in his favour, arguing: "a donkey was once made to speak and reason with a man (Balaam)." (*The Real Devil – A Biblical Exploration*, Duncan Heaster) Yes, "*made to*." But it is clear that the ass did not speak with its own voice. And there is not a word about it using its own powers of reason. That fact that it spoke and reasoned only proved that someone invisible was behind it. That the serpent should have spoken and reasoned because of a similar, but morally opposite, supernatural influence is not unreasonable.

Clearly the Devil did not create the serpent or turn into it. He simply influenced and spoke through it. This is no more a pagan concept than God opening the mouth of a dumb ass. The Genesis events predated any of those false stories and is not to be interpreted in light of them. Remember, it is the Bible that has Satan in the events in the Garden of Eden. (Re 12:9) And it is the Bible that shows that the fulfilment of the Genesis 3:15 prophecy about the crushing of the serpent refers to Satan. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." (Ro 16:20) It is too convenient to explain this understanding in terms of mythology, which, on a larger scale, is a relatively modern approach to the first nine chapters of Genesis.

Heaster recommends reading the Genesis account literally and we agree. The serpent was a literal creature. But figurative language and metonymy can appear in an otherwise literal account. For example, at Genesis 3:15 we read:

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Heaster suggests we understand this by reference to Genesis 4:7:

"Its [sin's] desire is for you [Cain], but you will be able to master it."

Viewed this way, Cain's mastering of sin would have been the seed of the woman bruising the serpent in the head. This is an interesting interpretation but, note, it makes

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the bruising of the serpent, and therefore the serpent itself, *figurative*. The question as to why the identity of Satan and his connection with the serpent was not fully revealed in Genesis or understood in Judaism, see 3.1 above.

What were Adam's and Eve's motives in taking the fruit? They were not created with a design flaw that made their defection inevitable. As God's creatures, they were "very good," "perfect." (Ge 1:31; De 32:4) However, both of the special trees in the Garden implied God's sovereign right to grant or deny things to the first couple in his own way and on his own terms. The "tree of life" mentioned at Genesis 3:22 was a literal tree. Eating its fruit would have signified that a person was qualified to live forever. But God withheld its fruit from Adam and Eve because they had not met God's terms for everlasting life.

"The tree of the knowledge of good and evil" at Genesis 2:17 was also a real tree. Why was something as desirable as knowledge denied to Adam and Eve? In a footnote to Genesis 2:17, the *Jerusalem Bible* (1966) says:

"This knowledge is a privilege which God reserves to himself and which man, by sinning, is to lay hands on, 3:5, 22. Hence it does not mean omniscience, which fallen man does not possess; nor is it moral discrimination, for unfallen man already had it and God could not refuse it to a rational being. It is the power of deciding for himself what is good and what is evil and of acting accordingly, a claim to complete moral independence by which man refuses to recognise his status as a created being. The first sin was an attack on God's sovereignty, a sin of pride."

It is clear this "knowledge" was something God reserved to himself. The serpent made the fruit appear attractive by arguing that it would give her godlike wisdom and independence; independence because she would not die when God had said she would. (Ge 3:4-6) Satan cunningly suggested to Eve that the same was true for her husband, the words "ye," "your" and "knowing" in verse 5 all being in the plural. So Eve was "deceived." Adam, though, was not. - 1Ti 2:14.

For different reasons, they both used their free will to make unwise choices. However, to say they exercised free will is not to eliminate Satan. Tempters usually target the free will of those they tempt. (Pr 7:21-23; Mt 4:1-10)

Given the circumstances of the case it is reasonable to believe that the Devil was created perfect and of himself became corrupt. We need neither believe God placed evil thoughts in a serpent, nor that a creature – just one among all non-human creatures on earth – was given the power of speech and reason and just happened to turn bad and tempt Adam and Eve at the precise time God was testing them.

4.2 Objections

Christadelphian author R. Abel suggests a 6-part solution to the problem of the serpent that includes certain objections.

4.2.1 'Angels Cannot Defect'

First, he argues that Luke 20:35, 36 teaches that neither angels nor Christians living forever can defect. The text says of resurrected ones "neither [*oude*] can they [*dynantai*] die any more, for they are like the angels." But Abel's conclusion is based on a misunderstanding of *dynantai* ("they are able"). Does *oude ... dynantai* imply absolute impossibility, or does it signify inability under certain conditions?

Acts 4:20 uses the same verb when Peter and John say "But as for us, we *cannot* [*ou dynametha*] stop speaking about the things we have seen and heard." It was no physical impossibility for them to stop speaking (as if predestined to be faithful), but it was a certainty *given their determination to remain obedient*.

And 1 John 3:9 says everyone born of God "cannot [*ou dynatai*] sin." Did this mean it was impossible for a faithful Christian ever to sin? Certainly not. John's point in context is that "whosoever *abideth* in him sinneth not," meaning the Christian must abide or remain in his close relationship with Christ. (1Jo 3:6) *Under these circumstances* he "cannot sin." Again, "cannot" is not absolute here.

When Jesus says to the angel of the Ephesian ecclesia "thou canst not [*ou dyne*] bear them which are evil," does this mean they were physically unable to bear with evildoers? (Re 2:2) Hardly, because other ecclesias clearly did bear them. (Re 2:14, 15, 20) In Ephesus "canst not" was *attended by the current circumstances*, that they were diligent to keep evil men from infiltrating the ecclesia.

Luke 20:35, 36 has been taken by Christadelphians as an absolute. This is to say more than the text actually says. Significantly, the Bible never uses the term 'immortality,' inherent or conditional, of angels. Yet, given the condition of obedience that faithful angels have thus far met successfully and will continue to meet, they cannot die.

Jesus said resurrected men and women do not marry nor are given in marriage but are like the "angels of God in heaven," showing that marriages between heavenly creatures do not exist, no male and female distinction being indicated among them. (Mt 22:30) He was evidently referring to the ordinary and intended condition of angels "in heaven." It was also a statement of the facts as they obtained when he spoke these words. However, this does not mean that, at some distant time in the past, some angelic creatures who assumed human form while *not* "in heaven" did not have marital relations with human women as an unnatural act.

At times the challenge is put: 'Where does the Bible ever say angels can be destroyed?' Matthew 25:41, "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," would be one example. 2 Peter 2:4, "the angels that sinned .. delivered .. into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment," would be another. The problem is that Christadelphians will not allow that these particular angels are the angels of heaven. There is no Scriptural reason to deny this, however. It is clear from these texts that *some* angels are to be destroyed. The identification of those angels is another matter. In Peter's letters, he also refers to angels at 1 Peter 1:12; 2 Peter 2:11 where they are almost certainly the heavenly angels.

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4.2.2 *'There Are Three Parties, Not Four'*

Second, he excludes a personal Devil because three parties (Adam, Eve, and serpent) are mentioned in the Genesis account, not four. But Revelation 12:9 says “the one called Devil and Satan” is to be identified in some way with “that [the, Greek] *old* serpent.” Once again, the definite article is a pointer back to a particular serpent, the one in Eden. So the Devil must in some sense be located in the Genesis account. There being no sinful humans on earth at the time the serpent uttered its lie, the Devil existed before any (human) ‘sin in the flesh’ and was therefore not identical with it. The fact that the original serpent exists at the time of the fulfilment of the Revelation 12:9 prophecy can only mean that whoever or whatever the Devil is, it is no more (human) sin in the flesh than it was in the garden of Eden. And, we might add, the literal serpent itself was no more Satan than the Revelation 14:1 reference to Jesus as “the Lamb” proves that Jesus was himself any one of the lambs slain in sacrifice under Mosaic Law.

4.2.3 *'The Devil Was Not Punished'*

Third, Abel argues that the serpent is held responsible for the wrongdoing in Eden and was cursed while the Devil, if he existed, was let off ‘scot-free.’ (Ge 3:14; 2Co 11:3) The serpent was addressed because it was the agent visible to Adam and Eve in whose presence the words were uttered. In the similar account regarding Balaam’s ass, “the LORD opened the mouth of the ass.” The account reads as if the ass itself were the source of the speech: “*She* [the ass] said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?” (Nu 22:28) As mentioned before, Peter makes clear that the beast itself was “dumb.” (2Pe 2:16) So no power of speech and reason was given to the ass; the voice was not that of the ass but of God. This shows that the serpent need not have been given the power of speech or reason to be able to say what it did. And that the real source of the voice behind the serpent did not escape ‘scot-free’ is clear in the account at Revelation 12:9-12 where the “*old* serpent” is called to account.

Certainly the literal serpent was cursed although innocent (Ge 3:14), but is this really such a problem in view of the ‘cursing’ of the innocent ground at the same time (Ge 3:17) or the ‘cursing’ of the innocent animals at Deuteronomy 28:18?

4.2.4 *'The Serpent Did Not Blame the Devil'*

Fourth, Abel further reasons that Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the serpent, but the serpent did not blame a fallen angel because there was no such creature. Well, if a fallen angel were truly the source of the voice spoken through the serpent, would he likely cause the serpent to accuse himself? Hardly! The argument is manifestly weak.

4.2.5 *'The Serpent Was Crafty'*

Fifth, he points out that it is specified that the serpent was “subtle” and “crafty” in its manner, qualities that lent themselves well to the test. Granted, but a spirit Devil could as easily have taken advantage of these qualities as could God. It does not disprove the spirit Devil’s existence.

4.2.6 *'The Offspring of the Serpent Were Sinful'*

Sixth, he then argues that the seed of the serpent has been symbolically identified with sin. (Mt 23:33) But the text cited says nothing that identifies serpents with the sin nature. It says: "Serpents, offspring of vipers, how are you to flee from the judgment of Gehenna?" Far from demonstrating that the seed of the serpent is sin in an 'internal' sense (the sin within), it shows that the seed of the serpent included the scribes and Pharisees, real persons in an 'external' sense. Obviously the seed is sinful, but this text proves nothing regarding the identity of the serpent.

It is breathtaking that any of these points, or even all of them taken collectively, could be considered a solution to the problem of the serpent in Eden. And even if they were, the dilemma of a God that deliberately arranged for an evil test, knowing in advance that the serpent must lie in order to facilitate it, violates the spirit of Romans 3:7 where Paul refutes the argument of men who charge that Christians say "Let us do evil, that good may come," adding "[their] damnation is just." God would have been guilty of exactly this if he had been party to lying by supplying the liar in order to test Adam and Eve. Any damnation of God over this would have been "just."

4.3 **Not Immediately and Fully Identified**

Still, it is true that Genesis itself does not completely identify the serpent. This ought not surprise us, because other features in the account, such as the "seed," were also not immediately explained. Progressively, however, the serpent is identified in the Scriptures as the Devil and Satan. (Joh 8:44; Ro 16:20; 2Co 11:3, 14; Re 12:9; 20:2) See 3.1 above for an explanation of the revealing of the "mystery" mentioned in the Scriptures.

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5 “The Sons of God”

The Bible describes “the sons of God” in Genesis 6:2-5 and there has been considerable discussion as to whether these were human or angelic sons of God. Naturally, those denying the personal existence of an invisible spirit Devil and demons advocate the former. The text reads:

“That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

5.1 Were They Humans?

“The sons of God” took “the daughters of men” as wives according to the text. “Sons of God” can refer either to humans or angels. (De 14:1; Job 38:7; Ps 89:6; Ho 1:10) So how can we determine who they were in the days of Noah?

Some hold that these “sons of God” were human, men of the line of Seth, and that taking as wives “the daughters of men” means that they married into the line of wicked Cain, but corroborating Scriptural evidence is lacking to support the view that intermarriage between the lines of Seth and Cain is meant here. For one thing, there is nothing to say the “sons of God” were the descendants of Seth, many of whom would have been killed in the Flood.

On the other hand, it is true that one of the descendants of Cain, Lamech, was a polygamist and killed someone. (Ge 4:19, 23) One made musical instruments, but this is hardly evidence of special wickedness. (Ge 4:21) Another made metal “tools,” “instruments” or “implements,” hardly a crime either. The text does not say he made weapons. (Ge 4:22, *New International Version, English Standard Version, NET Bible, New American Standard Bible*) So it does not seem that the Bible is making a point in Genesis chapter 4 about the wickedness of the line of Cain. Even less likely it is that inter-marriages between two lines of ordinary humans were somehow responsible for the birth of the “mighty men” mentioned in Genesis 6:4.

It is true that the expression “sons of men [or ‘of mankind’]” (which those favouring the earlier mentioned view would contrast with the expression “sons of God”) is frequently used in an unfavourable sense, but not consistently. (Compare Ps 4:2; 57:4; Pr 8:22, 30, 31; Jer 32:18, 19; Da 10:16) At Job 38:4-7 “the sons of God” who “shouted for joy” when God “laid the cornerstone” of the earth clearly were angelic sons and not humans descended from Adam, as yet not even created.

As mentioned at 4.2.1 above, when Jesus said angels “in heaven” do not marry, he was evidently referring to their ordinary and natural condition in heaven. But this is not to say

some angels at an earlier time while on earth and *not* “in heaven” did not marry women as an unnatural act.

For example, Jude 6, 7 specifically associates angels with unnatural activity. “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but *left their own habitation*, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them *in like manner*, giving themselves over to fornication, and *going after strange flesh*, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” The homosexuality of Sodom and Gomorrah was unnatural. (Ro 1:26) The mating of spirit creatures with women of flesh was unnatural “in like manner.”

1 Peter 3:18-20 also shows that angels were disobedient in Noah’s day. “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto *the spirits* in prison; *Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah*, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.”

Christ was “made alive *in the spirit* [RS, NE, JB, ESV],” not “by the Spirit [KJ],” since “in the spirit” must parallel “*in the flesh*.” The statements are antithetical. “Flesh” is the stuff of a body. That “spirit” describes a body form is confirmed by 1 Corinthians 15:44. In “this,” the spirit state or body, he went and preached to others also designated “spirits” who are specifically identified as individuals who lived pre-Flood. The position that somehow the ‘spirit of Christ’ in the sense of the essential element of the Christian message was preached to ordinary humans before the Flood is dependent on the arbitrary “by the Spirit” rendering at 1 Peter 3:18, rejected by the *Revised Standard Version, New English Bible, Jerusalem Bible and English Standard Version*. It is otherwise indefensible.

2 Peter 2:4, 5 links angels with an ancient day of judgment. “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.” ‘Angels in chains of darkness’ in this second letter correspond to ‘spirits in prison’ in Peter’s first letter. These angels were different from “the world of the ungodly” from whom they are clearly distinguished in verse 5.

All of these texts show that angels can, indeed, sin. We are aware of how they are explained by those who do not believe in personal demons. Those explanations will be considered later.

5.2 Objections

Five objections are proposed to this view.

5.2.1 ‘All Existence Is Bodily’

The first is that all existence in Scripture is *bodily* existence and there is no evidence in Scripture of materialization. God himself exists without being either flesh or man. (Nu 23:19; Hos 11:9) Clearly, existence is possible without a body of flesh. Jesus was raised a spirit. (1Co 15:45; 1Ti 3:16; 1Pe 3:18) He had a “spiritual body [*soma*, Greek]” as distinct from a “natural [literally, “soul”] body.” (1Co 15:44) So the Greek *soma* (body) does not exclusively refer to bodies of material substance, those that are souls, but also to

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those that are not ‘souls.’ While it is true that all existence is bodily, there is more than one kind of body. There are both physical and spiritual bodies. (1Co 15:44b) Spirit persons have bodies, although of a spiritual kind.

5.2.2 ‘Angels Don’t Marry’

Another objection to the view that the “sons of God” were disobedient angels is that angels do not marry. (Lu 20:35, 36) Jesus’ statement shows that marriages between angels do not exist. The parallel passage at Matthew 22:30, recording the same conversation, says: “angels of God *in heaven*” do not marry. This statement does not prove that angels never came *to earth* to marry women *on earth*. Jesus is quoted in the present tense. Resurrected ones “are [*eisi*’, Greek] like the angels” and this would logically be true *at the time he spoke the words*. But it is not to say that angels could not and did not marry human women at an earlier period in human history.

5.2.3 ‘Descendants of Seth and Cain’

The third objection is that the “sons of God” were men of the line of Seth intermarrying with Cainites. (Ge 4:26) This is pure speculation. Genesis 4:26 says nothing about the line of Seth being “sons of God.” There is nothing to show that God made any distinction between family lines at this point in human history.

Neither is there evidence that intermarriage between the lines of Seth and Cain is here meant, or that such marriages were somehow responsible for the birth of the “mighty men” mentioned in verse 4. The identification of “the sons of God” at Genesis 6:2-4 with angelic creatures is objected to because the context is said to relate entirely to human wickedness. But the wrongful interjection of spirit creatures into human affairs most certainly could contribute to or accelerate the growth of human wickedness and would be not at all inconsistent with it. In any case, why would the intermarriage of Sethites and Cainites result in greater badness than the marriage of Cainites among themselves? Why would the offspring Nephilim be outstanding “men of renown” if they were in fact ordinary men no different to ordinary Cainites?

5.2.4 ‘Nephilim Are Descendants of Humans’

A further objection is that Numbers 13:33 describes as “giants [*nephilim*, Hebrew]” Canaanites who were descendants of ordinary humans hundreds of years after the Flood. It is argued that therefore angels are not required to produce Nephilim. This is true, but it is irrelevant. In fact, the argument is quite misleading. The Bible records that the Nephilim existed in the pre-Flood world. (Ge 6:4) But the reference to the Nephilim at Numbers 13:33 is part of an “evil report” by faithless men who were trying to discourage the Israelites from entering the Promised Land.

Only in this false report are any of the inhabitants of Canaan ever called Nephilim. Their report exaggerated the strength of the inhabitants of Canaan, so it is likely that they were not Nephilim at all. Nevertheless, Nephilim simply means “fellers,” those who cause others to fall. It neither *requires* that they be the sons of angels who sinned, nor *requires* that they be the sons of ordinary humans.

5.2.5 *'Angels of Heaven Can't Sin'*

The fifth objection the view that the “sons of God” were disobedient angels is that divine angels cannot sin. The texts quoted in support (Ps 103:20, 21; He 1:14) date from a time much later than any rebellion of unfaithful angels and were true *at the time stated*, but are silent regarding earlier periods. No text says angels are incapable of sin.

Some have held that, when Jesus said, “Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven,” he implied that God’s will was then, at the time Jesus spoke, being done in heaven and that this would not have been possible had wicked angels been living in heaven. (Mt 6:10) But the *King James Version* italicizes words that do not appear in the Greek. Removing the words “*it is*,” the passage allows for the view that the doing of God’s will in both places (heaven and earth) was yet future. This agrees with the Revelation, where, after an initial cleansing of heaven (Re 12:9), earth is cleansed so that God’s will obtains in both places. - Re 19:21.

Another argument is based on Psalm 5:4, 5:

“Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish *shall not stand in thy sight.*”

It is argued that the Devil could not have been a person in heaven in the days of Job without contradicting this text.

But consider this. Habakkuk 1:13 similarly says:

“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and *canst not look on iniquity.*”

Does this mean that God is totally unable even to see bad, that he is blind to it? Logic similar to the Christadelphian approach to Psalm 5:4, 5 would require it. Yet the text goes on to add:

“wherefore *lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously ..?*”

So, yes, God does see sin. (cp. Jer 23:14) Habakkuk’s point is that God is unable to see or to look upon sin endlessly and without acting.

Similarly, Psalm 5:4, 5 points to God’s inability to tolerate endlessly those who take their stand against him without acting against them.

That some *do* temporarily take their “stand” against him, Psalm 2:2 testifies.

“The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD.”

The Hebrew word for “set” here is *yatsab*, exactly the same word as that translated “stand” at Psalm 5:5. People do in fact “stand” against God at present. But their stand will last only as long as the judgment. (Ps 1:5; 2:9) So the statements at Psalm 5:4, 5 cannot be taken as absolutes; only as proof that the bad cannot reside with God permanently.

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5.3 Other Arguments

One writer argues from Genesis 6:13 that humans were responsible for the violence in the pre-Flood world.

“The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.”

The argument apparently is that the words “through them” somehow preclude the possibility that spirit “sons of God” came to the earth encouraging violence among humans. We might as well reason that anyone who is misled by another person is not guilty of the sins they commit. Really, when anyone falls under an evil influence and succumbs, he is fully responsible for the consequences. So those who fell victim to the teachings of the Nicolaitans would be punished with the sword. (Re 2:15, 16) The fact that they were influenced did not excuse them. Neither did it the pre-Flood world, so the words of Genesis 6:13 in no way preclude demon influence in that time.

No compelling argument proves that the sons of God of Genesis chapter 6 were humans rather than errant angels, spirits who became demons.

6 Who Provoked David?

Some argue from a comparison of 2 Samuel 24:1 and 1 Chronicles 21:1 that even “the LORD,” Jehovah, was a Satan. There is no particular objection to God being called a *satan* in the sense of an opposer or resister, especially of wicked men.

Of course, a person who is “the Satan” (articular) is necessarily “a *satan*” (anarthrous) whereas the reverse is not always true. So “the Adam” (the father of the human race) was ‘an *adam*’ (anarthrous, a man) but not every *adam* was “the Adam.” Similarly, “the God” (the true God) is ‘a god’ but not every “god” (angelic or human) is “the God.”

It would not surprise us, therefore, to find that the invisible spirit Satan is possibly the one called ‘a *satan*’ (anarthrous) at 1 Chronicles 21:1.

6.1 God Permits But Does Not Cause Sin

If Satan or some other opposer, possibly a human, provoked David to sin, the question remains as to why 2 Samuel 24:1 seems to say God did it. We read:

“The anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and *he* moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.”

God is sometimes spoken of in Scripture as doing what he merely *permits* to be done by another. Jehovah was not the one that *actively* moved David to sin. The expression “he moved David” can also be rendered in a passive sense: ‘when David was influenced or incited [by someone else].’

So Rotherham’s translation shows it was by God’s sufferance or allowance rather than his own doing that David was influenced by someone else.

“The anger of Yahweh kindled against Israel, so that *he suffered* [allowed] *David to be moved* against them saying, Go count Israel and Judah.” - *The Emphasized Bible*.

In the Appendix on page 919 of this Bible, Rotherham discusses at length and with many examples that it is a feature of Hebrew that things a person is said to have done are often things he has merely permitted. (See 7.1.4 below.)

The actual culprit was a *satan*, as 1 Chronicles 21:1 shows.

“Satan [anarthrous, *satan*, not *has Satan* with the definite article] stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.”

The anarthrous usage allows for two possibilities. The first is that a human *satan*, or opposer, provoked David in this instance.

The second is that the invisible spirit Satan did so. Of course, “*the Satan*” is also ‘a *satan*.’ In the same way, “*the Adam*,” (the father of the human race) was ‘an *adam*’ (anarthrous, a man) but not every *adam* was “the Adam.” And “the God” (articular, the true God) is ‘a god’ but not every “god” (anarthrous, angelic or human) is “the God.” It is certainly possible, therefore, that the invisible spirit Satan is the one called ‘a *satan*’ (anarthrous) at 1 Chronicles 21:1.

The definite article is never used with *satan* in reference to God in the Scriptures.

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7 The Satan of Job

The Satan of the first two chapters of Job was *has Satan*, “the Satan.” (Job 1:6, 7, 8, 9, 12; 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7) Concerning the significance of the definite article, *has*, Gesenius’ *Hebrew Grammar* (GK), §126 *d* and *e*, states:

“The article is, generally speaking, employed to determine a substantive wherever it is required by Greek and English; thus: . . . (*d*) When terms applying to whole classes are restricted (simply by usage) to particular individuals . . . or things, e.g. . . .*the adversary, Satan*”

So *has Satan* applies, not to a personification of evil, an ‘internal’ sin in the flesh, but to a “particular” and therefore ‘external’ individual. Anarthrous uses of *satan* as at 1 Chronicles 21:1 are therefore not fully analogous to articular uses such as *has Satan* and may not be helpful in explaining them. The anarthrous *satan* may sometimes refer to the particular, individual Satan since ‘the Satan’ is always ‘*a* satan’ whereas the reverse is not always true.

There are several indications that the Satan of Job was no human. In the first place, he enters right among “the sons of God.” (Job 1:6) The only other time this expression “sons of God” occurs in the book of Job, it applies to *angels* watching on at the creation of the earth, before there were any humans on earth. (Job 38:7) The onus is on those who think the Job chapters 1 and 2 “sons of God” were humans to prove it. But they can’t prove it from the book of Job. Of course, to enter among angels, Satan must not have been a human.

Then Satan describes how he came to the meeting before God “*from . . . the earth*” suggesting travel from there to the presence of God. (Job 1:7) Compare the expression “*from heaven*” at Job 1:16 where fire actually moved from one location to another.

For the first test, God placed Job in Satan’s hand. This is important, because Christadelphians say God was directly responsible for Job’s suffering. The Bible says Satan requested that God turn his own hand against Job but that God placed Job in Satan’s hand instead. Satan says:

“But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, *all that he hath is in thy power* [“hand,” Hebrew]; only upon himself put not forth thine hand.” - Job 1:11, 12.

This means Jehovah refused Satan’s request for God personally to use his “hand” against his servant. The disaster that followed occurred while Job’s belongings were in Satan’s hand, not God’s.

It is true that a messenger reported the event this way: “The very fire *of God* fell from the heavens.” (Job 1:16) What can we say about this comment? First, he knew that the fire was not caused by any human, so he concluded it was from some supernatural source. If, as Christadelphians usually say, some human was given the capacity to perform miraculous works to test Job, why didn’t the messenger ascribe it to that miracle-worker?

But no human Satan could do this and the messenger knew it. The messenger was simply wrong in attributing the fire to God.

The fact that Satan was responsible is conclusively proven from verse 12: “all that he hath is in thy [Satan’s, not God’s] power.” The account does not say that God added to Satan’s power in any way in this regard. Satan used his existing powers against Job.

For the second test, Satan again requested that God turn his own hand against Job. Once again, God delivered Job to Satan’s hand.

“But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, *he is in thine hand*; but save his life.” - Job 2:5, 6.

Again, Jehovah refused Satan’s request for God personally to use his “hand” against Job. Rather, he placed Job in Satan’s hand, using Satan’s existing powers, so the events of this test were again caused by Satan, not God. It was Satan, not Jehovah, who struck Job with boils. (Job 2:7) No human Satan could do this, so either a spirit Satan or God himself struck Job. The source was supernatural. The things that happened to Job caused him much grief, particularly the death of his children. Are we to believe that God caused it? God has been said to cause grief to the wicked, although even then not out of his own heart. (La 1:5, 12; 3:32, 33) But does God grieve the righteous? - Eze 14:14.

7.1 Arguments that God Was Responsible

Attempts have been made to implicate God in the crimes committed against Job so as to deny the existence of an invisible Satan. Let’s examine the reasons as presented by Christadelphian writer Ron Abel.

7.1.1 ‘Job Blamed God’

Abel attributes Job’s woes to God because Job himself ascribed the events of the first test to God. For example, Job 1:21, 22 says: “‘the LORD hath taken away...’ In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.” Other examples are found at Job 6:4; 8:4; 19:21; 23:16, although at Job 8:4 Bildad the false comforter is speaking.

Duncan Heaster goes so far as to say it is a “major theme” of the book of Job that *God* was responsible for Job’s problems. (*The Real Devil - A Biblical Exploration*) It was certainly a theme in Job’s mind, but was it correct? The argument is that ‘problems’ like the death of Job’s children were a test that made Job more righteous. But what kind of God is this that kills sons and daughters to refine a father who in any case is not reported as having done anything wrong? Before both tests God himself calls Job

“a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil.” – Job 1:8; 2:3.

In any case, the principle of divine justice states:

“When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. *The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father*, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.” – Eze 18:19, 20.

So why would God kill Job’s children? Are we to believe that all ten of Job’s children were wicked enough to merit destruction on their own account? They certainly could not have been killed on their father’s account.

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In any case, if God was really the one testing Job, why give the job to Satan? Satan wanted God to do it, but God refused. (Job 1:11, 12; 2:5, 6) And if God was testing Job, the closest parallel case would be when God wanted to “tempt [*epeirase*, Greek *Septuagint*]” Abraham. (Ge 22:1) Here God tested Abraham but *prevented* him from killing Isaac once his faith had been tested. (Ge 22:12). If God was the direct source of all of Job’s terrible sufferings, sufferings he did not prevent, how could the following assurance possibly be true?

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted [same basic word as at Genesis 22:1, *peirazomai*] of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth [*peirazei*] he any man:” - Jas 1:13.

When God gave Abraham a test it was not with an evil end. The James statement applies to “any man,” and so we would expect it to apply to Job.

We should also note that when Job was finally moved to a clearer understanding and repentance it was not because of the trials, but because of God’s corrective counsel in chapters 38 to 41. Only after this counsel does he at last say: “*now* mine eye seeth thee.” (Job 42:5) No doubt the whole episode benefitted him because “tribulation worketh patience.” (Ro 5:3) But God was not the instigator of that tribulation.

The only way to reconcile these accounts is to view Job’s experiences as a test that God allowed, but did not actively cause. Someone has asked why a spirit Satan would cooperate in a test of Job’s faith if it only succeeded in making him more righteous. The answer seems obvious. Satan hoped he could intimidate Job into breaking integrity. Job’s integrity is an important theme in this Bible book. - Job 2:3, 9; 27:5; 31:6.

It is important to remember that it was Job’s own explanation that God had caused his suffering. In fact, the passage at Job 2:7, 10 describing the second test helps us better understand the matter. Job 2:7 specifically states that Satan caused the second test.

“So went *Satan* forth from the presence of the LORD, and *smote Job* with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.”

Then Job 2:10 records *Job’s* analysis, *his* understanding of what had happened.

“Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?”

Was Job correct in this? No. Remember that Job 2:6 clearly states that he was in “*thine* [Satan’s] hand,” not God’s, at this point. So Job was simply wrong about receiving evil ‘at the hand of God.’

There is also the fact that verses 7 and 10 cannot contradict each other. One says “Satan .. smote Job” and the other says God did it. So who really caused the affliction? Job 2:10 quotes Job’s own explanation or interpretation of the second test. It was wrong. Of course, it was not a sin against God to have a wrong understanding. Many other fine servants of God have misapprehended God’s dealings. (2Sa 7:1-3, 12, 13; Joh 21:23; Ac 7:23, 24) But all of his trials occurred while he was in the hand - the power and control - of Satan, not God.

We shall have something more to say about Job not sinning against God below.

7.1.2 'God Moved Satan to Act Against Job'

Abel also argues that God was responsible for Job's suffering because Job 2:3 has God saying to Satan: "Thou [Satan] movedst me against him [Job]." The Hebrew for "movedst" means "to seduce .. entice,.. persuade, provoke." (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*) It means to try to influence. But this does not mean that he was successful. It certainly does not prove that God was responsible for the crimes against Job.

7.1.3 'God Confirmed Job's Statements'

Again Abel suggests God's involvement because at Job 42:8 he says: "ye [Job's false friends] have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job." Abel believes God thereby confirms Job's idea that God caused his suffering. Yet, a moment's reflection shows that this is not at all true. There are many examples that demonstrate beyond doubt the inaccuracy of Job's understanding of God and His ways. For example, Job said:

"I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me. Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy, He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths." - Job 33:9-11.

Was Job correct in this? Let God answer:

"Behold, *in this thou art not just*: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man. *Why dost thou strive against him?* for he giveth not account of any of his matters." - Job 33:12, 13.

Job was not correct in this. Elsewhere Job said:

"It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God." - Job 34:9.

"My righteousness is more than God's .. What profit shall I have, if I be cleansed from my sin?" - Job 35:2, 3.

Although Job spoke many things regarding God that were truthful and God credits him for these at Job 42:8, many of his comments were inaccurate, as he himself says at Job 42:3-6:

"Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

He did not fully understand the things he "uttered" and they cannot be relied on if they conflict with other texts.

It is neither correct nor honest to apply the words of Job 42:8 as if they prove that God had caused Job's sufferings.

7.1.4 'Job 42:11 Confirms God Was Responsible'

Next, Abel implicates God because of the comments at Job 42:11. Should this read 'all the calamity that the LORD had let come [passive voice] upon him;' or "that the LORD had brought [active voice] upon him?" The Hebrew does not specify the voice either way.

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There are several comparable cases demonstrating the passive sense. For example, at Exodus 1:17 where our English version says the Hebrew midwives “saved the men children alive,” the original Hebrew text literally says that the midwives “*caused* the male children to live.” In reality, what they did was *permit* the children to live by not putting them to death. The active sense is intolerable here.

Another instance of this might be the situation where God said regarding Pharaoh: “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart.” (Ex 7:3, 4) Did God himself actively harden Pharaoh’s heart? Not really. It was hardened because of the message declared to him. The message gave an occasion for him to react in hard stubbornness and anger. But since the message Moses and Aaron declared was really God’s message, the account says God hardened Pharaoh’s heart.

As to who was really responsible for the hardening of the heart, Exodus 8:15 says: “When Pharaoh saw that there was respite, *he* hardened his heart.” And again after the lifting of one of the plagues: “*Pharaoh* hardened his heart at this time also.” (Ex 8:32) 1 Samuel 6:6 states: “*The Egyptians and Pharaoh* hardened their hearts.” We can conclude that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, but because it was in response to God’s message it could be said that God (passively) did the hardening.

Rotherham’s translation renders the Hebrew account to read that God “let [Pharaoh’s] heart wax bold.” In support his Appendix shows that in Hebrew the *occasion* or *permission* of an event is often presented as if it were the *cause* of the event, and that “even *positive commands* are occasionally to be accepted as meaning no more than *permission*.” After quoting Hebrew scholars M. M. Kalisch, H. F. W. Gesenius, and B. Davies in support, Rotherham states that the Hebrew sense of the texts involving Pharaoh is that

“God permitted Pharaoh to harden his own heart - spared him - gave him the opportunity, the occasion, of working out the wickedness that was in him. That is all.” - *The Emphasised Bible*, appendix, p. 919; cp. Isa 10:5-7.

Take another example. At Isaiah 6:10 God tells Isaiah:

“Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.”

Did Isaiah actually go and fatten their hearts to prevent their repentance? No, but this was the effect of the message that Isaiah had been commanded to preach, that people would close their own eyes, ears and hearts, that they would not repent and turn around for spiritual healing. The message made them unreceptive because it did not please them. Because Isaiah was the messenger he was said to have done these things to them.

That they did it to themselves is shown by Jesus himself in quoting this prophecy:

“For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes *they* have closed.”

Years later Paul quoted it in the same words. Though Isaiah's prophecy speaks of Isaiah as doing it, both Jesus and Paul show the people themselves did the closing of their eyes, not Isaiah. - Mt 13:14, 15; Ac 28:25-27.

To hold that God caused the suffering of Job either directly (but see Job 2:7) or by delegating miraculous power to some wicked man(!) makes God responsible for sins against his own servant just as wicked as any perpetrated by evil men. The very idea conflicts with God's personality. As young Elihu says at Job 34:12: "Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment." And, as mentioned, it would also conflict with James' words: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." - Jas 1:13.

7.1.5 '*Satan Is Not Called a Son of God*'

Fifth, Abel says "the sons of God" mentioned in Job may have been humans and Satan is not called a "son of God." Interestingly, as mentioned above, the only other reference in the same Bible book to "sons of God" is to angels. - Job 38:7; see also Ps 89:6.

Satan may not directly be called a son of God in the Job account, but we really wonder what point Abel is making. If he is arguing that the "sons of God" were mere humans, would he not *want* Satan to be a fellow human 'son of God'? In fact, it is next to certain that Satan is of the same kind as the "sons of God" mentioned in the account. Job 1:6 says it was "a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them." At the subsequent meeting, Job 2:1 says "Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD." How did Satan come to "present himself" right among the "sons of God" at a meeting reserved for them if he were not one of them?

7.1.6 '*Satan Was On Earth Because He Was "Walking"*'

Sixth, Abel says the meeting between Satan and Jehovah occurred on earth, as implied by Satan's "walking." (Job 1:7) But Job 1:7; 2:2 says Satan came "from ... the earth" to take his position before Jehovah. This is more naturally said if he had moved away from an earthly location, irrespective of the fact that a meeting "before" God could take place on earth, which point is not in dispute. (De 19:17) Elsewhere, angels are said to have "walked to and fro through the earth." (Zech 1:11)

God himself is also spoken of as walking on the earth. (Ge 3:8; Le 26:12; De 23:14) It would be equally possible for a spirit Devil. Nothing about this precludes Satan being an angel.

7.1.7 '*God Could Not Bear a Rebel in Heaven*'

Seventh, Abel argues that a rebel angel could not have had access to God's heavenly presence. He cites Psalm 5:4, 5, which says:

"Evil may not sojourn with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight."

We have encountered this argument above. He is arguing that this statement would preclude a wicked Satan living in heaven, but his explanation tears the text from its context. The psalmist is speaking about wicked men then living who were carrying on evil acts, but who could not expect to remain permanently as honoured guests of God. Their demise is forecast in the context. (Ps 5:6-10) The dwelling place particularly in view in the context is God's "house," his "holy temple" in Jerusalem. - Ps 5:7.

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However, that the wicked *do* stand at least temporarily before God is clear from Psalm 2:2: “The kings of earth *set* [or “stand,” same Hebrew verb as at Psalm 5:5] themselves ... against the LORD.” The facts are that evil men *were* sojourning in God's house, the temple, and standing in his sight, but this was not fitting and was at best temporary. Since evil men were temporarily being tolerated, Psalm 5:4, 5 is not a strong argument against a similar situation obtaining in heaven for a limited time.

Abel further uses Habakkuk 1:13, which reads:

“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.”

Look again at the second half of the same verse, which Abel ignores:

“wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?”

It refutes Abel's contention. The fact is, God *does* look on evil ones for a time, but, because it is inconsistent with his personality, he is unable to do so permanently and will eventually and inevitably act against evildoers.

Abel cites Matthew 6:10, where Jesus says: “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” His argument depends heavily on the *King James Version* rendering, “as it is in heaven.” The argument is that Jesus could not have said “as it is in heaven” if Satan, a wicked angel, was at that time in heaven. The fact is, the words “it is” do not appear in the Greek. The Greek simply reads *hos en ourano kai epi ges*, literally “as in heaven also upon earth.” Jesus was not comparing a future earthly condition with a present heavenly condition, but was inviting prayer for a future condition for both heaven and earth.

7.2 Other Arguments

Heaster has argued that Satan received power to attack Job from God and he cites Job 2:3-6.

“And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he *is* in thine hand; but save his life.”

For “thou movedst me,” see point 7.1.2 above. Note the expression “thine hand.” There is nothing here to say God added power to Satan's hand. This expression is the one regularly used in the Scriptures to refer to a person's authority, dominion or care. - Ge 9:2; 16:6; 41:35; 42:37.

Surprisingly, this writer suggests there is no indication in the account that Satan did anything wrong. But surely we have to concede at the very least that he was a resister, an opposer, for that is what Satan means. Of course, it is possible to be a satan in a positive

sense, resisting something bad. An angel resisted wicked Balaam in this way. (Nu 22:22) But in Job chapters 1 and 2, who exactly is Satan opposing, resisting, if not God and/or Job? How then could he be a morally neutral resister? As mentioned above, he tried to influence God against integrity-keeping Job. He did not succeed, of course, because God would not be drawn into acting against Job personally, but this confirms his wicked motives. – Job 2:3.

It is also interesting to see how Heaster attempts to evade the force of the definite article with Satan. He suggests that an anarthrous noun like “Duncan” might refer to a particular individual whereas “the Duncan” would be “a description of a function.” In Job, Satan is *has satanas*, “the Satan.” Heaster argues that we are not reading about a personal being named Satan. He enlists support from Dianne Bergant who says:

“The word satan appears with an article indicating that here the word is a title or description and not a proper name.” - *Job, Ecclesiastes*, page 27.

However, Heaster has pushed the point too far. A noun with the article may not be a proper name, but it may still refer to a personal being. This is no better demonstrated than at Job 2:1.

“Again there was a day when the sons of [“the,” Hebrew] God came to present themselves before the LORD, and [“the”] Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD.”

Here the Hebrew calls God “the God” and Satan “the Satan.” If the article with Satan means Satan is not a personal being, what can we say of God? That he is an impersonal function? This expression “the God” in Hebrew is *ha 'Elohim* and it occurs 368 times in reference to God. Surely this is proof positive that the article does not negate personality. The same is true of other Hebrew nouns. “Adam” of itself simply means “man,” but with article it refers to the first human person, Adam.

The attempt to evade a personal spirit Satan has led to many and varied explanations of Job chapters 1 and 2. For example, Heaster has suggested that the “sons of God” may even have been Job’s own children who celebrated their birthdays. (Job 1:4) But the Hebrew words for “day” and “birthday” are as different in Hebrew as they are in English. (Ge 40:20) At Job 1:4, the word “day” is used, not “birthday.” More likely, Job’s seven sons held a seven-day family gathering once a year when each son was the host of the feast held at his house on “his day.” Job himself performed the role of priest, offering sacrifices for his children. - Job 1:5.

Going one step further, Heaster points to Job 1:6, where reference is made to “a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD,” and he says “it seems that we are led to connect the keeping of days.” The suggestion is that “the LORD” in the account was actually a priest acting in God’s name. He further suggests this too was a feast day on which they allowed satan - but not the spirit Satan, of course - to attend the feast. The satan in this scenario would be Job’s three so-called ‘friends,’ and perhaps Eliphaz the Temanite in particular, who came to the feast that day. Because these ‘friends’ were effectively persecutors of Job, it is argued that they may have been a collective satan. – Job 6:19, 23, 27, 28; 8:6; 19:19.

This scenario is at least as speculative as ‘imagining’ a personal spirit Satan in Job. Here are some of the problems with it. (1) Job’s sons are not called “sons of God” in the

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account; (2) the only other “sons of God” in the book are angels (Job 38:7); (3) there is no support for the suggestion that the “day” of Job 1:6 was one of the days of Job 1:5; (4) there could not have been a priest acting for “the LORD” because Job 1:8 says “there is none like him [Job] in the earth.” (5) Satan speaks at Job 1:7, but it is not until Job 2:11, well after the sufferings of Job were under way, that the false friends even left their homes to visit him; (6) Job’s ‘friends’ persecuted him by their words and attitudes, but, even if it could be shown that Job believed they were responsible for all his sufferings, Job later admitted that he ‘uttered that he understood not’ (Job 42:3); (7) Eliphaz was likely a Temanite from Teman in Edom near the land of Uz where Job lived (Ge 36:31-34; Job 1:1), not from Tema. - Job 6:19.

Further to point (7) above, the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* says under “Tema” and “Teman”:

“TEMA .. The name of a son of Ishmael (Gen 25:15; 1 Ch 1:30), of the tribe descended from him (Jer 25:23), and of the place where they dwelt (Job 6:19 ..) ..
TEMAN .. The name of a district and town in the land of Edom, named after Teman the grandson of Esau, the son of his firstborn, Eliphaz (Gen 36:11; 1 Ch 1:36). A duke Teman is named among the chiefs or clans of Edom (Gen 36:42; 1 Ch 1:53)... From Obad 1:9 we gather that Teman was in the land of Esau (Edom) .. The inhabitants of Teman seem to have been famous for their wisdom (Jer 49:7; Obad 1:8 f). Eliphaz the Temanite was chief of the comforters of Job (2:11, etc.).”

Surprisingly, Heaster argues that ‘the hand of God’ in Job is often another way of referring to an angel charged with doing God’s will. That way, when Satan - a faithful angel - asked God to put forth his hand against Job, he was really inviting God to use himself, Satan, to persecute Job. There is really no way to prove this suggestion. Twice Satan uses “thine hand” in reference to God’s hand (Job 1:11; 2:5) and twice God responds with “thine hand.” (Job 1:12; 2:6) It is really quite wrong to infer that therefore Satan’s hand is God’s hand. They are simply two separate hands, each “thine” referring to a different person, God’s and Satan’s. God is rebuffing Satan, refusing his suggestion, and instead placing Job in Satan’s hand. To say, as some have said, that Satan seeks delegated authority from God is not supported in the account. There is nothing to say Satan is God’s angel or agent.

Interestingly, both times God uses the more complete expression ‘*in thy hand.*’ (Job 1:12; 2:6) This need only have been a transfer of authority. Other examples of the same language simply refer to passing authority, or care, of something to some other person. (Ge 9:2; 16:6; 42:37; Lu 23:46) There is no hint that this other person is in some way a special representative, like an agent.

What can we say of another suggestion, that Satan was God’s angel, a kind of secret agent “going to and fro in the earth,” reporting back to God about suspect individuals like Job? (Job 1:7) There is nothing in the account to prove it. But at least it proposes a spirit Satan which contradicts some of the other notions described above. We need to

remember that whoever he was, he was the Satan - the *opposer* - of someone, whether God or Job. A satan can be good if he opposes something bad. God's faithful angel opposed wicked Balaam. (Nu 22:22) But how could the satan in Job be a righteous angel if he opposes the righteous?

So far is Heaster prepared to go in dismissing a supernatural Satan that he is willing to consider the possibility that the narrative and its conversations are not literal, but a theatrical presentation. So he reasons that in this case Satan would be a role rather than a cosmic being. So goodbye to Satan. And if to Satan, why not to "the LORD" too? And why need even Job be historical? Well, the Bible confirms the existence of Jehovah and Job. We suggest that it equally confirms the existence of Satan as a spirit person.

Sometime this particular writer misreads a text or over-extends its meaning. For example, he quotes Job 30:21, 24 because he believes it shows Job expected to be persecuted but to have his life preserved. In this way he reasons that Job was aware of Satan's challenge. The text he quotes says:

"with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me... Howbeit he will not stretch out his hand to the grave."

Unfortunately, he leaves out verse 23, which says:

"For I know that thou [God] *wilt bring me to death*, and to the house appointed for all living."

So according to Job's incorrect view at this time, he *did* expect that God was going to bring him as far as death. Verse 24, the one Heaster believes supports his case, is one of the more difficult verses to translate in the book of Job. It does not contain the Hebrew word for "grave" and does not guarantee that he will not go there. However, it can easily be understood when translated in a manner similar to the *New International Version*:

"Surely no one lays a hand on a broken man when he cries for help in his distress."

The *English Standard Version*, *New American Standard Bible* and *World English Bible* read similarly. What would be Job's point? He could not imagine that, in the decrepit condition that he describes in the context, anyone would come to his aid. (Job 30:10, 16, 17, 19, 27, 30) His thought is the same as at Job 13:25:

"Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble?"

Job's condition seemed to him completely hopeless.

Consider an example of Heaster explaining a text to mean more than it really does. Isaiah 45:5-7 says:

"I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things."

Heaster's comment is "that no one except God (including human satans!) created evil." Is this what the scripture says? There are many texts showing that others also cause evil. For a very small sampling of the same Hebrew word for "evil" performed by humans against the will of God, see Exodus 23:2; Numbers 32:13; Deuteronomy 4:25; Judges 3:7, 12; 1 Kings 11:6. The Hebrew word for "evil," *ra'*, means "evil, distress, misery,

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injury, calamity.” Calamity can be moral when caused by God or immoral in the case of wicked men. Isaiah 45:7 is saying that God creates evil in the moral sense of negative consequences, calamities. It is simply not true that ‘no one except God created evil.’ The same term is applied to many others.

Overall, these alternate suggestions clearly contradict each other. One gets the impression that Christadelphians really don’t care which one works as long as a personal spirit Satan is avoided. None of the arguments against the spirit Satan of Job chapters 1 and 2 is really convincing.

8 The Devil in Matthew Chapter 4

If the Devil is not a spirit person, the experiences and conversations in Matthew 4:1-11 must be otherwise explained. There are two alternative explanations offered and those who deny the existence of a personal spirit Devil are by no means united on this point. The first possibility is that Jesus was talking to an inner voice that was suggesting evil things to him. This would be an 'internal' Devil, internal to Jesus. The second is that another person approached Jesus in the wilderness. This would be an 'external' Devil, external to Jesus.

8.1 Was the Devil in Jesus?

Christadelphians cannot agree about the identity of the tempter of Jesus. More recent Christadelphian scholarship has preferred a figurative interpretation. Rather than a dialogue between two people, it is considered a struggle between the good and evil within Jesus' own mind. So some contemporary Christadelphians hold that, in effect, Jesus was talking to himself in the wilderness. Older Christadelphians generally disagree and favour the view that an 'external' human Devil tempted him. This very disunity should call into question their various explanations. Still, let us consider now the options.

Most modern-day deniers of an invisible personal Devil prefer the first option. For example, *The Christadelphian Advocate* website says regarding Luke 4:2-13:

“The adversary or false accuser was in the mind of Christ. His heart was (and ours is) ‘deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it’? The temptations that took place on that occasion are typical of those that plague us all. The lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. These lusts were manifested in ways that were unique to his own circumstances.”

But consider the insurmountable difficulties connected with this view. It has the Devil in Christ actively producing evil works right within the heart of Jesus. Whether Jesus acted on the Devil's evil suggestions is really not the point. Evil was committed in his heart. Jesus chose not to prevent wicked things at least from being spoken within his own heart, an impossible dilemma if we wish, as we must, to maintain that he was sinless.

Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:16 to the Devil: “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” (Mt 4:7) That was a law. By tempting Jesus to violate that law, the Devil in Jesus, if that is where it was, sinned, since “sin is the transgression of the law” and the Devil was attempting to have Jesus break the Deuteronomy 6:16 law. - 1Jo 3:4.

Further, at Matthew 4:6 the Devil says: “cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” Here the Devil was wresting Psalm 91:11, 12. Peter says those who wrest the Scriptures merit destruction. (2Pe 3:16) Later when the Devil says “fall down and worship me,” this is nothing short of apostasy.” - Mt 4:9.

Jesus said at Luke 17:1, “woe to the one through whom [causes for stumbling] come!” How could Jesus be “separate from sinners” if *actual* sin were committed within him? (He 7:26) Yet this is an unnecessary dilemma, for John clearly states: “*in him* is no sin.” - 1Jo 3:5.

Our opponents object at this point that James 1:14, 15 covers the situation. “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” They

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argue that the three temptations represent the “lust” stage only. Only if Jesus had *acted* on those suggestions would he have committed “sin.” But we reply that there is no evidence in the Gospel accounts that Jesus ever ‘lusted’ after any of the things Satan suggested. The James 1:14, 15 process, which involves the development of a desire for bad things, did not even begin in his case. So that passage does not cover the Matthew chapter 4 events.

Beginning his description of the temptation event, Matthew reports that “the tempter came [*proselthon*] to him.” (Mt 4:3) At the end he says the Devil departed and “angels came [*proselthon*] ... unto him” (Mt 4:11) It is impossible to justify taking the words ‘came to him’ in two totally different senses in the same context. If the angels (real ‘external’ persons) ‘came to him’ in the sense of a person-to-person approach, why, when the tempter ‘came to him,’ should we not also think of a *person-to-person* approach?

This kind of language always signifies a personal approach. At Matthew 8:2, a leper “came,” at 8:5 a centurion “came unto him,” at 8:19 a scribe “came”; and in 24:3 the disciples “came unto him.” The original text uses exactly the words used of Satan’s approach to Christ. Never are these words used of thoughts arising in the mind. The view that “came to him” at Matthew 4:3 is somehow figurative has no parallel anywhere in Scripture. As an interpretation it is absolutely arbitrary. Our opponents should show from Scripture a single other instance in which such words are used figuratively. The language demands, therefore, that the tempter was a *person*, not an inner propensity to do evil. Really, where else in Scripture does human nature ‘come’ to a person and speak, holding an extended conversation? It is most unnatural to think that Jesus invited himself to fall down before himself and worship himself.

Matthew 4:11 then says: “Then the devil *leaveth* him.” If the departure of Satan means the departure of sinful human nature from Jesus for a period of time, does this mean that Jesus sometimes had the Devil within him and at other times did not? If so, in this regard at least, Jesus was not “like his ‘brothers’ in all respects,” since they *always* had sinful human nature. (He 2:17) The aforementioned website attempts to explain this by reference to James 4:7: “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (*The Christadelphian Advocate*) It is argued that the temptation facing Jesus departed temporarily until a later time. But such an explanation is weak for several reasons.

First, because it makes the Devil temptation. One would need to prove first that the Devil in James refers to temptation. There is no indication of this in James. According to Matthew 4:3 the Devil was “the tempter,” not the temptation. Jesus was “tempted *of the devil*,” so the Devil was someone other than the temptation. (Lu 4:2; see also verses 12, 13) Also unanswered is the rest of Matthew 4:11: “.. and, behold, angels came.” So the Christadelphian ‘internal’ Devil (not a real person) leaves (*figuratively*, leaving the mind) and angels (real persons) come (*literally*). Is this kind of language consistent? Or does it seem evasive? The account is far more in harmony with the natural view that Christ was talking to a real external person who came and later left.

Heaster points out that the Greek word for “came [*proselthon*],” as in the Devil ‘coming’ to Jesus, can be figurative. (Mt 4:3) No one would deny this. But, as mentioned above, what would we make of the same verb at Matthew 4:11 when “angels came [*proselthon*] and ministered unto him”? If in the context the word is used literally, a convincing case would need to be made to view it figuratively at Matthew 4:3. And there is none, apart from a need to evade an ‘external’ Devil. The context, then, suggests a literal meaning for “came.”

The same writer opts for the meaning “restrain” at Luke 4:13 where the account says the Devil “*departed* from him for a season.” This is a valid meaning for *apeste*, but only one of several. Matthew’s account clarifies the matter, saying: “then the devil *leaveth* him, and, behold, angels *came* and ministered unto him.” (Mt 4:11) The coming of the angels was literal and ‘external.’ Why not the leaving of the Devil? And since Matthew 4:11 and Luke 4:13 are parallel, it therefore seems clear that *apeste* in Luke is not in the sense of “restrain [oneself],” but in the sense of ‘depart, draw away or withdraw.’

If the Devil, as the sin nature, was ‘internal’ to Jesus, is it logical or Scriptural that it would have required Jesus to worship it? The Devil says at Matthew 4:9:

“All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”

Surely this is very difficult to understand metaphorically. Would it even have been a real temptation for Jesus to bow down to his own propensity to evil? The verbs here are *pipto* (to fall down) and *proskyneo* (to worship). They are linked grammatically, *pipto* in the participial mood and *proskyneo* in the subjunctive. The literal transliteration would be: ‘If, falling down, you would worship me.’ *Pipto* does have figurative meanings including to go morally astray, or to fall under judgment. However, it never has this meaning in Matthew, and never has a figurative meaning in the context of worship anywhere in the ‘New Testament.’ The more likely meaning, given the worship context, is ‘to throw oneself on the ground as a sign of devotion or humility, before high-ranking persons or divine beings,’ as at Matthew 17:6; 18:29; 26:39, including twice in connection with the same verb *proskyneo*, with a nearly identical grammatical construction:

“And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him.” - Mt 2:11.

“So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’” - Mt 18:26.

The language of falling down in worship precludes the possibility of an inner struggle. It is physically impossible to fall down before oneself, not to mention utterly meaningless!

As for *proskyneo*, Bauer’s Greek lexicon defines it as

“to express in attitude or gesture one’s complete dependence on or submission to a high authority figure.”

This word describes obeisance to another, and there is no attested metaphorical meaning which would allow the verb to be applied in relation to oneself, so for Jesus’ sin nature to have tempted Jesus to worship itself is clearly nonsense.

Luke’s account of the same temptation reads a little differently: “If thou therefore wilt worship [literally *proskyneses enopion*, ‘worship before’] me.” *Enopion* is nowhere else associated with *proskyneo* in the Christian Scriptures, but in the *Septuagint* there is a connection at 2 Kings 18:22 (“Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem”), Psalm

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22:27 (“all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee”), and a first-person example in Isaiah 66:23 (“shall all flesh come to worship before me”).

This word, as used in Luke 4:9, serves to emphasize the externality of the devil. Needless to say it is not possible to worship before oneself, or if we take it to mean ‘worship in the presence of me,’ the word is superfluous. One is always in one’s own presence!

The ‘inner struggle’ interpretation of the devil that tempted Christ breaks down upon a close examination of the text.

Pursuing another line, one writer objects that at least the temple of the second temptation and the mountain of the third must surely have been in Jesus’ mind:

“Name a mountain in the land of Israel from which all of the kingdoms of the world might literally be seen with one’s own eyes. There is no such mountain. In fact, there is not a single mountain on the face of the earth, nor has there ever been, from which all of the nations can be seen. If it be claimed that ‘the devil’ had the power to cause him to see these supernaturally, then we would ask why the necessity in the narrative of an ‘exceeding high mountain’? ... When all the facts are taken into account, it is clear that Christ’s temptations neither took him on a literal physical journey to a high mountain, nor could he have been in both the holy city and the wilderness concurrently (vss. 1, 5-6).”

The Devil likely took Jesus to both the temple and the unusually high mountain in some form of vision. There is no need to imagine an actual journey away from the wilderness. The reference to an “exceeding high mountain” is no problem. It is simply consistent with a high visionary vantage point, hardly very different to the apostle John being invited into heaven to observe things both heavenly and earthly. (Re 4:1)

Our opponents on the one hand accuse us of lacking Scriptural support in seeing a supernatural Devil in Matthew chapter 4, but then some of them suggest that the mountain was the symbolic mountain of Isaiah 2:1. There is of course no proof for such an assertion.

In a similar way, when the Devil took Jesus into Jerusalem and placed him on the temple, this was also likely by means of a vision. (Mt 4:5) Something similar to this had also happened before. (Eze 8:3-5)

The use of the article means that Matthew is speaking about “*the* Devil,” the one they already knew about, not just any devil. As mentioned, there is not a single reference in the Hebrew Scriptures to Satan as an ‘internal’ tempter. Satan was always a person, never an ‘internal’ sinful propensity. For example, the serpent in Genesis was clearly not Eve’s sinful human nature. It was an ‘external’ personality who spoke and reasoned with refined subtlety. Likewise the satans (anarthrous) of the Hebrew Scriptures were invariably ‘external’ persons. It is therefore inconsistent to propose that the Devil of Matthew chapter 4 (where the term occurs for the first time in the Christian Greek Scriptures) is suddenly an ‘internal,’ figurative person, namely sinful human nature. The suggestion imposes an alien idea upon Scripture.

Biblical terms used in the first century should be understood both from the evidence of Scripture as a whole and from usage current at the time of Jesus. We have ample evidence, for example, that “*the* kingdom of God” refers to a particular kingdom, the future Messianic reign. For similar reasons, we know from Matthew chapter 4 that “*the* Devil” cannot be human nature because no such idea is to be found in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Other who also deny the existence of a personal spirit Devil observe the contradictions of this ‘internal-Devil’ theory. One Christadelphian writes.

“Some think that the devil in the case of the temptation was Christ’s own inclination; but this is untenable in view of the statement that ‘when the devil had ended all the temptations, he departed from him for a season.’ It is also untenable in view of the harmony that existed between the mind of Christ and the will of the Father (John 8:29). It might be added also that it is untenable because a tempter or devil, i.e. one who attempts to seduce to evil, is invariably a sinner (Matt. 18:7, RSV) whether it is oneself or another...[This is] illustrated also in Mark 4:19: ‘The lusts of other things entering in choke the word.’ Lusts, then, that ‘enter in’ and ‘draw away’ (James 1:14), being not legitimate desires...are forbidden and therefore sin. Jesus was not thus ‘drawn away’ or inclined from the right and consequently *could not have been the devil or ‘satan’ in the case*. The devil was obviously a sinner who aimed to divert Jesus from the path of obedience and wrested the Scriptures (Ps. 91:11, 12) in the attempt. So that those who believe that Jesus himself was the ‘devil’ and Satan make him a sinner, their protestations notwithstanding.” - *The “Devil” and “Satan” Scripturally Considered*, pages 14, 15.

8.2 Was the Devil Another Human?

Since these considerations make it impossible to view the Matthew chapter 4 Devil as ‘internal’ to Jesus, a second approach is maintains that the Devil was an ‘external’ person, but a sinful human rather than a spirit Devil. Recall, though, that A.T. Robertson’s observation: “the article is associated with gesture and aids in pointing out like an index finger.” It means *that* Devil - the Devil we already know about. So the mindset of the reader is important.

The Devil was well known in Matthew’s mind and we need only consult the Hebrew Scriptures, the commonly held views among the Jews of the day and Christian Greek Scriptures to find out what was meant by the terms Satan or Devil. The presence of the definite article forbids our understanding the Satan as an *unknown* person. Otherwise, the article would not have served as a pointer. The fact that Matthew introduces “the Satan” as already well known to his readers shows that we must connect him with the ‘external’ Satan of Job chapters 1, 2 and Zechariah chapter 3.

It is not reasonable that a Roman official was the Devil of Matthew chapter 4. The Devil offered Jesus “all the kingdoms [plural, Greek] of the world.” “World” would hardly refer to the limited area visible from the top of a literal Judean mountain, because such an area did not contain several or many “kingdoms” (plural). Even if the dynasty of the Herods (Mt 2:1) be considered a kingdom, this together with Caesar’s own kingdom amounts to two “kingdoms,” hardly commensurate with the phrase “all the kingdoms.” And which Roman official would have dared to, or have been able to, offer Caesar’s

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kingdom to Jesus? None. And would a Roman “Devil” likely have quoted Scriptural texts to Jesus? Hardly.

Even less would a Jewish priest have been in a position to offer Jesus any kingship. Some Christadelphians conjecture that the Devil might have been the Jewish high priest Caiaphas. How, though, would the priest be able to show Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world *in a moment of time*”? And on what authority could Caiaphas offer “all the kingdoms of the world”? (Lu 4:5) He had no authority to offer Jesus the Roman Empire, for one. Even if Caiaphas did have a measure of political power, why would he offer to give it all away to a person who was new on the Jewish religious scene and almost unknown?

8.3 Other Arguments

Someone has argued that, because Jesus “was in all points tempted, like as we are” and because we have never been physically encountered by a literal Devil, there can be no Devil. (He 4:15) We have not been tested in many other ways, too. None of us have been crucified yet. Have we been tempted in this ‘point’? No. So does this mean there never was a crucifixion? Something is obviously wrong with the argument. See 2.2 above where we have discussed Hebrews 4:15.

One writer has asked: ‘Why would Jesus have quoted Bible texts to the Devil if the Devil were a spirit person? What would it have achieved?’ But we could ask in reply: ‘Is it not true that many Christadelphians believe Satan was a human Tempter? Would not the same question be as fitting in that case?’ Clearly, Jesus was not trying to scare Satan off by quoting Scripture. He quoted Scripture to Satan in the same way that he quoted Scripture to other hardened opposers. (Mt 9:13; 12:7; 15:4-9; 19:5, 6; 22:44) Many of these situations do not involve an attempt to convert people, but to convict them of the error of their position.

There is nothing to say he was using Scripture texts to counter his own sin nature. No doubt the text at Psalm 119:11 was relevant to Jesus just as it is to us all. It says:

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”

What it does not say is that Jesus had a sin nature that he needed to control. Nevertheless, the texts he quoted would have been strengthening to him as he reflected on God’s will. He was a perfect man without a sin nature just as Adam was before the fall. And as Adam *should* have reflected on God’s expressed will during his test, so Jesus *did* in practice.

Luke 4:13 tells us that after the temptations the Devil “departed from him for a season.” So an argument is presented that, in various ways - by the opposition of the Jews, by the way Judas became “a devil” and Peter “a satan” – the Devil was returning to tempt Jesus. No doubt this is true. But the conclusion drawn from this, that the real Devil is no more than the human opposition Jesus faced during his ministry, must be challenged.

Having failed with a direct approach, it is hardly surprising that the Devil would try a different approach using his earthly agents and the imperfections and fears of Jesus’ own disciples. Satan has “his ministers.” (2Co 11:14, 15) Ephesians 6:11 describes him as

‘wiley.’ He naturally uses any resources at his disposal. But his different approach does not mean ordinary humans or their sinfulness were the Devil. Rather, the approaches the Jews made to offer him a kingdom and to invite him to provide miraculous manna and other signs (Joh 6:15, 30, 31; Mt 16:1) were examples of the Devil returning to tempt Jesus at “an opportune time” using the influence available to him. (Lu 4:13, *New American Standard Version*) For the Devil to have returned in the very same manner would hardly have been ‘wiley.’

Other suggestions appear a little desperate for lack of Scriptural support. What possible proof can be offered that the bread and wine signified the division between flesh and spirit in the mind of Christ? (Mt 26:26) It has also been argued that, for the temptation to be given “all the kingdoms of the world” to be real, God would really have given the disobedient Jesus these kingdoms. But God never offered them to him. The Devil did. In any case, Jesus would have to commit idolatry in order to receive them. (Mt 4:8, 9) What was the penalty for idolatry? Death. (Le 20:2; De 13:6, 10, 13-15; 17:2-7; Nu 25:1-9) Really, to draw God himself into the temptation scenario as if he were prepared to provide a back-up “second best” kingdom is indefensible and insulting to God. It has God providing a reward for sin. Another unproven assertion is that “the kingdoms of the world” that the Devil showed Jesus were the future Kingdom of God. There is absolutely no reason to link Matthew 4:8 with Revelation 11:15. It is all guesswork.

What can we conclude? The Devil of Matthew chapter 4 is one with whom Matthew’s readers were already familiar, as the definite article requires. If the words attributed to the Devil were spoken in Jesus’ heart by his sin the flesh, they were actual sins because they involved wicked lies against God. Christ then had in him, as part of his personality, sin. But we must not confuse the evil which comes “from within, out of the heart” with the Satan described in Matthew who “came” up to Jesus from the *outside*. Finally, the offer of “kingdoms” by a mere human is unreasonable and is clearly an evasion of the alternative.

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9 The Angels That Sinned

The Bible clearly teaches that angels can sin. 2 Peter 2:4-7 mentions angels that sinned and were cast into Tartarus to await judgment.

“For if God spared not [1] the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell [*Tartarus*, Greek, not *Hades*], and delivered them into chains [“pits,” Greek] of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not [2] the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning [3] the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot.”

Those who do not believe these were spirit angels that sinned argue that Peter is talking about mortal men who were in a position of leadership as messengers of the word.

They acknowledge that the placement by Peter of these “angels that sinned” first in his story, followed by the story of Noah and then Lot, may make it appear that the events involving the angels took place between creation and the Flood. But they propose that Jude suggests a different sequence of events, quoting Jude 5-7, which says:

“I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved [1] the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And [2] the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as [3] Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

Some would argue that Jude’s order is that the “angels” were either with the people who came out of Egypt or they lived sometime after the Exodus. Should Jude’s order of events be accepted over Peter’s, or the reverse? Let’s consider both accounts.

9.1 The Order of Events

Is Jude’s account a better indicator of the time that the “angels that sinned” were on the earth?

Peter’s examples of unrighteous characters in 2 Peter chapter 2 appear in the following order: (1) “the angels that sinned” (Verse 4), (2) “the world of the ungodly” of Noah’s day (Verse 5), (3) “Sodom and Gomorrha” (Verses 6, 7) and (4) Balaam. - Verse 15.

Leaving aside the angels for the moment, the other characters are in chronological order. This might lead us to expect that Peter intended “the angels that sinned” to be taken as appearing in the pre-Flood period.

Now consider the list of unrighteous characters in Jude’s letter: (1) The Israelites who came “out of the land of Egypt” but did not believe (Verse 5), (2) the “angels” who

sinned (Verse 6), (3) “Sodom and Gomorrha” (Verse 7), (4) “the devil” (Verse 9), (5) Cain (Verse 11), (6) Balaam (Verse 11) and (7) Korah (verse 11).

Are Jude’s examples in any particular chronological order? Again, let’s set aside the angels for the moment. There is no discernable chronological order. The Israelites of the Exodus, (1) on our list, lived *after* the people of Sodom and Gomorrah (3), not before. Sodom and Gomorrah (3) were *after* Cain (5), not before. If Christadelphians wish to have the angels that sinned either as contemporaries of the people who came out of Egypt or as people who lived shortly thereafter on the basis of Jude 5, 6, how will they deal with Jude 6, 7? These latter verses, using the same reasoning, would teach that the “angels that sinned” lived before Sodom and Gomorrah, which would be contrary to the Christadelphian point of view.

We can conclude that their preference for Jude’s list over Peter’s in order to establish a chronological location for the “angels that sinned” after the Exodus is not firmly based. Peter’s letter is demonstrably more chronological. Jude’s letter is often not chronological.

One writer suggests that the “angels” of 2 Peter 2:4 are only the “false prophets” among the Israelites in the wilderness that are mentioned in verse 1. Really, there is no way to make such a link. The “angels” are no more identical with the “false prophets” than they are identical with “the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha” who are also mentioned in the context. (2Pe 2:6) It is safer to view all three groups as separate examples in history of wicked influences similar to the “false teachers” that were about to challenge the faith of the early Christians. – 2Pe 2:1.

Another argument points to 2 Peter 2:3, that “their damnation slumbereth not,” as if the fact that the Devil and demons still exist cannot be persons because by now their judgment would be long delayed. The argument overlooks the fact that God did take decisive action by casting them into Tartarus. In any case, when he was discussing the reserving of punishment against wicked men in the next chapter Peter says:

“One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness.” – 2Pe 3:8, 9.

Whether the passage of time is a day or a thousand years, or even many thousands of years, no one should consider this a long delay. It is ‘the Lord’s’ viewpoint, not ours, that is important.

9.2 “Angels” in the Context

It is true that an angel, meaning messenger, can refer to either a heaven-based or an earth-based person.

Were the “angels that sinned” humans? The word “angels” is used only twice in 2 Peter. The other reference is at 2 Peter 2:11 and clearly applies, not to humans but to angels in heaven:

“Whereas angels, *which are greater in power and might*, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.”

It is therefore unlikely that this could mean humans in positions of authority. It is more in harmony with Hebrews 2:6, 7 which says: “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels.” If

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the angels of verse 11 are the angels of heaven, why not those of verse 4? The distinction is in their conduct, not their nature.

An effort is sometimes made to equate these angels with the 250 who rebelled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness under the leadership of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. (Nu 16:1-35) So Numbers 16:9 says they used to “minister” in Israel. They say the Greek word *angelos* (“angel”) is sometimes used in the *Septuagint* for a minister or messenger, so the “angels” referred to by Peter and Jude were just those 250 rebels. But reasoning is forced because *angelos* does not appear in Numbers chapter 16 in reference to the rebels or anyone else. So Peter’s use of the word “angels” would not have suggested the Numbers account to his readers and he certainly does not make such an application explicit.

9.3 Angels in Jude 6

Let us consider the point about angels at Jude 6 more closely. One writer has argued that, because Jude first says at verse 5 “I will therefore put you in remembrance,” he implies that the account about “angels” at Jude 6 is a reference to some well-known historical fact. We agree. But his argument is that there is no record in history of angels sinning in Eden. ‘How,’ he says, ‘could Jude’s readers be reminded of something they never knew?’ Well, there is no need to think that Jude was referring to Eden. Jews and Christians of the first century were well aware of the events in Noah’s day involving the “sons of God.” Instead of “sons” at Genesis 6:2, the *Septuagint* that was used by the early Christians, reads “angels.” This understanding was widespread among the Jews at that time. Josephus, for example, says:

“many angels of God accompanied with women and begat sons that proved unjust, and despisers of all that was good, on account of the confidence they had in their own strength; for the tradition is, that these men did what resembled the acts of those whom the Grecians called giants.” - *Antiquities of the Jews* 1.3.72-74.

And Philo of Alexandria who also lived in the first century agrees.

“‘And when the angels of God saw the daughters of men that they were beautiful, they took unto themselves wives of all them whom they chose.’ Those beings, whom other philosophers call demons, Moses usually calls angels ..” - *The Works of Philo*, “On the Giants,” translated by C.D. Yonge, page 152.

There are similar references to these “sons of God” as angels in the *Book of Enoch* 6:1 and the *Book of Jubilees* 5:1. Yes, to Jude’s readers the events of Jude 6 were well-known and historical. They were related to Noah’s day.

Another question is whether the angels of Jude 6 committed sexual sin. Jude says:

“And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as [*hos*, Greek] Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in

like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

What does Jude mean, “in like manner”? Because of the punctuation in the *King James Version*, it may seem to mean that he is comparing “the cities about them” with Sodom and Gomorrah; in other words, that both Sodom and Gomorrah *as well as* the cities around them gave themselves over to sexual immorality. But Kenneth Wuest writes:

“This verse [verse 7] begins with *hos*, an adverb of comparison having meanings of ‘in the same manner as, after the fashion of, as, just as.’ Here it introduces a comparison showing a likeness between the angels of verse 6 and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha of this verse. But the likeness between them lies deeper than the fact that both were guilty of committing sin. It extends to the fact that both were guilty of the same identical sin. The punctuation of the A.V. is misleading, as an examination of Greek text discloses.

The A.V. punctuation gives the reader the impression that Sodom and Gomorrha committed fornication and that the cities about them committed fornication in like manner to the two cities named... The words ‘in like manner’ are related to the verbal forms, ‘giving themselves over to fornication’ and ‘going after strange flesh.’ In addition to all this, the Greek text has *toutois*, ‘to these.’ Thus, the translation should read, ‘just as Sodom and Gomorrha and the cities about them, in like manner to these, having given themselves over to fornication and having gone after strange flesh.’ The sense of the entire passage (vv.6, 7) is that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha and the cities about them, in like manner to these (the angels), have given themselves over to fornication and have gone after strange flesh. That means that the sin of the fallen angels was fornication.” - *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, Volume II, pages 241, 242.

When the *King James Version* left *toutois* untranslated in verse 7, it did not help us understand that Sodom, Gomorrah and the other cities were sinning *like the angels* in verse 6. The *New English Bible* captures Jude’s meaning.

“Remember too the angels, how some of them were not content to keep the dominion given to them but abandoned their proper home; and God has reserved them for judgement on the great Day, bound beneath the darkness in everlasting chains. Remember Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbouring towns; *like the angels, they committed fornication and followed unnatural lusts*; and they paid the penalty in eternal fire, an example for all to see.”

This means that Jude wrote of the fornication of the angels as a fact. In verse 7 of his epistle, he compares the sexual wickedness in Sodom, Gomorrah, and the surrounding cities to the sin of the angels.

9.4 What is “Tartarus”?

A comparison of 2 Peter 2:4 with Jude 6 shows that Tartarus corresponds with being “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness.” Whether we think in terms of “pits” or “chains,” the end result is the same. It is a condition of restraint.

We should not imagine, as some have done, that this condition would prevent “the angels that sinned” from tempting others to sin, because the restraint is one of “darkness,” not physical movement. The darkness is spiritual. A few verses later, Paul compares these angels with certain men in his own time, men

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“to whom the mist of *darkness* is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, *they allure* through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.” (Italics ours.) - 2Pe 2:17, 18.

Note that for these men, being reserved for darkness does not restrict their ability to tempt others. Neither does being reserved for darkness prevent wicked angels from pursuing their agenda.

It was a term known in Bible times as an underground prison as far below Hades as earth is below heaven. The Bible does not condone this meaning for Tartarus any more than it condones false ideas about torment in Hades. Nevertheless one fact is clear: to the Greeks, Tartarus was never a place for humans but always a place for superhuman creatures. This is consistent with a supernatural understanding for the “angels that sinned.”

10 The Devil at Jude 9

Jude refers to a dispute between Michael and “the Devil” at Jude 9. ‘Yet Michael, the Archangel, when contending with the Devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, [and] dared not bring against him a railing accusation, but said “The Lord rebuke thee.”’ Christadelphians offer complex and varied explanations.

Some refer to Zechariah 3:2 because a similar expression is used there. In *The Devil, an exposition of the Truth concerning that old serpent, the Devil and Satan*, first published in 1842 and reprinted by the Christadelphian Book Library, the following statement occurs:

“Michael the archangel and Satan were individual human beings, Joshua being Michael and Tatnai, Satan.” - pages 6, 16.

Tatnai (or Tattenai) opposed the rebuilding of the temple in the days of Joshua the High Priest. (Ezr 5:3ff.) It is said Tatnai is called ‘the Devil’ because he falsely accused the Jews. The ‘body of Moses’ is said to be the Jewish ecclesia, or church, and the disputation regarding the body is the disputation regarding the building of the Temple for the Mosaic system of worship. According to this explanation, Michael (Joshua the priest) did not rebuke Satan (Tatnai), but said ‘The Lord rebuke thee.’

10.1 Examining the Tatnai Explanation

The foregoing is pure speculation and there are sound reasons to reject it.

First, in no case is the term archangel ever used in the Bible of an earth-based human being. To apply the name Michael to Joshua is entirely arbitrary. Second, the dispute mentioned at Jude 9 was “about the body *of Moses*,” not the building of the temple. It is speculation that the body of Moses means the Jewish ecclesia. The Bible never calls it such. Third, Jude’s historical references are all clear and literal. In verse 5, the people who were “saved ... out of the land of Egypt” were the Israelites. In verse 7, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were literally so. Cain, Balaam and Korah mentioned in verse 11 were just these people. Enoch was literally “the seventh from Adam.” (Verse 14) In similar fashion, Michael and Satan (“the Satan,” with the article) are mentioned elsewhere in the Scriptures and there is no reason to think that they should have reference to anyone else unless the agenda is to avoid the conclusion that there is a personal Satan.

Ron Abel in *Wrested Scriptures* wonders why the Devil should want custody of a corpse. Well, the Bible reports that there was something unusual about the body of Moses. According to Deuteronomy 34:6, God “buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.” Moses’ literal body was for some reason buried privately by God in a place unknown to the Israelites. The Bible does not say why. We do know that after his death Israel observed a thirty-day mourning period, so Moses was evidently highly respected. (Deuteronomy 34:8) Certainly God treated Moses’ dead body in an exceptional way. Was it God’s intention to avoid worshipful pilgrimages to the burial site? It is certainly true that the Catholic Church in later times has gone seriously astray in the worship of religious relics, among them body parts.

The fact that we do not know for certain the exact reason for Michael requiring something in relation to Moses’ body is no argument that “the body of Moses” mentioned at Jude 9 was any other than his literal body.

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10.2 Other Explanations

Other Christadelphian writers have offered alternative explanations. Michael Watkins interprets Michael as a human messenger, the devil as Tatnai and the body of Moses as high priest Joshua.

Abel agrees, suggesting that “the body of Moses” refers to Joshua the high priest because “body” can at times be translated “slave.” He argues that Joshua was in a figurative sense Moses’ servant or slave since he served the law that Moses gave. But what evidence is there from the texts themselves, either in Zechariah or in Jude, that “the body of Moses” is somehow figurative, or refers to another person entirely? Absolutely none. And where else does the Bible call any Israelite a slave of Moses? Moses was the *mediator* of the Law covenant, but not its master so that the Jews could be considered his servants. (He 9:16-20) It is little wonder that in offering this interpretation Abel uses words like “it can be inferred,” “likely,” and “no doubt,” an expression often used when there is considerable doubt. What really drives the Christadelphian explanation is the need to avoid a supernatural Devil.

Yet another interpretation is that Michael was Moses, the Devil was Korah, Dathan and Abiram, and “the body of Moses” was the ecclesia of Israel in the wilderness after the Exodus. However, nowhere is the Israelite congregation called “the body of Moses.” And the identification of “*the* devil” (singular, always used in reference to one person in the Hebrew Scriptures) with Korah, Dathan and Abiram (three persons), is cavalier, to say the least. There is nothing to recommend this explanation apart from the need, once again, to avoid a spirit Devil.

10.3 The 2 Peter Chapter 2 and Jude Parallels

Abel points to the similarities between Jude and 2 Peter and suggests that Jude 9 can be read as an amplification of 2 Peter 2:11. He says that since Peter's account is about humans, the same must be true of Jude's parallel where he refers to the Devil. So the Devil must refer to humans. Let's test the explanation.

“Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them [wicked men] before the Lord.” - 2Pe 2:11.

Jude follows the same line of reasoning, saying:

“Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.” - Jude 9.

Are these similar? Yes. But notice that Peter mentions “angels” (plural). Jude has “Michael the archangel” (singular). If the argument is that “the devil” (singular) of Jude 9 is the same as the wicked men (plural) of 2 Peter 2:11, will the Christadelphian consistently argue that “Michael the archangel” (singular) of Jude 9 is the same as the “angels” (plural) of 2 Peter 2:11? Really, then, are Peter and Jude exactly parallel? No.

Peter and Jude seem to have been addressing the same dangers to the first century congregation. Yet a careful comparison of 2 Peter chapter 2 and Jude 1-25 indicates that they often chose *different* examples to prove the same point. Jude refers to the Israelites saved from Egypt but Peter does not. Peter refers to the ungodly world of Noah's day but Jude does not. Jude refers to Cain and Korah but Peter does not. Same objective, but different examples.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 provides the only other occurrence of the word archangel, and no one suggests in that verse that he is an earth-based human. Jude's mention of the Devil in opposition to an Archangel is therefore proof of Satan's reality as a supernatural being, and this is confirmed beyond any doubt by Revelation 12 where a war occurs in heaven between "Michael and his angels (who) made war with Satan and his angels."

Surely an interpretation which equates the archangel Michael with Moses or Joshua is self-condemned. The desperation involved in the Christadelphian treatment of Jude 9 should point to the weakness of their whole theory about Satan.

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11 Satan in Revelation 12 and 20

The seminal Christadelphian work explaining the Revelation is John Thomas' *Eureka – An Exposition of the Apocalypse*. It contains a detailed exposition, much of it fanciful and entirely arbitrary. Many Christadelphians have been unable to agree with it and alternative explanations have been offered which have themselves become objects of debate. *Eureka - An Exposition of the Apocalypse*. It contains a detailed exposition, much of it fanciful and entirely arbitrary. Many Christadelphians have been unable to agree with it and alternative explanations have been offered which have themselves become objects of debate. (For example, see *Revelation: A Biblical Approach*, by H. A. Whittaker, *Apocalypse For Everyman* by A. D. Norris and *Exploring The Apocalypse* by P. Watkins.) So one of their number, P. Billington writes:

“ So one of their number, P. Billington writes:

“Today, lack of faith in [Revelation's] meaning is robbing the Christadelphian community of its vigour and zeal; it renders brethren and sisters vulnerable to the deceptive influences of the ecclesiastical world.” - *The Book of Revelations - An Appeal For Right Understanding*.

Thomas thought of Satan in Revelation chapter 12 in terms of a political beast. However, one Christadelphian writer, R. Abel, recommends not becoming too involved in discussing the details of the prophecy with non-Christadelphians, saying:

“In such discussions it is sometimes advantageous to withhold expositional knowledge. Assuming for example, that it has been shown that Rev. 12 does not prove the proposition that the devil is a rebel angel, it may be far more appropriate either to advance to another passage which the non-Christadelphian considers does prove the proposition, or to expound the Bible's teaching on the devil. To expound the meaning of the woman, man-child, sun, moon, and stars, etc. of Rev. 12 will probably afford too many opportunities for irrelevant considerations.” - *Wrested Scriptures*.

However, the Christadelphian does not have “expositional knowledge” that is unchallenged, even in his own community.

11.1 The Dragon and Satan – Are Both Symbolic?

Abel makes it sound as if the details of the prophecy are irrelevant to the identity of Satan the Devil in Revelation 12. Are they? Consider some of them.

The argument often used is that Revelation 12:1 should not be forgotten: “there appeared a great wonder in heaven,” “wonder” translating the Greek *semeion*, meaning “sign.” The characters that follow should therefore be considered *symbolic*, including the woman, her child, the dragon, Michael, Satan the Devil and the Lamb. Thus Satan the Devil is consigned to “sign” language with the rest. Perhaps, though, we should not so quickly jump to this conclusion. God and Christ are also mentioned in the same account. (Re 12:5, 6, 10) Are they not individual spirit persons?

Thomas, for no good reason but that it fits his developing historical thesis, proposes that Michael is Constantine(!). He says:

“Constantine, as the military chieftain of the Catholic Church, which the Deity had predetermined should have the rule instead of the Pagan Priesthood, is styled in the prophecy ho Michael, the Michael: that is, the Michael of the situation.” – *Eureka – An Exposition of the Apocalypse*, commentary on Re 12:7.

He acknowledges the Bible’s earlier references to Michael at Daniel 10:13; 12:1, but he does not allow the Bible to interpret itself. He simply denies that “*the* Michael [Greek]” of Revelation 12:7 is the same person as there. Even so, to Thomas, Michael is still a person; not a spirit person but an individual person nevertheless. We now have at least three *persons* in Revelation chapter 12: God, Christ and Michael.

Now what about the dragon? Revelation 12:3 introduces “a great red dragon.” Note, ‘a dragon,’ not ‘the dragon.’ This is significant because here it is being introduced for the first time. After this it will always be ‘*the* dragon.’ (Re 12:4, 7, 9, 13-17) Again, as elsewhere, the article serves as a pointer to someone or something previously known.

Of course, everyone will admit that the dragon is symbolic, but does this mean that Satan the Devil is also symbolic? Verse 9 explains “the great dragon” as the one “called the Devil, and Satan.” What we have here is the ‘sign,’ the dragon and serpent, and its identification or interpretation, the Devil and Satan. The dragon/serpent are the symbols and the Devil/Satan are its inspired interpretation, a person. In a similar way, Revelation 12:11 mentions a symbolic “Lamb” meaning “the Christ” (verse 10, Greek) a literal person. Just because certain characters are figurative in no way means that all of them are symbols.

“Devil” and “Satan” in Revelation chapter 12 both carry the article: *ho diabolos* and *ho satanas*. The pointer article shows that the Devil and Satan is not just any satan, but the same one encountered before, outside the immediate context, at Jude 9; Revelation 2:9, 10, 12, 13, 24. It points to a specific Satan, not a different one in every place.

Are there any stronger indications that Satan the Devil is a spirit person? The Devil is twice called “that *old* serpent.” (Re 12:9; 20:2) Therefore, who- or whatever Satan the Devil is, he/it existed in Eden, again at the time of the fulfilment of Revelation chapter 12 and at the beginning and end of the 1000 years. He is called “that [literally, ‘the’] old serpent” by a figure of speech called metonymy, just as Christ in the same chapter is called “the Lamb.” The definite article signifies that this is the very same serpent that was in Eden.

Was that original serpent perhaps sin in the flesh? Hardly. It existed before it spoke to Eve, as discussed above. It was ‘external’ both to Adam and Eve at that point.

John’s equation of Satan with “that old serpent” agrees with Paul’s comment at Romans 16:20: “the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” Paul here alludes to Genesis 3:15 which was addressed to the serpent. The serpent and Satan are thus to be identified, not literally, but by metonymy. Of course, the serpent appears again in Revelation chapter 20, where he is bound and imprisoned. - Re 20:1-3.

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12 Satan and the Devil Interchangeable

The *Septuagint* translators usually chose *diabolos* (Devil) when translating the Hebrew *sathan* (Satan) into Greek. (1Ch 21:1; Job chapters 1 and 2; Zec 3:1, 2) The writers of the Christian Scripture corpus would therefore have been used to the idea that Satan was the Devil.

12.1 The Greek *Satan*

The Greek word is simply a transliteration of the Hebrew *sathan*. Christadelphian writers usually point back to the meaning of the words and prefer they be translated into English as ‘adversary.’ But the writers of the Christian Scriptures left the Hebrew word untranslated, “Satan.”

12.2 Equivalence of Satan and the Devil

Many Christadelphian works deal with Satan and the devil as if they were two completely independent concepts. So, is there evidence that they refer to one entity?

Revelation 12:9 speaks of “the ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world,” and Revelation 20:2 of “that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan.” In Matthew and Luke account, the tempter is *ho diabolos* (Devil) but in Mark the tempter is *ho satanas* (Satan). (Mt 4:1; Lu 4:1; Mr 1:13) In the illustration of the sower in Mark, the birds represent *ho satanas* (Satan) but in Luke, they are said to represent *ho diabolos* (Devil). (Mr 4:15; Lu 8:12) This evidence means that Satan and the Devil are interchangeable terms for the same individual.

Most Christadelphian studies acknowledge that there is an overall general doctrine of the Devil, or Satan, which pervades the New Testament, but individual passages are dealt with on a case-by-case basis. For instance, the Devil-Satan may be a human tempter in Matthew chapter 4, a personification of evil at Acts 13:10, the world at 1 Corinthians 5:5, the sin nature at Hebrews 2:14, the Roman persecutors at 1 Peter 5:8, and the Jewish authorities at Revelation 3:9.

That there is a single doctrine of “the Satan” “the Devil” in the Christian Scriptures can be established by two lines of argument.

The first is that most references to *diabolos* and *satan* in the New Testament are alluding to a pre-existing idea with which the reader is assumed to be familiar. This would not be possible if there were many meanings of *diabolos* and *satan*. The reader might make the wrong connection.

As discussed in Chapter 3 of this study, the definite article is a pointer to something specific. Let us briefly repeat this important point here. In his *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: an Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, grammarian Daniel B. Wallace outlines nine categories of the usage of the article, as follows.

(1) Simple identification: To distinguish one individual from another

- (2) Anaphoric: To refer back to a previous instance of a noun, which was usually introduced without the article
- (3) Kataphoric: To refer forward to a definition of the noun which is about to be supplied
- (4) Deictic: To point out an object or person present at the moment of speaking, as in 'this'
- (5) Par excellence: To point out a noun that is in a class by itself; the only one deserving of the name
- (6) Monadic: To identify a one-of-a-kind or unique noun
- (7) Well-Known: To identify a well-known object that has not been mentioned in the preceding context, but is not par excellence or monadic
- (8) Abstract: To define more closely a particular abstract noun (in such cases, the article should usually not be translated into English)
- (9) Generic (Categorical): To distinguish one class from another (as opposed to identifying a particular object belonging to a larger class)

Which of these apply when the article is used with Satan or Devil? Let us consider these passages:

“And [Jesus] was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.” - Mr 1:13.

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” -Jas 4:7.

In both of these texts *satanas* and *diabolos* occur with the article. Why? Both are too brief to make possible the first three functions mentioned by Wallace above, and there is no contextual cue for the fourth. The ninth function is also impossible since *satan* and *diabolos* are not classes of objects. All of the remaining possibilities fall into the category of an object that is already known to the reader. Mark has never before mentioned a *satan*, and James has never before mentioned a *diabolos*. Regardless of which of these functions we choose, the writer assumes that the reader is already familiar with the entity he is talking about. In a similar way, at Mark 1:13, Mark assumes the reader is familiar with angels and with wild animals in the wilderness.

In view of the definite article, we could interpret *satanas* as ‘the well-known Satan.’ What well-known Satan? Mark expects his readers to be able to answer from their existing pool of knowledge without further explanation. Therefore he must be referring to an entity that was well understood in the Judaism of the day. The same is true of James’ *diabolos*. The Satan and the Devil they knew was the Satan mentioned repeatedly in the ‘Old Testament.’

To justify the Christadelphian approach, which would require an abstract function for the article, we would need first to establish that Mark’s and James’s readers already understood *satan* and *diabolos* as abstract nouns. Since they are not used abstractly in the ‘Old Testament,’ one would have to show that the Old Testament usage had changed drastically by the first Christian century. This cannot be established.

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12.3 *Ho Diabolos* in Parables

The Christadelphian view of *diabolos* is that it is a figure of speech, namely personification. The word literally means slanderer or false accuser. The problem for the Christadelphian view is that *diabolos* is used twice in connection with Jesus' parables as an explanation of the metaphors in the illustrations. But if *diabolos* is itself a metaphor, then Jesus is explaining one metaphor with another.

12.3.1 *Ho Diabolos* and the Wheat and Weeds

For example, in the parable of the wheat and weeds, a man sowed seed in his field. At night an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat. Jesus' explanation of the metaphors is clear. The sower is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the seed means the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the wicked one and the enemy who sowed them is the devil (*diabolos*). The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are angels. - Mt 13:24-30.

Matthew 13:37-40 explains the illustration. "Son of man" is easily understood by reference to a well-known prophecy at Daniel 7:13. Every Israelite would have understood this to mean the Messiah. The angels are understood, not by analysing away the literal referent of the word *angeloi*, but by adopting the established concept of angels. In fact, every explanation is clear to a first-century Israelite.

Now, what about the *diabolos*? When Jesus says: "The enemy that sowed them is the devil," do we understand him to mean: "The enemy that sowed them is some unspecified slanderer"? If so, he did not explain who the enemy is. But this is not satisfactory, because he has clearly explained every other feature of the parable to refer to clearly understood persons or things. Therefore, we must also understand "the enemy" to be someone clearly understood, "the [well-known] *diabolos*" mentioned earlier. (Mt 4:1-11) Otherwise, Jesus is explaining a metaphor with another metaphor.

We might also note that "the enemy" is 'external' to the weeds rather than some 'internal' flaw. This enemy is responsible for the weeds but not within them.

12.3.2 *Ho Diabolos* and the Sower

In the parable of the sower, birds snatch away the fine seed. They are interpreted as "the wicked one." (Mt 13:4, 19) Mark 4:15 identifies this wicked one as "Satan" (*ho satanas*). Luke 8:12 calls him "the devil" (*ho diabolos*). So these are interchangeable terms. Interpreting the parable, Jesus says: "The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." - Lu 8:11, 12.

We learn two lessons from this. First, that "the Satan, "the Devil," explains the identity of the birds. The definite article before *satanas* and *diabolos* means that he is someone clearly understood, a person, not some abstraction. Second, this Satan, this Devil, 'comes' from outside and 'takes away' the seed, so it is clearly 'external' rather than 'internal.'

13 Christian Greek Scripture Usage

We can understand the usage of the words *diabolos* and *satanas* throughout the New Testament by analyzing the relative use by individual New Testament writers.

13.1 Matthew

Matthew prefers *diabolos* to Satan. Satan occurs only in the words of Jesus, and two out of three occurrences are in the vocative case, indicating direct personal address. The fact that “Satan” is used in Jesus’ personal address at Matthew 4:10 while *diabolos* is used elsewhere in the temptation account may support the view that Satan is a personal name.

In Matthew 16:23 and in the parallel at Mark 8:33, Peter rebukes Jesus for foretelling his death, which causes Jesus to command Peter, “Get thee behind me, Satan [*satana*].” This has been offered as proof that Satan simply means adversary. It is true that Satan as applied to Peter follows its lexical meaning of ‘an opposer.’ But both Matthew and Mark specifically make “Satan” anarthrous here; there is no definite article. This is very different to “*the* Satan,” the spirit person. It illustrates how the article is used deliberately to refer to a specific person.

The Devil (*to diabolos*) is also mentioned at Matthew 25:41 in connection with his destruction and that of his angels. Matthew reverts to the use of the article because he is talking about the Devil well-known to his readers, the same one he referred to earlier.

13.2 Mark

The references to Satan in Mark are at 1:13; 3:23, 26; 4:15; 8:33. Mark never *diabolos*. In the temptation account at Mark 1:13, he uses the article, *tou satana*, as expected when referring to a person already well-known to his audience. At Mark 3:23 the article is not used. “How can Satan [anarthrous] cast out Satan [anarthrous]?” This is because Jesus is stating a general principle that applies to all opposers, whether to ‘*the* Satan’ or to any other opposer. Of course, ‘*the* Satan’ is also ‘*a* satan.’ But there is no doubt in this case because at Mark 3:26 Jesus immediately clarifies which particular ‘satan’ he is discussing, *ho satanas*, “the Satan.” At Mark 4:15, in the wheat and weeds parable, Mark used “*the* Satan” again.

Interestingly, at Mark 8:33, when Jesus says: “Get thee behind me, Satan,” there is no article. Why? As mention above, because Peter was not ‘*the* Satan.’ He was ‘*a* satan,’ an opposer, but not the one usually identified by that term. This teaches us that Mark is using or not using the article for specific grammatical reasons in harmony with a concept that there is a particular Satan different from other opposers.

13.3 Luke and Acts

Luke uses *satanas* five times in his Gospel and twice in Acts, and *diabolos* in exactly the same frequencies.

The Luke 13:11, 16 account shows that Satan is capable of causing illness. It does not say Satan is always directly responsible for infirmity, but that he was in this case. (**Ac 10:38**) At Luke 22:3 we learn that Satan can “entered” Judas at a particular point in time indicated by the word “then.” The fact that *satanas* here is anarthrous does not mean it is the sin nature or another opposer, but simply that Satan – the person – is himself ‘an opposer.’ Of course, Satan, “the satan,” is also ‘*a* satan.’ Satan specifically came from outside to enter him. He was not in Judas before that. “Entered” translates the Greek

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eiselthen, the preposition *eis* meaning “into,” from outside. As always, this was an ‘external’ Satan.

Luke 22:31 describes the claim of Satan over the apostles. We are left with three more three interesting passages in Acts: 5:3, 13:10 and 26:18.

Acts 5:3, 4 is often cited by Christadelphians in support of their position. The apostle Peter first says:

“why hath *Satan* filled thine heart ..” (Italics ours)

He then adds:

“why hast *thou* [Ananias] conceived this thing in thine heart ..” (Italics ours)

The parallelism of the two clauses is thought to imply that Satan’s filling the heart with evil thoughts or motivations is just another way of saying that a person conceived an evil deed in the heart. But parallelism is not necessarily equation. In fact, to insist on the parallel the way Christadelphians suggest, Satan would be the equivalent, not of sin nature, but of Ananias because in the first clause *Satan* filled the heart. *He* was the one causing the action. In the second clause, *Ananias* (“*thou*”) was responsible for conceiving the wicked intention. He was the one responsible for the action. So was Ananias Satan? Clearly not.

In no way does the parallel suggest that the Satan of verse 3 is ‘internal’ to Ananias. Rather, the passage shows that *both* Satan and Ananias were involved in the sin, Satan filling Ananias’ heart with the idea, as a Tempter might, and Ananias considering the idea until sin was conceived. As Paul exhorted: “Neither give place to the devil.” (Eph 4:27) Satan may take a “place,” yes, but only if the Christian yields it.

At Acts 13:10, Paul refers to a son of the Devil and at Acts 26:18, Paul quotes Jesus: “turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” There is no need or necessary reason to read an ‘internal’ Devil or Satan into either of these texts.

13.4 John’s Gospel, Letters and the Revelation

At John 6:70, Jesus says: “One of you is a devil.” Note, not “the devil.” This is the grammatical equivalent of John 1:1c; 4:19. The “devil” at John 6:70, “god” at John 1:1c and “prophet” at John 4:19 are singular anarthrous predicate nouns preceding the same verb. Nouns of this type are invariably qualitative. Just as the Word had the quality, but not the identity, of *the* God (the Father), and just as the Samaritan woman thought Jesus had the quality, but not the identity, of *the* Prophet (the Messiah), Judas had the quality, but not the identity, of the one he imitated, the Devil.

John 8:44 is an important text for our understanding of the nature of the Devil. “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

Note the important elements of this text. (1) The Devil is a father. The same can be said of impersonal concepts, but it is also fitting for a personality. (2) He existed in “the

beginning.” What this beginning means, we are not told directly, but in that it is related to murder, the allusion to the Genesis account is obvious. It was the actions of “that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan” (Re 12:9) that caused the first deaths. (3) He was once “in the truth.” (4) He is the father of the lie, another obvious allusion to Genesis chapter 3.

1 John 3:8-10 uses *ho diabolos* four times:

“He that committeth sin is of *the devil*; for *the devil* sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of *the devil*. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of *the devil*: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.”

The context refers to Cain and his “works,” which were a reflection of the works of his father the Devil, so we know that this Devil existed at that early time in human history. (1Jo 3:8, 12) The passage also echoes John 8:44, describing the Devil as a father with children and as sinning from the beginning. The apostle John evidently considers the Devil to have existed continuously since Eden. It is difficult to see how the Devil can be interpreted as an evil ‘internal’ nature in this passage. “God” is a real person. “The children of God” are real. We are being asked to accept that “the devil” is *not* a real person while his “children” are. This is hardly consistent.

Revelation mentions the Devil and Satan more than any other ‘New Testament’ book (12 times). Seven of them are in the account of the war in heaven and related events in Revelation 12 and 20, which we already discussed at length.

There are five references to Satan or the Devil in the letters to the seven churches of Asia, Satan in Revelation 2:9; 2:13; 2:24; 3:9 and *diabolos* in Revelation 2:10. Even Christadelphians can see that it is extremely difficult to understand these as the personification of sin because abstract concepts can hardly throw people into prison or dwell in a certain city. They therefore usually understand these references of various human authorities who are enslaved by their evil impulses, or to the collective power of sin in the world. The Christadelphian Devil must be defined and redefined, sometimes as sin in the flesh, sometimes as a sinful human, sometimes as a governmental authority, as more and more passages must be accommodated.

When we view Satan as a fallen angel we have a consistent view that satisfies all of these texts. The synagogue of Satan refers to faithless Jews under the influence of Satan who persecuted Christians. (Re 2:9; 3:9) The Devil, using his agents, would throw some Christians into prison. (Re 2:10) Pergamos (Pergamum) was “where Satan’s seat is” and “where Satan dwelleth.” (Re 2:13) The city was a centre for demonic worship in many ways. The temple of Zeus, the shrine to Aesculapius, the god of healing and the cult of emperor worship were all expressions of this. “The depths of Satan” in Revelation 2:24 no doubt referred to some of the vast array of unchristian philosophies confronting the Thyatiran ecclesia.

13.5 Paul

When Paul says of a wicked man, “deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh,” it is so “that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” (1Co 5:5) The context shows that Paul is talking about disfellowshipping the man, removing him

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from the congregation into the world. (1Co 5:7, 11, 13) This destroys the sinful “flesh” element in the ecclesia so that God can bless its “spirit.” (Compare “flesh” in this sense at Galatians 5:17 and other texts.) - 1Ti 1:20.

Paul describes a problem, a thorn in the flesh, as a “messenger of Satan” (2Co 12:7) He does not explain the nature of the problem, much less say that the “messenger” or “Satan” was within him. Satan is someone who tempts (1Co 7:5) and hinders. (1Th 2:18) He tries to get the upper hand (2Co 2:11) and is an angel of light. (2Co 11:14) He lays snares (1Ti 3:7; 2Ti 2:26) and leads people astray. (1Ti 5:15) He succeeds only if we allow him. (Eph 4:27; 6:11) He has human agents (2Th 2:9). He is under divine judgment (1Ti 3:6) and, being the person behind the serpent’s lie in Eden, will ultimately be crushed by the seed of the woman. (Ro 16:20) All of these, while not decisive for a personal Satan, are consistent with it.

Ephesians 6:11-18 is a helpful passage in determining who the Devil is and how he works. In that passage we are advised to:

“put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle *not against flesh and blood*, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

The Devil and his principalities, powers and so forth are specifically described in *contrast* to “flesh and blood.” They are therefore not human, and for this reason we are exhorted to take up *spiritual* armour like “truth, .. righteousness .. the gospel of peace .. faith .. salvation, .. the word of God” and prayer. Other texts in Ephesians (like 2:6) do speak of a spiritually righteous standing that Christians have “in Christ Jesus” while they are on earth. But this condition is quite different to the spiritually wicked heavenly places that Paul is discussing in Ephesians 6:12 which are a contrast with “flesh and blood.”

13.6 Other Writers

James also mentions the Devil: “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (Jas 4:7) James uses the article, so his is speaking of an ‘external’ person in harmony with all other Biblical usage. Since James has not explained which Devil he means, James allows his readers to draw on their pool of knowledge that, as we have seen, included a personal spirit Devil. Remember, first century Bible readers did not have the ‘advantage’ of long and frequent articles written by the apostles to argue against the idea of a personal Devil, like Christadelphians have. They naturally would have understood the term the way others did.

Peter mentions the Devil at 1 Peter 5:8 where he says: “Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” Peter was familiar with Jesus’ beliefs about the Devil and he would have agreed, of course. Even though some have identified the Devil here with the persecuting Roman authorities, there is no proof for this connection. In fact, it seems the letter was written before 64 C.E., before the persecution of Christians by the Roman government under Nero.

Finally, at Jude 9 we are told of the dispute between “the Michael” and “the devil.” We have already discussed this. Suffice it to say that the Devil is as certainly an ‘external’ person as is Michael.

13.7 Other Titles

Of the few other titles applied to Satan is the one at 2 Corinthians 4:4, where Paul calls him “the god of this world.” This term is not elsewhere used of God, and “this world” in Paul’s letters usually refers to the present world of sin and corruption. (Ro 12:2; 1Co 7:31; Eph 2:2; 2Ti 4:10) It is likely that “the god of this world” is the special enemy of God. Satan demands worship and so can appropriately be called a false god. – Mt 4:9.

Another expression used by Jesus is “the prince [ruler] of this world.” (Joh 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) He is described as being “cast out.”

In 2 Corinthians 6:14-16, Paul contrasts believers with unbelievers, righteousness with unrighteousness, light with darkness, the temple of God with idols and Christ with Belial.

The Greek *beliar* transliterates a Hebrew word meaning worthlessness, which occurs 16 times in the ‘Old Testament.’ They refer to the words, ideas or the wicked as having the quality of *belial*, uselessness or baseness. Belial is not a person in its own right. (De 13:13; 15:9; Jg 19:22; 20:13; 1Sa 1:16; 2Sa 16:7; Pr 16:27) Some English translations leave the word untranslated as “Belial” as if to personify it as a father; others translate it as worthlessness, but in this Hebrew part of God’s Word there is no indication that Belial itself is a person.

However, in the centuries leading up to the first century, Belial became a description for Satan in Judaism. It is used for Satan frequently in the Book of Jubilees, the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, and the sectarian writings from Qumran. The Book of Jubilees definitely predated Paul’s epistles, and possibly the other traditions as well.

It is not certain how Paul uses it at 2 Corinthians 6:15. We do know that the sense of ‘worthlessness’ had gone out of Jewish usage by the time of Paul. Belial is not used in that sense after 2 Chronicles, and was translated rather than transliterated in the *Septuagint*. This means that in the Greek Bible that Paul regularly quoted in his writings he would not have read Belial or Beliar. So if Paul is citing Belial as used in the Hebrew Bible, it is odd that he has referred to Belial directly, rather than following the Hebrew’s citations in always using it to qualify something else. In 2 Corinthians 6:15, then, because he refers to Belial directly, he likely means Satan as the opposite of Christ.

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14 Historical Development

The historical development of the belief that there is no spirit Devil is important, because it shows that it is a late development rather than a restoration of Biblical truth.

There have been a few professed Christians taking this position, but it is a fairly recent development. Its few proponents begin to appear in the sixteenth century. Spiritualists became disbelievers too. Christadelphians would not find fellowship with many of them today.

Christadelphian Steven Snobelen's list of 'Christian' expositors who rejected the concept of Satan or the Devil as a literal supernatural agent of evil is very revealing. He lists in 1651 Thomas Hobbes, 1695 Balthassar Bekker, 1727 Isaac Newton, 1761 Hugh Farmer, 1791, William Ashdowne, 1804 John Simpson and in 1842 John Epps.

Snobelen also lists those who rejected the concept of demons as literal supernatural agents of evil, among them in 1651 Thomas Hobbes, 1695 Balthassar Bekker, 1727 Isaac Newton, 1737 Arthur Sykes, 1742 Nathaniel Lardner, 1755 Richard Meade, 1804 John Simpson and in 1842 John Epps.

Is this list impressive? It is very significant that the earliest evidence of the Christadelphian position since the apostles appears in 1651! Where is the evidence for the 1500 years of Christian history before 1651?

14.1 Isaac Newton's Denial

Christadelphians are happy to point out that Isaac Newton rejected belief in a personal spirit Satan. Newton was a careful and respected scholar. Based on his study of the Scriptures, he rejected the Trinity, infant baptism and the inherent immortality of the soul. He was right in these points, but wrong in others.

In fact, early in his career Newton believed in a personal Devil. At that time he explained the dragon of Revelation chapter 12 as both the Roman Empire and the Devil who influenced it. At that time he understood that there were two characters in view. Newton concluded that

“the Apocalyptic Dragon is a very proper emblem as well of the Roman Emperors and Empire which was so great an enemy to the church as of the Devil that arch-enemy to mankind.” - I. Newton, Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem, Yahuda MS 1.1a, f. 38r; Yahuda MS 1.1b, f. 16r. (As quoted in *Lust, pride and ambition: Isaac Newton and the Devil*, by Stephen D. Snobelen, History of Science and Technology, University of King's College, Halifax, November 2002.)

The dragon of Revelation 12, Newton wrote,

“has a double signification: he is taken for the Devil with his worship Gen 3 and for a kingdom.” - I. Newton, Yahuda MS 1.2, f. 11r. (*Ibid.*)

At this point in the 1670's and early 1680's Newton believes in a personal Devil. Later, however, he explained the dragon in terms of kingdoms of empires. For example:

“And there appeared another wonder in heaven, & behold a great red Dragon [the Roman heathen Empire] having seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns upon his heads. This Dragon being the old serpent called the Devil & Satan, is that Devil who hath his seat in Pergamus, that is the Greek empire in the reign of the last horn of Daniel's He Goat.” - *Language of the Prophets*, I. Newton, Keynes MS 5, f. 19r. (*Ibid.*)

The late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century marks a time of transformation to disbelief in the Devil for Newton. He came to believe that Athanasius was responsible for introducing teachings about demons into the Church. In his *Paradoxical questions concerning Athanasius*, Newton contends that Athanasius promoted the notion of the conscious existence of the soul in the intermediate state. This, he said, was directly linked to false teachings about demons:

“Athanasius by making Antony see the soule of Ammon ascend up to heaven, laid the foundation for introducing into the greek Churches this heathen doctrine of Dæmons together with that Popish one of Purgatory.” - *Paradoxical Questions concerning the morals and actions of Athanasius and his followers*, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, UCLA, f. 55r. (*Ibid.*)

According to Newton, one of the arguments used by Athanasius' followers against their opponents, the Arians, was that the Devil and demons reported being tortured when they denied the Trinity doctrine. Newton reports that they pretended demonic miracles in support of their case. It is important to note as a matter of history that the Arians did not deny a personal Devil. However, the fantastic claims of the Trinitarians that the Devil somehow supported their case would not have endeared Newton to belief in a Devil.

Newton's developed view about Satan influenced some in the following centuries. Others thought they arrived at the same position independently. Newton could never really demonstrate, though, that professed Christians apostatised on this point in the post-apostolic period.

14.2 Early Post-Biblical Writings

The belief in an 'internal' Devil who is a figure for sinful human nature is not reflected in any of the writings of the church 'fathers' or apologists. Christians do not base their beliefs on the statements of post-Biblical writers, but this is exactly what we would expect if “*the Satan*” the Devil were an 'external' personality. The notion that Satan is not a personal being is utterly foreign to their writings.

As mentioned above, when presented with this argument, Christadelphians can only cite evidence for their view among those who claimed to be Christians back to the year 1651 at the earliest. And they certainly have searched!

They claim to trace it in Judaism back to the first century, but it should be noted that they can cite only rabbinic Jewish references in the first three Christian centuries.

The first-century reference is quoted in John Gill's *Commentary On the Bible* (1748) in a note on Zechariah 3:1, which speaks of Satan standing:

“The Targum [the Targum of Jonathan Ben Uzziel] paraphrases it, ‘and **sin** standing at his right hand to resist him.’”

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The second-century reference is from Rabbi Joshua Ben Kar'ha (135-160 C.E.) as quoted in the Talmud Babylon, Tractate Baba Bathra, Part I, Chapter 1:

“He whose eyes are shut to charity is likened unto an idolater; and this is to be taken from an analogy of expression in the following verses: Concerning charity it is written: ‘Beware that there be not Belial in thy heart’; and concerning idolatry, it is written: ‘There have gone forth children of Belial.’”

In this passage the rabbi quotes Deuteronomy 15:9 which refers to a “word of Belial” (ftn.) in the heart. Belial basically means ‘good-for-nothing or worthless’ whether it refers to a thing or a person. There is no evidence that at the time Deuteronomy was written the word was understood to mean Satan. It is unlikely that here the rabbi, in discussing a text from that period, was referring to Belial as an ‘internal’ Satan.

The third-century reference is from Rabbi Simeon Ben Lakish (230-270 C.E.) as quoted in Talmud Babylon, Tractate Baba Bathra, Part I, Chapter 1 (or Folio 16a):

“Satan, the evil imagination, and the Angel of Death are all one.”

This is taken to mean that Satan is to be identified with the natural inclination in men to do evil.

So there are only three references in 250 years defending the Christadelphian position, all of them from *Judaism*. And against these three could be cited many more showing that by far the majority of Jewish writers of the period believed in a personal Satan. Snobelen cites later Judaistic sources such as Nachman Ben Isaac (330-360 C.E.), Judah (fifth century), Saadia Ben Joseph (892-942 C.E.), David Kimchi (1160 C.E.) and Levi ben Gershon (1344 C.E.). Still, the evidence is scanty. Even if there were more, Judaistic opinions in the Christian period are of no value. Where are the *Christian* references to a sin-nature Devil, especially in the earliest post-apostolic period?

There are hundreds of references to Satan the Devil in the writings of professed Christians during this period and they adopt the prevailing concept that he is an ‘external’ Devil, an invisible spirit adversary. For example, Clement of Rome, writing near the end of the first Christian century, says:

“Let us therefore implore forgiveness for all those transgressions which through any [suggestion] of the adversary [Satan] we have committed.” – 1 Clement 51:1.

Professed Christian Ignatius also wrote near the end of the first century. He clearly refers to wicked angels in heaven, organized but condemned.

“I am in bonds and can comprehend heavenly things and the arrays of the angels and the musterings of the principalities, things visible and things invisible.” – Trallians 5:2.

“Both the things which are in heaven, and the glorious angels, and rulers, both visible and invisible, if they believe not in the blood of Christ, shall, in consequence, incur condemnation.” - Smyrneans 6:1.

“For when ye assemble frequently in the same place, the powers of Satan are destroyed, and the destruction at which he aims is prevented by the unity of your faith. Nothing is more precious than peace, by which all war, both in heaven and earth, is brought to an end.” - Ephesians 13:1.

These are very early post-Biblical statements of belief in an ‘external’ personal spirit Devil and wicked angels.

Were they apostate views? It is true that apostasy was underway at this time and that much falsehood is evident in the writings of the period that followed. It is possible, for example, to show evidence that wrong views about the relationship between God and Christ were developing. Yet, there is also plenty of evidence that professed Christians of the period still viewed Christ as subordinate to the Father.

In other words, when apostasy developed it was gradual. But regarding Satan the Devil the situation is quite different. Christadelphian writers try to account for this as a rapid deviation from the Scriptures, but they are faced with the fact that there is *no* evidence that the early post-apostolic ecclesia *ever* denied the existence of Satan and the demons.

14.3 Satan in the Second Century

Polycarp is thought to have been an associate of Papias, who knew the apostle of John. He mentions nothing different about Satan the Devil. Polycarp is seen by historians the last link with the apostolic age. He does not argue against a personal spirit Devil either.

The Epistle of Barnabas is thought to have been written between 80 and 120 C.E. It refers to “angels of Satan” and “the ruler of the present time of iniquity.” (XVIII.1, 2) But there is no Christadelphian-type explanation of these expressions. Another second-century work, *The Shepherd of Hermas* is the same.

Justin Martyr wrote in about 150 C.E. and refers to “the prince of the wicked spirits .. called the serpent, and Satan, and the devil.” (First *Apology*, XXVIII). This same work mentions demons 21 times. His second *Apology* contains four more references to demons. In *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, chapter LXXIX, Trypho accuses Justin of blasphemy for asserting “that angels sinned and revolted from God.” Justin uses Isaiah 30:3 (*Septuagint*), Zechariah chapter 3, Job chapters 1 and 2, Genesis chapter 3, the magicians of Egypt in Exodus, and Psalm 96:5 (95:5, *Septuagint*).

Athenagoras of Athens wrote in toward the end of the second century. In his work *A Plea for the Christians*, he says:

“...so is it among the angels. Some, free agents, you will observe, such as they were created by God, continued in those things for which God had made and over which He had ordained them; but some outraged both the constitution of their nature and the government entrusted to them...These *angels*, then, *who have fallen from heaven*, and haunt the air and the earth, and are no longer able to rise to heavenly things, and the souls of the giants, which are the demons who wander about the world, perform actions similar, the one (that is, the demons) to the natures they have received, the other (that is, the angels) to the appetites they have indulged.” - Chapter XXIV (Italics ours).

Irenaeus of Lyons wrote about 180 C.E. In *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* he describes Satan this way:

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“This commandment the man kept not, but was disobedient to God, being led astray by the angel who, for the great gifts of God which He had given to man, was envious and jealous of him, and both brought himself to nought and made man sinful, persuading him to disobey the commandment of God. So *the angel, becoming by his falsehood the author and originator of sin*, himself was struck down, having offended against God, and man he caused to be cast out from Paradise. And, because through the guidance of his disposition *he apostatized and departed from God, he was called Satan, according to the Hebrew word; that is, Apostate: but he is also called Slanderer*. Now God cursed the serpent which carried and conveyed the Slanderer; and this malediction came on the beast himself and on the angel hidden and concealed in him, even on Satan.” – Chapter XVI (Italics ours).

. Clearly, to Irenaeus, Satan was an apostate angel. In his work *Against Heresies*, Book 5, he makes a lengthy analysis of the Temptations of Christ, drawing attention to the fact that both the temptation in Eden and the first temptation of Christ involved food, as evidence that a single tempter was at work in both cases. He further declares:

“*The devil, however, as he is the apostate angel*, can only go to this length, as he did at the beginning, to deceive and lead astray the mind of man into disobeying the commandments of God, and gradually to darken the hearts of those who would endeavour to serve him, to the forgetting of the true God, but to the adoration of himself as God... *the devil, being one among those angels* who are placed over the spirit of the air, as the Apostle Paul has declared in his Epistle to the Ephesians, becoming envious of man, was rendered *an apostate from the divine law*: for envy is a thing foreign to God.” - Book 5, XXIV.3, 4 (Italics ours).

We do not believe that Satan is an ‘external’ spirit person because Polycarp and Irenaeus did. The point is, where apostasy took place, it happened gradually. There is evidence that the truth was slowly but surely corrupted. As mentioned, the Trinity was a case in point. The abandoning of the millennial hope was another.

If the acceptance of a personal spirit Satan were part of the foretold apostasy, it would be expected that for some time the truth of the ‘sin-nature’ Devil should have persisted somewhere in the writings of the post-Biblical professed Christians. But it is nowhere to be found, exactly as expected if it were not original Christian doctrine. There is nothing in the writings of the so-called church ‘fathers’ or apologists to parallel the lengthy modern-day articles of Christadelphians and others to counter the personal-spirit-Devil concept. They seem just to have accepted it, as the writers of the Christian Scriptures did.

15 Origins of the Satan Concept

It is sometime claimed that notions of a personal Devil and demonology were derived from ancient pagan religions. The Serpent appears in the religious books of nearly all ancient cultures, it is true. But so too does the Flood. For a time the Egyptians toyed with monotheism. None of this means that all such concepts were totally false, although false religion always added its characteristic corruptions. Major truths held in the Bible often have their contrasting counterparts in other faiths. The belief in the personal Devil and in demons is a prime example. The fact that the basic Jewish concept of a personal Devil and demons meets absolutely no corrective attention in Scripture is surely very significant.

15.1 An Evasion of Responsibility?

Those who oppose the concept of a personal Devil often state that belief in an ‘external’ Devil is to attempt to pass responsibility for sin to another person. The Scriptures teach that “every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” and “from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts ... all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.” (Jas 1:14; Mr 7:21, 23) None of this, however, prevents another person from being a “Tempter,” as we see clearly in the wilderness temptation account. Whether the tempter was spirit or human, he was still a tempter capable of introducing sinful concepts to Jesus that Jesus had not entertained before the conversation took place. - Mt 4:1.

If some will not concede an ‘external’ tempter even in this case, a variety of seducers and tempters are certainly mentioned elsewhere. (Pr 7:21; Mt 16:1; 1Jo 2:26; Re 21:20) The external influence from an ‘external’ tempter can prompt thoughts that lead to desires that form within the heart and that eventually lead to sin. For this very reason Paul states: “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.” - 1Co 15:33.

Another Christadelphian argument reasons that, since “the sting of death is sin,” there is no room for Satan unless he is sin. (1Co 15:56) We have discussed the argument elsewhere and it is weak. Every human murderer causes death, but is every human murderer Satan? There is certainly no difficulty in the concept of an ‘external’ person tempting and otherwise opposing people in an effort to have them sin and for that sin to lead to their death.

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16 Other Evidence

Consider now some texts that at the very least are consistent with the existence of an 'external' spirit Devil and demons.

16.1 Confirmation

At Ephesians 4:26-27 Paul exhorts:

“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil.”

The word “neither” sets the Devil as an entity apart from either human sin or a provoked state of mind. This is consistent with the Biblical presentation of “the Satan” and “the Devil” as an entity 'external' to a person.

When drawing a distinction between true worship and false, Paul contrasts Belial, a common Jewish term for Satan, with Christ. If he meant Belial was just the impersonal badness in humans, we would have expected it to be contrasted to goodness. But no, Paul contrasts Belial to a person, and a supernatural one at that, Christ. The implication is that Belial, too, is a person. - 2 Co 6:15.

James 2:19 says:

“the demons believe and shudder.”

James was discussing a certain kind of belief demonstrated by works but without genuine faith which may produce emotional reactions. Faith is a condition of the heart and mind. To teach his point, James speaks of demons who had this capacity yet failed to exercise true faith. He does not say that persons with the demons shudder, but that demons themselves shudder.

17 The Nature of Demons

The usual explanation for the references to demons in Scripture is that they are an accommodation to the ignorance of people of the first Christian century, so that Jesus did not disturb the superstition of his contemporary Jews when curing the demon-possessed. But the following points are interesting.

17.1 Differentiated From the Possessed Person

The medical doctor Luke and others report that the demons spoke for themselves and that Jesus addresses the demon as a person distinct from the sufferer. At Luke 4:33-35 we read:

“And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil [demon, Greek], and cried out with a loud voice, Saying, Let us alone; what have *we* to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and *come* out of *him*. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.”

The demon speaks for the group of demons: “what have *we* [plural] to do with thee?” Jesus then addresses the demon as distinct from the man: “*come* [second person singular, referring to the demon] out of *him* [third person singular, referring to the man].” It could not be clearer that two separate persons are meant.

Verse 41 adds:

“And devils also came out of many, *crying out*, and *saying*, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking *them* suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ.”

Here the Greek participles “crying out” and “saying” are neuter plural, referring to the demons. They cannot refer to the men, which would have required a masculine plural. Jesus rebuked “them” (again, neuter plural, the demons, not the men). Throughout the account, as everywhere in the New Testament, the demons are distinct from their victims. - See also Acts 16:18.

Refusing such evidence, some will say Jesus was merely speaking to the aberrations in people. Well, Luke, who was a doctor, does not say so, and the prevailing concept of demons was that they were malevolent spirits. We are left to wonder what other language Luke could have used if he believed the popular view was right. There is no better way of demonstrating the independent personality of the demons than this. It is only when one has decided in advance that demons do not exist that these accounts become a problem. Otherwise, their meaning is obvious.

17.2 They Knew Things Humans Did Not

The demons recognized Jesus as Messiah and as the Son of God when ordinary people did not. As quoted above, the demon said:

“What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? *I know thee who thou art*; the Holy One of God.” - Lu 4:33, 34; cp. Mr 1:23, 24.

And elsewhere:

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“When he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, *thou Son of God?* art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” - Mt 8:28, 29; see also Mr 3:11; Lu 4:41; 8:28.

How is it that some mental or physical aberration gave sick humans such extraordinary insight?

Where are the similar statements from ordinary Jews not affected by demons? The only others to make similar comments were God’s servants Gabriel, John the Baptist, Jesus’ disciples and a Roman army officer who reached the correct conclusion regarding Jesus’ identity as a matter of deduction. (Mt 14:33; 27:54; Mr 15:39; Lu 1:35; Joh 1:34, 49; 6:69) How is it that the demons reached accurate conclusions about the identity of Jesus when ordinary sane Jews did not?

Also significant is that Jesus discussed demons privately with his disciples without qualification. Were they also ignorant of the real meaning of demons? Was Jesus humouring them also? Why did Jesus never move into the same expository explanation of the ‘true’ nature of the Devil and demons so common today among those who deny the existence of personal demons? - Lu 10:20; 11:14-28.

Virtually conceding that the usual explanation is inadequate, Christadelphian writer Peter Watkins writes:

“Let it be stated categorically that it is not sufficient to say that the New Testament writers were using language that would have reflected current superstitions... It was not the limitations of language that compelled the Gospel writers to make such elaborate use of demon terminology. It was the Spirit of God.” - *The Devil, the Great Deceiver*, p. 65.

Watkins correctly opposes the arguments that his colleagues almost always use to defend their belief in no demons. But instead of simply accepting the existence of personal demons, he proposes a solution which most other Christadelphians would surely reject. He says:

“The subject of Satan and the demons - or the Devil and his angels - must be thought of as one elaborate New Testament parable.” - *Ibid.* p. 64.

But the language of Scripture makes clear when Jesus spoke in parables. Otherwise, Scriptural interpretation would be impossible. The language in accounts involving Satan the Devil and demons is indicative of real, historical accounts, not parables. There is no internal evidence suggesting that any of the accounts about the casting out of demons were parables.

Certain texts link demons with pagan idols. For example, 1 Corinthians 10:20 says:

“The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils [demons, Greek].”

Deuteronomy 32:17 agrees:

“They sacrificed unto devils [demons], not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.”

Psalms 106:36, 37 says:

“And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils [demons].”

It would be wrong, however, to identify demons so closely with idols as to conclude that they actually *were* idols. First-century usage precludes this, Bible writers affirming the casting out of demons from people. Demons, then, were capable of entering and afterward leaving a person. Obviously, this was not possible if they were idols. Revelation 9:20 provides a comment that helps us discern a distinction between demons and idols:

“.. that they should not worship devils [demons, Greek], *and* idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk.”

Demons are mentioned separately from and in addition to idols, but they are the unseen force behind idolatry.

The proposition that demons can be equated with diseases or mental aberrations is entirely contrary to the usage of the term in the Christian Scriptures. If demon means epilepsy and mental disease, then it must be shown how epilepsy and mental disease can believe (Jas 2:19: “the demons believe and shudder.”) and produce false “teachings of demons.” - 1Ti 4:1.

The expression “teachings of demons [*didaskaliais daimonion*]” at 1 Timothy 4:1 is explained by some as teachings *about* demons, so that belief in personal demons would be a sign of apostasy. *Daimonion* is a noun in the genitive case here. Consider other genitive nouns in the immediate context. There is the expression “hypocrisy of men who speak lies [*hypokrisei pseudologon*]” in the same sentence. There is also the “creation of God [*ktisma theou*]” and “God’s word [*logou theou*]” shortly thereafter. (1Ti 4:2, 4, 5) These expressions surely mean ‘hypocrisy *belonging to* men ...,’ ‘creation *belonging to* God’ and ‘word *belonging to* God.’ So we strongly suspect that “teachings of demons” means ‘teachings *belonging to* demons’ rather than teachings *about* demons. This is called the “Subjective Genitive,” and one Greek grammar explains its meaning this way:

“The *Subjective Genitive*. We have the subjective genitive when the noun in the genitive *produces* the action, being therefore related *as subject* to the verbal idea of the noun modified. *to kerygma Iesou Khristou. The preaching of Jesus Christ. Rom. 16:25.*” - *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, H.E. Dana and J.R. Mantey, page 78.

“Demons” is the genitive noun at 1 Timothy 4:1. If a subjective genitive, it would emphasize the fact that the demons *produce* the teaching rather than the teaching producing the demons. At least, the former is clearly the meaning of the other genitives in the immediate context.

Note that, at 1 Corinthians 10:20, “demons” are in contrasting parallel to God:

“The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God.”

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The Greek language has adequate words for “mad” and “madness,” and they are used in the Scriptures. Yet the Bible writers separately refer repeatedly to demons. The following texts show the distinction between demons and disease and that they were not identical.

Matthew 4:24: “they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, *and* those which were possessed with devils, *and* those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.”

Matthew 8:16: “they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, *and* healed all that were sick.”

Matthew 10:1: “he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, *and* to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.”

Matthew 10:8: “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils.”

Mark 1:32-34: “they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, *and* cast out many devils.”

Mark 6:13: “they cast out many devils, *and* anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.”

Luke 4:40, 41: “all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. *And* devils also came out of many.

Luke 9:1: “he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, *and* to cure diseases.”

Luke 13:32: “I cast out devils, *and* I do cures to day and to morrow.”

Acts 5:16: “bringing sick folks, *and* them which were vexed with unclean spirits.”

Acts 19:12: “the diseases departed from them, *and* the evil spirits went out of them.”

We can be sure that the demons in these texts are not illnesses because the “and” in most of them marks them as different from mental or physical disorders. Of course, and as expected, the demons may also cause illnesses in people just as malevolent humans may injure or make others ill by various means, but this is not to say demons are the same as physical or mental disorders.

Christadelphians argue that Jesus spoke of ‘lunaticks’ without necessarily believing in the power of the moon to produce madness. This is true. But the use of lunacy is not parallel to the use of demon terminology in the Christian Scriptures. For example, Jesus never spoke to the moon as he did to demons. The moon never answered him back as demons did. If Jesus had spoken to the moon, forbidding it to cause epilepsy, it would have implied that he accepted that the moon influences illness. Jesus never does. He does speak this way of demons because they were real persons.

The Jews of the first Christian century were familiar with rabbinical and other Jewish writings that pointed to the existence of Satan and the demons. *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible* notes:

“Satan is called the prince of the demons in Matt. 12:24 just as Sammael ‘the great prince in heaven’ is designated the ‘chief of satans’ in the Midrash. The demonology that confronts us in the New Testament has striking points of contact with that which has developed in the Enochic literature.”

Christadelphian writer Robert Roberts concedes as much. Discussing the visit of Jesus to the country of the Gadarenes in which he meets a man called Legion, Roberts says:

“The narrative is necessarily tinged with the notion universal in the world at that time, that madness was due to the presence of malignant beings.” - *Nazareth Revisited*, page 155.

This is not to say that Christ and the first century Bible writers *adopted* their concept of demons from apostate Judaism or from pagan nations. It means that belief in demons was common in Jesus’ day, Jesus and his disciples did not argue against the underlying concept that personal demons exist. Rather, they recognized and confirmed the existence of demons and of Satan.

Really, if the ideas about demons that were popular in Jesus’ day were wrong, the last thing Bible writers would do is use the term “demon” so often. The word appears over 70 times in the ‘New Testament.’ Instead, they would have avoided it because of the wrong impression it would give, or, at the very least, they would redefine the meaning of the word. But they use it freely. What were their readers supposed to think except that demons were real persons? There is no lengthy argument in the Bible like those in Christadelphian publications explaining that personal demons do not exist.

17.3 Unclean Spirits, Not Flesh

There are many Bible texts that distinguish between spirits and flesh.

Isaiah 31:3 “the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit.”

Luke 24:37, 39 “they were imagining they beheld a spirit.... A spirit does not have flesh and bones.”

John 4:24 “God is a Spirit.”

Yes, God is a spirit, different to the flesh of men. A spirit is not flesh. Elsewhere, God, the resurrected Jesus and the angels are described as spirits.

1 Kings 22:21, 22 “there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him.”

1 Corinthians 15:45 “the last Adam was made a quickening spirit”

2 Corinthians 3:17 “the Lord is that Spirit.”

1 Timothy 3:16 “God [“he who” according to better manuscripts] was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit.”

Hebrews 1:13, 14 “The angels ... Are they not all ministering spirits ...?”

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1Peter 3:18 “Christ ... put to death in the flesh, but quickened by [actually, “in” to correspond with “in the flesh”] the Spirit.”

The human spirit is also many times referred to in the Christian Scriptures and means the life principle or a person’s dominant emotion. But this spirit is always something humans possess or have within them. Humans are never called spirits. - Mt 26:41; 27:50; Ma 8:12; 14:38; Lu 1:47, 80; 8:55; 23:46; Joh 11:33; 13:21; 19:30; Ac 7:59; 17:16; 19:21; Ro 1:9; 8:16b; 11:8; 1 Co 4:21; 5:3-5; 7:34; 16:18; 2Co 2:13; 7:1, 13; Ga 6:1, 18; Php 4:23; Col 2:5; 1Th 5:23; 2Ti 1:7; 4:22; Philem 25; He 4:12; Jas 2:26; 4:5; 1Pe 3:4.

Demons, on the other hand, are many times called spirits, but differentiated from God, Christ and the angels as “unclean.”

Mark 5:13: “the *unclean spirits* went out, and entered into the swine.” (Cp. Lu 8:33 which calls these “*devils* [‘demons,’ Greek].”)

Luke 4:33-36: “there was a man, which had a spirit of an *unclean devil* [‘demon,’ Greek], and cried out with a loud voice, .. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him... And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the *unclean spirits*, and they come out?” Note that *the demon was an unclean spirit*.

Luke 10:17-20: “Lord, even *the devils* [‘demons,’ Greek] are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, .. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that *the spirits* are subject unto you.” Again the demons are called spirits.

Acts 16:16: “a certain damsel possessed with a *spirit* of divination met us.”

This presentation of demons as spirits is a personal presentation of the same kind as that of God, Christ and the angels, although “unclean.”

Compare the unclean spirits with the holy spirit. The holy spirit is personified as an exception in one conversation Jesus had with his disciples (Joh 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26; 16:13) and is very rarely said to speak. When it does, it always speaks through the Scriptures or a human agent. (Ac 1:16; 8:29; 10:19; 13:2) But as shown above, the demons spoke separately from any human and with information unknown to any human. While God was the Source of information in the case of humans speaking under the influence of holy spirit, who was the source of the information spoken by unclean spirits if they did not exist as persons?

17.4 Capable of Miracles

Those who don’t believe in supernatural evil often explain away modern demonic ‘miracles.’ In many cases, this is proper because they can be explained as sleight of hand or in other natural ways. However, sometimes genuine ‘miracles’ are performed by enemies of God. For example, the magicians in Egypt were able to imitate the miracles performed by Moses and Aaron. (Ex 7:11, 22; 8:7) How are these to be explained without recourse to real demonic power? The Bible does not explain them away as fakery.

Would we say that God empowered the Egyptian magicians for some reason? Paul speaks of how the Egyptians “Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses,” likening them to men in his own day, “men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.” (2Ti 3:8) They were hardly agents of God. Jesus said: “*Every* kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation.” (Mt 12:25) This must therefore be true, not only of Satan’s kingdom, but also of God’s kingdom. For God to do such a thing would be to undermine his own sovereignty fatally. The power of demonic miracles is real and must be explained by those who deny the existence of demons.

17.5 Satan and “His Angels”

At Revelation 12: 7, 9 we read that the “old serpent,.. the Devil and Satan .. and his angels” are to be cast out of heaven. The next verse says it marks the coming of “the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ.” (Revelation 12:10) These events were in the future at the time John received the Revelation. (Re 1:1)

What can we say about the identity of Satan and his angels? As mentioned above, the definite article that appears with all of Satan’s descriptors, “dragon,” “serpent,” “Devil” and “Satan,” marks this evil character as the one already well known to the readers. The dragon is easily identified from Revelation 12:3, the serpent from Genesis 3:1, the Devil and Satan from the knowledge pool of the reader from the ‘New Testament’ accounts. There is no need to look forward, outside the knowledge pool of the reader, to a future political ruler. In that case, we would not have expected the article.

If the Satan of Revelation 12:9 is the one person well known since the garden of Eden and more especially exposed in the Christian Scriptures, his angels must be his messengers. It is true that angels may refer to humans, especially in the symbolic book of Revelation. (Re 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14) Even so, many times the angels of Revelation are the angels of heaven. How can we identify them?

Revelation 12:7 is helpful here. Note that the dragon and “his angels” fight Michael and “his angels.” Given that the war in heaven takes place at the time the kingdom of God is established, it is interesting that other Bible texts mention the angels in connection with the kingdom. For example, at Matthew 13:41 says:

“The Son of man shall send forth *his angels*, and they shall gather out of his *kingdom* all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.”

So the faithful angels are active at the time the kingdom is established. At Matthew 13:47-50 they are again busy in connection with the kingdom.

“Again, the *kingdom* of heaven is like unto a net,.. the *angels* shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire.”

Note the active role of the angels in the kingdom. At Matthew 16:27, 28 Jesus says:

“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with *his angels*;.. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his *kingdom*.”

At Matthew 24:31, at the coming of the Son of man, it is said:

“And he shall send *his angels* with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

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Again at Matthew 25:31 Jesus says:

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy *angels* with him, then he shall sit upon the *throne* of his glory.”

So far, then, it is established that the holy angels are repeatedly associated with the coming of the kingdom, just as at Revelation 12:9, 10. Why is this significant and how does it help us identify Satan’s angels? Because, following on from the Matthew 25:31 reference to the holy angels, Jesus as the King of the kingdom (Matthew 25:40) issues this command:

“Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for *the devil and his angels.*”

Yes, Jesus and “his angels,” all of them, face the Devil and “his angels” at the time God’s kingdom is established. In fact, “his angels” is a term only ever used of God’s holy angels, with the single exception of the reference to Satan’s angels in Revelation chapter 12. The kingdom reference points to the time involved and helps us identify ‘the devil and his angels’ of Revelation 12:9 as “the devil and his angels” of Matthew 25:41. The fact that the holy angels, “his angels,” are heavenly angels infers that the Devil’s angels are also of heaven. Jesus called Satan “the prince of the devils.” (Mt 9:34) So he has the kind of authority over them consistent with their being “*his* angels.”

17.6 Conclusion

The combined force of the evidence about demons is compelling. They are often distinguished from the humans they were influencing, they knew things ordinary humans did not, and they could perform miracles. The Jews believed in personal demons, but nowhere do Jesus or the Bible writers argue that demons were physical or mental aberrations. Christadelphians have ‘fixed’ the problem by writing articles, chapters and whole books on the subject. But the Bible never does. Really, what were Jesus’ hearers and the readers of the Christian Scriptures supposed to think but that Satan the Devil and the demons were real spirit persons?

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