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## Response to Jonathan Burke on Satan and Demons

### Overview of Content:

Page	Topic	Summary of Main Point
6	Evidence for Existence of Demons	Science cannot prove or disprove the existence of demons. Empirical and philosophical arguments have been put forth by scholars in favour of the existence of demons. In light of this we have no reason to challenge the testimony of Scripture on the matter.
7	Tree-Fruit Analogy	Jesus gave the tree-fruit analogy concerning individuals, not belief systems. Even if one tries to extend it to belief systems, it is not the case that belief in demons necessarily yields bad fruit or that unbelief in demons necessarily results in good fruit.
9	Christian Responses to Illness	Comparing demon-possession with sore gums or a cold is inappropriate since the physical manifestations of demon-possession in Scripture are always life-threatening or life-altering. It is normal for Christians to pray for healing from life-threatening or life-altering afflictions.
9	Satan in the Old Testament	I've revised my understanding of Old Testament satanology in light of scholarship. However three or four references to supernatural beings as 'a satan' or 'the satan' are widely accepted, laying a foundation for the more refined satanology of apocalyptic Judaism and Christianity. By contrast, the Old Testament never personifies 'satan' or uses it in an abstract way.
11	The importance of the intertestamental period	The intertestamental literature is important, not as inspired revelation, but as literary-historical background to the New Testament which is an essential component of the historical-critical method
12	Quotations from Caird, Boyd and Rosen-Zvi	
12	Caird	Caird allowed that some in the early church (he mentions only Paul explicitly) may have regarded Satan as a personification and not a person, while others definitely viewed Satan as a person. Thus there remains virtually no scholarly support for Christadelphian satanology in the New Testament as a whole.
13	Two recent studies of Pauline satanology	Two recent critical studies of Paul's satanology suggest a renewed acceptance of his belief in Satan as a personal spiritual being.

15	Do Christadelphians have a unified satanology?	That Christadelphians do not have a unified satanology is plain from the heterogeneous interpretations of 'satan' and 'diabolos' texts in the New Testament. In some cases the term is taken to be a personification of the <i>yetzer hara</i> , and in other cases the term is taken as a reference to the unbelieving Jewish religious establishment or the Roman Empire.
16	Boyd	That the Shepherd of Hermas demythologizes demons as personified vices but does not do so with Satan is very unexpected if Satan had already been demythologized and personified within the New Testament! Boyd elsewhere makes it clear he thinks an apocalyptic, personal view of Satan undergirded Jesus' entire ministry.
16	Rosen-Zvi	Rosen-Zvi argues that the rabbis rejected demons as an explanation for human sinfulness, but he does not say they rejected the existence of demons. He and many other scholars observe that the rabbis strongly affirmed the existence of demons, as did Philo.
18	Pagels	Another Christadelphian writer (Duncan Heaster) has cited Pagels as a supporter of the Christadelphian view, whereas in fact she believes Satan is portrayed as a supernatural enemy in the New Testament.
18	Targum Jonathan to the Prophets on Zech. 3:1	One would want to see more caution in the dating of this passage in light of scholarship. In any case, the reading 'sin' is contextually improbable, and this is the only reading which supports your claim that 'satan' is interpreted as a personification in the Targum.
21	Belial	If we agree that 'Belial' is an abstract term in the Old Testament (akin to worthlessness or destructiveness) and not a personal being, it is no surprise that the word continued to be used that way in later Judaism. What <i>is</i> remarkable is that in some circles the term became a title for Satan.
21	Authorship of Pentateuch	My conviction that the Pentateuch was largely written by Moses is based on my faith in the Son of God, who said as much, and not in my faith in my own abilities as a biblical scholar.
21	Historico-Critical Method	I think there has been a misunderstanding as I do not denounce the historical-critical method <i>per se</i> ; I myself use it and cite scholars who do the same. However I also recognise its limitations, especially when it is combined with a deistic or secular worldview.
23	Twelftree	
23	Is there a New Testament demonology?	Twelftree does not say there is no New Testament demonology as you seem to think; he merely emphasizes that there is no fully worked out demonology as the writers' focus was on the salvific work of Christ and not the demons themselves. He further affirms both Paul's belief in demons and that Paul was an exorcist (albeit a reluctant one).
24	Arguments for the existence of demons	While Twelftree proposes a partial demythologization of what the New Testament refers to as demons, he cautions against taking this too far as the spiritual, demonic dimension of illness should not be confounded with the natural dimension. He offers empirical and philosophical arguments in favour of the existence of demons in his book <i>Christ Triumphant: Exorcism Then and Now</i> .

25	Diminution of interest in exorcism in the early church	Twelftree acknowledges the diminution of interest in exorcism in the early church as attested by the Pauline corpus, the Johannine writings and the Apostolic Fathers of the early second century. He provides carefully reasoned explanations for the diminution in each case but these explanations never include the idea that the church put away belief in demons.
29	Beliefs of Jesus and the apostles	Twelftree emphatically affirms that Jesus and the early church believed in demons.
29	Scholarly support for virtual absence of satan from John's Gospel	You have claimed there is scholarly support for the idea that Satan is virtually absent from John's Gospel but have not cited any. I cite scholars who hold the opposite view. Anyone who thinks the devil is not important to Johannine theology must also contend with 1 John 3:8.
30	New Testament Statistics on <i>satanas</i> , <i>diabolos</i> and other titles	I refer to a recent blog post in which I investigated your claims regarding a marginalization of interest in Satan can be observed within the New Testament and found them to be statistically unfounded. It is further noted that you have not cited any scholars who observe such a trend.
30	Twofold categorization of New Testament books	That the New Testament epistles were written to established churches is beyond dispute; however, that the Gospels were written entirely for evangelistic or catechetical purposes is very much debatable.
31	Summary of statistical analysis	Even if we assume your twofold categorization of books is correct, once we control for the vastly different word counts of the New Testament books, there is no significant difference in rate of occurrence of the words <i>satanas</i> and <i>diabolos</i> between the two categories. Most of the books in which neither word occurs are very short. A similar number of New Testament books fails to mention the words <i>basileia</i> (kingdom), and again the word <i>anastasis</i> (resurrection) or its verbal equivalents. It would be unwise to claim on that basis that these doctrines were unimportant to the early church; the same is true of Satan.
33	The Devil and Satan in 1 John	You reduced the number of references to the devil in 1 John to two on dubious grounds whereas the true number of references is nine when the synonymous term 'the evil one' is taken into account.
34	The Devil and Satan in Revelation	
34	Rev. 2:9 and 3:9	You refuted a straw man exegesis and offered your own without any scholarly support. Scholarly exegesis is cited in support of the view that <i>ho satanas</i> here refers to a personal supernatural being.
35	Rev. 2:10	You failed to discuss this text. Scholarly exegesis is cited in support of the view that <i>ho diabolos</i> here refers to a personal supernatural being.
35	Rev. 2:13	You refuted a straw man exegesis and offered your own without any scholarly support. Scholarly exegesis is cited in support of the view that <i>ho satanas</i> here refers to a personal supernatural being.
37	Rev. 2:24	You refuted a straw man exegesis and offered your own without any scholarly support. Scholarly exegesis is cited in support of the view that <i>ho satanas</i> here refers to a personal supernatural being.
38	Rev. 12:7-9 and 20:2-3, 7-10	You again raised a straw man and then briefly proposed an exegetical framework which was not

		developed. Scholarly analysis of these texts is quoted at length to show the historical-critical basis for the traditional view of 'the devil and Satan' in these texts.
43	Church of England	I overlooked the 39 Articles and was looking at the wrong document as the creed of the Church of England; hence I acknowledge that the catechism of the Church of England does explicitly refer to the devil.
43	The Didache	The Didache is a manual for practical Christian living, not a theological treatise. Nonetheless, there is probably an implicit reference to the devil in Didache 16:4, and it is plausible that there was an explicit reference to the devil in the Didache's lost ending.
45	Other arguments for the unity and personality of the New Testament Satan/Devil	The reader is referred to the discussion of the significance of the definite article for New Testament satanology in my paper The Accuser of our Brethren, to which you have not responded.
45	The Temptations of Christ	
46	Mark's version	It is argued, with scholarly support, that in referring to 'the satan' without further explanation, Mark alluded to an entity who/which was well known to his audience by that term.
47	Matthew's and Luke's versions	It is questioned whether it is plausible to take the apparent dialogue between Jesus and the devil as a figurative representation of an internal struggle given the lack of other figurative representations of events involving Jesus in the Gospel narratives.
48	'The tempter came and said to him'	It is argued that for this to mean anything other than 'a person approached him and said to him' is highly unlikely, not only lexically but also compared with Matthew's use of this formula elsewhere
49	'Fall down and worship me'	It is argued that the grammar of both Matthew and Luke make explicit that the devil demanded a physical act of worship. This shows the distinction between Jesus and the devil which you acknowledge as problematic for your 'internal struggle' interpretation.
52	Scholarly support for the Christadelphian Interpretation	The only known scholarly supporter of the Christadelphian interpretation is the late William E. Phipps. It is shown that Phipps was a liberal and self-described 'provocative' writer who was relentless in his anti-supernatural approach to the biblical text. His treatment of the temptations is superficial and introduces little in the way of new exegetical insight.
53	A literal or figurative mountain?	The main argument for a figurative reading of the temptation accounts (the lack of a literal mountain from which all kingdoms of the world can be seen) is shown to be flawed in light of Deut. 34:1-4 and other Jewish parallels.
54	The devil's power	The devil's claim to have the authority to bestow absolute political power on Jesus is set against the literary-historical background of Luke-Acts and the rest of the New Testament. It is argued that this claim is problematic for the 'internal struggle' interpretation of the passage.
56	The Devil in Jesus' Parables	
56	The Parable of the Sower	You give 'satan' four different meanings in the four texts in which it occurs in Mark. This lacks

		theological coherence especially given that Mark was writing to a Gentile audience and using a transliterated Hebrew word.
57	The Parable of the Weeds	This parable has great satanological significance. The only contextually consistent meaning of “the enemy who sowed them is the devil” is that ‘the devil’ alludes to the supernatural personal being of Jewish apocalyptic. Otherwise we are left with a metaphor explained with another metaphor – virtually a tautology.
60	The Beelzebul Controversy	A careful consideration of Jesus’ argument rules out the idea that he was merely accommodating the scribes’ belief in Satan and demons for the sake of argument.
61	Other Logical Arguments	It is argued that the presence of ‘the satan’ among the angels in Job implies that ‘the satan’ was also an angelic being. It is further argued that if the devil ‘has angels’ just as Michael and the Son of man have angels, the devil must himself be a supernatural being.
62	The Angels that Sinned	In view of your endorsement of Steven Cox’s pamphlet concerning “the angels that sinned” (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6), reference is made to three recent articles which challenge Cox’s views.
62	Conclusion	It is argued that, in light of the claims that most Christadelphian doctrines have been vindicated by modern scholarship, the fact that this particular doctrine has not should serve as an alarm bell prompting an urgent review of the Christadelphian understanding of Satan and demons.

Dear Jonathan,

I trust you are well by the grace of our Lord and that your Ph.D. studies continue to progress fruitfully. I am thankful for our correspondence as I have found it to be a great catalyst for deepening my knowledge in the vast subjects of biblical satanology and demonology.

The reason it took me seven months to respond is that I was unaware of your latest response until two months ago. Apparently you requested several months ago that it be forwarded to me, but instead it was shared with others via the internet and not with me! I also learned recently that all of our previous correspondence had been shared over the internet without my knowledge. I have no objection to sharing our correspondence publicly, but I would appreciate it if my permission was obtained first in the future.

This document is about three times as long as your last reply. This is not because I seek to complicate the discussion, but because you touched on many technical points which required careful analysis. It is because of the length of this document that I decided to make a sort of executive summary with links for quick reference. Clicking on a page number at left in the table above will take you to that location in the document. In certain cases where I've quoted blocks of text from your response, I have used a blue font.

My response contained herein is the product of many hours of careful study and prayerful reflection, and it is my earnest desire that it will prove illuminating to both you and anyone else who may read it.

## **1. Evidence for the existence of demons**

Your statements about the lack of empirical evidence for demons and your use of the tree-fruit analogy suggest that your objections to traditional Christian demonology are primarily non-exegetical in nature. (This is to be expected since it would be very difficult to construct an exegetical argument for the non-existence of demons from the Synoptic Gospels.) However, let me briefly address your non-exegetical arguments.

I admit that the existence of demons cannot be established by observation under experimental conditions. However, this is not decisive because, as Arnold points out, "On the issue of the actual existence of evil spirits, science is unable to decide the question."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, cogent philosophical and empirical arguments for the real existence of demons have been put forth by scholars with much greater knowledge and experience of the subject than I have. See, for example, Twelftree's balanced and thorough discussion in his book *Christ Triumphant: Exorcism Then and Now*.<sup>2</sup> You may wish to respond his arguments at some stage; I'm not going to describe them here but just wanted to note that such arguments have been put forth in the scholarly literature. I think his discussion shows, at a minimum, that belief in demons is intellectually respectable.

For me, biblical revelation takes epistemological precedence over other sources of knowledge such as science, personal experience and tradition. In view of the fact that a philosophical and empirical case

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold, Clinton E. 1992. *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul's Letters*. InterVarsity Press, p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> Twelftree, Graham. 1985. *Christ Triumphant: Exorcism then and now*. Hodder & Stoughton, pp. 135-170.

can be made for the existence of demons, by no means can we deny or explain away the testimony of the early church concerning demons simply because the idea is difficult to fit into our worldview.

As a final note, it would be difficult to construct a compelling philosophical or empirical argument for the existence of *angels*. However, nearly all Christian traditions affirm the existence of angels. Why? Primarily because the Bible testifies to their existence and Christian traditions have considered this witness to be normative in all things otherworldly. If this is a good enough reason to believe in angels, it is a good enough reason to believe in demons.

### **1b. Tree-Fruit Analogy**

You have previously used the tree-fruit analogy to argue that, because people believing in supernatural evil have done things like witch hunts, and people who deny supernatural evil have opposed such things, therefore belief in supernatural evil must be a “bad tree.” However, this logical argument stands only if those who believe in supernatural evil *necessarily* engage in or encourage such atrocities, which of course is not the case. Jesus did not say, “Generally speaking, there is a correlation between bad trees and bad fruit”, but, “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.” ‘Cannot’ is a strong word, which is why we should be cautious about extending the application of this principle from individual persons (as Jesus used it) to whole worldviews and belief systems.

Interestingly, recent sociological research in the United States has suggested that belief in religious (i.e. supernatural) evil is strongest among “traditionally power and resource deprived groups.”<sup>3</sup> Belief in Satan and demons was negatively associated with education level and income level. Basically it appears that the wealthy and well-educated are most likely to deny the existence of Satan and demons. I would not want to draw any conclusions about the validity of such beliefs from these statistics, but they do call to mind Paul’s observations about the demographics of the early church (1 Cor. 1:26-27).

Furthermore, the same study suggests that over 75% of Americans ‘absolutely’ or ‘probably’ believe in Satan, and nearly 70% ‘absolutely’ or ‘probably’ believe in demons.<sup>4</sup> These findings agree with a 2004 Gallup poll which found that 70% of Americans believe in the devil,<sup>5</sup> over against the Barna Group’s findings which you have previously cited. This may call into question the Barna Group’s claim of a downward trend in belief in supernatural evil in the USA, although I would want to see the wording of the questions in the studies to see whether they explicitly referred to literal/personal belief in Satan and demons (as opposed to merely symbolic belief).

You have suggested that denying the existence of the demonic results in good fruit. However, consider the following quotation from Hiebert:

“When tribal people spoke of fear of evil spirits, [Western missionaries] denied the existence of the spirits rather than claim the power of Christ over them. The result, as Newbigin has

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<sup>3</sup> Baker, Joseph. 2008. Who Believes in Religious Evil? An Investigation of Sociological Patterns of Belief in Satan, Hell, and Demons. *Review of Religious Research* 50(2), p. 208.

<sup>4</sup> Baker, Joseph. op. cit., p. 211.

<sup>5</sup> Baker, Joseph. op. cit., p. 206.

pointed out (1966) is that Western Christian missions have been one of the greatest secularizing forces in history.”<sup>6</sup>

Is secularization a good fruit? In my opinion, not at all.

Furthermore, by denying the existence of spirits Christian missionaries risk portraying their Lord as impotent compared to heathen magicians. Speaking from his experience from a Hindu village in India, Hiebert writes:

“What happened to villagers who became Christians? Most of them took problems they formerly took to the saints to the Christian minister or missionary. Christ replaced Krishna or Siva as the healer of their spiritual diseases. Many of them in time turned to Western allopathic medicines for many of the illnesses they took to the doctor and quack. But what of the plagues that the magician cured? What about spirit possession, or curses, or witchcraft or black magic? What was the Christian answer to these?

Neither the missionary evangelist or doctor had an answer. These did not really exist, they said. But to people for whom these were very real experiences in their lives, there had to be an answer. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of them returned to the magician for cures.”<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, Hayes states:

Comaroff & Comaroff (1991) have shown that most of the missionaries who came to sub-Saharan Africa from Europe in the nineteenth century were thoroughly imbued with the Enlightenment world view. These Western missionaries brought the Christian faith to pre-Enlightenment cultures. They soon became aware of the cultural gap, and the typical way of dealing with it was to say that before the Christian faith could take root, the pre-Enlightenment culture must make way for the Enlightenment culture, or, as they put it, civilisation must precede Christianisation. Since the Enlightenment such missionaries have said, in effect, "You must abandon your problems and accept our problems and explanations of evil". Enlightenment missionaries could only offer solutions to Enlightenment problems. Civilised solutions demand civilised problems!<sup>8</sup>

If we insist that people in pre-Enlightenment societies forsake their belief in evil spirits before coming to Christ, we are placing an undue burden upon them. By your own admission, the first century church did not use this approach but at the very least ‘accommodated’ beliefs in demons and spirits. To simply deny the reality of ‘trans-empirical’ evil compromises the relevance and power of the gospel for these societies:

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<sup>6</sup> Hiebert, Paul G. 1982. The Flaw of the Excluded Middle. *Missiology: An International Review* 10(1), p. 44.

<sup>7</sup> Hiebert, Paul G. op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>8</sup> Hayes, Stephen. 1995. Christian responses to witchcraft and sorcery. *Missionalia* 23(3): 339-354.



“The pre-Enlightenment cultures of Africa continued to accept witchcraft as an explanation of some forms of evil, however, and to those Africans who retained links with those cultures, the solutions proposed by Enlightenment missionaries appeared irrelevant. Among some there was a split response. This was to divide sicknesses into "isifo sabantu" and "isifo sabelungu" African disease and European disease. For the first one goes to the isangoma, and for the second one goes to the hospital or clinic.”<sup>9</sup>

Thus, our respective demonologies lead to very different responses to the requests for help in dealing with trans-empirical evil in missionary contexts. Your demonology calls for a denial that the requests have any basis, which (as the quotations above show) often results in the asker returning to pagan practices. My demonology calls for invoking the power of Christ over all such evil in faith, and opposing all other practices, as the apostles did (Acts 16:18; 19:11-20). The gospel message must come to the mission field not in word only, but in power (1 Thess. 1:5).

## **5. Christian responses to illness**

There are surely many professing Christians who do not pray for colds, paper cuts, etc. However, while you mentioned only such minor afflictions, your statement, “I treat naturalistic illness with naturalistic remedies” was left unqualified. I expect you would qualify it with certain exceptions; for instance I expect you would approve of praying to God for the healing of a young mother diagnosed with terminal cancer. If this is true, then you are willing to allow that Christians can and ought to seek supernatural remedies when faced with life-altering or life-threatening health problems.

All the physical manifestations of demon-possession mentioned in Scripture were life-altering or even life-threatening; thus headaches and sore gums are not the best analogy to use. If I were struck blind or became insane I would definitely pray about it and/or hope others would do so. I would also seek professional medical treatment and there is no contradiction here for two reasons: (1) God is sovereign and omnipotent in both the physical and spiritual realms. (2) Physical afflictions always have a physical dimension but may or may not have a spiritual dimension as well.

## **6. Satan in the Old Testament**

My understanding of Satan in the Old Testament has been greatly enriched since our last exchange. If I were to produce a new edition of my paper *The Accuser of our Brethren* I would substantially re-work the section on the Old Testament.

What is now apparent to me is that, while there may not be a doctrine of Satan in the Old Testament (viewing the texts from a purely historical-critical point of view), there is a broad consensus that Numbers, Job and Zechariah all refer to supernatural beings (though not necessarily the same being) when they use the term *satan*. Numerous scholars also remain convinced that *satan* is a supernatural being in 1 Chronicles 21:1. This view has recently and ably been defended by Stokes.<sup>10</sup> In his survey of

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<sup>9</sup> Hayes, Stephen. op. cit.

<sup>10</sup> Stokes, Ryan E. 2009. The Devil Made David Do It... or ‘Did’ He? The Nature, Identity, and Literary Origin of ‘Satan’ in 1 Chronicles 21:1. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128(1): 91-106.

satanological biblical studies, Brown mentions the four passages above as references to *satan* as a heavenly being, noting no opposition to this claim for any of these texts except Japhet's view that the Chronicler's *satan* was a human being.<sup>11</sup> In his survey of ancient Jewish beliefs about Satan, Williams concurs with this assessment.<sup>12</sup> Some commentators have followed Japhet's view but I don't think it can be called a consensus.

We can therefore confidently assert that the word *satan* is used multiple times in the Old Testament of an angelic being (or beings). As such it does provide a foundation from which a much more detailed satanology developed in later apocalyptic Judaism: a belief in Satan as a specific angelic being opposed to God, which was later endorsed by Jesus and the apostles. By contrast, from an historical-critical point of view the Old Testament writers never once used the word *satan* as an abstract noun. As such, the Old Testament provides no foundation for the Christadelphians' primary interpretation of *ho satanas* in the New Testament, whereas it is easy to see how, in the context of later Judaism, these texts were taken together to conclude that Satan is a specific angelic being. Twelftree's insight is useful here (though he makes it in the context of demons, not Satan):

"When we compare stories as they appear in the Old Testament with the way they are understood and interpreted in the New Testament era it becomes obvious that these writers understood the Old Testament stories very differently from their original writers – and from the way we understand and interpret the Old Testament."<sup>13</sup>

In your discussion of Job you appear to think that if God was responsible for Job's sufferings, then Satan was not; yet even the prologue of Job states that both God and Satan were responsible for Job's sufferings, albeit at different levels (Job 2:3).

One of your main points concerning the Old Testament texts I raised seems to be that the satan/spirit does not tempt people in any of these texts. Even if this were true, it would not sever the link between these texts and New Testament satanology, since Satan in the New Testament carries out a number of functions other than tempting, such as oppressing, scheming, deceiving and accusing.

That said, I think it is clear that the satan/spirit tempts people in 1 Chr. 21 and Job 1, and to a lesser extent 2 Chr. 18, even if the temptation is not described explicitly like Jesus' temptations in the wilderness. In 1 Chr. 21 Satan or a *satan* incites David to take a census of the people. That this was a sinful act (probably on the basis of Exodus 30:11-16) is clear from David's confession, "I have sinned greatly in that I have done this thing" (1 Chr. 21:8). Is inciting someone to commit sin not temptation?

In Job 1-2 the *satan* brings great suffering into Job's life, believing that this will cause him to curse God. Does inflicting harm on someone in order to see if they will sin not qualify as temptation? For scholars

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<sup>11</sup> Brown, Derek R. 2011. The Devil in the Details: A Survey of Research on Satan in Biblical Studies. *Currents in Biblical Research* 9(2), p. 203.

<sup>12</sup> Williams, Guy. 2009. The Spirit World in the Letters of Paul the Apostle: A Critical Examination of the Role of Spiritual Beings in the Authentic Pauline Epistles. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, p. 88.

<sup>13</sup> Twelftree, G. 1985. Christ Triumphant, p. 24.

such as Williams it certainly does: "Temptation in general is one of the most commonly accepted functions of Satan in Second Temple Judaism, going all the way back to the prologue of Job."<sup>14</sup>

In 2 Chr. 18 it is less obvious that the spirit tempts Ahab to sin, but there is a clear cause-and-effect relationship between the spirit's activity (to be a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets) and Ahab's sinful activity (imprisoning the prophet of the Lord, and going into battle against the Lord's will with fatal consequences). The host of heaven is explicitly asked to "entice Ahab the king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead" and the spirit responds, "I will entice him" (2 Chr. 18:19-20). Would you not agree that enticing is synonymous with temptation (cf. James 1:14)?

The idea that Satan or one of his lieutenants would seek God's approval to tempt or deceive people might strike you as making for a very curious satanology, but such ideas are a logical consequence of the sovereignty of God. I think Page elucidates the complex relationship between God and Satan rather well.<sup>15</sup>

## 7. The importance of the intertestamental period

Again we have a proposed dichotomy: *either* the Jews developed the doctrine of Satan in the intertestamental period *or* there was progressive revelation. "Which is it?" you ask. Why can't it be both? During the intertestamental period, the Jews reflected on the Old Testament as well as on their experience of oppression by foreign powers. In some quarters this resulted in a belief in fallen angels and in a specific angelic being called Satan/the devil. Once Jesus and the apostles endorsed this belief, it no longer constituted theological reflection but revelation.

You said: "Your argument that 'that ho diabolos and ho satanas in the NT are Jewish concepts from the OT with which the readers are assumed to be familiar' is not in dispute, what is in dispute is what those concepts mean; in any case, your main appeal is not to Old Testament concepts, but to concepts during the inter-testamental era, from the apocryphal and pseudepigraphical literature."

New Testament satanology is ultimately rooted in the Old Testament satan texts; see Beale and McDonough's commentary on Rev. 12 and Rev. 20 (quoted at length below).<sup>16</sup> Your 'satanology'<sup>17</sup> is not rooted in the Old Testament satan texts at any level beyond the lexical. My appeal to intertestamental literature was not an appeal to authority, but rather an appeal to the importance of reading New Testament satanology against its literary-historical background. This is the historical-critical method of exegesis which you heartily endorse, so I would ask that you justify your objection to its use here.

An important question for Christadelphians is this: **if Jesus and the apostles were aware of the personal satanology of intertestamental Judaism but rejected it, why did they constantly refer to Satan/the**

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<sup>14</sup> Williams, Guy. op. cit., p. 96.

<sup>15</sup> Page, Sydney. 2007. Satan: God's Servant. Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 50(3): 449-65.

<sup>16</sup> Beale, G.K. & McDonough, S.M. 2007. Revelation. In *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Beale & Carson. Baker, pp. 1125-26.

<sup>17</sup> I put this term in inverted commas because I'm not sure it can be said that you have a satanology, given your heterogeneous exegesis of New Testament Satan and devil texts.

devil using personal language which could only perpetuate the error they were trying to eradicate? If they were merely accommodating a personal satanology without endorsing it, then this suggests the Christadelphians are not following apostolic practice in rejecting from fellowship those with a personal satanology. And if the New Testament writers sought to show their flocks a more excellent way, namely an abstract satanology, where is this explicitly articulated? Why does the personal language for Satan neither wane nor disappear?<sup>18</sup>

## 8. Quotations from Caird, Boyd and Rosen-Zvi

### a. Caird

Caird refers to two views of Satan in the early church, one of which he says undoubtedly existed (personal) and the other of which he says *may* have existed (personification). Consider his statement in context:

“Most of the material in the **New Testament** concerning Satan appears in the form of myth; and it is a matter of some delicacy to determine how far the **New Testament writers** took their language literally. To many in the early Church Satan was undoubtedly a person; to others he may have been a personification.”

The final sentence is an inference drawn from the New Testament evidence; Caird is basically summarising the survey of New Testament satanology he has given over the previous four pages. Thus he is explicitly saying that some of the New Testament writers held Satan to be a person, which your satanology cannot allow. The only New Testament writer whom he explicitly suggests might “possibly” view Satan as a personification is Paul.<sup>19</sup>

Your quotations about Caird’s opposition to Bultmann’s hermeneutics are enlightening as I was not aware of this. I further admit that my reading of Caird’s use of the word ‘myth’ in the above quotation was superficial. I’m sure you are much more familiar with his ideas than I am, and it was wrong for me to assume that he was a liberal. However, his book’s methodology is a “Conference Table Approach”<sup>20</sup> in which he is “setting the biblical writers discussing among themselves.”<sup>21</sup> He is not writing systematic theology or trying to resolve any of the tensions in their writings but leaves this task to his readers. He takes a moderate position on theological unity in the New Testament (which appears influenced by the Barthian notion of *diastasis*):

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<sup>18</sup> See statistical arguments below.

<sup>19</sup> Caird accepts the critical consensus that the pastoral epistles are non-Pauline and is open to the idea that Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians and Colossians are non-Pauline (Caird, G.B. 1995. *New Testament Theology*. Oxford University Press, pp. 17-18). Thus his view of Paul’s satanology may be based only on four epistles which he is certain are Pauline and which mention Satan/the devil (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians). It is likely that he takes Ephesians and 2 Thessalonians into account, since he asserts that “the three disputed Pauline letters are the work either of Paul himself or of disciples with a profound understanding of his mind” (Caird, op. cit., pp. 17-18). However he is probably excluding the pastoral epistles from his assessment of Paul.

<sup>20</sup> Caird, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>21</sup> Caird, op. cit., p. 22.

“Thus the New Testament itself provides a criterion for judging its own unity. The question we must ask is not whether these books all say the same thing, but whether they all bear witness to the same Jesus and through him to the many splendoured wisdom of the one God. If we are persuaded that the second Moses, the son of Man, the friend of sinners, the incarnate logos, the firstborn of all creation, the Apostle and High Priest of our calling, the Chief Shepherd, and the Lamb opening the scroll are the same person in whom the one God has achieved and is achieving his mighty work, we shall neither attempt to press all our witnesses into a single mould nor captiously complain that one seems at some points deficient in comparison with another.”<sup>22</sup>

While I have respect for Caird’s position, it is not my own. Neither does the traditional Christadelphian view of the Bible allow for ‘deficiencies’ in the Word of God or any doctrinal disunity between writers.<sup>23</sup> Thus it remains true that Caird is working from a premise that you cannot accept without challenging the BASF: namely, that Paul and other New Testament writers may have had conflicting doctrinal views about Satan.

A survey of Pauline scholarship reveals that it has been quite popular in the past few decades to assert that Paul at least partially marginalised and/or demythologised Satan in his writings. As such, Christadelphians are able to claim that their understanding of Satan is respectable from a scholarly point of view at least as far as the critically accepted Pauline epistles are concerned. However, recent studies have challenged this view of Paul’s satanology, which suggests it may be falling on hard times.

#### **i. Two recent studies of Pauline Satanology**

In his recent book on the spirit world in Paul’s letters, Williams notes that it is fairly common to argue that Paul had no real angelology or demonology, and that Paul exhibits a straightforward demythologisation of angelic and demonic beings. He explains:

“Satan has long been regarded by many as a marginal figure in Paul’s teaching. On occasions, he is notable by his absence, and the letters certainly are not packed with references to him. However, this casual observation is sometimes developed into the stronger claim that Satan is not a real part of Paul’s teaching at all; he is simply part of the scenery, a relic of half-forgotten Jewish tradition. Paul, so the argument goes, did not find any distinctive function or meaning for Satan. He just passed on a certain amount of common Jewish doctrine.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Caird, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>23</sup> See the strict inerrancy espoused in the BASF in the first paragraph added in 1886 apparently in response to the ‘partial inspiration’ camp who wanted to at least partially accommodate higher-critical conclusions about the Bible. <http://www.christadelphia.org/basf.htm>

<sup>24</sup> Williams, Guy. op. cit., p. 87.

However, Williams challenges this view for several reasons. First, it fails to take into account that Paul “has the widest angelic/demonic vocabulary of all NT writers.”<sup>25</sup> Secondly, he questions whether it really makes an effort to situate Satan in his historical context, i.e. Second Temple Judaism.<sup>26</sup>

He observes, “By leaving the word un-translated (transliterating: *Satanas*) and persistently giving it the definite article, Paul probably intends this to be a personal name or at least a definite title: ‘Satan’.”<sup>27</sup> On this point he further argues:

“Paul probably had to make a deliberate effort to import Satan into his Gentile churches, since *Satanas* is an Aramaism, generally unknown to native Greek speakers at the time. The fact that Paul preserved Satan at all – who would have required a great deal of explanation to new converts – suggests that he thought him to be of at least some importance.”<sup>28 29</sup>

Becker similarly argues that Paul refers to “several figures and spiritual beings representing evil – without any suspicion”, using Jewish terminology such as Satan and possibly Beliar to name these figures.<sup>30</sup> For both scholars, exegesis of individual Pauline texts bears out that Paul viewed Satan as a personal being:

- Commenting on 1 Thess. 2:18, Williams comments, “It is unlikely that this is intended purely as poetic shorthand for illness; Satan is a spiritual being of malicious intent.”<sup>31</sup>
- Williams argues that the idea of a global ruler of evil emerged as a distinctive belief held by a small but significant minority within Second Temple Judaism, and that Paul explicitly states this idea in 2 Cor. 4:4.<sup>32</sup>
- On 2 Cor. 11:3, 14, Williams first notes, “That angels in general or Satan in particular might transform themselves was well known in Judaism.” He expounds Paul’s meaning thus:

“Paul assumes that his readers know what he is talking about when he suggests that Eve was no chaste virgin or that Satan can transform himself. The fact that this is an unspoken subtext should not diminish its significance. On the contrary, the narratives which Paul can unquestioningly rely on, in which he expects his readers to fill in the blanks, are likely to be firmly established among his followers. Here, he presupposes a distinctive misanthropic Satan, lurking in Eden, with a special propensity for causing sin.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Williams, Guy. op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>26</sup> Williams, Guy. op. cit., p. 87.

<sup>27</sup> Williams, Guy. op. cit., p. 88.

<sup>28</sup> Williams, Guy. op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>29</sup> See the similar views expressed later on about Mark’s use of the term *ho satanas* in his Gospel written for a predominantly Gentile audience.

<sup>30</sup> Becker, Michael. 2013. Paul and Evil. In *Evil and the Devil*, ed. Koskeniemi & Frohlich. T&T Clark, p. 128.

<sup>31</sup> Williams, Guy. op. cit., p. 96.

<sup>32</sup> Williams, Guy. op. cit., p. 100.

<sup>33</sup> Williams, Guy. op. cit., p. 95.

- Both Becker and Williams are agreed that the “angel of Satan” in 2 Cor. 12:7 is a spiritual being, and that this implies Paul believed in a kind of Satanic hierarchy in analogy to the heavenly retinue.<sup>34 35</sup>

Becker concludes that Paul believed in Satan and evil spirits, but that the importance of this realm was surpassed in his thinking by the anthropological categories of sin, death and law:<sup>36</sup>

“Paul has indeed no interest in a speculative interpretation. He is not interested in theories but in people. There is no need to deny the reality of a spiritual world, but it should be recognized that its importance has been broken by the salvific act in Christ and the change in Paul’s thinking initiated by the shift to the thematic issues of sin, death, and the law.”<sup>37</sup>

Williams’ conclusion is even stronger: “When we place Paul’s comments within the spectrum of Jewish beliefs about Satan and evil angels, we find that he works with quite a ‘strong doctrine’ of a globally influential and absolutely wicked figure.”<sup>38</sup>

## ii. Do Christadelphians have a unified satanology?

Furthermore, while you assert that there is one doctrine of satan/the devil in the New Testament, your exegesis doesn’t bear this out, as in some cases you interpret satan/the devil as a personification, and in others as human religious or political systems opposed to God (as we’ll see later, you have proposed three or even four different interpretations of Satan within the Gospel of Mark alone). The two concepts might be linked using a literary technique such as synecdoche but this is not an obvious step and would need to be justified. It is also important to note that in devil/satan texts which Christadelphians interpret with reference to human systems, scholarly exegetes frequently acknowledge the this-worldly historical background. However, unlike Christadelphians they affirm that ‘the devil’ or ‘Satan’ in these texts refers not to the human systems themselves but to the other-worldly agent of evil behind these systems.

Take, for example, Paschke’s monograph on 1 Pet. 5:8: he argues at length that the Roman *ad bestias* execution provides the probable historical background for this allusion, but concludes, “Because through the comparative particle *hos* the Devil is compared to such a lion, he then would be seen as responsible for what was going on in the arena at the *ad bestias* executions of Christians.”<sup>39</sup> The Roman system is linked to the devil, but the Roman system itself is not the devil.

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<sup>34</sup> Becker, Michael. op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>35</sup> Williams, Guy. op. cit., pp. 108-109.

<sup>36</sup> A fuller discussion of the relationship between Paul’s theology of sin in Romans and Paul’s satanology is in the section ‘Summary of statistical analysis’ below.

<sup>37</sup> Becker, Michael. op. cit., p. 141.

<sup>38</sup> Williams, Guy. op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>39</sup> Paschke, Boris A. 2006. The Roman *ad bestias* Execution as a Possible Historical Background for 1 Peter 5.8. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 28(4), p. 498.

## b. Boyd

One reason I neglected to respond to your appeals to Boyd and other scholars was that you did not paginate your citations, which made it difficult to investigate them. Based on your assessment of what Boyd says, however, we can agree on the following:

- Boyd by your own admission says that the Shepherd of Hermas does not personify *satan* even though he does do so with demons and other vices. Given that this writer shows a strong personifying/demythologizing tendency, it is odd that he apparently exempts Satan from this approach (especially if the New Testament writers had already used it extensively as you claim)
- Boyd has also written the following statement, which follows a discussion of the development of Jewish satanology and demonology during the intertestamental period:

“Most contemporary New Testament scholars believe it is primarily against this apocalyptic background that we are to understand the ministry of Jesus and the early church...As in apocalyptic thought, the assumption that Satan has illegitimately seized the world and thus now exercises a controlling influence over it, undergirds Jesus’ entire ministry...Jesus concurs with the apocalyptic worldview of His day – in agreement with John, Paul and the rest of the New Testament.”<sup>40</sup>

I think the above quotation significantly undermines the claim that scholars such as Boyd have been “establishing a socio-historical context into which the Christadelphian understanding of the New Testament fits perfectly”. Historical-critical analysis has largely reinforced the traditional reading of *diabolos/satanas* texts in the New Testament, not undermined it.

## c. Rosen-Zvi

Two quotations from Rosen-Zvi will prove useful in assessing his overall view of Jewish demonology in late antiquity:

“For the rabbis, unlike in monastic literature, there is no simple continuity between the yetzer and ‘real,’ external demons. The rabbis developed a sophisticated division of labor, in which **external demons account for external dangers such as illness and suffering**, while the (internal) yetzer accounts for human sinfulness”<sup>41</sup>

“To be sure, rabbinic demonology is a rather developed body of knowledge, but, as we have already seen, it is almost nowhere connected to their discussion of the sources of human sinfulness, **in stark contrast with Second Temple demonology**, including, of course, Qumran. It is no accident that Belial and Mastema, the main figures responsible for

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<sup>40</sup> Boyd, Gregory A. 1997. *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict*. InterVarsity Press. Online excerpt accessed at [http://www.foundationscourse.org/uploads/documents/Boyd-God\\_at\\_War.pdf](http://www.foundationscourse.org/uploads/documents/Boyd-God_at_War.pdf), p. 102.

<sup>41</sup> Rosen-Zvi. 2011. *Demonic Desires: ‘Yetzer Hara’ and the Problem of Evil in Late Antiquity*. University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 43. Emphasis added.



misleading people in Second Temple literature (along with their evil spirits), are totally absent from rabbinic corpus. Rabbinic literature also does not turn to the story of the fallen angels ('Watchers') to explain the origin of sin, as in the Enochic tradition. **Since the rabbis did not refrain from demonology in other contexts**, their disregard for it in the context of human sinfulness is most likely not the result of purist monotheism but rather of their insistence on free choice and human responsibility."<sup>42</sup>

One of the primary theses of Rosen-Zvi's book, if I have understood him correctly, is that within both Judaism and Christianity one observes a shift away from attributing human sinfulness to demonic causes, in favour of concentrating entirely on the internal *yetzer hara*. It is crucial to note, however, that Rosen-Zvi was not saying that the rabbis disbelieved in demons. (In the New Testament, too, demons are portrayed primarily as a source of oppression rather than as an explanation for human sin.)

If there is any doubt about whether the rabbis affirmed the existence of demons, the following quotations should suffice to dispel it:

"So firm was the belief in evil spirits, both among the educated and uneducated classes, that the Talmud legislates for it. In their legal decisions the Rabbis prescribed for circumstances which presuppose the actuality of demons"<sup>43</sup>

"The existence of demons is taken for granted throughout rabbinic literature"<sup>44</sup>

I believe the quotation about Philo's demonology also needs qualification. An uninformed reader might take the bolded portion of Rosen-Zvi's statement about Philo "rejecting demonology as an explanation of human action" and conclude that Philo did not believe in demons. However, what Rosen-Zvi is saying is that Philo, like the rabbis, refused to explain human sinfulness in terms of the demonic. That Philo did affirm the existence of demons is clear from the following quotation from Russell:

"Philo distinguished between gods and demons, equating the demons of the Greeks with the angels of the Jews. These angels/demons lived in the air, probably in the ether – the upper air near heaven – but they moved back and forth between heaven and earth as intermediaries between God and man. The angels/demons are arranged in twelve companies. Some are benevolent: they help and guide individuals and nations. Others are 'employed by God to inflict punishment upon all who deserve it.' But Philo also indicated the existence of a third class, which he called evil angels. It is not clear whether he meant these beings allegorically or literally, but apparently he identified them with the Watchers, who fell because of their lust for mortal women"<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Rosen-Zvi, op. cit., p. 53. Emphasis added.

<sup>43</sup> Cohen, Abraham. 2007. Everyman's Talmud: The Major Teachings of the Rabbinic Sages. Editorial Benei Noaj, p. 276. Originally published 1932.

<sup>44</sup> Bamberger, Bernard J. 2010. Fallen Angels: Soldiers of Satan's Realm. Jewish Publication Society, p. 103.

<sup>45</sup> Russell, Jeffrey B. 1987. Satan: The Early Christian Tradition. Cornell University Press, p. 49.

In summary, then, you have not produced any evidence for a systematic denial of the existence of demons either in Second Temple Judaism or Rabbinic Judaism. Of course, there was at least one group that did not believe in demons: the Sadducees (Acts 23:8). Luke's reference to their disbelief in angels, spirits and resurrection implies that he viewed it as reprehensible, since he says the Pharisees acknowledge (concede, grant or admit)<sup>46</sup> them all. Since resurrection, angels and spirits all occur in narratives within Acts, it is likely that Luke refers to the Pharisees' beliefs approvingly.

If you could provide page references for the other scholars you cited in this portion of your second-to-last response I would be happy to investigate these sources as well.

#### **d. Pagels**

Although you haven't cited Pagels in our correspondence so far, I mention her work here because another Christadelphian apologist who has written extensively on the devil (Duncan Heaster) has cited her as a supporter of the Christadelphian position.

Heaster writes:

"Elaine Pagels, Professor of Religion at Princeton University, is perhaps the highest profile writer and thinker to express agreement with our position about the devil. Her best selling book *The Origin Of Satan* is well worth a read if you're interested in this theme."<sup>47</sup>

He provides several quotations from Pagels' book which he says "exactly reflect our own conclusions." He then concludes:

"Pagels and other writers tackle the obvious question: Where, then, did the present idea of a literal evil being called satan come from, seeing it's not in the Bible? They trace the idea back to pagan sources that entered Judaism before the time of Christ- and then worked their way into Christian thought in the early centuries after Christ, as mainstream Christianity moved away from purely Biblical beliefs."<sup>48</sup>

I haven't been able to get a copy of Pagels' book, but from reading reviews of it, it seems clear to me that Pagels believes the New Testament writers (especially the Gospel writers) were primarily responsible for spreading the idea that the devil is a supernatural, personal being. Her book is further an attack on the historicity of the Gospel narratives. The latter quotation is a blatant misrepresentation of Pagels' position since she does think the idea of a literal being called Satan is in the New Testament, and that these ideas worked their way into Christian thought through the canonical New Testament writings and not in the following centuries. The best I can do here is to quote from a lecture delivered by Pagels on this subject shortly after the first edition of her book was published:

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<sup>46</sup> "*homologeō*". Danker, Frederick W. 2000. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. 3d. ed. University of Chicago Press.

<sup>47</sup> Heaster, D. The Real Devil 1-6: The Devil And Satan In Recent Thought. Accessed at <http://www.realdevil.info/1-6.htm> on 29 November 2013

<sup>48</sup> Heaster, D. op. cit.

“And it’s no accident that the foundational texts of Christian tradition – the gospels of the New Testament, like the Dead Sea Scrolls – all begin with stories of Satan contending against God’s spirit. Each of the gospels frames its narrative – both at its beginning and at its close – with episodes depicting the clash of supernatural forces it sees played out in Jesus’ life and death.

How, then, does the figure of the devil (here usually called Satan) function in the New Testament gospels? Many liberal-minded Christians have preferred to ignore the presence of such blatant supernaturalism. Yet the story that the evangelists have to tell would make little sense *apart* from the context of cosmic war.”<sup>49</sup>

When I wrote to Duncan Heaster suggesting that he correct the misrepresentations of Pagels’ position on his website, he replied that the real issue is what the Bible says. He acknowledged that he may have misread Pagels, but stated that he lives a busy life and has no intention of spending much time rereading her material. This was at the beginning of October 2013 and as of this date no correction has been made to his website.

While I’m not suggesting that you have engaged in the kind of careless scholarship that Heaster has, I think this case serves as a warning against the danger of ‘mining’ the scholarly literature. What I refer to is the practice of seeking out statements in the literature which support a particular aspect of Christadelphian belief and extrapolating, while failing to acknowledge other statements which contradict Christadelphian beliefs – even by the same author or within the same work!

### **8.1. Targum Jonathan to the Prophets on Zechariah 3**

It must be admitted that there is a great deal of uncertainty regarding the date when Targum Jonathan to the Prophets was finalized. Levey states, “We have no reservations in asserting that the *terminus a quo* of the official Targumim can be assigned to the period between 200 1<sup>st</sup> and 150 BCE.”<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, there are passages in Targum Jonathan which “cannot be of pre-Islamic coinage”, which leads Levey to the conclusion that “the *terminus ad quem* of Targum Jonathan to the Prophets cannot be any earlier than the Arab conquest of Babylonia”<sup>51</sup> (i.e. mid 7<sup>th</sup> century).

There is no need to dwell on the issue of date, and it is of no great consequence whether the text under consideration was authored by Jonathan ben Uzziel. What is important is the need to be completely transparent and not describe as a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century source without qualification a document which may not have been finalized until the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

Thank you for the background research on the meaning of the Aramaic word used to render *satan* in this text. I personally don’t feel qualified to wade into the debate as to whether the word means ‘seducer’,

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<sup>49</sup> Pagels, Elaine. 1997. The Origin of Satan in Christian Tradition. The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, delivered at University of Utah. Accessed at <http://tannerlectures.utah.edu/documents/a-to-z/p/Pagels99.pdf>. Emphasis in original.

<sup>50</sup> Levey, Samson H. 1971. The Date of Targum Jonathan to the Prophets. *Vetus Testamentum* 21(2), p. 190.

<sup>51</sup> Levey, Samson H. 1971. The Date of Targum Jonathan to the Prophets. *Vetus Testamentum* 21(2), p. 196.

‘accuser/searcher of sin’, ‘sinner’ or ‘sin’. ‘Sin’ might be a possible reading from a lexical standpoint, but from a contextual standpoint it is very improbable. Consider the following quotation of the literary tendencies observed in Targum Jonathan:

“Because in rabbinic theology Satan is also the angel of death, Targum Jonathan, **always loath to use abstract expressions**, renders Habakkuk 3:5a – “Before him (viz., God) went pestilence” – by ‘From before him the angel of death is sent.’ Thus where there is a choice between abstract expressions – which could easily be misunderstood by unsophisticated audiences – and the employment of an angel who in the last resort is merely an instrument to carry out the will of his divine master, Targum Jonathan **opts to introduce an angel**.”<sup>52</sup>

In light of the fact that the document elsewhere shows a tendency to replace abstract expressions with persons, is it plausible that in this case it has replaced a person (‘the adversary’ in the Hebrew) with an abstract expression? Smolar and Aberbach propose the rendering ‘searcher of sin’, ‘accuser’ or ‘one who causes to sin’ in Targum Jonathan’s Aramaic paraphrase of *satan* in Zech. 3:1,<sup>53</sup> and I have no reason to reject this reading.

You stated that you have no preferred reading but have apparently ruled out several of the readings found in scholarly literature and limited the choices to ‘sin’ and ‘sinner’, which you say are both consistent with your argument. However, your original argument was that Targum Jonathan’s paraphrase here is “exactly in keeping with the Christadelphian understanding of *satan* as a personification of sin.”<sup>54</sup> This statement stands unsubstantiated if any reading other than ‘sin’ is correct.

I think the sense proposed by Smoler and Aberbach is likely because it accords best with rabbinical *satanology*, in which Satan is not a sinner but “an agent of God” with an “unpleasant” role.<sup>55</sup> While Satan is personified in one Talmudic passage attributed to Resh Lakish you’ve previously quoted, this does not necessarily represent a denial of his personal existence. To posit that Satan, the angel of death and the *yetzer hara* are all one does not necessarily mean they are literally identical.

The view that Satan is an external personal being is still taught by rabbis today. Consider this quotation from a prominent American orthodox rabbi:

“The above drive comprises the internal yetzer hara, which is an integral part of every human being. There is also an external yetzer hara. This is Satan, an angel whom G-d created to offset the forces of kedushah (holiness)”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Smolar, L. and Aberbach, M. 1983. *Studies in Targum Jonathan to the Prophets*. KTAV Publishing House, p. 226.

<sup>53</sup> Smolar and Aberbach. op. cit., p. 225.

<sup>54</sup> Burke, J. 2007. *Satan and Demons*, p. 14. Accessed at <https://docs.google.com/a/dianoigo.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGlhbm9pZ28uY29tfGRpYW5vaWdvdGd4QjM2MWMzNWY5N2QwODE1MWI> (with the author’s permission I have uploaded his paper to this link since it was not previously available on the web).

<sup>55</sup> Bamberger, op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>56</sup> Twerski, Abraham J. 2002. *The Enemy Within: Confronting your Challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Mesorah Publications, p. 14.

## **8.2. Belial**

This term was originally abstract in meaning. Thus its continued use in an abstract sense does not imply any shift in Jewish thinking about evil away from the personal and toward the abstract. On the contrary, its adoption as a title for Satan in some sources within Second Temple Judaism point to a shift in Jewish thinking about evil away from the abstract and toward the personal.

The statements you quoted presuppose that the Qumran community believed in a personal Satan, even if the term 'Belial' did not always or even usually refer to Satan.

## **10-11. Authorship of Pentateuch**

The scope of the discussion does not allow for a detailed discussion of Old Testament historical and source criticism. I believe the Torah was authored by Moses, although I would allow for some compilation and redaction after his death (since, for example, he cannot have written the account of his own death in Deut. 34). When I say that I hold this conclusion on the basis of my faith, I am not saying my interpretation of the Bible is more accurate than that of source-critical experts. What I am saying is that I feel obligated to submit to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ in this matter, and he asserted that Moses wrote the Torah (Mark 10:5; John 5:46-47). Ultimately what I am saying is that I consider the word of the Lord more binding than the hypotheses of critical scholars. While I understand the position of those who might argue that Jesus was either accommodating his listeners or was actually ignorant of the origin of the Pentateuch, I personally cannot accept this position in good conscience.

In view of my convictions I surely read Kaiser's book with a biased perspective. Nonetheless it cannot be said that the traditional view of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is irrational or indefensible.

## **12. Historico-Critical Method**

I apologise for not making myself clear about the historical-critical method. As a theology student I am learning to use the historico-critical method myself, and I believe the citations in this document bear out the fact that I have great respect for the method and the scholars who practice it.

Both higher and lower criticism have made many valuable contributions to the study of Scripture, such as improved textual accuracy in biblical translations, the solution to the Synoptic problem reached by source critics, redaction criticism as a tool for determining an author's theological intent, etc.

That said, the historico-critical method has its limitations. In the hands of liberals it is indisputably driven by naturalistic assumptions. For many liberals a reference to a supernatural event is taken as evidence for the unhistorical nature of a text, and apparent predictive prophecy is taken as evidence that the composition post-dates the event it 'predicted'. By contrast, when conservative evangelicals use the historico-critical method they bring certain dogmatic presuppositions to the text, such as the doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy and the possibility of miracles and predictive prophecy. The quotations you provided are evidence of this.

The historico-critical method is helpful in understanding the 'human side' of the Bible but it does not necessarily take into account that the Scriptures are the product of a single divine Mind. As such, it has difficulty in identifying, for instance, christological types in the Old Testament of the kind which the New Testament writers observed.

"We should realize, however, that scholars who work on the basis of the presuppositions of the secular or deistic form of the historical-critical method have little choice in rejecting typology: their presupposition of living in a closed universe has done it for them. For without the biblical teaching of God working sovereignly in history, typology is sheer nonsense."<sup>57</sup>

"For more than a century it has been asserted that the historical-critical method has invalidated this important interpretation of the revelatory event which was fulfilled in Jesus. Historical criticism considers the OT account of history to be a description of faith that is different from the actual course of history. Therefore, it is necessary to ask: Does Mosaic period typology, for example, become invalid if, from the historical point of view, the way the events happened was different from the OT's witness of faith? In the last decade, F. Baumgartel has not tired of calling attention to this problem from the standpoint of OT research and he has developed the thesis that the NT interpretation of Jesus that is based on typology and prophecy is no longer valid for us."<sup>58</sup>

That said, I would concur with the statement you quoted from Harrisville et al, as long as the historical-critical method is constrained by a theistic worldview and a robust doctrine of biblical inspiration.

What I would like to hear from you is whether you affirm the doctrine of full inspiration and inerrancy as spelled out in the foundational article of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith.<sup>59</sup>

If so, how would you square this with instances when the consensus of historico-critical scholarship contradicts the testimony of Scripture itself? (For example, in matters such as the authorship and historicity of Daniel, the historicity of early Genesis, the authorship of the Pentateuch, and the authorship of the pastoral epistles.)

If not, is this not a significant deviation from Christadelphian orthodoxy? It is my understanding that the foundational clause of the Statement of Faith was adopted in the 1880s specifically to rule out the acceptance of partial inspiration which was being promulgated by brethren influenced by higher criticism.

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<sup>57</sup> Greidanus, Sidney. 1999. Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method. Eerdmans, p. 249.

<sup>58</sup> Goppelt, Leonhard. 1982. Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New. Eerdmans, p. 229.

<sup>59</sup> "THE FOUNDATION -- That the book currently known as the Bible, consisting of the Scriptures of Moses, the prophets, and the apostles, is the only source of knowledge concerning God and His purposes at present extant or available in the earth, and that the same were wholly given by inspiration of God in the writers, and are consequently without error in all parts of them, except such as may be due to errors of transcription or translation. (This paragraph was added in 1886.)" The Christadelphian Statement of Faith, accessed at <http://www.christadelphia.org/basf.htm>

I will now investigate in more detail your appeal to Graham Twelftree's scholarship on demons and exorcism.

## 12.1. Twelftree

### a. Is there a New Testament demonology?

A close reading of Twelftree's writings reveals that he is not in agreement with key points in your argument. Firstly, you state your point that "the New Testament does not contain a demonology" and adduce three quotations from Twelftree. However, Twelftree states that the New Testament does not contain a 'fully worked out' demonology, which is quite different from not containing a demonology at all.

Twelftree's main point here seems to be that the New Testament writers were uninterested in spelling out what a demon is, where demons come from, etc. However, they did affirm the reality of demons.

"...in contrast to some writers in the ancient world, New Testament writers are remarkably restrained in both their interest, and the imagery they use, in their demonology...little interest is shown in demons and demonology except where it relates to soteriology. Instead, the focus of attention on God's salvation in Jesus redirects attention away from demons and speculation on the causes of various illnesses."<sup>60</sup>

Twelftree then approvingly quotes C.S. Lewis' famous statement about the "two equal and opposite errors" that exist regarding demons, which I also quoted as a header to my paper on demons.<sup>61 62</sup> Thus, from Twelftree's stated point of view your denial of the existence of demons is an error.

You interpret your next quotation to mean that Twelftree is non-committal as to whether Paul actually believed in evil beings such as fallen angels and demonic spirits. While it is difficult to tell exactly what he means by "a single focus of hostility to God of cosmic proportions", in his first book on demonology, *Christ Triumphant*, he sets forth a more decisive position. While he notes that "Paul has very little to say about demons or evil spirits",<sup>63</sup> he goes on to caution, "With such an infrequent association of Satan and demons with sickness and human suffering we should not be too quick to conclude that Paul did not believe in the reality and power of evil."<sup>64</sup> He goes on to articulate his own position as follows:

"Much of what Paul thought about evil is contained in his notion of 'principalities and powers'. And in this idea it becomes apparent that although he mentions demons in only one passage (1 Cor. 10:20ff) Paul's notion of evil is not as far from the Synoptic Gospels and Jesus as might at first be thought. The most obvious meaning of Paul's 'principalities and powers' language is the Jewish idea that behind the pagan world order were the

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<sup>60</sup> Twelftree. 2007. In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism Among Early Christians. Baker Academic, p. 294.

<sup>61</sup> Twelftree. 2007. In the Name of Jesus, p. 294.

<sup>62</sup> Farrar, T. 2009. Are demons real? A study of the New Testament evidence. Accessed at [http://www.dianoigo.com/articles/Are\\_demons\\_real.pdf](http://www.dianoigo.com/articles/Are_demons_real.pdf), p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Twelftree. 1985. *Christ Triumphant*, p. 90.

<sup>64</sup> Twelftree. 1985. *Christ Triumphant*, p. 91.

supernatural motivating powers...But this by no means exhausts the contents of Paul's use of 'principalities and powers'...the principalities and powers in Romans 8:38f are probably not intended to refer to civil authorities but to **evil opposing spiritual beings**, potentially at least, able to separate men from the love of God. However, as a result of the cross and Christ's intercession these powers have been deprived of their authority over men."<sup>65</sup>

He also offers possible explanations for the lack of references to exorcism in Paul's letters, and it is not because Paul discounted the reality of the demonic:

"In linking the destruction of evil with the cross we may have a reason why Paul also tells us nothing either about Jesus' being an exorcist or about the early Christians as exorcists...As Paul's letters were written to the Church primarily about matters of internal concern it is then not so surprising that he has not mentioned exorcism or exorcists."<sup>66</sup>

He further asserts on the basis of Acts 16 and Acts 19 that "Paul was an exorcist, recognising it as part of his ministry – yet he probably gave it a very low priority."<sup>67</sup>

In his more recent book his position does not appear to have changed, and he adds that 1 Cor. 4:20 "is possible evidence that exorcism was an established part of Christianity as Paul knew it."<sup>68</sup>

Thus, while it seems that Twelftree as a graduate student in 1980 had not yet made up his mind about Paul's view of demons, he later came to the conclusion that Paul did believe in the reality of demons. For more arguments in favour of Paul's belief in demons, see Arnold's book *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul's Letters*.<sup>69</sup>

## **b. Arguments for the existence of demons**

It is true that Twelftree allows for a partial demythologisation of demon-possession, but there are important limitations to his demythologisation which you do not share. This is apparent even in the quotation from his 1980 paper, but he articulates his position more fully in his 1985 book:

"There is, I think, no question that general medicine, psychology and psychiatry have been able to show that a number of conditions that have been, or in some instances still are, thought to be caused by demons, have in fact medical explanations."<sup>70</sup>

Having listed some examples, he calls this "a large cautionary note for those who too quickly attribute ailments and disorders to evil spirits."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Twelftree. 1985. *Christ Triumphant*, p. 91. Emphasis added.

<sup>66</sup> Twelftree. 1985. *Christ Triumphant*, p. 92.

<sup>67</sup> Twelftree. 1985. *Christ Triumphant*, p. 94.

<sup>68</sup> Twelftree. 2007. *In the Name of Jesus*, p. 281.

<sup>69</sup> Arnold, Clinton E. op. cit.

<sup>70</sup> Twelftree. 1985. *Christ Triumphant*, p. 152.

<sup>71</sup> Twelftree. 1985. *Christ Triumphant*, p. 153.



However, citing examples from both psychiatry and anthropology, he observes that “The attempt to explain phenomena once ascribed to evil spirits exclusively in medical, psychological and parapsychological terms seems, at least for some researchers, to have failed. There remains a residue of states of phenomena that is unexplained.”<sup>72</sup> He then sums up as follows:

“From this we cannot go on to conclude that there are no medical, psychological or rational explanations for the anthropologists’ and sociologists’ observations of an unexplained residue but it still does suggest that the question remains open. It also means that even where diseases may be considered to have a natural or regular explanation the demonic need not be ruled out. Therefore we ought to devote some attention to considering the question of the existence of ‘evil spirits’ or ‘demons’.”<sup>73</sup>

There are two important points here: (1) some psychiatric/anthropological phenomena have defied scientific explanation, which should limit the extent of the tendency to demythologise, at least until such time as such an explanation is provided; (2) even if medical explanations are available this does not rule out the possibility of the demonic. On the latter point, Twelftree adds:

“But even if all sicknesses were to be accounted for by natural explanations, the ‘demonic’ dimension to sickness would not necessarily be eliminated. For example, because a sickness is labelled, understood and cured in terms of ‘epilepsy’ it may not mean that there is not a demonic aspect to the sickness which also needs to be discerned and dealt with.”<sup>74</sup>

He puts forth philosophical and empirical arguments for the plausibility of existence of demons and reaches his conclusion (which had not changed as of 2007)<sup>75</sup>:

“The evidence adduced in this chapter means, however, that we cannot define ‘demon’ or ‘evil spirit’ more precisely than to say that it is some form of evil agency often manifesting personal characteristics. So, the inability of the prevailing contemporary secular world-view to explain adequately the complex range of man’s experience of evil, sickness and healing, along with the positive arguments for the existence of demons or evil spirits, leads us to conclude that it remains legitimate and meaningful for twentieth-century people to use such categories as ‘demons’, ‘possession’ and ‘exorcism’ even if less frequently and with different content to those who used them in the first century.”<sup>76</sup>

### **c. Diminution of interest in exorcism in the early church**

I don’t dispute the statements made by Twelftree regarding a diminution of interest in exorcism over time in the New Testament data, or the “surprising, if not a little short of astounding”<sup>77</sup> absence of

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<sup>72</sup> Twelftree. 1985. *Christ Triumphant*, p. 155.

<sup>73</sup> Twelftree. 1985. *Christ Triumphant*, p. 156.

<sup>74</sup> Twelftree. 1985. *Christ Triumphant*, p. 170.

<sup>75</sup> Twelftree. 2007. *In the Name of Jesus*, p. 293.

<sup>76</sup> Twelftree. 1985. *Christ Triumphant*, p. 170.

<sup>77</sup> Twelftree. 2007. *In the Name of Jesus*, p. 285.

references to exorcism in surviving Christian writings early second century. I do, however, dispute the assertion that this harmonizes well with “the Christadelphian model of a gradually maturing community which put away belief in literal demons” as well as the assertion that those Christians who did not perform exorcisms did “absolutely nothing to combat” demons.

Indeed, Twelftree explicitly rules out the idea of a gradually maturing community which marginalizes demons:

“It is not that there was a reluctance to become involved in exorcism, perhaps because of an increasing intellectual sophistication, but an understanding that the demonic could be doctrinal and dealt with and defeated other than through exorcism.”<sup>78</sup>

In the above quotation Twelftree also negates what you called a ‘fact’: that “people who don’t treat illnesses with exorcism are people who don’t really believe demons exist.”

In the case of John’s writings, Twelftree asks why John ignored Jesus’ exorcisms and rejects the view that it was because John was “embarrassed about portraying Jesus as a man of his time”, noting that he attributes to Jesus techniques used by other healers of the period such as the use of spittle.<sup>79 80</sup> Rather, he proposes three reasons for the suppression of the exorcisms:

- (1) Noting the spectacular nature of Jesus’ miracles recorded in John, “Compared with these spectacular miracles, which were chosen to show Jesus’ glory and his divine nature, the relatively common exorcisms performed by Jesus’ contemporaries would have appeared banal.”
- (2) A second reason may be because John “chose to give little attention to the Kingdom of God in Jesus’ teaching. We have seen that Jesus – and the Synoptic Gospels – closely associated exorcism and the Kingdom of God...for John to exclude one probably meant that he felt obligated to preclude the other.”
- (3) Third, whereas in the Synoptic Gospels an aspect of Satan’s defeat is directly linked with Jesus’ exorcisms, “in John the defeat of Satan is linked with the cross”, which “probably meant that the exorcisms did not have the same importance for him.”<sup>81</sup>

In his more recent book he adds concerning John, “Johannine theology saw no place for exorcism, not because there was no category of demonic or demonic possession but because the demonic was overcome by truth rather than by the power-encounter of an exorcism”.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Twelftree. 2007. In the Name of Jesus, p. 290.

<sup>79</sup> Twelftree. 1985. Christ Triumphant, pp. 88-89.

<sup>80</sup> It is also worth consider Piper’s comment here: “it is unlikely that one can claim that [John] recorded no exorcism simply because he gives a low priority to the sphere of Satan and the demonic. The fourth gospel on the contrary shows some significant interest in this area” (Piper, R. 2000. Satan, Demons and the Absence of Exorcisms in the Fourth Gospel. In Christology, Controversy, and Community: New Testament Essays in Honour of David R. Catchpole, ed. Catchpole, Horrell & Tuckett. Brill, p. 256).

<sup>81</sup> Twelftree. 1985. Christ Triumphant, p. 90.

<sup>82</sup> Twelftree. 2007. In the Name of Jesus, p. 207.

As we saw earlier, Twelftree also offers the third reason above as an explanation for Paul's lack of clear references to exorcism.

Turning to Matthew, his tendency to play down the importance of exorcism relative to the other Synoptists is attributed by Twelftree to false prophets in the form of wandering exorcists who were corrupting the Christian community through ungodly behaviour. As a second possibility he suggests the lack of success enjoyed by exorcists connected with Matthew's church.<sup>83</sup> Misuse by false prophets is also given as the probable explanation for the Didache's explicit opposition to exorcism.<sup>84</sup>

Having noted the above, we should also take stock of what Twelftree says about the witness to exorcism in the early church found in other New Testament books:

Luke:

"That Jesus was the pattern for the early Church's healing ministry – including exorcism is seen when we look more closely at Luke-Acts."<sup>85</sup>

"In that Jesus is portrayed as the model for the early Church we should expect Luke to understand that the early Church would not only be involved in exorcism, but from what we have seen of his portrait of Jesus, involved in exorcism as part of a broader mission perhaps under the rubric of 'preaching the Kingdom of God'...That the Seventy and their mission probably represent or prefigure the universal post-Easter mission of the Church is also suggested by the number seventy, for in the eyes of the Israelites this was the number of nations in the ancient world...in his Gospel Luke is giving a warrant for the ministry of exorcism as part of the broader ministry of the early Church. And in his second volume Luke shows the early Church carrying out such a ministry which included exorcism."<sup>86</sup>

"Nevertheless the small amount of material on exorcism in Acts and from what we have seen of Luke's taking exorcism as just one part of Jesus' ministry, Luke does not permit us to take exorcism as in any way the most important part of the Church's ministry."<sup>87</sup>

Mark:

"Mark most probably held the view that exorcism was the most significant aspect of post-Easter Christian ministry."<sup>88</sup> !

James:

"With all this, and the evidence for the name of God causing demons to shudder being found predominantly in Jewish literature, along with the Jewish character...and the

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<sup>83</sup> Twelftree. 1985. Christ Triumphant, pp. 128-129.

<sup>84</sup> Twelftree. 2007. In the Name of Jesus, p. 288.

<sup>85</sup> Twelftree. 1985. Christ Triumphant, p. 96.

<sup>86</sup> Twelftree. 1985. Christ Triumphant, p. 99.

<sup>87</sup> Twelftree. 1985. Christ Triumphant, pp. 106-107.

<sup>88</sup> Twelftree. 2007. In the Name of Jesus, p. 207.

background of James in mind we can probably conclude that among Jewish Christians the name of God remained dominant in use as a power-authority for exorcism. And even though 5:14 is not in itself intended as a procedure for exorcism...though to pray 'over' (*epi*) a patient was also part of the directions for some exorcisms...the role of exorcists in James' Church was probably confined to the 'elders' (*presbuteroi*) of the Church."<sup>89</sup>

Hebrews:

"Hebrews likely carries hints of exorcism being part of the message of salvation."<sup>90</sup>

His overall conclusion:

"In the light of the investigations in this chapter it can be concluded that the early Church continued the practice of exorcism after Easter and that, rather than being peripheral to the ministry, the early Christians adopted exorcism as an important part of their mission. However this conclusion does not hold good for all of the Churches represented in the New Testament writings."<sup>91</sup>

As to the early second century, the longer ending of Mark (though difficult to date) may attest to the importance of exorcism in some parts of the early second century church.<sup>92</sup> Even if we are correct in detecting a wane in interest in exorcism in this period, Twelftree does not see this as a witness to a decline in belief in demons but to "the fluctuating fortunes of exorcism, much in the same way that over the centuries since there has been a varying interest in such phenomena."<sup>93</sup>

Your hypothesis that the apostolic fathers of the early second century do not mention exorcism because of a decline in belief in Satan and demons also fails to account for the fact that most of the apostolic fathers refer to the devil/Satan in their writings (Ignatius, 1 Clement, 2 Clement, Polycarp, Barnabas, Shepherd of Hermas). A survey of these references is given in my paper *The Accuser of our Brethren*.<sup>94</sup>

Twelftree mentions in his 2007 book that his views have changed so that he is no longer as enthusiastic about the importance of exorcism for today's church. Nevertheless, this is not due to a change of belief about the existence of demons, but a recognition "that the church may confront the demonic in the form of an exorcism *or* in the form of Truth."<sup>95</sup> He sums up very responsibly:

"We should pay as little attention to the demonic as is pastorally possible. Yet we should confront the demonic as much as is pastorally required."<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Twelftree. 1985. *Christ Triumphant*, p. 132.

<sup>90</sup> Twelftree. 2007. *In the Name of Jesus*, p. 281.

<sup>91</sup> Twelftree. 1985. *Christ Triumphant*, p. 132.

<sup>92</sup> Twelftree. 2007. *In the Name of Jesus*, p. 231ff.

<sup>93</sup> Twelftree. 2007. *In the Name of Jesus*, p. 291.

<sup>94</sup> Farrar, Thomas. 2012. *The Accuser of our Brethren: Unmasking the Biblical Devil*. Accessed at [http://www.dianoigo.com/articles/The\\_Accuser\\_of\\_our\\_Brethren.pdf](http://www.dianoigo.com/articles/The_Accuser_of_our_Brethren.pdf), pp. 57ff.

<sup>95</sup> Twelftree. 2007. *In the Name of Jesus*, p. 293.

<sup>96</sup> Twelftree. 2007. *In the Name of Jesus*, p. 294.

#### **d. Beliefs of Jesus and the apostles**

Twelftree leaves no room for the possibility that Jesus and the apostles themselves did not believe in demons themselves but tolerated and accommodated the belief among their contemporaries:

“Fourth, we shall also discover that the first-century mind was, at times, not as credulous as has often been thought. Many people believed neither in demons, possession nor in exorcism, yet the early Church and, previously, Jesus did.”<sup>97</sup>

“But in so far as exorcism, the defeat of Satan and the coming of the new Kingdom are interconnected, and that Jesus sent his disciples out to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom, then we can assume both that Jesus intended the disciples to be exorcists and that in fact they were exorcists.”<sup>98</sup>

I don’t think there are many New Testament scholars today who doubt that Jesus believed in demons, and this is not to be taken lightly, as this quotation from Moore reminds us:

“It is obvious that Jesus himself believed in the demonic and in possession, and however legitimate it may be to attribute to his contemporaries an ignorance of modern medicine which could lead them to mistake illness for possession, it is not so easy to attribute the same ignorance or confusion to one so manifestly aware of the spiritual and the psychic as was our Lord.”<sup>99</sup>

#### **13. Scholarly support for virtual absence of satan from John’s Gospel**

It’s difficult for me to evaluate your assertion that Dunn, Twelftree and other scholars have noted the virtual absence of Satan from John’s Gospel, since you didn’t provide any specific citations (I can’t find anything to that effect in Dunn and Twelftree’s paper on demon possession). As I noted above, Twelftree argued that John linked Jesus’ defeat of Satan to the cross, which was one reason for his suppression of exorcisms. Kostenberger agrees that John has eliminated virtually all references to demons “In order to focus his readers’ eye even more keenly on this titanic spiritual clash” between God and his Messiah on the one hand and Satan on the other.<sup>100</sup>

Kovacs’ monograph further supports the importance of Satan to the Gospel of John. Opening her paper with the question, “How does the Fourth Evangelist interpret the death of Christ?” she concludes with the answer, “In the death of Jesus Christ the final judgment has already begun, and the decisive engagement in the cosmic battle between God and Satan has been won”.<sup>101</sup> To this we could add Piper’s comment:

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<sup>97</sup> Twelftree. 1985. *Christ Triumphant*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>98</sup> Twelftree. 1985. *Christ Triumphant*, p. 86.

<sup>99</sup> Moore, E. Garth. 1977. *Believe it or not: Christianity and Psychical Research*. Mowbray, p. 97. (A similar point could be made regarding the idea that Jesus was ignorant or confused about the authorship of the Pentateuch)

<sup>100</sup> Kostenberger, Andreas J. 2009. *A Theology of John’s Gospel and Letters*. Zondervan, p. 281.

<sup>101</sup> Kovacs, Judith L. 1995. “Now shall the Ruler of this world be driven out”: Jesus’ death as cosmic battle

“One must also reckon with the place of the Devil/Satan/the Evil One in the Johannine world view. In John Jesus may not oppose Satan by means of exorcisms or in a temptation narrative, but there is a conflict nonetheless and it is one which appears to be invested with genuinely cosmic dimensions as well as social implications.”<sup>102</sup>

In any case 1 John 3:8 is sufficient evidence for the importance of Satan in Johannine theology.

## **18. New Testament Statistics on satanas, diabolos and other titles**

I recently devoted a blog post<sup>103</sup> to debunking in detail the claim that references to Satan/the devil are relatively less frequent in books written for mature congregations than those written for preaching purposes.

### **a. Twofold categorization of New Testament books**

Of course I do not dispute that the New Testament epistles were written for established congregations. However it is quite reasonable to dispute that the Synoptic Gospels were written purely for catechumens. On Matthew, Carson cautions that “it is unwise to specify only one purpose; reductionism cannot do justice to the diversity of Matthew’s themes.”<sup>104</sup> He lists four needs which he believes Matthew sought to meet, which are (1) catechetical, (2) apologetic/evangelistic, (3) encouragement of believers in their witness before a hostile world, and (4) “to inspire deeper faith in Jesus the Messiah, along with a maturing understanding of his person, work, and unique place in the unfolding history of redemption.”<sup>105</sup>

As for Mark, Wessel and Strauss write, “Concerning the occasion and purpose of Mark’s gospel, scholars have tended toward three general directions, seeing the gospel’s purpose as primarily catechetical, pastoral, or theological.”<sup>106</sup> Thus, it is at very least an oversimplification to assume that these books were written purely for preaching or catechetical purposes. Wessel and Strauss see credence in all three, noting that “it is likely that Mark wrote for a variety of reasons.”<sup>107</sup>

However, even if we assume for the sake of argument that your simplistic division of New Testament books is valid, the data does not support your claim that Satan appears less frequently in the books written for mature Christians.

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in John 12:20-36. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114(2): 227-247.

<sup>102</sup> Piper, R. 2000. Satan, Demons and the Absence of Exorcisms in the Fourth Gospel. In *Christology, Controversy, and Community: New Testament Essays in Honour of David R. Catchpole*, ed. Catchpole, Horrell & Tuckett. Brill, p. 271.

<sup>103</sup> Farrar, T. 2013. The Statistics of Satan. Accessed at <http://blog.dianoigo.com/2013/11/the-statistics-of-satan.html>

<sup>104</sup> Carson, D.A. 2010. Matthew. In *Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew-Mark*, ed. Longman & Garland. Zondervan, p. 46.

<sup>105</sup> Carson, D.A. op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>106</sup> Wessel, W. & Strauss, M. Mark. In *Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew-Mark*, ed. Longman & Garland. Zondervan, p. 685.

<sup>107</sup> Wessel, W. & Strauss, M. op. cit., p. 688.

## b. Summary of statistical analysis

The statistical analysis in my blog post reveals that when we consider a statistical model that relates total *satanas* + *diabolos* count for each book to the book's purpose (according to your definition), there is a statistically significant difference: *satanas* and *diabolos* occur more often in the 'preaching purposes' books. However, if we add word count to the model as another independent variable, the 'purpose' variable is no longer statistically significant but there is a strong relationship between *satanas* + *diabolos* count and word count. This means that statistically speaking, once we control for word count there is no longer any difference in the *satanas* + *diabolos* counts between the 'preaching purposes' books and the 'mature Christians' books.

I also considered 'likely date of composition' as an independent variable in the model and it was also not statistically significant, so there is no evidence that the rate of occurrence of *satanas* and *diabolos* decreases with time either.

You said I provided no evidence that we should expect short books to have fewer mentions. In this case I would simply appeal to common sense. If we have two documents on the same general topic and one is much longer than the other, many words are going to occur more times in the longer document.

Figure 1 below shows the rate of occurrence per 1000 Greek words of *satanas* (blue), *diabolos* (green) and other terms for Satan (red), for each book of the New Testament. There is no obvious pattern from which a declining trend might be observed across any logical grouping of books.

**Figure 1**

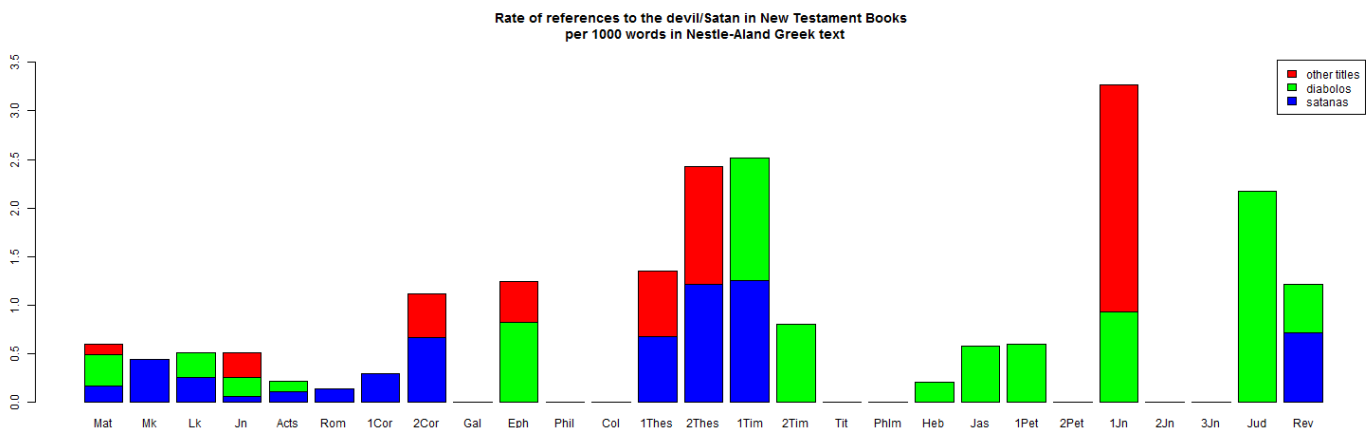
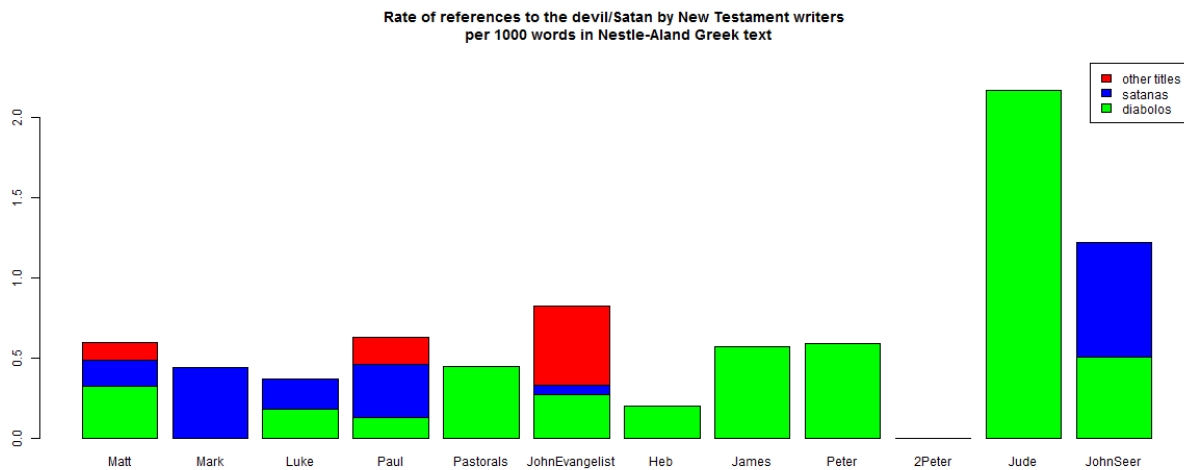


Figure 2 shows the rate of occurrence per 1000 Greek words of *satanas* (blue), *diabolos* (green) and other terms for Satan (red), for each writer of the New Testament. I have divided the writers according to critical consensus but included all the traditional Pauline epistles except the pastorals under Paul.

It is actually apparent from this graph that, on a per-word basis, Paul and John refer to Satan more frequently than Matthew, Mark and Luke do!

Figure 2



I note that your analysis did not take terms other than *satanas* and *diabolos* into account, even though there is considerable scholarly support for taking titles mentioned in the New Testament as references to Satan. These include “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4), “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), “Beliar” (2 Cor. 6:14), “the tempter” (1 Thess. 3:5),<sup>108</sup> “the ruler of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2) and “the evil one” (Matt. 13:19; 13:38; John 17:15; 2 Thess. 3:3; 1 John 2:13; 2:14; 3:12; 5:18; 5:19).

Concerning John’s Gospel, I do not understand your statement that John only has one reference to Satan unless you deny that the terms ‘devil’, ‘evil one’ and ‘ruler of this world’ are synonyms for Satan.

As to the eight books which make no reference to Satan/the devil: four of these books are among the five shortest books of the New Testament (Titus, Philemon, 2 John and 3 John), which have word counts of 659, 335, 245 and 219. Obviously a shorter book has less content within which a reference to Satan might arise (again, common sense). The other four books are all epistles which fall under ‘task theology’, addressing specific situations faced by the original audience. Indeed, most of the New Testament is like this; it was not written as a purely theological endeavour. Thus the fact that 18 of the 22 New Testament books which exceed 700 words mention Satan demonstrates that Satan was a highly relevant topic throughout the New Testament period.

By way of comparison, in my blog I noted that there are ten New Testament books in which the word *basileia* (kingdom) does not occur, and nine New Testament books in which neither the word *anastasis* (resurrection) nor the verbs *anistemi* or *egeiro* (rise; raise up) occurs. I don’t expect you would claim that this implies that the kingdom of God and the resurrection are marginalized within portions of the New Testament.

<sup>108</sup> On *ho peirazon* in 1 Thess. 3:5 being a title for Satan, see Williams, op. cit., p. 96.



It is certainly noteworthy that Satan is not mentioned at all in Galatians, and only once in Romans in spite of the extended discussion of sin. How are we to explain this absence? Does it represent a conscious move on Paul's part to marginalize Satan? Williams argues against this view:

"True, Satan occurs only once in Romans and not even once in Galatians. Yet, we gain a very different picture from the other *Hauptbriefe*, the two letters to the Corinthians. If Paul really was in the business of marginalising Satan, then why did he mention him no fewer than five times in the second letter to Corinth?"<sup>109</sup>

Williams explains the dearth of references to Satan in some epistles as follows:

"The safest and most obvious answer might simply be that Paul's decision to refer or not to refer to Satan at any given moment was not based upon a theological agenda, but happened purely by chance. The overall impression given by the letters as a whole, including Romans, is that Satan was something fully accepted as part of life in the early church."<sup>110</sup>

He is aware that other scholars have argued that in Romans, Satan has been supplanted by a non-mythological explanation for evil. Both he and Becker reject this notion, however. For Becker, the discussion of sin, law and death in Romans is not un-mythical,<sup>111</sup> but Paul's strategy of arguing using the central term 'sin' "pushes the reasoning in transpersonal powers and mythical figures to the side."<sup>112</sup> Williams argues as follows:

"The idea that Satan simply has been supplanted by a non-mythological explanation for evil does little justice to the subtlety and complexity of Paul's presentation. Indeed, what Paul arguably has done here is bring aspects of Satan's character into his description of the powers of sin and death. Instead of removing Satan, one might even argue that Paul has 'Satan-ised' the issues he is addressing."<sup>113</sup>

We can see, then, that recent scholarly syntheses allow for both mythological and anthropological explanations for evil in Paul's theology.

### **18.1. The Devil and Satan in 1 John**

Your assessment that 1 John refers to 'the devil' only twice is remarkable. First, you dismiss three references to the devil from your count simply because they refer to "of the devil", "children of the devil" and "works of the devil". Can you explain why the presence of a genitive noun in front of *diabolos* negates these as references to the devil?

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<sup>109</sup> Williams, Guy. op. cit., p. 101.

<sup>110</sup> Williams. op. cit., pp. 101-102.

<sup>111</sup> Becker, Michael. op. cit., p. 141.

<sup>112</sup> Becker, Michael. op. cit., p. 137.

<sup>113</sup> Williams, Guy. op. cit., p. 101.

You then caricature evangelical theology by implying that temptation is the devil's only function within it.<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, you ignore the five references to "the evil one" (1 John 2:13; 2:14; 3:12; 5:18; 5:19) which is a synonym for the devil (see the 'Rosetta stone'<sup>115</sup> of the parallel accounts of the parable of the sower: Matt. 13:19; Mark 4:15; Luke 8:12; cf. Matt. 13:38-39). That John uses the term in this way may be seen by comparing John 8:44 with 1 John 3:12, as is noted (for example) by Marshall.<sup>116</sup> The equivalence of "the evil one" and "the ruler of this world" from John's Gospel is also apparent from 1 John 5:19. On this text Kruse comments:

"The teaching that the rest of the world is under the control of the evil one has its counterpart in the Gospel of John, where three times (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) the evangelist mentions the prince (ruler) of this world"<sup>117</sup>

## 18.2. The Devil and Satan in Revelation

I would like clarification of your statement that "the latter is used only in Revelation, and only three times at that". 'The latter' seems to refer to *diabolos*. However, Revelation contains five instances of *diabolos* and seven of *satanas*.<sup>118</sup>

To say that Revelation is a symbolic book cannot be used as an excuse for avoiding careful exegesis. You cited a myriad of commentators in support of your assertions regarding the recipients of Paul's letters, but your exegesis of Satan in Revelation is noticeably devoid of any references to scholarly literature. Instead you've raised a series of straw men for refutation without interacting with real scholarship or providing any detailed exegesis of your own.

### a. Rev. 2:9 and 3:9

I've never read or heard anyone to claim that these texts refer to the synagogue where Satan goes on the Sabbath, so this appears to be a straw man. You are no doubt aware that the genitive often denotes possession or source. Johnson's and Osborne's comments on 2:9 will suffice to present the standard scholarly exegesis:

"But are of the synagogue of Satan' reveals for the first time in Revelation the ultimate source of the persecution of Christians, namely, Satan. Many further references to the

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<sup>114</sup> For confirmation that this is not the case, see, for instance: "Satan". Elwell, Walter A., ed. 2001. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. Baker Academic, pp. 1054-1055.

<sup>115</sup> This analogy for the parallel between these three titles is taken from a doctoral thesis: Snodderly, M.E. 2008. *A Socio-Rhetorical Investigation of the Johannine Understanding of "the Works of the Devil" in 1 John 3:8*. University of South Africa, p. 125.

<sup>116</sup> Marshall, I. Howard. 1978. *The Epistles of John*. Eerdmans, p. 189.

<sup>117</sup> Kruse, Colin G. 2000. *The Letters of John*. Eerdmans, p. 196.

<sup>118</sup> Perhaps you have arrived at this number by combining the pairs of references in Rev. 12 and Rev. 20 into one each. Of course, if we do that, then to be consistent we should count all occurrences of *diabolos* and *satanas* in Matthew's Temptations account in Matthew as one, and count the two occurrences of *satanas* in Matt. 12:26 as one, which would leave us with only three references to *diabolos* and two to *satanas* in Matthew. If I were to repeat the statistical analysis described above counting multiple references in the same immediate context as only one, I'm confident it wouldn't produce an outcome more favourable to your hypothesis.

archenemy of the followers of Christ are found throughout the book (2:13; 3:9; 9:11; 12:9-10, 12; 13:4; 20:2, 7, 10). In fact, he is one of the principal actors in the apocalyptic drama.”<sup>119</sup>

“In other words, the claim of these Jews to be the people of God is obviated by the fact that they are the tools of Satan against God’s true people, the church. This is a point made often in the NT...Thus the Jews of Smyrna may have called themselves ‘the synagogue of God’ (cf. Num. 16:3), but the exalted Christ here states that they are actually ‘Satan’s synagogue.’ The choice of *Satana* (Satan) is deliberate, as the term is a Hebrew loanword meaning ‘adversary,’ depicting this archenemy of God and his people as supremely hostile, filled with hatred and slander”<sup>120</sup>

You haven’t provided any detailed evidence or referred to any scholarship to support your view that ‘Satan’ in Rev. 2:9 and 3:9 refers to human beings. It is further noteworthy that you treat the references to Satan/the devil in the seven letters independently from those later in the same book, proposing inconsistent meanings. In these earlier texts you give ‘Satan’ what appears to be a plain and literal meaning, even though you argue that we must interpret ‘Satan’ symbolically in this book.<sup>121</sup>

#### **b. Rev. 2:10**

You have omitted the reference to Rev. 2:10 (“the devil is about to throw some of you into prison”) from both your count and your analysis. It suggests a reluctance to admit that references to ‘the devil’ are in fact references to Satan. Once again the historical background to the allusion is obviously persecution of Christians by other humans; but what the author of Revelation is saying is that the devil is behind the persecution. Osborne states:

“The change of title from ‘Satan’ in 2:9 to *ho diabolos* (the devil) here is probably for emphasis. This term also means ‘adversary, slanderer’ and is used often in the LXX to translate Hebrew *satan*. In other words, **the two are synonymous**. By using both ‘Satan’ and ‘devil,’ John emphasizes the fact that he is the ‘adversary’ of God’s people.”<sup>122</sup>

#### **c. Rev. 2:13**

You again caricature the traditional interpretation of this passage in order to construct a straw man: “Does this really refer to a fallen angel living in Pergamum, with a literal throne (or judgment seat), to sit on?” Again I would encourage you instead to interact with scholarly exegesis. Osborne mentions five

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<sup>119</sup> Johnson, Alan. 2006. Revelation. In *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews – Revelation*, ed. Longman & Garland. Zondervan, pp. 617-618.

<sup>120</sup> Osborne, Grant R. 2002. Revelation. *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, Vol. 27. Baker Academic, pp. 131-132.

<sup>121</sup> You appear to think you have given ‘Satan’ a symbolic meaning in Rev. 2:9 and 3:9, but it is not clear how the reference to *satanas* could be used as a ‘symbol of an adversary’ since ‘adversary’ is the literal meaning of the word!

<sup>122</sup> Osborne. *op. cit.*, p. 133. Emphasis added.

potential historical bases for the allusion that have been proposed in the literature, and states his own preference, with which Johnson is in agreement:

“The emphasis is on the appositional *hopou ho thronos tou satana* (where Satan has his throne). The connectives – *pou/hopou* – are in apposition and state that Pergamum is Satan’s special habitation, his ‘throne.’ In the ancient world a throne signified special authority and royal governance, so in some way Pergamum is named as the seat of satanic power. There have been several interpretations of ‘Satan’s throne’...The best option is the imperial cult, the major problem behind Revelation as a whole (as we will see) and the core of Pergamum religion. It was emperor worship that most directly occasioned the persecutions under Domitian and Trajan, and Pergamum was the center of the imperial cult for all of the province of Asia...Finally, this is clarified further as the place *hopou ho satanas katoikei* (where Satan dwells). This frames the verse with the satanic presence at Pergamum. The first part says the city is ‘where Satan has his throne,’ and the second part says it is ‘where he dwells.’ In other words, they live in Satan’s hometown, and this is proven by Antipas’s martyrdom and by the total opposition of the pagan populace and Roman officials to the saints in Pergamum. Satan is the true origin of this hatred.”<sup>123</sup>

“The speaker’s knowledge is searching. He knows they live in a hostile and difficult place ‘where Satan has his throne.’ This certainly refers to the fact that Pergamum was a center for worship of the pagan gods, especially the emperor cult. The first temple in the empire was established in honor of Augustus in AD 29 at Pergamum because it was the administrative capital of Asia. In succeeding years the city boasted of being the official neokoros (‘temple sweeper’) of the ‘temple where Caesar was worshipped’ (Barclay, *Seven Churches*, 45)...to declare oneself a Christian who worships the one true God and Savior Jesus Christ would certainly provoke hostility...Satan tries to undermine loyalty to Christ by persecution.”<sup>124</sup>

Both commentators seek an historical background within which to interpret the references to the enthronement and dwelling of Satan in Pergamum. Both mention several alternatives (mainly related to idolatrous practices in the city) and agree that the imperial cult and associated persecutions of Christians forms the most likely background to the allusion. However, neither commentator entertains the notion that the word ‘Satan’ refers to the human authorities or system as you do (this is no surprise given the lack of external attestation to such a meaning for *satanas*). Rather, they see it as an assertion that the cosmological foe Satan lies behind the human idolatry and persecution. This is contextually likely because it is well known that early Christians attributed pagan idolatry to demons. Rosen-Zvi makes this point:

“For early Christian accusations that pagans worship demons, taking them for real gods (based on LXX to Deut. 32:17, ‘They sacrifice to daimones and not God,’ and Ps. 96[95]:4, ‘For all the gods of the nations are daimones’), see 1 Cor. 10:20; Clement, *Protrepticus* 3.2;

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<sup>123</sup> Osborne. op. cit., pp. 141-143.

<sup>124</sup> Johnson. op. cit., pp. 619-620.

40.1; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 7:67; Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, 37...As Dale B. Martin, in *Inventing Superstition: From the Hippiocratics to the Christians* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), meticulously shows, the accusation is not completely false. It stems from a deep discrepancy between pagans and Christians regarding the nature of daimones – lesser gods or evil creatures. Thus Robin Fox: ‘To the Jews, demons were not the ambiguous intermediaries whom pagans placed between gods and men: they were outright agent of evil, the troupe of Satan himself. The Christians’ view was similar’ (Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* [New York: Knopf, 1989], 327).<sup>125</sup>

#### d. Rev. 2:24

You say “Again, no direct reference to satan (still less to a fallen angel), just a quotation from people who claim to teach ‘deep secrets of satan’.” You have stated what you think the word ‘satan’ refers to here. To conclude that it does not refer to a fallen angel because it does not explicitly say so is fallacious. In this case there are two main views among commentators, with Osborne and Johnson differing on which is preferable:

“There are two options [for interpreting *ta bathea tou Satana*, the deep things of Satan]. (1) It might be a sarcastic comment on Jezebel’s claim to ‘know the deep things of God’ (cf. 1 Cor. 2:10): they are actually ‘the deep things of Satan’ (so Prigent, Hemer, Ford, P. Hughes, Roloff, Beale). Her prophetic utterances came not from God but Satan. (2) It could be meant literally (so Beckwith, Farrer, Morris, Johnson, Chilton, Krodell, Talbert). On the basis perhaps of proto-gnostic principles, Jezebel may have taught that Christians should experience ‘the deep things of Satan’ in order to triumph over them. In this sense, she would admit that the guild feasts and pagan environment are evil but claim that they have no power over the believer. She would even have taught that Christians should participate in those activities and experience the ‘depths’ of paganism in order to show their mastery over it. The first is more likely...”<sup>126</sup>

“The reference to ‘Satan’s so-called deep secrets’ is ambiguous (cf. ‘the deep things of God’ [1 Cor. 2:10]). It may mean the ‘deep things,’ i.e. the secret knowledge of God reserved only for the initiates into the heretical teaching. This would suggest a form of Christian Gnosticism, an early heretical teaching. The words so-called would then be John’s mocking remark – ‘the so-called deep things of God, which are in fact of Satan’ (Bruce, 639)...another sense is preferable, namely, that Satan’s ‘deep secrets’ is the actual phrase Jezebel used. But could she lure Christians by using such a term? The reasoning of some in the early church (the Nicolaitans) might have gone something like this: The only effective way to confront Satan was to enter into his strongholds; the real nature of sin could only be learned by experience, and therefore only those who had really experienced sin could truly appreciate grace. So by experiencing the depths of paganism (the ‘deep secrets’ of Satan), one would be better equipped to serve Christ or be an example of freedom to his brothers (cf. 1 Cor.

<sup>125</sup> Rosen-Zvi. op. cit., p. 154.

<sup>126</sup> Osborne. op. cit., p. 162.

8:9-11). Thus the sin of Jezebel was deadly serious because of the depths of its deception.”<sup>127</sup>

Either of the two prevailing interpretations fit the standard view of Satan as a personal cosmological enemy of God’s people, and neither of them suggests that Satan is anything else.

#### e. Rev. 12

You state, “No reference to a fallen angel at all” without even discussing the explicit reference to angels being thrown out of heaven. Your statement that the dragon could not also be a serpent is incorrect,<sup>128</sup> and you’ve raised another straw man by assuming that non-Christadelphians take the dragon imagery literally.

You note that the imagery of a beast with ten horns is used in Daniel to describe a worldly empire persecuting God’s people. You are apparently arguing that, by parallelism, the dragon also refers to a worldly empire (I am reduced to guesswork because you did not say what you think the dragon symbolizes). The beast derives its power from the dragon (Rev. 13:2-4) which implies that the dragon is superior to the beast. We already saw that most commentators take the references to Satan/the devil in the seven letters to mean that the Roman and Jewish authorities were empowered by Satan, and unsurprisingly this is how most commentators conceptualize the relationship between the dragon and beast as well.

Your argument against identifying the dragon as a fallen angel in this text and Rev. 20 is that the dragon is identified with the ancient serpent, and he cannot be both an animal and a fallen angel. This is like saying that the dragon cannot both be an animal and a world empire. We are agreed that the dragon is a symbol; what we disagree on is what the dragon symbolizes. You argue that it symbolizes a world empire persecuting God’s people, whereas I argue that it symbolizes Satan, as the text explicitly states. This interpretation is of course consistent with a world empire persecuting God’s people being the historical background of the passage. As we saw in the seven letters, what John is asserting is that Satan empowers this world empire.

Let us look at the main exegetical features of this passage as discussed in scholarly literature:

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<sup>127</sup> Johnson. op. cit., p. 625.

<sup>128</sup> “The image of *drakon megas* (a great dragon) has a complex background. Benson (1987: 98-101) shows how the symbol of the dragon was well known not only in Jewish contexts but also in every ancient culture (Sumerian, Akkadian, Indian, Greek, Hittite, Egyptian and Phoenician). **A *drakon* was a ‘serpent’** or ‘sea monster’ usually connected with demonic powers in the ancient world. The earliest was Sumerian in the twenty-fourth century B.C. (the destruction of the seven-headed dragon), and in Canaan it symbolized all the serpent gods as the enemy of Baal. In Babylon it is a red serpent that guards the god Marduk and is featured as a dragonlike creature on the Ishtar gate. To the Hebrews there was both Leviathan and the female sea monster Rahab. In Greek mythology there is a seven-headed hydra slain by Hercules. **In the LXX it is often synonymous with *ophis* (serpent).** In the OT there is the serpent, Leviathan, Behemoth, Tannin, and Rahab. For instance, while in Gen. 3:1-24 the ‘serpent’ that deceived Eve is *ophis*, in Exod. 7:9-12 the ‘serpent’ or ‘snake’ that Aaron’s rod turned into is *drakon*, as is the ‘venom of serpents’ in Deut. 32:33; Job 20:16 (cf. Job 26:13). Leviathan is linked with Rahab in Job 9:13; 26:12; Isa. 51:9; Ps. 89:10; and with Tannin in Ps. 74:13 (Yarbro Collins 1976: 76). Finally, *drakon* is used for ‘Leviathan’ of the deep in Job 3:8, 41:1; Ps. 104:26; Isa. 27:1.” (Osborne. op. cit., p. 457, emphasis added)

- (1) Behind the image of the 'dragon' lies the idea of the sea monster (Leviathan or Rahab in Hebrew).<sup>129 130</sup> Osborne notes that Leviathan is a many-headed beast in Psalm 74 and a seven-headed dragon in the late-first century Christian Odes Sol. 22.5.<sup>131</sup> For Israel, Leviathan "came to represent all the terrors of the sea and thus the presence of evil and death" and also "signified nations that stood against God and his people."<sup>132</sup> However, the symbolism goes further:

"Sometimes there is allusion to, perhaps at the dawn of history, God's past defeat of a more sinister, malevolent force behind Egypt and other evil kingdoms: God 'shattered the sea monster...his hand has pierced the apostate dragon' (Job 26:12-13 LXX [cf. chap. 41; see also 7:12; 9:13]). The image of the dragon in Rev. 12:3 represents the devil (so see confirmation of this in 12:9) who instigates the evil kingdoms of the world to persecute God's people. In the light of the comments on 12:2 and together with 12:4-5, 12:3 indicates the beginning fulfilment of Gen. 3:15-16."<sup>133 134</sup>

- (2) The dragon is identified with the serpent that deceived Eve and led her to the forbidden fruit. "In the OT the 'serpent' is linked to Leviathan, the sea monster of chaos (Job 26:13; Isa. 27:1); but it was not until later Judaism that the serpent was linked to Satan (Wis. 2:24; 3 Bar. 9:7; b. Sanh. 29a). In the NT this identification was made complete (2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9; 20:2)."<sup>135</sup>

"The description of the dragon as 'the ancient serpent' identifies him as the same diabolical character of Gen. 3:1, 14. The ancient foe of God's people here in 12:9 is also 'called devil and Satan,' meaning respectively, 'slanderer' and 'adversary'. He is a slanderous adversary in two ways. Genesis 3 attributes to him the two functions of slanderer and deceiver. After the fall, the serpent and his agents do on a worldwide scale what he began in the garden (cf. Jub. 11:5; 1 En. 54:6; 2 En. 7; 18). Here in 12:9 he is called 'the one deceiving the whole inhabited earth' and in 12:10 'the accuser' of God's people."<sup>136</sup>

- (3) The dragon is identified with "the one called 'Devil' and 'Satan'":

"In the LXX *diabolos* usually translates the Hebrew *satan*, and thus **the two Greek terms are virtually synonymous**, meaning 'adversary' or 'evil opponent.' The angel who opposed Balaam (Num. 22:22, 32) was called a *satan*. At its root is a forensic aspect, referring to an accuser in a law court (see on 12:10). This is how 'Satan' appears in Job 1:6-12 and 2:1-6, accusing Job 'before the Lord,' as well as in Zech. 3:1-2, where Satan accused Joshua the high priest. However, a growing number of scholars see the articular

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<sup>129</sup> Johnson. op. cit., p. 696.

<sup>130</sup> Beale, G.K. & McDonough, S.M. 2007. Revelation. In Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament, ed. Beale & Carson. Baker, p. 1123.

<sup>131</sup> Osborne. op. cit., p. 459.

<sup>132</sup> Osborne. op. cit., p. 459.

<sup>133</sup> Beale, G.K. & McDonough, S.M. op. cit., p. 1123.

<sup>134</sup> See also Osborne. op. cit., p. 470.

<sup>135</sup> Osborne. op. cit., p. 472.

<sup>136</sup> Beale & McDonough. op. cit., p. 1125.

*hassatan* in Job 1-2 not as a proper name but as a description of an ‘accusing’ or prosecutorial angel. In that sense it would not become a title until the anarthrous form in Zech. 3. In the intertestamental period, Satan is often linked with the evil impulse and tempts people to sin (Jub. 10:8; T. Judah 19:4; 3 Bar. 4:8). He not only accuses people before God (1 Enoch 40:7; Jub. 48:15-16) but tries to destroy them (T. Ben. 3:3; Jub. 1:20 [combining the ideas of accusing and tempting]; 49:2). These ideas continue in the NT, but the language used of Satan is elevated.”<sup>137</sup>

Particularly noteworthy here is Beale and McDonough’s analysis which shows how Revelation draws on Old Testament *satan* texts. It is worth quoting at some length:

“On the basis of this description and the description of Satan in Job 1:6-11; 2:1-6; Zech. 3:1-2, it can be concluded that the devil was permitted by God to come before him in heaven and ‘accuse’ his people of sin. The OT texts portray Satan accusing saints of unfaithfulness, with the implication that they did not deserve God’s salvation and gracious blessings (Zech. 3:1-5, 9; cf. Midr. Rab. Num. 18:21). Implicit also in the accusations was the charge that God’s own character was corrupt.

The emphasis on Satan’s accusatorial role here in 12:10 reveals that the angelic battle of 12:7-9 was figurative for a courtroom battle between two opposing lawyers, with one losing the argument and being disbarred for employing illegal tactics (so Caird 1966: 154-56). In addition to Satan’s accusatorial role in Job 1:6-11; 2:1-6; Zech. 3:1-2, the devil also had the role of a legal ‘accuser’ in early Judaism (Jub. 1:20; 17:15-16; 18:9-12; 48:15-18; 1 En. 40:7; T. Levi. 5:6; T. Dan 6:2), and Michael played the part of an advocate defending Israel from the accusations made by Satan in the heavenly court (T. Levi 5:6; T. Dan 6:1-6; Mid. Rab. Exod. 18:5). Particularly interesting is Jub. 48:10-19, which says that essential to Israel’s victor over Egypt at the exodus was that Satan ‘was bound and imprisoned behind the children of Israel that he might not accuse them.’ Christ’s death has freed Christians at a greater exodus from the devil’s accusations.”<sup>138</sup>

(4) The literary-historical background to the ‘war in heaven’ is the heavenly combat imagery of Daniel 10.

“The fact that the battle first takes place in heaven between Michael, the guardian of God’s people (Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9), and the dragon **shows that evil is cosmic in dimension (not limited merely to this world)** and also that events on earth are first decided in heaven.”<sup>139</sup>

“In 12:7 is developed Daniel’s heavenly combat imagery between Michael and the ‘son of man’ against the wicked angels of Persia and Greece (Dan. 10:13, 21; cf. 10:6, 18 LXX; 10:16,

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<sup>137</sup> Osborne. op. cit., p. 472. Emphasis added.

<sup>138</sup> Beale and McDonough. op. cit., pp. 1125-1126.

<sup>139</sup> Johnson. op. cit., p. 698. Emphasis added.



18 Θ). In Daniel, Michael is closely associated with the 'son of man,' since both are set forth as heavenly representatives of Israel (cf., respectively, Dan. 12:1; 8:11 LXX/Θ and 7:13-27). This is why they are identified as fighting together for Israel against the forces of evil in Dan. 10:20-21. The two figures are not the same heavenly being, since the one in 'the likeness of a son of man' in Dan. 10:16 is distinguished from Michael. Michael helps the 'son of man' fight against malevolent angelic forces."<sup>140</sup>

- (5) There are different views on the timing of the 'war in heaven'. Osborne views it as primeval, supporting his view with several parallels from Jewish texts in which the devil is cast out of heaven or the garden of Eden.<sup>141</sup> Other Jewish texts held the view that "Michael would cast out Satan from heaven as the first of the end time struggles to establish the kingdom of God on earth."<sup>142</sup> Johnson, more convincingly in my view, argues for a Christian modification of Jewish apocalyptic in which the time of the dragon's defeat and ejection from heaven is "connected with the incarnation, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus (v. 13; Lk 10:18; Jn. 12:31)."<sup>143</sup> He further explains:

Johnson pieces together a brief history of Satan as follows:

"The triumph of the archangel results in the ejection of the dragon and his angels from heaven to earth. Apparently, prior to this event Satan had access to the heavens and continually assailed the loyalty of the saints (Job 1:9-11; Zec. 3:1), but now, together with his angels, he has been cast out (cf. Lk 10:18). Whatever appears to be the earthly situation for God's people now, the victory has already been won. When the battle grows fiercer and darker for the church, it is but the sign of the last futile attempt of the dragon to exercise his power before the kingdom of Christ comes (v. 12). The 'ancient serpent' who tempted Eve with lies about God (Ge. 3:1-5) is in John's mind the same individual as the 'devil' and 'Satan.' Farrer, 142, notes that 'it is precisely when Satan has lost the battle for the souls of the saints in heaven that he begins the fruitless persecution of their bodies.' Satan is also the one who 'leads the whole world astray.' His power lies in deception, and by his lies the whole world is deceived about God (2:20; 13:14; 18:23; 19:20; 20:3, 8, 10; cf. Ro. 1:25; 2Jn 7)."<sup>144</sup>

#### **f. Rev. 20**

Much of what was said about Rev. 12 applies to the references to the devil and Satan in Rev. 20:1-3, 7, 10. However it is again worth quoting at length the literary-historical background offered by Beale and McDonough here:

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<sup>140</sup> Beale & McDonough. op. cit., p. 1124-25.

<sup>141</sup> Osborne. op. cit., p. 468ff.

<sup>142</sup> Johnson. op. cit., p. 698.

<sup>143</sup> Johnson. op. cit., p. 698.

<sup>144</sup> Johnson. op. cit., pp. 697-698.

“Isaiah 24:21-22 is the basis for 20:2-3 (see Kraft 1974: 256) and finds its fulfilment there...This fulfilment was inaugurated at Christ’s death and resurrection and will be culminated when Christ returns at the climax of history. The prophetic connection of Isa. 24 with Rev. 20 is suggested also by Isa. 27:1, which appears to be a further explanation of the punishment of 24:21-22 (the Hebrew ‘in that day Yahweh will visit’ occurs only in 24:21 and 27:1): ‘In that day Yahweh will visit the sea monster...with his...sword’ (the LXX of 27:1 has ‘the dragon, the serpent,’ which is almost identical to Rev. 20:2: ‘the dragon, the ancient serpent’).

Typically, early Judaism spoke of evil spirits, not Satan, imprisoned in an absolute manner either at the time of or prior to the Noachic deluge or subsequently in the OT epoch (cf. 1 En. 10:4-16; 18:11-19:3; Jub. 5:6-14; 1 En. 88:1-3; 2 Pet. 2:4; Tob. 8:3; see also Jude 6). Even the NT sees demonic spirits as absolutely imprisoned, while Satan and other spirits are on the loose (e.g. contrast 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6 with 1 Pet. 5:8). In 1 En 54 is depicted the end of the age, when good angels will ‘cast in to the abyss of complete condemnation forever’ (53:2) human, and possibly demonic, subjects of Satan who were ‘leading astray those who dwell on the earth.’

The only apparently explicit references to the binding of Satan in Judaism speak of a ‘binding’ that is not absolute, since immediately subsequent to his binding his ‘evil spirits’ continue to exist in some form of opposition to the saints; we note T. Levi 18:12, ‘Beliar shall be bound by him [the Messiah], and he shall give power to his children to tread upon the evil spirits,’ a text with such striking similarities to Luke 10:18-20 that the two probably are organically related in some way. In this respect, both of these texts appear to be developing the prophecy in Gen. 3:15 that Eve’s seed would fatally ‘bruise’ the ‘serpent’ (see T. Levi 18:9-14 and the margin of NA of Luke 10:19). In this light, it is likely not coincidental that Rev. 20:2 makes allusion to the same ‘ancient serpent,’ so that the ‘binding’ is part of the fulfilment of the primeval promise in Gen. 3:15 (on which, see Beale 1999a: 994, 998).

Jubilees 48:15-17 portrays Mastema, prince of demons, as being restrained only so that he could not accuse the Israelites at the time of their exodus from Egypt: ‘Mastema was bound and imprisoned behind the children of Israel that he might not accuse them.’ Then he is ‘let loose’ so that again he could work against and accuse Israel. So also 48:18: Mastema was ‘bound... that he might not accuse the children of Israel’ (see also 48:9-11). Since the exodus theme dominates so much of the book of Revelation (e.g. , the trumpet and bowl plague series), perhaps there is also a similar reflection here of Satan’s inability to keep Israel in Egyptian captivity but now applied to a limited binding of Satan in 20:1-3, so that he cannot stop the latter-day exodus of the church and its expansion during the church age. That the notion of ‘binding’ with respect to an inability to ‘accuse’ may be in mind is apparent because the parallel account of Satan’s defeat in 12:7-11 also refers to Satan

twice as ‘the [former] accuser’ of the saints and once as ‘the great dragon, the ancient serpent.’”<sup>145</sup>

Johnson similarly sees parallels between the binding of Satan here and “the binding of spirits or angels” mentioned in Isa. 24:21-23; Jude 6 (cf. Tob. 8:3; 1 En. 10:4, 11-12; 88:1-3; Jub. 23:29; T. Levi 18:12), and also discusses the connection between this passage and Mark 3:27.<sup>146</sup>

To summarise the discussion of the ‘devil’ and ‘Satan’ references in Revelation, there is a scholarly consensus that the devil and Satan in Revelation refers to a supernatural personal being, i.e. a fallen angel. For you to dislodge this consensus it is not enough for you to show that dragon imagery can symbolise evil human empires, since scholarship recognises this. Crucial to your argument would be to provide literary-historical evidence for the use of the terms *ho diabolos* and *ho satanas* of human political/religious systems (as opposed to a malevolent force who empowers these systems).

More broadly, I would encourage you to interact with recent scholarship on the meaning of these terms in Revelation instead of offering up straw-men for simplistic rebuttal. Let me remind you of your own rule concerning scholarly consensus which you spelled out in your response of 3 November 2012:

“I would only contest a historico-critical scholarly consensus using reliable scholarship identifying significant problems with the consensus, offering a more efficient alternative explanation; I would not contest it simply because it was inconvenient to me.”

If you reject the scholarly consensus on exegesis of these texts, you should explain why and provide a comprehensive alternative exegesis which demonstrably better fits the literary-historical context.

## 20. Church of England

I stand corrected on this point. The official website of the Church of England does not include the 39 articles within its section entitled “Creeds and authorized affirmations of faith” (which refers only to the Apostles’, Nicene and Athanasian Creeds), but the 39 articles are listed in a separate section entitled Articles of Religion.

## 21. The Didache

As all of your quotations indicate, the Didache focus on practical guidance for initiation of converts, and your quotation from Brown even explicitly contrasts the term *didache* with *kerygma* or preaching.

“As an oral tradition, the Didache encapsulated the **lived practice** by which non-Jews were initiated into the altered habits of perceiving, judging and acting characteristic of one branch of the Jesus movement during the mid-first century.”<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Beale and McDonough. op. cit., pp. 1145-1146.

<sup>146</sup> Johnson. op. cit., p. 766.

<sup>147</sup> Milavec, Aaron. 2003. The Didache: Text, Translation, Analysis and Commentary. Liturgical Press, p. ix.

The New Testament contains no evidence for the exorcizing of baptismal candidates or their verbal renunciation of Satan, but contains abundant witness to a satanology. Thus the fact that such practices are not attested within the Didache is not evidence for the absence of a satanology.

While the absence of reference to Satan in the Didache would be surprising, it would be very difficult to argue from this silence that the satanology had no important place in the early church given the overwhelming testimony to the contrary in the New Testament.

At any rate, I would now assert that it is plausible that the original text of the Didache did contain an explicit reference to the devil, and the extant text may contain a second implicit reference. The Didache tradition survives in only one complete manuscript dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>148</sup> It is likely that the ending of the Didache is lost. The ending in chapter 16 is “abrupt and unresolved...obviously only half-complete”<sup>149</sup>, and the way in which the scribe uncharacteristically left space at the end of the work and omitted the usual punctuation mark indicating the end of a literary work suggests that he “knew his exemplar was defective”.<sup>150</sup>

The Apostolic Constitutions are a “moderately edited version of the Didache included in a larger church manual compiled around 380 C.E.”

There are two later editions of the Didache that have longer endings, one of them being the *Apostolic Constitutions*, which “represents a moderately edited version of the Didache included in a larger church manual compiled around 380 C.E.” Milavec explains that “The longer ending found therein has been widely accepted as providing a ‘very loose reproduction’ (Niederwimmer 1998: 227) of the ‘lost ending’ of the Didache.”<sup>151</sup> Aldridge states, “There is good evidence that this is the Didache’s true ending (approximately).”<sup>152</sup>

Aldridge renders what he believes to be the proximate true ending of the Didache as follows:

“8 Then the world will see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven with the angels of His power, in the throne of His kingdom, 9 **to condemn the devil, the deceiver of the world,** and to render to every one according to his deeds. 10 Then shall the wicked go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous shall enter eternal life, 11 to inherit those things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, such things as God hath prepared for them that love Him. 12 And they shall rejoice in the kingdom of God, which is in Christ Jesus.”<sup>153</sup>

Since the Apostolic Constitutions contains interpolations in its version of the Didache, even if Aldridge is correct that it preserves the Didache’s true ending it cannot be said with certainty that the devil was

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<sup>148</sup> Milavec. op. cit., p. xiv.

<sup>149</sup> Aldridge, Robert E. 1999. The Lost Ending of the Didache. *Vigiliae Christianae* 53(1), p. 3.

<sup>150</sup> Aldridge. op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>151</sup> Milavec, Aaron. 2003. *The Didache: Faith, Hope and Life of the Earliest Christian Communities*. Paulist Press, p. 833.

<sup>152</sup> Aldridge. op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>153</sup> Aldridge. op. cit., pp. 12-13. Emphasis added.

mentioned in the original. On the other hand, the possibility is enough to render the argument from silence from the Didache unconvincing.

Moreover, the full (Bryennian) manuscript of the Didache contains a reference to the “world-deceiver” at 16:4. There is an apparent link between the tradition recalled here and that of 2 Thess. 2, where the entity so described is likened to Satan. Milavec observes that the Didache does not endorse this link,<sup>154</sup> but Jenks states that “the description seems to be a clear allusion to the satanic connections of this figure.”<sup>155</sup> Verheyden concurs that “This character calls forth associations with traditions on the Antichrist and Satan.”<sup>156</sup> Peerbolte even argues on the basis of linguistic similarity with Rev. 12:9 that Didache 16:4 refers to Satan himself: “it is best to regard the title ‘deceiver of the world’ as a description of Satan.”<sup>157</sup>

In summary, your argument from silence regarding the absence of references to Satan in the Didache rests upon considerable uncertainty, and it would be wiser to return to the New Testament writings to gauge whether the early church had a satanology.

## **27. Other arguments for the unity and personality of the New Testament Satan/Devil**

You wrote, “Your argument about *ho diabolos* and *ho satanas*, does not address what I wrote about these points.”

Our correspondence began with your response to my paper *The Accuser of our Brethren*, but so far you have not responded to my arguments on the significance of the definite article for New Testament satanology,<sup>158</sup> which counters your own analysis of the definite article.<sup>159</sup>

### **a. The Temptations of Christ**

You said: “Your argument that ‘the grammatical construction of Matt. 4:9 and Luke 4:7 preclude any interpretation of ‘worship’ here other than a physical act’, does not address what I wrote about this point.”

The traditional interpretation of these accounts is that Jesus was tempted by a supernatural personal being called the devil. This is untenable for Christadelphians, who must therefore resort to innovative interpretations. The founders of the Christadelphian movement, John Thomas and his protege Robert Roberts, both taught that Christ was tempted by an unknown human being. Thomas wrote, “Who he

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<sup>154</sup> Milavec, Aaron. 2003. *The Didache: Faith, Hope and Life of the Earliest Christian Communities*, p. 648.

<sup>155</sup> Jenks, Gregory C. 1988. *The Origins and Development of the Antichrist Myth*. University of Queensland, p. 310.

<sup>156</sup> Verheyden, J. 2005. Eschatology in the Didache and the Gospel of Matthew. In *Matthew and the Didache*, ed. H. van de Sandt. Uitgeverij Van Gorcum, p. 204.

<sup>157</sup> Peerbolte, L.J. Lietaert. 1996. *The Antecedents of Antichrist: A Traditio-Historical Study of the Earliest Christian Views on Eschatological Opponents*. Brill, p. 181.

<sup>158</sup> Farrar, Thomas. 2012. *The Accuser of our Brethren*, Sections 4.1-4.4, pp. 24-27.

<sup>159</sup> Burke, Jonathan. *Satan and Demons*, p. 22ff.

was does not appear."<sup>160</sup> Roberts concurred: "Who the personal tempter was cannot be decided, because there is no testimony."<sup>161</sup>

Subsequent generations of Christadelphian exegetes rejected this interpretation in favour of the view that the tempter was not external but internal. As you put it, this narrative is "a representation of Christ's inner struggle with his own temptations."<sup>162</sup> The temptations were not prompted by another individual but "arose from within his own heart."<sup>163</sup>

You have marshaled an impressive array of principles from different parts of Scripture in favour of your interpretation. However, we must first ask is whether this interpretation is plausible within the immediate context. If not, then it must be rejected outright.

#### **i. Mark's version**

Often discussions of the temptations of Christ focus entirely on Matthew and Luke and pay little attention to Mark's briefer version of the story. However, Mark's account is also very useful to us; and, to your credit, you have recognized this. Mark's account reads thus:

"And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him." (Mark 1:12-13 NRSV)

There are several noteworthy features of Mark's account. I do not agree with the odd contention that the statement 'he was with the wild beasts' is the key to identifying the Satan here, a claim which fails to account for the omission of this detail in the fuller accounts of Matthew and Luke. In my view it is more likely that "Satan, the animals, and the angels point to early Jewish Adam traditions."<sup>164</sup>

Mark expected his readers to be able to identify *ho satanas*, the Satan or 'Satan', even though he did not provide details of the temptations as Matthew and Luke did. This is remarkable because Mark was writing to a predominantly Gentile audience (perhaps in Rome) two to four decades after the events he described. How can he use the term *satanas*, a transliterated *Hebrew* word, and expect his readers to know what he is talking about without any further explanation? It is probable that the term *ho satanas* was by this time well-established in the early church either as a proper name or as a technical term conveying a specific idea:

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<sup>160</sup> Thomas, J. 1867. *Elpis Israel: Being an Exposition of the Kingdom of God; with Reference to the Time of the End, and the Age to Come*. 4th edition. Published by author, p. 78.

<sup>161</sup> Roberts, R. 1880. *Seasons of Comfort at the Table of the Lord: Being Fifty-two Addresses, Etc.* Birmingham, No. 51.

<sup>162</sup> Burke, J. 2007. *Satan and Demons*, p. 171.

<sup>163</sup> Burke, J. 2007. *Satan and Demons*, p. 173.

<sup>164</sup> Dochhorn, Jan. 2013. *The Devil in the Gospel of Mark*. In *Evil and the Devil*, ed. Koskeniemi & Frohlich. T&T Clark, p. 101.

“The figure whom Mark designates as the perpetrator of Jesus’ Wilderness temptation, whether called Satan or one of a host of other names, was not an ‘unknown quantity’. On the contrary, in Mark’s time and in the thought world which Mark and his audience shared, Satan’s identity and the activities characteristic of him were both well-defined and widely known.”<sup>165</sup>

Hence the use of the term *ho satanas* for the tempter was not a literary device invented by Mark but draws on earlier tradition.<sup>166</sup>

But the key question is, what is the source of that tradition? Who or what was this well-defined, widely known entity referred to as *ho satanas* in the thought world of the early church? Given that ‘satan’ always refers to personal beings in the Old Testament, and that belief in Satan as a personal being existed in later Second Temple Judaism, it seems likely that Mark is referring to a specific personal being. However, let us turn to the more detailed accounts in Matthew and Luke.

## ii. Matthew’s and Luke’s versions

It is widely agreed by scholars that the background and model for this temptation story is in the account of the temptation of Israel in the wilderness outlined in Deuteronomy 6-8.<sup>167</sup> Thus these two Gospels portray Jesus typologically as the true Israel. Some scholars also see these temptation accounts as antitypical of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (and the two typological frameworks are not mutually exclusive).<sup>168</sup> Additionally, the form of this tradition “may be due to the influence of the wisdom tradition, in which a sage is tempted by his opponent(s), often a demonic figure.”<sup>169</sup>

In Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 we find what appears to be a dialogue between two persons: Jesus and the tempter, the devil (also addressed as Satan in Matthew). Christadelphians assure us that no dialogue actually took place; instead it is a representation of Jesus’ internal struggles with his own evil impulse or *yetzer hara*, which was personified in the tradition as an external being. Faced with Buzzard’s criticism that this interpretation has Jesus talking to himself, you called this a caricature and stated:

“Christadelphians who believe that Christ was tempted from within himself do not believe that Christ was literally talking to himself, but that the exchanges between himself and the

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<sup>165</sup> Gibson, Jeffrey. 2004. *Temptations of Jesus in Early Christianity*. Continuum, p. 58. Gibson argues that *ho satanas* as used by Mark here is “a proper name, not a common noun, and denotes a particular being, a distinct personality”.

<sup>166</sup> So Gibson writes, “Commentators are in little doubt that Mark’s story of Jesus’ Wilderness temptation does not originate with the evangelist but is derived from, and is largely dependent for both its form and substance on, an older pre-Markan tradition.” (Gibson. op cit., p. 42)

<sup>167</sup> Gibson. op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>168</sup> Talbert, Charles H. 2002. *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary*. Smyth & Helwys, p. 50.

<sup>169</sup> Yamazaki-Ransom, Kazuhiko. 2010. *The Roman Empire in Luke’s Narrative*. Continuum, p. 88.

satan are figurative representations of the internal struggle he was having with the temptation to sin.”<sup>170</sup>

If I understand you correctly, you are saying that Jesus wasn’t talking to himself *aloud* but that the figurative ‘exchange’ does recount (at least in a condensed form) Jesus’ actual thought process (temptations and responses). If this is the case, the account is construed as an elaborate figure of speech; a sort of hybrid of narrative and parable. Before looking at the text we must ask whether this fits in with the Gospels’ genre. The Gospels are narrative books which are largely biographical. They do contain parables, but the parables are spoken *by* Jesus as part of his teaching ministry, not narrated *about* Jesus. Can you provide other examples of narrative accounts *about* Jesus in the Gospels which the writers did not intend to be read literally?

### iii. ‘The tempter came and said to him’

As students of Matthew’s Gospel, when we encounter the words, “the tempter came and said to him,” we observe that this account opens with the very same construction as many other dialogues in the Gospel: a scribe came and said to him (Matt. 8:19), or the disciples came and said to him (Matt. 13:10; 14:15; 15:12), or Peter came and said to him (Matt. 18:21), or the chief priests and elders came and said to him (Matt. 21:23), or the bystanders came and said to Peter (Matt. 26:73), or Jesus came and said to the disciples (Matt. 28:18). Is it plausible that Matthew expected his readers to read this “came and said to him” formula figuratively, without any explicit instructions to do so, when he used it literally on so many other occasions?

The verb translated “came” here is *proserchomai*, which has the primary meaning “to move towards”, either of physical movement, of entry into a deity’s presence, or (when used of inanimate things) to ‘come upon’ or ‘come over’.<sup>171</sup> In your response to Anthony Buzzard you argued that Matthew is here using the verb in the latter sense, to describe something originating within an individual.<sup>172</sup>

This meaning is rare; for instance it is nowhere else attested in the New Testament, but appears in The Shepherd of Hermas 3.1.5: “a fit of shuddering **came upon** me, because I was alone.” You cited a few other examples from classical Greek literature.

*proserchomai* occurs in the participial form in Matt. 4:3, and BDAG notes that the participial form is “frequently used with verbs denoting an activity, to enliven the narrative”.<sup>173</sup> By my own count Matthew uses *proserchomai* in the participial mood at least 25 other times to this end (8:19; 8:25; 9:20; 13:10; 13:27; 14:12; 15:12; 15:23; 16:1; 17:7; 17:19; 18:21; 19:16; 21:28; 21:30; 25:20; 25:22; 25:24; 26:49;

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<sup>170</sup> Burke, J. 2007. Satan and Demons, p. 37.

<sup>171</sup> “*proserchomai*”. Danker. op. cit.

<sup>172</sup> Burke, J. 2007. Satan and Demons, p. 113.

<sup>173</sup> “*proserchomai*”. Danker. op. cit.



26:50; 26:73; 27:58; 28:2; 28:9; 28:18).<sup>174</sup> In summary, it is grammatically possible to read Matt. 4:3 as, "the tempter came over him", but to do so we must assert that Matthew broke with his typical usage in favour of a very rare figurative construction, which he further obscured by using a personal noun as the subject.

#### iv. 'Fall down and worship me'

As we move through the actual exchange, whether we take it as a literal dialogue or a figurative representation of an internal struggle, presumably it may be agreed that Jesus was *literally* tempted to *literally* do what the tempter prompted him to do. Thus, when the tempter said, "Command these stones to become loaves of bread", Jesus was tempted to literally turn stones into bread to satisfy his hunger; this is not a metaphor for something else. Similarly, when the tempter said, "Throw yourself down (from the pinnacle of the temple)", Jesus was tempted to literally throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple to test God's providential care; this is not a metaphor for something else.<sup>175</sup>

Consistency dictates, then, that when the tempter said, "All these will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me", Jesus was tempted to literally fall down and worship the tempter; this expression is not a metaphor for something else. However, to take 'fall down and worship me' literally makes no sense if this dialogue is a 'figurative representation of an internal struggle'. Buzzard stated the difficulty that this temptation poses for the Christadelphian interpretation: "It is most unnatural to think that Jesus invited himself to fall down before himself and worship himself!"<sup>176</sup> To this, you responded:

"It is not argued that Jesus 'invited himself to fall down before himself and worship himself'. It is argued that the narrative represents the internal struggle in Christ using the language of personification."<sup>177</sup>

Here is an attempt to break away from the pattern of the other two temptations and assert that Jesus was not tempted to literally do the concrete deed which the tempter prompted him to do. Indeed, your statement neglects to say precisely what Jesus was actually tempted to do. However, are more specific on this point elsewhere:

"The temptation represents Christ as the one having power to elevate himself, and self-worship, rather than the worship of God, is both the requirement and result."<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> These examples are from my own analysis. Those explicitly cited in BDAG are "Matt. 4:3; 8:19; 18:21; see also 13:10; 15:12; 25:20, 22, 24"

<sup>175</sup> This is true even if the tempter did not literally place Jesus atop the temple, although the text gives us no reason to deny that he did so.

<sup>176</sup> Buzzard, Anthony. Satan: the Personal Devil. Accessed at <http://focusonthe kingdom.org/articles/satan.htm>

<sup>177</sup> Burke, J. 2007. Satan and Demons, p. 40.

<sup>178</sup> Burke, J. 2007. Satan and Demons, p. 181.

Thus, although you deny that Jesus was tempted to fall down before himself and worship himself, you affirm that Jesus was tempted to self-worship, i.e. worship himself. In effect, the only difference between what you deny and what you affirm Jesus was tempted to do is "to fall down"; thus you apparently believe Jesus was tempted to worship himself in mental attitude but not in a physical act of obeisance.

The problem is that the text says, "...fall down and worship me". That this is a demand for a physical act of worship is even clearer in the Greek than in the English. The Greek verb translated "worship" in both Matt. 4:9 and Luke 4:7 is *proskuneo*. The BDAG lexicon defines this verb thus: "to express in attitude or gesture one's complete dependence on or submission to a high authority figure, (*fall down and*) *worship, do obeisance to, prostrate oneself before, do reverence to, welcome respectfully*".<sup>179</sup> Before you seize on the words "in attitude", you ought to observe from the list of synonyms that this refers to an outwardly expressed attitude and not merely a mental state. As far as I can tell there is no attested use of this verb reflexively (i.e. in relation to oneself) in the ancient literature. Indeed, as far as I know the only attested use of this verb with an abstract object is a reference to worship of wealth by Philo, where he explicitly states in the context that he is using "figurative language."<sup>180</sup>

Kittel further emphasizes the "concreteness" of the term, observing that, as used in the New Testament, "Proskynesis demands visible majesty before which the worshipper bows."<sup>181</sup> Thus, in order to take *proskuneo* in the sense of figurative self-worship instead of literal other-worship, you must give it an unprecedented meaning. However, any doubt that your interpretation is grammatically inadmissible is removed when we consider that both Matthew and Luke qualify the verb *proskuneo* with another word which makes the physicality of the worship even more explicit.

In Matthew, the qualifier is the participial form of the verb *pipto*, which means "to move w. relative rapidity in a downward direction, *fall*".<sup>182</sup> It usually has a literal sense, and one attested meaning which suits this context well is "*fall down, throw oneself to the ground* as a sign of devotion or humility, before high-ranking persons or divine beings".<sup>183</sup> The words *proskuneo* and *pipto* modify each other in two passages of the LXX and eleven other passages in the New Testament, and in every single instance they clearly denote a physical act of worship (2 Chr. 20:18 LXX; Dan. 3:4-15 LXX; Matt. 2:11; Matt. 18:26; Acts 10:25; 1 Cor. 14:25; Rev. 4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4; 19:10; 22:8).

Particularly noteworthy are the two other Matthean texts:

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<sup>179</sup> "*proskuneo*". Danker. op. cit.

<sup>180</sup> Philo of Alexandria. Delineation of the Mosaic Legislation for non-Jews, Book 27, IV.25.

<sup>181</sup> Kittel, G., ed. 1969. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. VI. Eerdmans, p. 765.

<sup>182</sup> "*pipto*". Danker. op. cit.

<sup>183</sup> There are also figurative meanings of *pipto* which include to fall in a transcendent or moral sense. It might be argued that Jesus' evil impulse tempted him to fall (morally) and elevate himself in self-worship. However, such a meaning is again unprecedented when the verbs *pipto* and *proskuneo* are used together.

"On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down (*pipto*) and paid him homage (*proskuneo*). Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh." (Matt. 2:11)

"So the slave fell to the ground (*pipto*) and prostrated himself (*proskuneo*) before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.'" (Matt. 18:26)

Thus, when used together, *pipto* and *proskuneo* depict a physical act of homage. It is all but certain that this is what the devil demanded of Jesus in Matt. 4:9; this is undoubtedly how most readers in the first century would have understood the narrative. In asking us to read this as a figurative expression of a temptation to mental self-worship, you are asking your readers to lay aside usual lexical and syntactical meaning and adopt a sense which is unprecedented in Matthew, in Scripture and in extant *koine* Greek literature in general!

The verb *pipto* does not appear in Luke's parallel account. Nevertheless, while most Bible translations render the key phrase in Luke 4:7 simply as "if you worship me", there is also a qualifying word in the Greek here which makes the physical nature of the temptation more explicit than the use of *proskuneo* by itself would do. This is the adverb/preposition *enopion*, which primarily means "before; in the sight of; in the presence of".<sup>184</sup> Thus a more literal translation of this phrase in Luke 4:7 is, as the NASB has it, "if you worship **before** me". This makes it clear that the worship was to take place in front of or in the presence of some external party. This word is superfluous if the temptation refers to self-worship.

Once again, if we look at other occurrences of *proskuneo* with *enopion* in Scripture, we find that it always denotes a physical act of worship before an external being (2 Kings 18:22 LXX; Ps. 21:27-29 LXX; Ps. 85:9 LXX; Isa. 66:23 LXX; Rev. 3:9; 15:4). Typical is Rev. 15:4b: "All nations will come and worship **before** you, for your judgments have been revealed".

Responding to Buzzard's criticism of your reading of *proserchomai* in Matt. 4:3, you write that Buzzard

"deliberately over translates the Greek...in order to create the sense of a greater distinction between Christ and the satan, giving the false impression that the text wishes us to understand that Christ and the satan are two separate individual beings"<sup>185</sup>

This is effectively an acknowledgment that if the Greek did create a clear distinction between Christ and the devil, it would be problematic for the figurative view of the passage. Yet the Greek of Matt. 4:9 and Luke 4:7 unmistakably create such a clear distinction. The language of physical worship is meaningless, indeed nonsensical, if the object of worship is the worshipper himself!

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<sup>184</sup> "*enopion*". Danker. op. cit.

<sup>185</sup> Burke, J. 2007. Satan and Demons, p. 37.

Simply put, the idea that Temptation accounts are a figurative representation of an internal struggle can be ruled out on grammatical grounds. Christ was tempted by a personal being external to himself, and this personal being (a) knew his identity at the outset of his ministry (as the demons also did), (b) had the power to place him atop the pinnacle of the temple, and (c) could make a credible claim to absolute temporal power. As there was no human being external to Christ who met these three criteria, we are left with only one possibility: the devil is a supernatural personal being.

#### **v. Scholarly support for the Christadelphian interpretation**

There is very little scholarly support for the Christadelphian exegesis of the Temptation accounts. Even Rosen-Zvi, when specifically researching the internalization of evil within the human psyche in late antiquity, acknowledged that Christ was tempted by an external figure.<sup>186</sup> The only scholar that I am aware of who reads the temptations figuratively is Phipps. He argues as follows:

“The temptation story expresses ancient Jewish psychology in a picturesque manner. Each person has within, so it was thought, an evil and a good inclination (Hebrew, *yetzer*) which could be personified as a devil and an angel in battle. The ancient Jews did not interpret Satan or devils in a literal manner, with hell as their home address. European folklore, not biblical tradition, is responsible for imagining the devil to have a horned skull and a forked tail, wearing scarlet leotards and carrying a pitchfork. The Jews did not believe in an uncreated rival to God who existed from all eternity.”<sup>187</sup>

It should be noted that Phipps implies that the historicity of the Temptation narrative is doubtful. Additionally, it is important to realize that Phipps’ interpretation is part of a persistent tendency to psychologize apparently supernatural biblical events. For instance, he also equates Eve’s dialogue with the serpent and Jacob’s wrestling match with the angel with “what Freudian psychology expresses more prosaically and secularly as the ego’s confrontation with id and superego.”<sup>188</sup> He further argues that Paul’s Damascus Road experience was “one that occurred within the inner recesses of the self and thus had no metaphysical content per se.”<sup>189</sup> He extends this idea further by arguing that Paul’s references to appearances of the resurrected Jesus to others should be understood in the same subjective manner: “The best avenue for understanding the Easter experiences of the earliest Christians is to presume they were like Paul’s experience.”<sup>190</sup> As such, he argued that Mark probably made up the empty tomb legend “as an apologetic device to convince those who required material evidence before accepting something

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<sup>186</sup> Rosen-Zvi, op. cit., p. 154.

<sup>187</sup> Phipps, William E. 2008. *Supernaturalism in Christianity: Its Growth and Cure*. Mercer University Press, pp. 351-352.

<sup>188</sup> Phipps. op. cit., p. 352.

<sup>189</sup> Lippy, Charles H. 2009. Review of *Supernaturalism in Christianity, Its Growth and Cure*, by William E. Phipps. *Church History* 78(1), p. 246.

<sup>190</sup> Phipps. op. cit., p. 198.

as true.”<sup>191</sup> He dismisses those scholars who still occasionally champion the historicity of Jesus’ physical resurrection as comparable “to those who say ‘the sun arose over the mountains.’”<sup>192</sup>

What is apparent from the above is that Phipps was an out-and-out liberal who sought relentlessly, as his book title states, to ‘cure’ Christianity of the supernatural. His interpretation of the Temptation accounts is part of a broader hermeneutical programme driven by anti-supernatural bias. His exegesis is superficial and offers little in the way of new historical-critical insights. He caricatures the traditional Christian doctrine of the devil, and fails to acknowledge that a belief in a personal Satan existed in Second Temple Judaism and is not the product of European folklore. He does not even interpret the key phrase of the second temptation, “fall down and worship me”; instead he vaguely suggests that Jesus “contemplated obtaining authority over people internationally by using devilish tactics.”<sup>193</sup> More specifically, he conjectures that this temptation entailed world conquest by war,<sup>194</sup> although the biblical text says nothing of the kind.<sup>195</sup> In his treatment of Jesus’ temptation to throw himself off the pinnacle of the temple, Phipps takes the unlikely view that Jesus rejected the content of Psalm 91 as a product of the evil inclination.<sup>196</sup>

Finally, Phipps also had a flair for writing provocative material;<sup>197</sup> for instance he wrote a book arguing that Jesus was probably married.<sup>198</sup> Thus, Christadelphians may cite Phipps as a scholar who supported their understanding of the Temptation accounts, but whether they would want to do so in view of his approach to the Bible is another matter. In light of his worldview it is likely that Phipps would have had a very low opinion of the Christadelphian belief system, so he and Christadelphians make for strange bedfellows.

#### **vi. A literal or figurative mountain?**

One argument which Christadelphians (and Phipps) have raised against taking the temptation narratives literally is that no mountain exists from which one can see all the kingdoms of the world, as Matthew 4:8 says. Therefore, it is argued that this ‘mountain’ can only have been figurative and the temptation must have taken place entirely within Jesus’ mind.

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<sup>191</sup> Phipps. op. cit., p. 249.

<sup>192</sup> Phipps. op. cit., pp. 283-287.

<sup>193</sup> Phipps. op. cit., p. 352.

<sup>194</sup> Phipps, William E. 1993. *The Wisdom and Wit of Rabbi Jesus*. Westminster John Knox Press, p. 38.

<sup>195</sup> Phipps’ interpretation here does not appear to be logically coherent. If Jesus did not actually have supernatural powers, as Phipps argues, then on what basis could he as a Jewish rabbi have supposed himself capable of assuming absolute, international political power? This view depicts Jesus as almost delusional.

<sup>196</sup> Phipps. 1993. *The Wisdom and Wit of Rabbi Jesus*, p. 40. This seems impossible to reconcile with sayings of Jesus which show he had a very high view of Scripture (Matt. 5:17-18; John 10:35).

<sup>197</sup> Phipps or his publisher used the word “provocative” on the back cover to promote his book *The Sexuality of Jesus* (Pilgrim Press, 1996).

<sup>198</sup> Phipps, William E. 1970. *Was Jesus Married? The Distortion of Sexuality in the Christian Tradition*. Harper & Row.

However, the premise does not imply such a strong conclusion; it only implies that Jesus did not literally see all the kingdoms of the world, at least not with his natural sense of sight. It could be that “all the kingdoms of the world” is hyperbolic, or that Jesus’ vision was supernaturally enhanced. These possibilities are supported by a comparison with Deuteronomy 34:1-4, which is likely part of the literary background to this temptation (as well as, indirectly, Genesis 13:14-15).<sup>199 200</sup> In Deut. 34:1-4 Moses went up to Mount Nebo and the Lord “showed him all the land.” Commentators note that several of the places mentioned could not actually have been seen by Moses from the top of Mount Nebo.<sup>201 202</sup> While liberal commentators may ascribe this to the non-historicity of the account, it is also possible this is simply hyperbole<sup>203 204</sup> or a supernatural vision is in view:

“Dan, the hinder sea (Mediterranean), and Zoar are not literally visible from Pisgah. If Moses sees them, YHWH must be showing him a vision perceptible only with eyes of hope. Then why must Moses climb the mountain to see this supernatural vision? Why not see the whole view ‘from below’? Because hope sees through the visible to the invisible.”<sup>205</sup>

In a similar way, in Genesis 13:14-15 it is unlikely that the land promised to Abram was limited to what he could literally see with his eyes. Yamazaki-Ransom further observes a parallel with 2 Baruch in which Baruch is instructed by God to climb to the top of a mountain and survey all the countries of the earth before leaving this world (2 Baruch 76:3).<sup>206</sup> Concerning Moses’ view from Mount Nebo, Yamazaki-Ransom further notes that later Jewish writers expanded its geographic scope to include the land of Egypt, or to cover “all the regions from Egypt to the Euphrates”.<sup>207</sup> Thus, read in its literary-historical context it does not follow that the temptation must have been internal simply because Jesus could not have seen all the kingdoms of the world from any mountain with his natural sense of sight.

## **vii. The devil’s power**

There are other features of the second temptation as depicted in Luke which fit well into a personal satanology but create serious problems for the Christadelphian ‘internal struggle’ view:

“5 Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And the devil said to him, “To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. 7 If you, then, will worship me, it will all be

<sup>199</sup> See Pao, David W. & Schnabel, Eckhard J. Luke. In *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*. Zondervan, p. 287.

<sup>200</sup> Yamazaki-Ransom. op. cit., p. 88.

<sup>201</sup> Lundbom, Jack R. 2013. *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*. Eerdmans, pp. 943-945.

<sup>202</sup> Walton, John H. et al. 2000. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*. InterVarsity Press, p. 208.

<sup>203</sup> So Driver, Samuel R. 1902. *Deuteronomy: A critical and exegetical commentary*. Continuum, p. 419.

<sup>204</sup> Smith, George A. 1918. *The Book of Deuteronomy: In the Revised Version*. Cambridge University Press, p. 379.

<sup>205</sup> Work, Telford. 2009. *Deuteronomy*. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. Baker.

<sup>206</sup> Yamazaki-Ransom. op. cit., p. 88.

<sup>207</sup> Yamazaki-Ransom. op. cit., p. 89.

yours.” 8 Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’” (Luke 4:5-8 NRSV)

One feature that needs to be explained is the devil’s opening claim that he has been given power over all the kingdoms of the world. There are plenty of scriptures supporting the idea that the devil has power, including within Luke’s writings (Luke 10:19; Acts 26:18; John 12:31; John 14:30; John 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; Eph. 6:12; Col. 1:15; Col. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:22; 1 John 5:19; Rev. 13:2). In some cases this power is explicitly political in nature.<sup>208</sup> Hence Green comments on this temptation, “In a way clearly parallel to the scenario painted in Revelation 13, we discover that the world of humanity is actually ruled by the devil.”<sup>209</sup>

Behind this lies “the idea of angelic beings ruling over earthly kingdoms” which “has a long tradition, both before and after the New Testament.”<sup>210</sup> Several Old Testament texts develop this idea, most notably Daniel 10, and it is prominently displayed in Revelation 12-17 and may be presupposed in other New Testament texts such as Luke 4:6, 10:1, Acts 16:9, 1 Cor. 4:9, 6:3 and 1 Tim. 3:16.<sup>211</sup>

Yamazaki-Ransom explains the devil’s claim thus:

“In the Lukan temptation narrative, Satan claims to be the lord of the world. Is he telling the truth? The answer is both yes and no. On the one hand, although Satan is not a reliable character in the narrative, the implied reader is expected to take Satan’s claim at face value. First, Jesus does not deny Satan’s claim. Second, Paul later describes his ministry as opening the eyes of the people ‘so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power (*exousia*) of Satan to God’ (Acts 26:18). This assumes the reality of Satan’s *exousia* over people, although it is undermined by God through Paul’s ministry. Thus Satan’s power over the world is a real, not an illusory, one. On the other hand, as was just shown, he is not the true lord who deserves worship. For Luke the true Lord is God and Jesus, but not Satan. Thus Satan’s lordship over the world is a real but illegitimate one, one that is to be dismantled. The reality of diabolic authority over the world, and Jesus’ refusal to receive this authority from Satan, has great significance in Luke’s narrative.”<sup>212</sup>

By contrast, the Christadelphian view lacks a plausible explanation for why the devil (as opposed to Jesus) claims absolute political power here. If this were merely an internal temptation in Jesus’ mind about usurping worldly power, we would expect the basis of the temptation to be Jesus’ privileged

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<sup>208</sup> Morris, Leon. 1988. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary. Eerdmans, p. 113.

<sup>209</sup> Green, Joel B. 1997. The Gospel of Luke. Eerdmans, p. 194. For Green, the recurring motif of ‘darkness’ in Luke’s writings represents “an arena of existence ruled by cosmic forces in opposition to God” (op. cit., p. 119). Compare Luke 1:78-79; 22:53; Acts 26:18.

<sup>210</sup> Yamazaki-Ransom. op. cit., p. 93.

<sup>211</sup> Wink, Walter. 1984. Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament. Fortress Press, pp. 26-35.

<sup>212</sup> Yamazaki-Ransom. op. cit., pp. 95-96.

position as Messiah and heir of all things. For instance, just as the third temptation begins, “If you are the Son of God...” and alludes to the privileges of divine protection described in Psalm 91, so we might expect this temptation to go something like this:

“If you are the Christ, march into Jerusalem and declare yourself king, for that is your right, as it is written, ‘Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom’ (Isa. 9:6).”

Instead, the narrative places no emphasis on Jesus’ right to the throne but rather focuses on the devil’s claim to power and his offer to hand the world to Jesus in exchange for worship. Hence, the temptation is ultimately about worship of an external being, and so Jesus’ reply focuses on God as the one and only legitimate object of worship.

Moreover, if this is strictly an internal temptation then there is no thought of the kingdoms of the world being given by or to anyone other than Jesus, which renders the words “I give it to anyone I please” superfluous. Under the personal devil view, however, the devil’s claim alludes to God’s claims in Jeremiah 34(27E):5 LXX and Daniel 4:31 LXX, and as such “Luke pictures Satan as usurping God’s prerogative to confer authority on whomever God wishes.”<sup>213</sup>

In summary, the interpretation of Christadelphians and Phipps fails to account for the fact that this second temptation (third in Matthew’s ordering) is as much about the devil as it is about Jesus.

## **b. The Devil in Jesus’ Parables**

You said: “Your argument that ‘Christ, on at least two occasions, gave *ho diabolos* as the interpretation of a symbol within a parable, which makes little sense if *ho diabolos* is itself a symbolic term’ is irrelevant because I am not saying it is a ‘symbolic term’.”

### **i. The Parable of the Sower**

In the case of the parable of the sower you make a valid point. I would first observe, however, that other Christadelphian writers have interpreted Satan/the devil/the evil one in the parable of the sower to be a personification of the flesh.<sup>214 215</sup> My argument militates against the symbolic interpretation of Satan in these passages. However, is your interpretation any better? You posit that “the religious leaders of Christ’s day...collectively referred to as ‘satan’, are the birds of Christ’s parable.”<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Carroll, John T. 2012. Luke: A Commentary. Westminster John Knox Press, p. 103.

<sup>214</sup> Roberts, Robert. The Evil One, Part 5. Accessed at [http://www.antipas.org/books/devil/evil1\\_d.html](http://www.antipas.org/books/devil/evil1_d.html)

<sup>215</sup> Heaster, Duncan. The Real Devil 5-11: Satan takes away the Word. Accessed at <http://www.realdevil.info/5-11.htm>. Heaster here interprets Satan in the parable of the sower as ‘evil desires’, but on another page he interprets Satan in the parable of the sower as the Judaizers: <http://www.realdevil.info/2-4.htm>.

<sup>216</sup> Burke, J. 2007. Satan and Demons, p. 77.



In favour of your interpretation you point out that the birds in the parable are plural, whereas the orthodox 'Satan' is singular. However, the requirement that the numbers correspond is over-exegesis of the parable. Indeed, the non-correspondence of numbers is present in the Greek, since Satan/the devil/the evil one is a singular noun. You too have had to take this into account by proposing that 'satan' is a collective noun. It is more likely that the birds are plural simply because this gives a more realistic picture of what might happen to seed scattered on a path.

Your interpretation suffers from serious contextual problems. The term *ho satanas* (i.e., with definite article) occurs in four pericopae in Mark's Gospel. You apparently claim that Mark used this term in four different ways in these four passages (with the definite article in at least three).<sup>217</sup> For you 'the satan' in Mark 1:13 refers to an internal source of temptation ("the bestial nature"<sup>218</sup>), 'the satan' in Mark 3:22-27 refers to a false Jewish doctrine which Jesus is accommodating, and 'the satan' in Mark 4:15 refers to the Jewish religious leaders collectively. (I cannot find an explicit statement about your understanding of 'satan' in Mark 8:33,<sup>219</sup> but I presume you follow the standard Christadelphian exegesis in which 'satan' here "simply means an adversary", and a particular individual, Peter, is addressed as such.<sup>220 221</sup>)

It is highly unlikely that Mark would use the same term in four different ways in such a short space. This is especially true since *satanas* was a foreign word to the majority of his Greek-speaking, Gentile readers. Since Mark never provides an explanation of the term, it is far more likely that it refers to a specific entity which by this time was well known in the early church.

Simply stated, while Dochhorn argues that "Satanology is an important theme for Mark"<sup>222</sup>, you are arguing that Mark really contains no satanology – just four scattered references with different meanings and no obvious theological coherence.

Similarly, the parable of the sower is the only place where *ho diabolos* occurs in Luke's Gospel outside the Temptations of Christ. Given that Luke provides no explanation of this term, it is very likely that he expects his readers to understand the brief reference to *ho diabolos* in Luke 8:12 through the lens of the Temptations of Christ. How then can we argue that *ho diabolos* in Luke 8:12 refers to someone/something other than Jesus' tempter?

## ii. The Parable of the Weeds

The parable of the wheat and weeds is unique to Matthew's Gospel. The parable itself reads thus:

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<sup>217</sup> There is no definite article in Mark 8:33, but this is because of the vocative; hence the grammar is ambiguous in this case as to whether 'satanas' is definite or indefinite.

<sup>218</sup> Burke, J. 2007. *Satan and Demons*, p. 176.

<sup>219</sup> Burke, J. 2007. *Satan and Demons*, pp. 183-184.

<sup>220</sup> Roberts, Robert. *The Evil One*, Part 4. Accessed at [http://www.antipas.org/books/devil/evil1\\_c.html](http://www.antipas.org/books/devil/evil1_c.html)

<sup>221</sup> Contrast the above with the view of Dochhorn, "A person 'is' the spirit which dwells in the person concerned...It seems probable that Mk 8:33 presupposes a pneumatology resp. Satanology of inspiration." (Dochhorn, op. cit., p. 99)

<sup>222</sup> Dochhorn. op. cit., p. 104.

He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'" (Matt. 13:24-30 NRSV)

As in the parable of the sower, Jesus' interpretation of this parable is also provided:

"Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers" (Matt. 13:36-41 NRSV)

Christadelphian writers have tended to overlook the significance of this parable for understanding New Testament satanology. For instance, the resource *Wrested Scripture*<sup>223</sup> contains no entry on this passage. Duncan Heaster also does not offer a detailed exegesis, although he indicates in his treatment of other passages that he takes 'the devil' in this passage to mean "the desires of sin".<sup>224</sup> As far as I can tell you make no reference to this parable in your 196-page treatment of the subject of Satan and demons.<sup>225</sup> Christadelphian writer Julio Scaramastro offers an exegesis of the parable of the tares featuring a twofold interpretation of 'the enemy' in the parable: "1. sin-in-the flesh and 2. The leaders of the Jews who were dominated by sin-in-the-flesh."<sup>226</sup> Note that both of these arise from a figure of speech, a metaphor or more precisely personification in which sin-in-the-flesh is likened to a slanderer (*diabolos*).

This parable is highly significant for understanding Jesus' satanology because it serves the specific purpose of explaining the origin of the conflict between the wicked and the righteous: "Where did the

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<sup>223</sup> *Wrested Scriptures*. Satan, Devil and Demons. Accessed at <http://www.wrestedscriptures.com/b07satan/satan.html>

<sup>224</sup> Heaster, Duncan. The Real Devil 5-33: Devil and Satan Bound. <http://www.realdevil.info/5-33.htm>. Again, in a different place he offers a different interpretation, namely that the devil in this parable refers to the Judaizers: <http://www.realdevil.info/2-4.htm>.

<sup>225</sup> Burke, J. 2007. Satan and Demons.

<sup>226</sup> Scaramastro, Julio. The Parable of the Tares, p. 4. Accessed at [http://www.antipas.org/books/tares/tares\\_4.html](http://www.antipas.org/books/tares/tares_4.html)

conflict originate, and whose responsibility is it to deal with it?"<sup>227</sup> The scope of the question is cosmic, since the field is "the world" (thus, for instance, the Jewish religious leaders are not a sufficient interpretation of 'the enemy' in this parable).

Before examining the parable in more detail it will prove useful to have a working definition of a parable in hand:

"A parable is a figure of speech in which a comparison is made between God's kingdom, actions, or expectations and something in this world, real or imagined."<sup>228</sup>

Parables (especially short parables) have also frequently been described as "extended metaphors."<sup>229 230</sup>

We can make several observations about the devil from the parable itself. Firstly, while it might be argued that the devil's involvement in the parable of the sower is incidental, the enemy occupies a central function in the parable of the wheat and weeds. Secondly, the element of the story which represents the devil is introduced as external to humanity: the enemy "came" (just as the birds "came" in the parable of the sower and the tempter "came" to Jesus).

Jesus' interpretation of the parable is straightforward. Each element of the story is a metaphor for a concrete reality. Besides the enemy, the two other personal characters in the parable (the householder and the reapers) correspond to supernatural personal beings (the Son of man and the angels respectively). To be consistent, we ought also to understand the enemy as representing a concrete reality, and it would make for good symmetry if he were a supernatural personal being like the householder and the reapers! The interpretation simply says that the enemy in the parable "is the devil." For Matthew, this statement was just as straightforward as "is the Son of Man", "are the children of the kingdom", "are the children of the evil one", "is the end of the age", and "are angels". None of these require much further explanation.

Within the context, then, the only plausible meaning of 'the enemy that sowed them is the devil' is that "the devil" alludes to a readily identifiable concrete reality needing little or no further explanation. So Bruner writes:

"No reading of the Gospels can escape the impression that the earliest disciples of Jesus believed, and believed that Jesus believed, in the existence of an Evil One, who sought to thwart the purposes of God."<sup>231</sup>

In seeking to escape this impression, Christadelphian interpreters must claim that 'is the devil' is a metaphor within a metaphor, a personification within another figure of speech. It is also noteworthy that the words *echthros* ("enemy") and *diabolos* ("slanderer; accuser") are nearly synonymous in lexical

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<sup>227</sup> Bailey, Mark L. 1998. The Parable of the Tares. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155, p. 276.

<sup>228</sup> Hultgren, A.J. 2002. The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary. Eerdmans, p. 3.

<sup>229</sup> Kjargaard, M.S. 1986. Metaphor and Parable: A Systematic Analysis of the Specific Structure and Cognitive Function of the Synoptic Similes and Parables Qua Metaphors. Brill, p. 196.

<sup>230</sup> Gowler, D.B. 2000. What are They Saying about the Parables? Paulist Press, p. 110.

<sup>231</sup> Bruner, Frederick D. 1990. Matthew: A Commentary. Word Publishing, p. 48.

meaning (cf. Luke 10:19). Thus Jesus' interpretation is a tautology unless we perceive that *diabolos* carries a referential meaning here rather than merely a lexical meaning. Under the Christadelphian view, Jesus did not actually interpret the figure of 'the enemy'; he simply provided another figure which begged the question, "And who/what is the devil?"

On a final note, we observe that in Matt. 13:42-43 Jesus says all evildoers will be thrown into the furnace of fire. This links the eschatology of this parable with the judgment scene in Matt. 25:31-46 with its "eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" as well as the lake of fire in Rev. 20:10 into which the devil is thrown. This implies that the devil of Matthew and the devil of Revelation are one and the same. This renders the 'Roman Empire' interpretation of the devil in Revelation even more improbable.

### c. The Beelzebul Controversy

You said: "Your argument that 'in the Beelzebul controversy, Jesus explicitly connects Satan with the demonic realm' does not address the Christadelphian accommodationist view; this is precisely the language we expect Christ to use when accommodating his audience."

As noted above, you are proposing three different interpretations of 'the satan' in the first four chapters of Mark. According to your view, one of Jesus' most poignant teachings regarding the triumph of the kingdom of God over evil was actually merely an accommodation of his audience.

In your paper *Satan and Demons* you stated with respect to Matt. 12:24, "In this passage it is the Pharisees, not Scripture, who identify satan as the 'prince of demons'".<sup>232</sup> You go on to state that "if Christ had wished to adopt and support the contemporary beliefs regarding demons and 'Satan', he would have made some reference to them."<sup>233</sup> This reasoning fails to take into account that it was actually Jesus who introduced the term 'Satan' into the dialogue according to all three Gospel accounts.

You make much of the fact that Mark presents Jesus' reference to Satan casting out Satan within a parable. However, both Matthew and Luke have removed the reference to a parable, and simply have, "He knew what they were thinking and said to them..." (Matt. 12:25; Luke 11:17). Furthermore, the context suggests that Jesus' question, "How can Satan cast out Satan?" in Mark is not the beginning of the parable but rather the question that prompts the parable. If Jesus were simply accommodating his opponents he would surely have used their term, Beelzebul. That he instead introduces 'Satan' suggests he was using his own preferred term and not accommodating.

The two parables used to show the self-contradictory nature of the scribes' accusation are those of a kingdom divided against itself and a house divided against itself. Jesus uses these parables to build toward his actual conclusion: "If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come" (Mark 3:26).

Moreover, Jesus does not stop with defending himself against the accusation but then goes on the offensive with the parable of binding of the strong man. This parable is regarded by scholarly consensus

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<sup>232</sup> Burke, J. 2007. *Satan and Demons*, p. 68.

<sup>233</sup> Burke, J. 2007. *Satan and Demons*, p. 69.

as teaching about Jesus' assault on Satan's domain through exorcisms.<sup>234</sup> <sup>235</sup> <sup>236</sup> The overall thrust of Jesus' argument is summarised thus:

"It would be illogical if Beelzebul acted against himself by enabling exorcisms. Therefore, the objection of the scribes against Jesus is absurd. What really happens is demonstrated by argument no. 2: Jesus has overcome Satan, and therefore he is capable of exorcizing demons."<sup>237</sup>

#### **d. Other logical arguments**

You said: "Your argument from Job that satan is an angel, does not address the relevant scholarly literature on this subject; in any case, 'X presented himself among the Y' does not naturally read as 'X is a member of the Y', and the fact that the devil is said to have angels likewise is no evidence that the devil is an angel (God and Christ have angels, but neither God nor Christ is an angel)."

While the language of the satan presenting himself among the sons of God may imply a distinction between the satan and the sons of God, it is difficult to conceive of a human being presenting himself among the angels. This is probably why the scholarly consensus is that Job's satan is supernatural. According to Scripture, angels present themselves before the Lord in a heavenly setting (e.g. Rev. 5:11; 7:11; 8:2) to which a human satan would not have access.

The latter is a patently weak argument. In the first place, while God and Christ are not angels, they are supernatural beings. So if we rephrase the argument to, "The devil has angels, therefore the devil is a supernatural being" you no longer have a counter-example.

In the second place, it is more appropriate to consider the contrast actually given in Scripture: "Michael and his angels" vs. "the dragon and his angels" (Rev. 12:7-9) or, in a less direct contrast, "the Son of man in his glory and all the angels with him" vs. "the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:31, 41). Michael is known to be an angel, and so it is virtually certain that his angels are also angels. Consistency dictates that the dragon's angels are also angels, and if the dragon has angels it is difficult to envision him being either a personification or a human empire. Similarly, if the Son of man's angels are angels, it stands to reason that the devil's angels are also angels, and their leader a supernatural being.

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<sup>234</sup> "The context makes it clear that the strong man represents Satan and/or his demons." Hiers, R.H. 1985.

'Binding' and 'Loosing': the Matthean Authorizations. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104(2), p. 237.

<sup>235</sup> Of the parable of the strong man and Luke 10:18: "In both sayings Jesus understands his mission as a struggle against Satan in order to advance the coming of the kingdom of God." Guijarro, Santiago. 1999. *The Politics of Exorcism: Jesus' Reaction to Negative Labels in the Beelzebul Controversy*. *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 29, p. 121.

<sup>236</sup> "The strong man (Satan) is now, and through the exorcisms of Jesus, is being bound by a stronger one. The plundered goods are meant to signify those possessed persons whom Jesus frees from the power of the strong man." Awwad, Johnny. 2005. *Satan in Biblical Imagination*. *Theological Review* 26(1), p. 121.

<sup>237</sup> Dochhorn, J. op. cit., p. 105.

### e. The Angels that Sinned

In view of your endorsement<sup>238</sup> of Steven Cox's interpretation of 'the angels that sinned' with reference to 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6 and other relevant texts within those epistles,<sup>239</sup> I would draw your attention to three recent online articles I've written which challenge Cox's conclusions.<sup>240 241 242</sup>

### Conclusion

It would be fair to say that there is significant debate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century church (amongst biblical scholars, clergy and laypeople alike) about the existence and reality of Satan and demons. This is a hermeneutical issue which is tied up with one's view of biblical inspiration and inerrancy as well as one's worldview and the place of science within it. Not a few Christians today deny that Satan actually exists as a personal being.

However, viewed at a strictly exegetical level (what the text of Scripture says) there is far less debate. The scholarly consensus is that the New Testament witnesses to a belief in the cosmological reality of Satan and demons in the early church. The rise of critical scholarship over the past two centuries has reinforced rather than undermined this view, which suggests it is unlikely to change. The only possible exception is Pauline scholarship, but even here weighty arguments in favour of Paul's belief in the spiritual realm are still being put forward. Thus, even if Christadelphians find scholars who share their disbelief in the actuality of Satan and demons, these scholars are for the most part not using the same epistemology as Christadelphians. Christadelphians stand apart from scholarship when they claim that the New Testament writers shared their denial in the real existence of Satan and demons.

You have observed that a number of other Christadelphian doctrines have now gained widespread scholarly support. Instead of assessing this claim, which is beyond the scope of this document, I would have us consider the implications of this observation if it is assumed to be true. For you the implication seems to be that, because scholarship has vindicated Christadelphian theology on so many other points, the Christadelphian view of satan must also be correct, and it is only a matter of time before scholars recognize this.

For me the implication is quite different: if scholarship has vindicated so many other Christadelphian doctrines, should the fact that it has not vindicated this particular doctrine not serve as an alarm bell? Might it not suggest that Christadelphians ought to revisit their satanology and demonology and

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<sup>238</sup> Burke, J. Satan and Demons, p. 159ff.

<sup>239</sup> Cox, Steven. 2000. The Angels that Sinned: Slandering Celestial Beings. Accessed at [http://www.christadelphia.org/pamphlet/p\\_sinned.htm](http://www.christadelphia.org/pamphlet/p_sinned.htm)

<sup>240</sup> Farrar, Thomas. 2013. The Angels that Sinned: Christadelphian Interpretations of 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 1:6 <http://blog.dianoigo.com/2013/10/the-angels-that-sinned-christadelphian.html>

<sup>241</sup> Farrar, Thomas. 2013. Jude's Quotation from 1 Enoch: Straightforward Citation or Subtle Irony? <http://blog.dianoigo.com/2013/10/judes-quotation-from-1-enoch.html>

<sup>242</sup> Farrar, Thomas. 2013. Were 2 Peter and Jude written to oppose the teachings of 1 Enoch? Accessed at <http://blog.dianoigo.com/2013/11/were-2-peter-and-jude-written-to-oppose.html>

consider the possibility that it might have been constructed without taking all the grammatical, literary and historical evidence into account?

If even one Christadelphian opens his or her mind to this possibility and undertakes a thorough, objective inquiry accordingly, I will consider my efforts in preparing this response to have been worthwhile.