

Dear Jonathan,

Thanks for getting back to me once again. I said I wouldn't continue the dialogue further, but you did raise a number of new lines of argument which I don't feel can be left unanswered. Unfortunately they can't be dealt with very briefly either.

1. The reason it wasn't clear to me that you were responding to my work 'The Accuser of our Brethren' is that your response focused on demons as much if not more than on the devil and Satan, whereas my paper was about the devil and Satan, and only discussed demons peripherally. To keep things on topic, I'm not going to address the points you raised about demons.
2. I don't want to beat a dead horse, but to reiterate – Thomas Williams felt the idea of a personal supernatural devil could be ruled out on logical grounds before even commencing exegesis of the relevant biblical passages. That suits the philosophical definition of *a priori* knowledge, which is knowledge obtained before looking at empirical evidence (which in this case would be biblical testimony).
- 3.
4. Demons – off topic
5. Demons are again off topic. However I want to note that I've never met a professing Christian, Christadelphian or otherwise, who said he saw no need to pray about naturalistic illness. (What do you make of James 5:14-15?) I must admit I'm at a bit of a loss; but I guess I now understand why you don't see the false dichotomy in asking whether I visit a doctor or an exorcist when I am unwell.
6. I'll discuss further along your claim that there is no doctrine of Satan in the OT. You may well be correct about Job and family and friends – as far as we read in the account, they were never informed about Satan's role in his misfortunes. However, this is a moot point since the Holy Spirit moved the author of the book to include this information in the narrative! Satan in the Old Testament certainly did tempt Job to sin. He believed that if Job suffered, he would curse God (1:11), so he incited God to inflict suffering upon him (2:3). Furthermore, Satan tempted David to number Israel (1 Chr. 21:1), and a lying spirit (who may have been Satan or one of his lieutenants) enticed Ahab to go to his death in battle (2 Chr. 18:20-22).
7. In the intertestamental period, the Jews correctly inferred based on the Old Testament that Satan (or the devil) was a specific supernatural personal being. The attributes, workings, and above all the destiny of Satan are revealed in much greater detail through the New Testament writings. The evidence is in the entirety of Scripture as discussed thoroughly in my paper.

8. Where is the evidence that there are two distinct doctrines of Satan/the devil in the New Testament? Can you provide me with sources closer to Second Temple Judaism than 18<sup>th</sup> century England to verify that the Jews believed Satan to be the evil imagination?

I looked in your treatise 'Satan and demons' to see if you've cited any primary sources to back up your claim here. You've called in four witnesses (p. 13ff). The first is the 1<sup>st</sup> century Rabbi Jonathan Ben Uzziel. You cite his commentary on Psalm 103:14 indirectly through John Gill, and it has nothing to do with Satan.

You then refer to the Targum of Jonathan Ben Uzziel (a.k.a. the Targum to the Prophets, since more than one is attributed to him), which, again according to John Gill in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, paraphrases Zech. 3:1 as "...and **sin** standing at his right hand to resist him." So I did a bit of digging, and the Aramaic word rendered 'sin' by Gill here is given the definitions sinner, searcher of sin, or accuser in Jastrow's *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature*, the standard Aramaic lexicon. See the relevant entry at the top right of this page: <http://cal1.cn.huc.edu/showjastrow.php?page=447>. The same word, for instance, is used in the Targum of Psalm 104:35 – "The sinners will be destroyed from the earth, and wicked exist no longer." The reading 'Sinner' is supported by Sweeney, writing with 360 years more scholarship and archaeology to turn to than Gill had.<sup>1</sup> So it appears as if there is no personification here, just a paraphrase referring to Satan by another title.

Secondly, your citation makes it sound as though Jonathan ben Uzziel definitely wrote these words in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. In fact, the Targum to the Prophets was attributed to Jonathan ben Uzziel centuries later in the Babylonian Talmud. While there is general agreement that this attribution is valid, the Jewish Encyclopedia states that the Targum to the Prophets was "thoroughly revised, however, before it was redacted in Babylonia." (<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/14248-targum#anchor9>) The Catholic Encyclopedia states that "For Jonathan as for Onkelos the final settlement of the written form did not occur until the fifth Christian century." (<http://www.bible-researcher.com/aramaic1.html>)

Thus, instead of a primary source from the First Century which unmistakably reduces Satan to a non-personal form, we have a primary source finalized in about the Fifth Century which uses a different noun for Satan, but one which the standard Aramaic lexicon declares to be personal.

The second witness deals entirely with the word Belial. This witness is unremarkable since it is agreed by all that Belial is a word meaning 'worthlessness' which is personified in the Old Testament. It has no direct bearing on the Jews' understanding of the word Satan. In fact, what we find in Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity is that Belial, or Beliar, becomes an

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<sup>1</sup> Sweeney, Marvin (2008). Targum Jonathan's Reading of Zechariah 3: A Gateway for the Palace. In *Tradition in Transition: Haggai and Zechariah 1–8 in the Trajectory of Hebrew Theology*, ed. Boda and Floyd.

epithet for Satan (Book of Jubilees, Testament of Twelve Patriarchs, Qumran writings, Ascension of Isaiah). Thus we see a tendency to take 'personified' nouns and apply them to real persons, which is precisely the opposite of what you claim the Jews were doing at this time (taking real personal nouns and using them to personify abstract concepts).

The third witness is from the very Talmudic text that I acknowledged and discussed in my paper. I submit that you have misunderstood this passage. In saying, "Satan, the evil prompter, and the Angel of Death are all one," the rabbi was not saying that Satan and the Angel of Death are mere figures of speech with no personal existence. He was rather positing a link between the activities of Satan, the evil prompter in man, and the Angel of Death. That he was not denying the personal existence of Satan is obvious when one reads Rabbi Resh Lakish's statement in the context in which it is quoted in the Talmud (Baba Bathra 16a). It is quoted in the midst of a commentary on Job 1-2, where it is undeniable (both in the biblical record and the Talmudic commentary thereon) that Satan is portrayed as a personal being. See here for the full Talmudic context of the quotation from Rabbi Resh Lakish: [http://www.come-and-hear.com/bababathra/bababathra\\_16.html](http://www.come-and-hear.com/bababathra/bababathra_16.html). You can also see Section 7.4 of my paper where I discuss the two different senses of the word 'personification.'

Your fourth and fifth witnesses make no mention of Satan and thus don't merit a detailed discussion.

In summary, the witnesses you've brought forward in your response to Buzzard contain not a single clear reference to the 'depersonalized' internal Satan which you say is well recognized in scholarship of Second Temple Judaism. Add this to the fact that all of your witnesses post-date Second Temple Judaism, and the argument is completely bankrupt.

9.

10. This is the first time I'm aware of the theory that Genesis 1-11 was written by Daniel – do you mean Daniel 1-11? As for Brother Welch's remark, it may not matter too much whether the Pentateuch were written by Moses or Joshua. However, wouldn't it be a bit problematic for a high view of Scriptural authority if the Pentateuch were assembled by at least four editors or committees over a period of centuries beginning in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, each with competing theological agendas? This has been the consensus of source critics for more than a century.

Higher/source criticism is absolutely driven by naturalistic assumptions. The Book of Daniel is believed by the majority of scholars to have been written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC because it predicts events in the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, which is impossible (under naturalistic assumptions) if the book was written by Daniel in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC (as was traditionally believed and is still maintained by a minority of conservative scholars)!

Higher criticism has turned biblical narratives into myth or revisionist history, and biblical prophecy into pseudepigraphic fraud, and the best response you can give is that you are enthusiastic about higher criticism, and “What matters it?” who wrote the Pentateuch?

I suggest you pick up a book like Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.’s, “The Old Testament Documents: are they reliable and relevant?” This might curb your enthusiasm for higher criticism.

11. I contest critical consensus on the sources, authorship and dates of many of the biblical texts, not because of any Dunning-Kruger Effect but because of **faith**. I have faith that God can and did act supernaturally in history to inspire human writers to record his revelation to mankind. Many scholars don’t believe this could happen because they are naturalists without faith in a theistic God.
12. “Scholarship unrestricted by evangelical theology” – in practice, what this means is scholarship unconstrained by a high view of scriptural authority, and unconstrained by the need for doctrinal unity across different biblical writings. I don’t think there are too many Biblical scholars who take a high view of biblical authority but deny that the New Testament teaches the existence of a supernatural, personal being called the devil and Satan.

I have looked at a couple of the works you cited:

**a. Caird**

Caird writes, “To many in the early Church Satan was undoubtedly a person; to others he may have been a personification” (NT Theology, p. 110). He also refers in the same section of his book (p. 107ff) to the “creation myth” and writes that “Most of the material in the New Testament concerning Satan appears in the form of myth.” So it appears that Caird, far from a conservative scholar, sees no need to seek a harmonized New Testament doctrine, and follows Bultmann’s ‘demythologizing’ approach to the New Testament. Presumably you don’t take that approach – that is, you (in line with Christadelphian tradition) believe that creation actually took place as described in Genesis, and that supernatural events narrated in the Bible are real historical events that happened in time and space. Presumably you believe that the New Testament writers had a unified understanding of the devil and Satan.

If my presumptions are incorrect, then you are basically reinventing the Christadelphian worldview and cannot claim to represent the historic Christadelphian position. If they are correct, you have arrived at your conclusion about Satan using an entirely different set of assumptions from Caird. Even then his agreement with you is limited to the writings of Paul, and even *then* it is a tentative agreement.

**b. Boer**

Boer writes that “The dualism of the two ages exhibits two distinct patterns (or ‘tracks’) in the available Jewish literature, one ‘cosmological,’ the other ‘forensic’... (1) According to the

cosmological pattern, the created world has come under the dominion of evil, angelic powers in some primeval time...(2) The other pattern is a modified form of the first. In this pattern, the notion of evil, cosmological forces is absent, recedes into the background, or is even explicitly rejected...Instead, the emphasis falls on free will and individual human decision.” (Boer, pp. 31-32)

He further writes, “[Paul’s] not infrequent references to Satan, always as the power hostile to God and the gospel of Christ (refs), suggest his deep indebtedness to the worldview of ‘cosmological’ Jewish apocalyptic eschatology (cf. ‘the god of this age’ in 2 Cor. 4:4; ‘Beliar’ in 2 Cor. 6:15). The angelology of ‘cosmological’ Jewish apocalyptic eschatology probably also lies behind the references to ‘the rulers of this age’ in 1 Cor. 2:6-8, the principalities and powers mentioned in Rom. 8:38 and 1 Cor. 15:24, and Paul’s personification of Sin and Death as oppressive cosmic powers that rule over human beings (cf. Rom. 5:12, 21; 1 Cor. 15:26, 56). For this reason, Schweitzer concludes that Paul like Jesus ‘stood closer to the world of thought represented by the Book of Enoch,’ with its ‘cosmological’ apocalyptic eschatology, than to that of ‘the Apocalypses of Baruch and Ezra,’ with their ‘forensic’ apocalyptic eschatology...” (Boer, p. 33)

So basically, Boer contends that there are two competing apocalyptic eschatologies found in the available Jewish literature: one ‘cosmological’, reflecting a belief in malevolent angelic powers, and one ‘forensic,’ minimizing or even rejecting such a belief in favour of human culpability. **He then goes on to say that Paul favours the cosmological approach – that’s the one with the fallen angels in it – and quotes another scholar who says that both Paul and Jesus stood closer to this viewpoint than the other.** Do I need to continue looking at the other references (other than the demon-related ones, which are off topic) or will I again find them making arguments completely opposed to your interpretation of Satan in the NT?

No one is contesting that there were schools of thought in Second Temple Judaism that minimized or denied the existence of Satan and the angelic realm. The Sadducees are an obvious example, since they denied the existence of angels and spirit beings altogether (Acts 23:8). But the scholarly consensus is that the surviving writings of Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity confirm that the dominant viewpoint of both affirmed the existence of a supernatural personal being named Satan.

13. As I pointed out, John’s Gospel contains one of the most definitive statements about the devil in the whole NT (8:44). Even more significantly, 1 John and Revelation – written later than the Gospel of John and thus presumably for an even more ‘mature audience’ – have the highest rate of occurrences of the devil and Satan among all NT books. Is this congruent with the Christadelphian accommodationist position?

- 14.

15. It is no challenge for my view of Satan. Remember, my paper was about Satan.

16.

17.

18. I'm a professional statistician so you are now entering my field of expertise. Of course the per-word frequency of satanas and diabolos is relevant and not only the absolute number per book. Mark has more than 5 times the word count of 1 John, but only one more reference to satanas/diabolos (5 vs. 4). We would expect short books to have few mentions because they just don't cover as much ground.

Furthermore, it is not clear to me what your criteria are for dividing the books according to audience. You've used the contrived criteria of 'established congregations and mature believers' versus 'preaching and potential'. You haven't justified the assignment of books into these respective categories. Besides, with Paul's letters for example, it is arguably the **genre** and **subject matter**, rather than the maturity of the audience, that drives the low frequency of mentions of satanas/diabolos.

And once again your whole case is shattered by 1 John and Revelation, which were written late and for established, mature Christians and yet feature the highest rate of mentioning diabolos/satanas in the New Testament. In short this is a contrived argument.

19. Discussed above

20. I looked up the creedal confessions of the Church of England again; no mention of the devil or Satan. There is one passing mention in 'A Corporate Renewal of Baptismal Vows,' but states only, "Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God? I reject them," which a Christadelphian could also say, but with a personified view of the devil in mind. The Lutheran 'Augsburg Confession' does mention the devil several times, but this does not appear to be in widespread use among present-day Lutheran churches.

21. The Didache is primarily a handbook for Christian living and does not focus on doctrine. Indeed I can't find a single explicit mention of the death or resurrection of Christ. So it's hardly a benchmark for early Christian doctrine! Furthermore, the Apostles' Creed in its present form is of uncertain date and origin. Probably the earliest post-apostolic 'doctrinal confession' that we have is Irenaeus' rule of faith (late 2<sup>nd</sup> century) which refers to "the angels who transgressed and became apostates" and says that all the churches are of one mind on these things.

In fact, the data that we do find is not at all what we would expect if the orthodox view of the devil were correct. We find that from the NT writings extending to the apostolic and ante-Nicene fathers, the devil's existence is affirmed without the slightest hint of polemic or

controversy. They make the same kind of passing, allusive references to the devil that we find in the NT, which is exactly what we would expect if the devil was a thoroughly uncontroversial idea.

22. I would be happy to include more contemporary Christadelphian scholarship in a future edition; it would be helpful though if your work were published and publicly available in a static form.
23. Perhaps the issue here is whether Christadelphians (past or present) should be interacting with popular beliefs about Satan, or scholarly, published Christian theology, such as the following from the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society:

“The Bible portrays Satan as an implacable enemy of God, whose designs on humanity are malicious; however, it does not represent Satan as God’s equal or as one who acts independently of divine control. In the prologue of Job, the oldest text that speaks of a celestial Satan figure, he is clearly pictured as one who is subordinate to God and who operates only within the parameters that God sets for him.”<sup>2</sup>

If incorrect beliefs about Satan are found in the rank and file of Evangelical churches, this could point to a failure of Evangelical congregations in teaching and learning theology, but it does not imply that the theology itself is wrong.

24.

25.

26. Is it a fact or an assumption that those with the strongest belief in a literal satan were those most easily led to commit the horrors of the witch hunts? And what do you mean by ‘strongest’? Do you mean ‘strongest’ as in well-grounded in sound biblical theology about Satan, or ‘strongest’ as in most superstitious and obsessed with the occult?

C.S. Lewis’ statement was not made in the context of the witch hunts. A materialistic worldview leads to its own bad fruit, like self-sufficiency and a deistic view of God.

## Conclusion

The fact that you thought demonology was a major theme covered in my paper, coupled with the fact that you don’t think I introduced any new arguments besides those of Buzzard, frankly lead me to wonder whether you actually read my paper in full before writing a response. The following is a summary of arguments which were either not in Buzzard’s paper at all, or which I have developed further:

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<sup>2</sup> Page, Sydney. Satan: God’s Servant (2007). JETS 50(3): 449-65.

- (1) Buzzard's point that *ho diabolos* and *ho satanas* as normally used in the NT refers to 'the devil/Satan we all know about' is basically correct, but he has reached this conclusion without eliminating other possible meanings of the article from consideration, which is what I did in my paper. I engaged in a thorough discussion of the grammatical significance of the article and how this aids in understanding the biblical devil and Satan. Furthermore, I did discuss Esther 7:4 LXX – see footnote 61 on page 27 of my paper.
- (2) While rightly Buzzard noted on the Temptations of Christ, "It is most unnatural to think that Jesus invited himself to fall down before himself and worship himself!" I expanded this argument by pointing out that the grammatical construction of Matt. 4:9 and Luke 4:7 preclude any interpretation of 'worship' here other than a physical act.
- (3) There are at least three lines of evidence not mentioned by Buzzard which demonstrate that *ho diabolos* and *ho satanas* in the NT are Jewish concepts from the OT with which the readers are assumed to be familiar:
  - a. The New Testament *ho diabolos* is founded on the LXX translators tendency to translate *sathan* with *diabolos* (in contrast to the Christadelphian view in which no relationship between the OT Satan and the NT Satan/devil is claimed beyond the use of a common word).
  - b. The New Testament writers' use of the Semitic loanword *satanas*, with article, presupposes an established Jewish concept for which the OT is the logical precedent – especially in Mark 1:12-13 where Mark, writing for a Gentile audience, expects his readers to understand the Temptations account based on the use of *ho satanas* alone without further elaboration.
  - c. The NT Satan reflects the attributes of the OT Satan. I mentioned a couple of parallels in my paper but Reese gives a more thorough list: "In Job 1-2 we encounter a being that seems to share traits with the being known as Satan that we encounter in the New Testament accounts: Satan tempts humans to turn against God: Matt. 4:1-11; Rev. 2:10. Satan must ask permission from God to attack his people: Luke 22:31. Satan works to destroy the flesh: 1 Cor. 5:5. Satan works on God's behalf: 2 Cor. 12:7; 1 Tim. 1:20; Rev. 2:10. Satan roams the earth looking for his victims: 1 Pet. 5:8. Satan being rebuked: Jude 1:9."<sup>3</sup> (To which I would add: Satan accuses the faithful before God: Rev. 12:10).
- (4) Buzzard does not mention 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 (Matt. 13:24-30; Luke 8:5-12).
- (5) Buzzard does not mention how, in the Beelzebul controversy, Jesus explicitly connects Satan with the demonic realm. Note that he is not merely assuming his opponents' claim for the sake of argument, for it is he who introduces Satan into the conversation! Luke 10:17-19 and 13:11-16 are other texts which link Satan with the demonic realm.
- (6) Buzzard does not mention all the evidence pointing to Satan's identity as an angel. For instance, in Job 1-2 LXX *ho diabolos* presents himself amongst the *angeloi* (angels) which strengthens the already strong argument that 'sons of God' in the Hebrew be understood as angels here.

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<sup>3</sup> Reese, Samuel A (2008). Accusing the Adversary: A Study of the Role of the satan in Job 1 and 2.



Furthermore, the fact that the devil has angels (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:7-12) who fight with the angels of God headed by the archangel Michael (Rev. 12:7-8) is best understood if the devil and his angels are actually angels.

- (7) To add to all of these, I recently became aware of another line of evidence which counters your assertion that there is no doctrine of satan in the Old Testament. Namely, there are links between Job 1-2, Zech. 3, 1 Chronicles 21 and 2 Chronicles 18 which support the idea that the Chronicler consciously introduces Satan as the same being from Job and Zechariah:

“The final occurrence of the word *sathan* with reference to a supernatural being in the Hebrew Bible is in 1 Chr. 21:1. Here we read, ‘Satan stood up against Israel, and incited David to count the people of Israel.’ Note that in this instance the noun appears without the article. It is usually assumed that the absence of the article indicates that the noun had by this point become equivalent to a proper name; however this has recently been called into question. Some argue that in this text, the word is a common noun and refers to an unnamed adversary, probably a human adversary. In favor of understanding the term as a proper name is the fact that the Chronicler echoes language from the earlier texts that refer to the Satan. The phrase translated ‘stood up against’ is also found in Zech 3:1, where it is used of the Satan standing at Joshua’s right side, and the verb translated ‘incited’ is the verb Yahweh uses when he accuses the Satan of inciting him against Job. **These linguistic links suggest that the Chronicler had the earlier references to the Satan in mind when he redacted the statement he took from 2 Sam 24:1 about what prompted David to take the census**”<sup>4</sup> (emphasis mine).

Grace and peace be unto you,

Tom

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<sup>4</sup> Page, Sydney. Satan: God’s Servant (2007). JETS 50(3): 449-65.