

Is There a SUPERNATURAL DEVIL?

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

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1 Language and Personification

Those who hold that there is no invisible personal Devil explain “Satan” and “Devil” by reference to the basic meaning of the words, namely “resister (satan)” and “slanderer (devil).” In some cases Satan (or the Devil) is taken to refer to sinful human nature, the sinful propensity within or ‘internal’ to a person. In other cases Satan is understood to be a particular (human) resister, perhaps an individual or an organization. In this paper we call this an ‘external’ use of the word Satan because in these cases Satan refers to the whole person rather than to something ‘internal’ to the person.

Are not Satan and the Devil spoken of in very *personal* terms in Scripture? Those denying an invisible personal Devil explain this by saying that in the ‘external’ cases the satans were humans while in other cases (the ‘internal’) sinful human nature was personified although not actually a person.

1.1 Internal or External?

We will examine firstly whether Satan is the ‘internal’ tempter, sin in the flesh. We can confidently state that there is not a single reference in the Hebrew Scriptures (the ‘Old Testament’) to support this view.

Revelation 12:9 (“that old serpent”) says Satan the Devil was present in the Genesis Garden of Eden account. The serpent there was clearly not Eve’s sinful human nature. It was something outside Eve, a personality who spoke and reasoned subtly with her. Likewise, the ‘satans’ of the Hebrew Scriptures at Numbers 22:22; 1 Samuel 29:4; 2Sa 19:22; 1 Kings 5:4; 11:14, 23, 25; 1 Chronicles 21:1; Job 1:6-9, 12; 2:1-4, 6; Psalm 109:6; Zechariah 3:1, 2 were without exception *persons*, ‘satans’ in an ‘external’ sense, and never the sin principle. The same is true in the Greek Scriptures.

The wicked Haman is called *diabolos*, “a devil,” in the Greek Septuagint at Esther 7:4. Again, the devil is a person, not an ‘internal’ sin nature.

So to say that “Satan” in the NT simply means ‘internal’ human nature is to ignore the testimony of the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus’ Bible was the ‘Old testament,’ the Hebrew Scriptures, which teach that Satan was an ‘external’ person and not a personification of sin.

It was simply not in the Jewish or Christian mind-set based on Scripture to conceive of any *satan*, with or without the definite article “the,” that was ‘internal.’ It is therefore amazing that anyone should propose that the Devil of Matthew chapter 4, for example, is ‘internal’ to a person in the sense of a sin nature. The very notion imposes an alien idea upon Scripture.

At Matthew 4:10; 16:23; Mark 1:13; 4:15; 8:33; Luke 8:5, 12; Revelation 12:9 all would likely agree that ‘Satan’ is ‘external.’ For example, in the parable of the sower “the fowls of the air” ate the seed that fell by the road. Explaining, Jesus says “then *cometh* the devil, and *taketh away* the word.” (Lu 8:5, 12; cp. Mr 4:15) Jesus gives no suggestion that these birds represent the sin nature that already exists within a person. Rather, the Devil is ‘external,’ someone who can come from another place and takes something away.

There are, however, many texts in the Christian Scriptures that some might apply to an ‘internal’ Satan, among them Matthew 12:26; Mark 3:23, 26; Luke 10:18; 11:18; 13:16; 22:3, 31; John 13:27; Acts 5:3; 26:18; Romans 16:20; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 7:5; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; 1 Timothy 1:20; 5:15; Revelation 2:9, 13, 24; 3:9; 20:2, 7. Of these texts it must be said that each could as easily be understood of a personal, invisible

Satan. Those who explain them of an ‘internal’ satan must account for the fact that all of the Hebrew Scripture satans were ‘external’ in nature and then should explain why we should understand the matter differently in other texts.

When “satan” or “devil” are used without the definite article “the” and refer to individuals other than a spirit Satan, it is made perfectly clear to whom they refer (Mt 16:23; Joh 6:70, 71) or that humans are meant. - 1Ti 3:11; 2Ti 3:3; Tit 2:3.

1.2 Personification?

Consider the question of whether the very personal descriptions of “the Satan” might only be personifications. Of course, inanimate things are sometimes personified in the Scriptures. Sin, death, wisdom and the holy spirit are examples. But it should equally be noted that they are usually presented impersonally. Personification for these is the exceptional presentation, not the norm.

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

The Jews of Jesus’ day believed in a personal Satan, or Devil, and demons. Christadelphian writer Robert Roberts, for example, acknowledges that it was “the notion universal in the world at that time, that madness was due to the presence of malignant beings.” (*Nazareth Revisited*, page 155) As Jesus, his apostles and other Bible writers referred to Satan the Devil or demons, there is no record that they made any attempt to correct the common belief as if it were incorrect. But today in a time when belief in a personal Satan is also common, those who deny a personal Devil almost always move immediately into a refutation presentation whenever the subject arises. When Jesus spoke about the Devil or demons, he accepted the common language of the day *without redefining its meaning*. This is significant. He and his disciples would hardly fail to deny the belief in an invisible personal Devil, or at least to clarify what Satan and the Devil really were, if the common beliefs were not true. Christadelphians do it all the time.

2 Is the Devil Sin Nature?

Most often the argument against a personal Devil begins from Hebrews 2:14, so we should examine this argument first. Here is the text in its context, with key points that will be discussed highlighted.

“For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put **all things** [*panta*] in subjection under his feet. For in that **he** [God] **put all** [*panta*] **in subjection under him**, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now **we see not yet all things put under him**. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, **crowned with glory and honour**; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of **flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage**. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore **in all things** [*panta*] **it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren**, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”

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

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

2.1 “Blood and Flesh” and Sin Nature

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

Christadelphians propose that to share “blood and flesh” with his brothers, Jesus had to share their sinful human nature; otherwise, he would not have been like them “in all respects.” But, there are several important considerations. (He 2:17) The context offers no such definition of “blood and flesh,” nor does the wider Scriptural context. The text merely says Christ’s disciples are “sharers of blood and flesh” and that Christ partook of these same elements. Paul contrasts the “spirit” of angels (He 1:14) with the “blood and flesh” of Christ and his brothers. This contrast should not be missed and, if given proper weight, it suggests the “blood and flesh” has a meaning

somewhat the opposite of “spirit.” This can be confirmed by studying other occurrences of “blood and flesh” (“or, “flesh and blood”) in the Christian Scriptures at Matthew 16:17; 1 Corinthians 15:50; Galatians 1:16; Ephesians 6:12.

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

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

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

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

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

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

If “all” does not mean totally, absolutely, all at Hebrews 2:8, why should it mean absolutely all just 9 verses later at Hebrews 2:17, especially since there are many respects in which Christ was not like his brothers. Was he born as a result of normal marital relations as they were? Was he an imperfect sinner as they were? Did he grow old or get sick and die normally as they would? Obviously there were many respects in which Jesus was not absolutely equal to them.

The expression “in all things [*panta*]” must therefore have an application limited to the matter under discussion. Verse 14 provides the contextual limit, saying: “forasmuch then as the children are partakers of *flesh and blood*, he also himself likewise took part of *the same*.” The “all things” therefore refer to his “blood and flesh” condition and, as mentioned above, there is evidence that this simply refers to their humanity.

Actually, Christadelphians should be the last to use the word “all” at Hebrews 2:17 as if it were all-inclusive. In other contexts they often point out that it is not. For example, R. Abel, says in explanation of John 5:28:

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

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

2.3 Identifying the Devil at Hebrews 2:14

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

2.4 The ‘Devil in Christ’ Concept

Before examining their conclusion, it is important to note that the Christadelphian argument is that the Hebrews 2:14 Devil was in Jesus Christ and had “the power [*kratos*, “might,” Greek] of death.” This Devil was supposedly the sin *nature*, but not actual, committed sin because they accept that Christ was “without sin [actually committed].” (He 4:15)

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

Well, it flatly contradicts the passage at James 1:14, 15:

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

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

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

The texts used by Abel¹ to link the Devil with sin, such as Romans 5:21; 6:23; 7:17, 18; Hebrews 9:26 certainly show that sin causes death. “Sin ruled as king with death ... the wages sin pays is death ... sin that resides in me.” But by quoting these texts to explain the Devil at Hebrews 2:14, what is he really saying about Christ? Not only that he had a sin *nature*, a *propensity* to sin, but actual sin in him, for “sin,” not merely ‘sin nature,’ is the word these texts use. His argument, then, effectively places *sin* in Christ, for sin is the word used in the texts he asks us to compare. And, note, all of these texts are speaking about the sin in persons other than Christ. (He 9:28) None of them speak of a kind of sin existing within a person only as a principle without being manifested as actual, committed sin. As mentioned above, both the sin principle and actual sin are present in all humans, with just one exception. Jesus Christ was “without sin.” (He 4:15) He “did not know sin.” (2Co 5:21)

This illustrates that Christadelphians are applying Bible references to sin arbitrarily. They use the word “sin” at Romans 5:21; 6:23; 7:17, 18; Hebrews 9:26 to explain the Hebrews 2:14 “Devil” as if it meant, not “sin,” but sin *nature*, because they would not want to attribute *actual* sin to Christ. But they not apply the sense of the word “sin” used at Hebrews 4:15; 2 Corinthians 5:21 to the Hebrews 2:14 “Devil”? These latter texts say Christ did not “sin,” meaning actual, committed sin,

as Christadelphians agree. If they were to use this sense for sin and apply it to the Hebrews 2:14 Devil, they would be saying Christ was a sinner. (Isa 53:5, 8)

So it is only by selectively using their Romans 5:21; 6:23; 7:17, 18; Hebrews 9:26 meaning for sin (a meaning which is itself invalid) and avoiding the Hebrews 4:15; 2 Corinthians 5:21 meaning for sin that Abel makes his case. All of this is arbitrary. Abel's texts cannot fairly be used to explain the Devil at Hebrews 2:14.

2.5 Could a Personal Devil Cause Death?

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

It might be possible for both to be true. An individual, a person, might have the power of to cause death and yet sin still to be the underlying cause. It is obvious that any person who kills another has the means (or, might) to cause physical death. So the Scriptures say that Joab and Abishai "slew Abner." (2Sa 3:30) Saul "slew the Gibeonites." (2Sa 21:1) Of course, their victims were sinners and their sins were leading them to their deaths in the natural course of things, but their untimely deaths were caused by, and attributed to, sinful humans. However, no one would argue that Joab, Abishai and Saul were 'sin in the flesh' just because they had the power to cause death.

Similarly, the Devil can exist as a person with the power of death, but this would not eliminate sin as the ultimate cause of death. Any murderer demonstrates the might to cause death, but this does not make him sin in the flesh. So the premise of the argument is invalid.

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

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

2.6 Did Jesus Christ Die For His Own Sinfulness?

It cannot be established from Hebrews 2:14 that Christ also carried his own 'sin in the flesh' in death. Some say, though, that the Law of Moses contains types indicating that, as high priest, Christ had to provide a sacrifice for his own sin nature as well as for others.

They point to the fact that Israel's high priests sacrificed for themselves. Hebrews 5:1-3, for example, says the high priest sacrificed "*for himself.*" Hebrews 7:27 says: "*for his own sins.*" Hebrews 9:7 agrees: "*for himself.*"

According to the wording of the Law:

"Moses said unto Aaron, Go unto the altar, and offer thy sin offering, and thy burnt offering, and make an atonement *for thyself*, and for the people: and offer the offering of the

people, and make an atonement for them; as the LORD commanded. Aaron therefore went unto the altar, and slew the calf of the sin offering, which was *for himself*.” (Le 9:7, 8)

“Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house... Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself.” (Le 16:6, 11)

The question is, Is there a type of Christ in this?

First it should be observed that not every aspect of the priesthood takes place in the antitype. As Christadelphian writer Robert Roberts observes:

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

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

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

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

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

“Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up

sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."

The error of some has arisen in supposing that the Jewish priest paralleled Christ in this matter and in overlooking the fact that much of Hebrews serves to *contrast* rather than parallel certain features of the Law with the antitype.

Hebrews 7:26-28 is part of such a *contrast* - rather than a parallel - of Christ with the high priests of Israel. The writer of Hebrews uses *kreitton* ("better") 13 times to stress the *contrasting* superiority of the Christian system of worship. Although the Mosaic priesthood was the type and the Christian priesthood the antitype, not every feature was in exact parallel.

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

Hebrews 7:26-28 is a continuation this series of contrasts. Consider some of them. It presents Christ as "separate from sinners" in *contrast* to their "infirmity." Logically, then, he did not need "to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins," sins that he did not have. (He 7:27) He sacrificed "once" in *contrast* with their "daily" sacrifices. So it should not be supposed that Paul's point at verse 27 is that Christ as high priest is similar *to* the Israelite high priest in respect to offering his sacrifice "first for his own sins." Rather, this is another *contrast*. Christ was different to the high priest in this respect.

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

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

Some have pointed to Hebrews 9:12 which says Christ "obtained eternal redemption" and to the fact that the verb "obtained" (*heuramenos*, Greek) is in the middle voice. The middle usually indicates the involvement of the subject in the action of the verb. So the contention is that Christ

obtained deliverance *for himself*. This usage is usually described as “the direct middle.” However, as stated by H.E. Dana and J.R. Mantey on page 158 of *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*:

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

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

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

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

Such a thing would be inconsistent with the types for another reason. We are being asked to believe that the sinless Christ (with a sinful human nature) died in his own behalf. Yet no sacrificial animal ever died in its own behalf in the types.

2.7 Objections to the Personal Devil at Hebrews 2:14

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

2.7.1 ‘A Strange Preparation’

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

2.7.2 ‘A Strange Way to Defeat a Personal Devil’

It is further objected that death was a strange way to defeat a personal Devil. But Hebrews 2:14 states that “*through [dia, Greek] ... death,*” not *in* death, Christ would bring to nothing the Devil. The expression does not imply the immediate annihilation of the Devil, whether this Devil were within Christ or otherwise, at Jesus’ death. When, later in the same Bible book, we read: “he appeared to put away sin by [same Greek word, *dia*] the sacrifice of himself,” are we to conclude that the expression “by the sacrifice” implies that sin was immediately and finally disposed of forever at Jesus’ death? (He 9:26) No, even after the sacrifice sin remained, as is obvious to all. Yet, in the course of time and based on the sacrifice of Christ, sin will ultimately be eliminated. It was one of the purposes of his death and resurrection that Christ “might be Lord both of the dead and living.” (Ro 14:9) Thus, it was *after* the resurrection that Jesus said “all authority has been

given me in heaven and on the earth.” (Mt 28:18) Passing “through death” (including the resurrection process), he was uniquely positioned to defeat a living personal Devil.

Actually, we are given a clue to the timing of the bringing to nothing of the Devil in the second half of the same sentence, at Hebrews 2:15. Consider the whole sentence, both verses 14 and 15.

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

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

2.7.3 ‘The Devil Should Be Dead by Now’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.8 ‘In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh’

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

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

3 The Definite Article

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

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

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

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

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

“The definite article is never meaningless in the Greek... The article is associated with gesture and aids in pointing out like an index finger... Wherever the article occurs, the object is certainly definite.” - *Grammar of Greek New Testament*, page 756.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.1 Satan the Devil and the Mystery

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

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

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

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

Paul explains: “the mystery .. *in other ages was not made known* unto the sons of men, as *it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.*” (Eph 3:3-6) Or as he put it to the Colossians: “the mystery .. *hath been hid* from ages and from generations, but *now is made manifest to his saints.*” (Col 1:25-27) Logically, if the secret regarding the “seed” was finally revealed, it would also involve the complete unmasking of “that old serpent” and the identification of the other members of the Genesis 3:15 “mystery.” Evidently, Jehovah did not choose to make the issue with Satan paramount until the coming of the Messiah. And who better to unmask Satan than the Seed, Christ Jesus himself? Consistent with this, the Gospels reveal much about the Devil and his works. - Eph 3:8, 9; Col 1:26.

As indicated at Revelation 10:7, the “mystery” is completed in connection with the blowing of the seventh trumpet. According to Revelation 11:15, at that time the announcement is made: “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.” The completion of the mystery therefore has to do with the establishment of God’s kingdom with Christ, the Seed, as king. As part of the events that follow as a result of this trumpet blast, Revelation chapter 12 brings into clear focus all four Genesis 3:15 characters in one place. [1] “You” (the serpent) appears in Revelation 12:9, 15; [2] “the woman” in verses 1, 2, 5, 6; [3] “your seed” (the serpent’s agents) in verse 15; and [4] “her seed” (Jesus Christ and his brothers) in verses 5, 10, 13, 17. Thus, the clear identification and full exposure of Satan and his methods was not to be expected at least until the coming of the true Seed in the first Christian century.

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

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

4 Satan the Devil in Eden

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

This identification is well known in the writings of Paul’s contemporaries. It is clearly made in Revelation 12:9; 20:2. The very fact that the Serpent of Genesis is to be crushed by the Seed of the woman alerts us to the fact that the Serpent continued to exist until the times of the Messiah. (Ge 3:15) The implications of Revelation 12:9 are that the same ‘external’ person that existed in Eden must still be in existence at the time of the fulfilment of the Revelation prophecy. It cannot be argued that the same ‘internal’ sinful tendencies present in the serpent will be present in the character that fulfils Revelation 12:9. Not only would such an explanation run counter to the absence of any evidence of ‘internal’ Satans in the Scriptures, but it would also mean that, at least in this case, the Devil and Satan do not mean sinful *human* nature at all, because the *original* serpent was no human.

4.1 Alternative Explanations

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

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

A second scenario is that, still with the intention of testing Adam and Eve, God gave the serpent a pure moral character but that the serpent somehow went bad of itself. What can we say of this? God’s creative activity is perfect. (De 32:4) Given that all of his intelligent creation had proven perfect to that point, a strong likelihood existed that any reasoning serpent would also have proven righteous, defeating the very purpose for which it was given speech. The notion that a perfect serpent, created in the hope of defecting, chose to go bad at precisely the moment required to test Adam and Eve surely challenges even the most credulous mind. We can dismiss this as highly unlikely.

A third scenario might be that, without the intention of the serpent playing any role in testing Adam and Eve, God for some unknown reason gave this particular serpent the power of speech and logic and that of itself it went bad and the test was purely of its own making. Is this

reasonable? There is no evidence that any animal was created with the power of speech and reason. To suggest otherwise is to exchange the apparent difficulty some have with the notion of a supernatural Devil speaking through a serpent for the even greater difficulty of a naturally talking serpent just happening to turn bad at the very time that God was imposing a test on the first couple. Angels can at least speak and reason for themselves. The Bible says nothing of any animal having, or ever having had, this ability.

Even in the closest comparable case, Balaam's ass that spoke is called "the *dumb* ass speaking with *man's* voice," so clearly, of itself, the ass was dumb, having no voice of its own. When it spoke, it spoke "with man's voice," not with its own voice. (2Pe 2:16) The Source of the voice was an invisible person, God himself and, since God is not a man (Ho 11:9), he gave the ass a man's voice to suit his purpose on that occasion. The ass did not speak with its own voice using its own powers of reason. That the serpent should have spoken because of similar, but morally opposite, supernatural influence is not unreasonable.

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

4.2 Objections

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

4.2.1 'Angels Cannot Defect'

First, he argues that Luke 20:35, 36 teaches that neither angels nor Christians living forever can defect. The text says of resurrected ones "neither [*oude*] can they [*dynantai*] die any more, for they are like the angels." But Abel's conclusion is based on a misunderstanding of *dynantai* ("they are able"). Does *oude ... dynantai* imply absolute impossibility, or does it signify inability under certain conditions? Acts 4:20 uses the same verb when Peter and John say "But as for us, we *cannot* stop speaking about the things we have seen and heard." It was no physical impossibility for them to stop speaking (as if predestined to be faithful), but it was a certainty *given their determination to remain obedient*. Luke 20:35, 36 has been taken by Christadelphians to say more than it actually says.

Significantly, the Bible never uses the term 'immortality,' inherent or conditional, of angels. Yet, given the condition of obedience that faithful angels have thus far met successfully and will continue to meet, they cannot die.

4.2.2 'There Are 3 Parties, Not 4 in Genesis 3'

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

serpent itself was no more Satan than the Revelation 14:1 reference to Jesus as “the Lamb” proves that Jesus was himself any one of the lambs slain in sacrifice under Mosaic Law.

4.2.3 *‘The Devil Was Not Punished’*

Third, Abel argues that the serpent is held responsible for the wrongdoing in Eden and was cursed while the Devil, if he existed, was let off ‘scot-free.’ (Ge 3:14; 2Co 11:3) The serpent was addressed because it was the agent visible to Adam and Eve in whose presence the words were uttered. In the similar account regarding Balaam’s ass, “the LORD opened the mouth of the ass.” The account reads as if the ass itself were the source of the speech: “*She* [the ass] said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?” (Nu 22:28) As mentioned before, Peter makes clear that the beast itself was “dumb.” (2Pe 2:16) So no power of speech and reason was given to the ass; the voice was not that of the ass but of God. This shows that the serpent need not have been given the power of speech or reason to be able to say what it did. And that the real source of the voice behind the serpent did not escape ‘scot-free’ is clear in the account at Revelation 12:9-12 where the “*old serpent*” is called to account. Certainly the literal serpent was cursed although innocent (Ge 3:14), but is this really such a problem in view of the ‘cursing’ of the innocent ground at the same time (Ge 3:17) or the ‘cursing’ of the innocent animals at Deuteronomy 28:18?

4.2.4 *‘The Serpent Did Not Blame the Devil’*

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

4.2.5 *‘The Serpent Was Crafty’*

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

4.2.6 *‘The Offspring of the Serpent Were Sinful’*

Sixth, he then argues that the seed of the serpent has been symbolically identified with sin. (Mt 23:33) But the text cited says nothing that identifies serpents with the sin nature. It says: “Serpents, offspring of vipers, how are you to flee from the judgment of Gehenna?” Far from demonstrating that the seed of the serpent is sin in an ‘internal’ sense (the sin within), it shows that the seed of the serpent included the scribes and Pharisees, real persons in an ‘external’ sense. Obviously the seed is sinful, but this text proves nothing regarding the identity of the serpent. It is breathtaking that any of these points, or even all of them taken collectively, could be considered a solution to the problem of the serpent in Eden. And even if they were, the dilemma of a God that deliberately arranged for an evil test, knowing in advance that the serpent must lie in order to facilitate it, violates the spirit of Romans 3:7 where Paul refutes the argument of men who charge that Christians say “Let us do evil, that good may come,” adding “[their] damnation is just.” God would have been guilty of exactly this if he had been party to lying by supplying the liar in order to test Adam and Eve. Any damnation of God over this would have been “just.”

5 “The Sons of God”

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

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

5.1 Were They Humans?

Some hold that these “sons of God” were human, being men of the line of Seth and that taking as wives “the daughters of men” means that Sethites began to marry into the line of wicked Cain, but corroborating Scriptural evidence is lacking to support the view that intermarriage between the lines of Seth and Cain is meant here, or that such marriages were somehow responsible for the birth of “mighty men” as mentioned in verse 4. It is true that the expression “sons of men [or ‘of mankind’]” (which those favouring the earlier mentioned view would contrast with the expression “sons of God”) is frequently used in an unfavourable sense, but this is not consistently so. (Compare Ps 4:2; 57:4; Pr 8:22, 30, 31; Jer 32:18, 19; Da 10:16) But at Job 38:4-7 “the sons of God” who “shouted for joy” when God “laid the cornerstone” of the earth clearly were angelic sons and not humans descended from Adam (as yet not even created).

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

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

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

Christ was “made alive *in the spirit* [RS, NE, JB, ESV],” not “by the Spirit [KJ],” since “in the spirit” must parallel “*in the flesh*.” The statements are antithetical. “Flesh” is the stuff of a body. That “spirit” describes a body form is confirmed by 1 Corinthians 15:44. In “this,” the spirit state or body, he went and preached to others also designated “spirits” who are specifically identified

as individuals who lived pre-Flood. The position that somehow the ‘spirit of Christ’ in the sense of the essential element of the Christian message was preached to ordinary humans before the Flood is dependent on the arbitrary “by the Spirit” rendering at 1 Peter 3:18, rejected by *RS, NE, JB, ESV*. It is otherwise indefensible.

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

5.2 Objections

Five objections are proposed to this view.

5.2.1 ‘All Existence Is Bodily’

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

5.2.2 ‘Angels Don’t Marry’

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

5.2.3 ‘Descendants of Seth and Cain’

The third objection is that the “sons of God” were men of the line of Seth intermarrying with Cainites. (Ge 4:26) This is pure speculation. Genesis 4:26 says nothing about the line of Seth being “sons of God.” There is nothing to show that God made any distinction between family lines at this point in human history. Neither is there evidence that intermarriage between the lines of Seth and Cain is here meant, or that such marriages were somehow responsible for the birth of the “mighty men” mentioned in verse 4. The identification of “the sons of God” at Genesis 6:2-4 with angelic creatures is objected to because the context is said to relate entirely to human wickedness. But the wrongful interjection of spirit creatures into human affairs most certainly could contribute to or accelerate the growth of human wickedness and would be not at all inconsistent with it. In any case, why would the intermarriage of Sethites and Cainites result in greater badness than the marriage of Cainites among themselves? Why would the offspring Nephilim be outstanding “men of renown” if they were in fact ordinary men no different to ordinary Cainites?

5.2.4 ‘Nephilim Are Descendants of Humans’

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

Nevertheless, Nephilim simply means “fellers,” those who cause others to fall. It neither *requires* that they be the sons of angels who sinned, nor *requires* that they be the sons of ordinary humans.

5.2.5 ‘Angels of Heaven Can’t Sin’

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

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

Another argument is based on Psalm 5:4, 5: “thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish *shall not stand in thy sight*.” It is argued that the Devil could not have been a person in heaven in the days of Job without contradicting this text.

But consider this. Habakkuk 1:13 similarly says: “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and *canst not look on iniquity*.” Does this mean that God is totally unable even to see bad, that he is blind to it? Logic similar to the Christadelphian approach to Psalm 5:4, 5 would require it. Yet the text goes on to add: “wherefore *lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously ..?*” So, yes, God does see sin. (cp. Jer 23:14) Habakkuk’s point is that God is unable to see or to look upon sin endlessly and without acting. Similarly, Psalm 5:4, 5 points to God’s inability to tolerate endlessly those who take their stand against him without acting against them.

That some *do* temporarily take their stand against him, Psalm 2:2 testifies. “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD.” The Hebrew word for “set” here is *yatsab*, exactly the same word as that translated “stand” at Psalm 5:5. People do in fact “stand” against God at present. But their stand will last only as long as the judgment. (Ps 1:5; 2:9) So the statements at Psalm 5:4, 5 cannot be taken as absolutes; only as proof that the bad cannot reside with God permanently.

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

6 Who Provoked David?

Some argue from a comparison of 2 Samuel 24:1 and 1 Chronicles 21:1 that even “the LORD,” Jehovah, was a Satan. There is no particular objection to God being called a satan in the sense of an opposer or resister, especially of wicked men. Still, it seems that it is not necessary to resort to such an explanation in these texts.

God is sometimes spoken of in Scripture as doing what he merely permits to be done by another. So 2 Samuel 24:1 states:

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

But Jehovah was not the one that actively moved David to sin. The expression “he moved David” can also be rendered in a passive sense: ‘when David was influenced or incited [by someone else].’ The “he” need not have been God. The culprit was a satan, as 1 Chronicles 21:1 states:

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

This anarthrous usage allows for the possibility that a human opposer provoked David in this instance and is entirely different from the use of Satan and Devil with the definite article.

Rotherham translates shows it was by God’s sufferance or allowance rather than his doing that David was influenced to order :

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

Alternatively, the invisible spirit Satan may be the one referred to at 1 Chronicles 21:1 since “*the Satan*” is of course also ‘*a satan*.’ While a person who is “the [articular] Satan” is necessarily “a [anarthrous] satan”, the reverse is not always true or necessary. So “the Adam” (the father of the human race) was ‘an *adam*’ (anarthrous, a man) but not every *adam* was “the Adam.” Similarly, “the God” (articular, the true God) is ‘a god’ but not every “god” (anarthrous, angelic or human) is “the God.” It would not surprise to find, therefore, that the invisible spirit Satan is possibly the one called ‘a satan’ (anarthrous) at 1Chronicles 21:1.

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

7 The Satan of Job

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is true that a messenger reported the event this way: “The very fire of God fell from the heavens.” (Job 1:16) What can we say about this comment? First, he knew that the fire was not caused by any human, so he concluded it was from some supernatural source. If, as Christadelphians usually say, some human was given the capacity to perform miraculous works to test Job, why didn’t the messenger ascribe it to that miracle-worker? But no human Satan could do this and the messenger knew it. The messenger was simply wrong in attributing the fire to God. The fact that Satan was responsible is conclusively proven from verse 12: “all that he hath is in thy [Satan’s, not God’s] power.”

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

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

Again Jehovah refused Satan's request for God personally to use his "hand" against Job and placed Job in Satan's hand, so the events of this test were again caused by Satan, not God. Thus, it was Satan, not Jehovah, who struck Job with boils. (Job 2:7) No human Satan could do this, so either a spirit Satan or God himself struck Job. The source was supernatural.

The things that happened to Job caused him much grief, particularly the death of his children. Are we to believe that God caused it? God has been said to cause grief to the wicked, although even then not out of his own heart. (La 1:5, 12; 3:32, 33) But does God grieve the righteous? – Eze 14:14.

7.1 Arguments that God Was Responsible

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

7.1.1 'Job Blamed God'

Abel attributes Job's woes to God because Job himself ascribed the events of the first test to God. (Job 1:21, 22: "the LORD hath taken away..." In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." cp. 19:21) Such an application makes God responsible for the death of Job's children. It is important to remember that this is Job's own explanation, not the explanation of the writer (probably Moses) recording the events.

The passage at Job 2:7, 10 describing the second test helps us better understand the matter. Job 2:7 specifically states that Satan caused the second test:

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

Yet Job 2:10 records *Job's* words: "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Verses 7 and 10 cannot contradict each other. So who caused the affliction, Satan or God? The key is in the fact that Job 2:10 quotes Job's own explanation of the second test. His explanations were inaccurate. Otherwise, Satan would have been the active agent of God, carrying out destructive activity against innocents by the power of God. Concerning the comments about Job not ascribing anything improper to God, see below.

7.1.2 'God Moved Satan to Act Against Job'

Abel also argues that God was responsible for Job's suffering because Job 2:3 has God saying to Satan: "Thou [Satan] movedst me against him [Job]." The Hebrew for "movedst" means "to seduce .. entice,.. persuade, provoke." (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*) Satan may have enticed or provoked God, but this neither means that Satan succeeded, nor that Satan was successful. It certainly does not prove that God was responsible for the crimes against Job.

7.1.3 'God Confirmed Job's Statements'

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

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

Was Job correct in this? Let God answer:

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

Job was not correct in this. Elsewhere Job said:

“It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.” (Job 34:9)

“My righteousness is more than God’s .. What profit shall I have, if I be cleansed from my sin?” (Job 35:2, 3)

Although Job spoke many things regarding God that were truthful and God credits him for these at Job 42:8, not everything he said about God was right. He conceded as much and retracted many of the things he had said.

“Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not..... Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:3, 6)

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

7.1.4 ‘Job 42:11 Confirms God Was Responsible’

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

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

Another instance of this might be the situation where God said regarding Pharaoh: “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart.” (Ex 7:3, 4) Did God himself actively harden Pharaoh’s heart? Not really. It was hardened because of the message declared to him. The message caused him to react in hard stubbornness and anger. But since the message Moses and Aaron declared was really God’s message, the account says God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. As to who was really responsible for the hardening of the heart, Exodus 8:15 says: “When Pharaoh saw that there was respite, *he* hardened his heart.” And again after the lifting of one of the plagues: “*Pharaoh* hardened his heart at this time also.” (Ex 8:32) 1 Samuel 6:6 states: “*The Egyptians and Pharaoh* hardened their hearts.” We can conclude that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, but because he did so in response to God’s message it could be said that God (passively) did the hardening.

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

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

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

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

God did not mean for Isaiah to actually go and fatten their hearts to prevent their repentance, but he was predicting that that would be the effect of the message that Isaiah had been commanded to go and preach, that the people themselves would close their eyes, ears and hearts, that they would not repent and turn around for spiritual healing. The message made them unreceptive because it did not please them. Because Isaiah was the messenger he was said to have done these things to them.

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

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

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

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

7.1.5 *‘Satan Is Not Called a Son of God’*

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

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

7.1.6 *That Satan Was On Earth Because He Was “Walking”*

Sixth, Abel says the meeting between Satan and Jehovah occurred on earth, as implied by Satan’s “walking.” (Job 1:7) But Job 1:7; 2:2 says Satan came “from ... the earth” to take his position before Jehovah. This is more naturally said if he had moved away from an earthly location, irrespective of the fact that a meeting “before” God could take place on earth, which point is not in dispute. (De 19:17) God himself is spoken of as walking on the earth. (Ge 3:8; Le 26:12; De 23:14) It would be equally possible for a spirit Devil. Nothing in this argument, then, precludes Satan being an angel.

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

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

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

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

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

Abel further uses Habakkuk 1:13, which reads: “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.” Look, though, at the second half of the same verse, which Abel ignores: “wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?” It completely refutes Abel's contention. The fact is, God *does* look on evil ones for a time, but, because it is inconsistent with his personality, he is unable to do so permanently and will eventually and inevitably act against evildoers.

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

So none of these arguments against the personal spirit Satan of Job chapters 1 and 2 is found convincing.

8 The Devil in Matthew Chapter 4

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

8.1 Was the Devil in Jesus?

Christadelphians cannot agree about the identity of the tempter of Jesus. Most contemporary Christadelphians hold that Jesus was talking to himself in the wilderness. Older Christadelphians generally disagree that Jesus was tempted by his own mind and favour the view that an 'external,' human Devil tempted him. This very disunity should call into question their various explanations. Still, let us consider now the options.

Most modern-day deniers of an invisible personal Devil prefer the first option.² But consider the insurmountable difficulties connected with this view. It has the Devil in Christ actively producing evil works right within the heart of Jesus. Whether Jesus acted on the Devil's evil suggestions is really not the point. Evil was committed in his heart. Jesus chose not to prevent wicked things at least from being spoken within his own heart, an impossible dilemma if we wish, as we must, to maintain that he was sinless.

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

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

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

Our opponents object at this point that James 1:14, 15 covers the situation. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." They argue that the three temptations represent the "lust" stage only. Only if Jesus had *acted* on those suggestions would he have committed "sin." But we reply that that there is no evidence in the Gospel accounts that Jesus ever 'lusted' after any of the things Satan suggested. The James 1:14, 15 process, which involves the development of a desire for bad things, did not even begin in his case. So that passage does not cover the Matthew chapter 4 events.

Beginning his description of the temptation event, Matthew reports that "the tempter came [proselthon] to him." (Mt 4:3) At the end he says the Devil departed and "angels came

[*proselthon*] ... unto him” (Mt 4:11) It is impossible to justify taking the words ‘came to him’ in two totally different senses in the same context. If the angels (real persons) ‘came to him’ in the sense of a person-to-person approach, why, when the tempter ‘came to him,’ should we not also think of a *person-to-person* approach?

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

Matthew 4:11 then says: “Then the devil *leaveth* him.” If the departure of Satan means the departure of sinful human nature from Jesus for a period of time, does this mean that Jesus sometimes had the Devil within him and at other times did not? If so, in this regard at least, Jesus was not “like his ‘brothers’ in all respects,” since they *always* had sinful human nature. (He 2:17) The aforementioned website³ attempts to explain this by reference to James 4:7: “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” It is argued that the temptation facing Jesus departed temporarily until a later time. But such an explanation is weak for several reasons.

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

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

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

The Devil likely took Jesus to both the temple and the unusually high mountain in some form of vision. There is no need to imagine an actual journey away from the wilderness. The reference to an “exceeding high mountain” is no problem. It is simply consistent with a high visionary vantage point, hardly very different to the apostle John being invited into heaven to observe things both heavenly and earthly. (Re 4:1) Our opponents on the one hand accuse us of lacking Scriptural support in seeing a supernatural Devil in Matthew chapter 4, but then some of them

suggest that the mountain was the symbolic mountain of Isaiah 2:1. There is of course no proof for such an assertion.

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

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

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

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

8.2 Was the Devil Another Human?

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

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

It is not reasonable that a Roman official was the Devil of Matthew chapter 4. The Devil offered Jesus “all the kingdoms [plural, Greek] of the world.” “World” would hardly refer to the limited

area visible from the top of a literal Judean mountain, because such an area did not contain several or many “kingdoms” (plural). Even if the dynasty of the Herods (Mt 2:1) be considered a kingdom, this together with Caesar’s own kingdom amounts to two “kingdoms,” hardly commensurate with the phrase “all the kingdoms.” And which Roman official would have dared to, or have been able to, offer Caesar’s kingdom to Jesus? None. And would a Roman “Devil” likely have quoted Scriptural texts to Jesus? Hardly.

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

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

9 The Angels That Sinned

The Bible clearly teaches that angels can sin.

2 Peter 2:4-7 mentions angels that sinned and were cast into Tartarus to await judgment.

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

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

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

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

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

9.1 The Order of Events

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

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

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

Now consider the list of unrighteous characters in Jude’s letter: (1) The Israelites who came “out of the land of Egypt” but did not believe (verse 5), (2) the “angels” who sinned (verse 6), (3) “Sodom and Gomorrhah” (verse 7), (4) “the devil” (verse 9), (5) Cain (verse 11), (6) Balaam (verse 11) and (7) Korah (verse 11).

Are Jude’s examples in any particular chronological order? Again, let’s set aside the angels for the moment. There is no discernable chronological order. The Israelites of the Exodus, (1) on our list, lived *after* the people of Sodom and Gomorrhah (3), not before. Sodom and Gomorrhah (3) were *after* Cain (5), not before. If Christadelphians wish to have the angels that sinned either as

contemporaries of the people who came out of Egypt or as people who lived shortly thereafter on the basis of Jude 5, 6, how will they deal will Jude 6, 7? These latter verses, using the same reasoning, would teach that the “angels that sinned” lived before Sodom and Gomorrah, which would be contrary to the Christadelphian point of view.

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

9.2 “Angels” in the Context

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

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

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

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

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

9.3 What is “Tartarus”?

A comparison of 2 Peter 2:4 with Jude 6 shows that Tartarus corresponds with being “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness.” It is therefore a condition of restraint, as if in chains. It was a term known in Bible times as an underground prison as far below Hades as earth is below heaven. The Bible does not condone this meaning for Tartarus any more than it condones false ideas about torment in Hades. Nevertheless one fact is clear: to the Greeks, Tartarus was never a place for humans but always a place for superhuman creatures. This is consistent with a supernatural understanding for the “angels that sinned.”

10 The Devil at Jude 9

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

Some refer to Zechariah 3:2 because a similar expression is used there. In *The Devil, an exposition of the Truth concerning that old serpent, the Devil and Satan*, first published in 1842 and reprinted by the Christadelphian Book Library, the following statement occurs: “Michael the archangel and Satan were individual human beings, Joshua being Michael and Tatnai, Satan” (pp. 6, 16).

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

10.1 Examining the Tatnai Explanation

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

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

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

requiring something in relation to Moses' body is no argument that "the body of Moses" mentioned at Jude 9 was any other than his literal body.

10.2 Other Explanations

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

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

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

10.3 The 2 Peter Chapter 2 and Jude Parallels

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

"Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them [wicked men] before the Lord." – 2 Peter 2:11.

Jude follows the same line of reasoning, saying:

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

Are these similar? Yes. But notice that Peter mentions "angels" (plural). Jude has "Michael the archangel" (singular). If the argument is that "the devil" (singular) of Jude 9 is the same as the wicked men (plural) of 2 Peter 2:11, will the Christadelphian consistently argue that "Michael the archangel" (singular) of Jude 9 is the same as the "angels" (plural) of 2 Peter 2:11? Really, then,

are Peter and Jude exactly parallel? No. Peter and Jude seem to have been addressing the same dangers to the first century congregation. Yet a careful comparison of 2 Peter chapter 2 and Jude 1-25 indicates that they often chose *different* examples to prove the same point. Jude refers to the Israelites saved from Egypt but Peter does not. Peter refers to the ungodly world of Noah's day but Jude does not. Jude refers to Cain and Korah but Peter does not. Same objective, but different examples.

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

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

11 Satan in Revelation 12

The seminal Christadelphian work explaining the Revelation is John Thomas' *Eureka - An Exposition of the Apocalypse*. It contains a detailed exposition, much of it fanciful and entirely arbitrary. Many Christadelphians have been unable to agree with it and alternative explanations have been offered which have themselves become objects of debate.⁴ So one of their number, P. Billington writes:

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

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

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

However, the Christadelphian does not have “expositional knowledge” that is unchallenged, even in his own community. Abel makes it sound as if the details of the prophecy are irrelevant to the identity of Satan the Devil in Revelation 12. Are they? Consider some of them.

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

Thomas, for no good reason but that it fits his developing historical thesis, proposes that Michael is Constantine(!).⁵ He acknowledges the Bible's earlier references to Michael at Daniel 10:13; 12:1, but he does not allow the Bible to interpret itself. He simply denies that “*the* Michael [Greek]” of Revelation 12:7 is the same person as there. Even so, to Thomas, Michael is still a person; not a spirit person but an individual person nevertheless. We now have at least three *persons* in Revelation chapter 12: God, Christ and Michael.

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

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

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

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

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

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

12 Early Post-Biblical Writings

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

When presented with this argument, Christadelphians can only cite evidence for their view among those who claimed to be Christians back to the year 1651 at the earliest. And they certainly have searched! They claim to be able to trace it in Judaism back to the first century, but it should be noted that they can cite only one first-century, one second-century and one third-century Jewish reference in the first three Christian centuries.⁶ Even if there were more, Judaistic opinions in the Christian period are of no value.

There are hundreds of references to Satan the Devil in the writings of professed Christians during this period and they adopt the prevailing concept that he is an ‘external’ Devil, an invisible spirit adversary.

It is of course true that apostasy was well underway by this time and that therefore much falsehood is evident in the writings of the period. It is possible, for example, to show evidence that wrong views about the relationship between God and Christ were developing. Yet, there is also plenty of evidence showing that ‘Christians’ of the period still viewed Christ as subordinate to the Father. In other words, the development of apostate ideas was gradual.

But regarding Satan the Devil the situation is quite different. There is *no* evidence of the Christadelphian view. There is nothing in the writings of the so-called church ‘fathers’ or apologists to parallel the lengthy modern-day articles of Christadelphians and others to counter the personal-spirit-Devil concept. They seem just to have accepted it, as the writers of the Christian Scriptures did.

13 Origins of the Satan Concept

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

13.1 An Evasion of Responsibility?

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

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

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

14 Other Evidence

Consider now some texts consistent with the existence of an 'external' spirit Devil and demons.

At Ephesians 4:26-27 Paul exhorts: "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil.." The word "neither" sets the Devil as an entity apart from either human sin or a provoked state of mind. This is consistent with the Biblical presentation of "the Satan" and "the Devil" as an entity 'external' to a person.

As Belial (a common Jewish term for Satan) he is contrasted with the supernatural Christ (not with the "good" in human beings — 2 Cor. 6:15.

James 2:19 says: "the demons believe and shudder." James was discussing a certain kind of belief demonstrated by works but without genuine faith which may produce emotional reactions. Faith is a condition of the heart and mind. To teach his point, James speaks of demons who had this capacity yet failed to exercise true faith. He does not say that persons with the demons shudder, but that demons themselves shudder.

15 The Nature of Demons

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

15.1 Differentiated From the Possessed Person

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

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

Verse 41 adds:

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

The demon spoke as a member of a class of demons: “what have *we* [plural] to do with thee?” Jesus then addressed the demon as distinct from the man: “come out of *him* [singular].” In verse 41 the Greek participles “crying out” and “saying” are neuter plural agreeing with and referring to the demons. They cannot refer to the men, which would have required a masculine plural. Jesus then rebuked “them” (again, neuter plural, the demons, not the men). Throughout the account, as everywhere in the New Testament, the demons are distinct from their victims.

15.2 Knew Things Humans Did Not

The demons recognized Jesus as Messiah and as the Son of God when ordinary people did not. As quoted above, the demon said: “What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? *I know thee who thou art*; the Holy One of God.” (Lu 4:33, 34; cp. Mr 1:23, 24) And elsewhere: “when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, *thou Son of God*? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” (Mt 8:28, 29; see also Mr 3:11; Lu 4:41; 8:28) How is it that some mental or physical aberration gave sick humans such extraordinary insight?

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

Also significant is that Jesus discussed demons privately with his disciples without qualification. Were they also ignorant of the real meaning of demons? Was Jesus humouring them also? Why did Jesus never move into the same expository explanation of the ‘true’ nature of the Devil and demons so common today among those who deny the existence of personal demons? (Lu 10:20; 11:14-28) Why do we not find the same lengthy argument against their existence in the ‘New Testament’ as we do in Christadelphian publications?

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

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

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

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

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

Certain texts link demons with pagan idols. For example, 1 Corinthians 10:20 says: “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils [demons, Greek].” Deuteronomy 32:17 agrees: “They sacrificed unto devils [demons], not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.” Psalm 106:36, 37 says: “And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils [demons].”

It would be wrong, however, to identify demons so closely with idols as to conclude that they actually were idols. First-century usage precludes this, Bible writers affirming the casting out of demons from people. Demons, then, were capable of entering and afterward leaving a person. Obviously, this was not possible if they were idols. Revelation 9:20 provides a comment that helps us discern a distinction between demons and idols: “that they should not worship devils [demons, Greek], *and* idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk.” Demons are mentioned separately from and in addition to idols, but they are the unseen force behind idolatry.

The proposition that demons can be equated with diseases or mental aberrations is entirely contrary to the usage of the term in the Christian Scriptures. If demon means epilepsy and mental disease, then it must be shown how epilepsy and mental disease can believe (Jas 2:19: “the demons believe and shudder.”) and produce false “teachings” (1Ti 4:10)⁷.

Not that, at 1 Corinthians 10:20, “demons” are in contrasting parallel to God: “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We can be sure that the demons in these texts are not epileptic, paralytic or any other kind of illness or sickness because they mentioned in addition to and different from these mental or physical disorders. Of course, and as expected, the demons may also cause certain illnesses in people just as malevolent humans may injure or cause others to become ill by various means, but this is not to say demons should be identified with physical or mental disorders.

Christadelphians argue that Jesus spoke of lunacy without necessarily believing in the power of the moon to produce madness. But the use of the word “lunacy” is in no way parallel to the use of demon terminology in the Christian Scriptures.

For example, the Bible speaks of demons entering and leaving their victims. This is quite different to Jesus’ speaking of lunacy. Jesus actually spoke directly to demons. If Jesus had spoken to the moon, forbidding it to influence someone, as he did with demons, this would have implied that he accepted the belief that the moon really does influence illness. Jesus never speaks this way of lunacy, but he does of demons because they were real persons.

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

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

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

15.3 Unclean Spirits, Not Flesh

There are many Bible texts that point to a distinction between spirits and persons of flesh, among them the following.

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

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

John 4:24 “God is a Spirit.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But demons are many times called spirits, spirits differentiated from God, Christ and the angels as unclean spirits. The following are examples.

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

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

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

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

This presentation of demons as spirits is a personal presentation of the same kind as that of God, Christ and the angels, although “unclean.” It is entirely dissimilar to the impersonal Biblical presentation of the human spirit.

It is also dissimilar to the holy spirit. While the holy spirit is personified as an exception in a limited context (Joh 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26; 16:13) and is very rarely said to speak and, even then, always through the Scriptures or a human agent (Ac 1:16; 8:29; 10:19; 13:2), a range of personal actions and speech are attributed to demons. And as shown above, the demons are said to speak separately from any human and with information unknown to any human. While God was the Source of information in the case of humans who spoke under the influence of holy spirit, who was the source of the information spoken under the influence of unclean spirits?

15.4 Capable of Miracles

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

Would we say that God empowered the Egyptian magicians for some reason? Paul speaks of how the Egyptians “Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses,” likening them to men in his own day, “men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.” (2Ti 3:8) These were hardly agents of

God. Jesus said: “*Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation.*” (Mt 12:25) This must therefore be true, not only of Satan’s kingdom, but also of God’s kingdom. For him to do such a thing would be to undermine his own sovereignty fatally. The power of demonic miracles is real and must be explained by those who deny the existence of demons.