

SATAN AND DEMONS

A Reply To Anthony Buzzard

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Introduction

This paper is a reply to Anthony Buzzard's challenge to Christadelphians, the article entitled 'Satan – The Personal Devil'.

For the sake of convenience, Buzzard's arguments are listed under separate headings, and the text of his article which presents each argument is to be found here under those headings.

This means that the text of Buzzard's article is not presented here in the order in which it originally appears in the article – it is presented thematically, in order for the reader to identify conveniently the arguments Buzzard has made, and read the response to each one of them.

The following is a list of the headings under which Buzzard's arguments have been grouped:

- **The Alleged Novelty Of The Christadelphian Interpretation:** Buzzard argues that the absence of the Christadelphian interpretation of satan and demons from Christian exposition for the first 1,800 years is evidence that it should be considered suspect.
- **'The' Satan Cannot Be 'A' Satan:** Buzzard argues that the repeated use of the definite article to identify **the** satan, or **the** devil, is evidence that the Christadelphian interpretation of these words as referring to **generic** identities (**an** adversary, **a** devil), is both bad grammar and bad exposition.
- **Christadelphians Divided Over Satan:** Buzzard argues that the divided opinion among Christadelphians as to the identity of the satan in the record of the wilderness temptation of Christ, is evidence our community is struggling to find a way to insert into the text an interpretation which is contrary to it, in order to avoid the conclusion that a supernatural being of evil is involved.
- **The Temptation In The Wilderness:** Buzzard argues that the Biblical record of Christ's temptation in the wilderness not only remains a problem unsolvable by Christadelphian expositors, but explicitly contradicts the Christadelphian interpretations, and that the most natural reading is that Christ was tempted by a supernatural being of evil.
- **Satan In The Old Testament:** Buzzard argues that the Old Testament bears witness to an external satan which cannot be reconciled with Christadelphian interpretations, but which must be a supernatural being of evil.
- **Satan As A Fallen Angel:** Buzzard argues that the Bible identifies satan clearly as a fallen angel, thus contradicting the Christadelphian understanding of satan.
- **New Testament Teaching On Demons:** Buzzard argues that the New Testament (especially the gospel records), speaks of demons using language which cannot be reconciled with the Christadelphian interpretation, unless it is to be assumed that both Christ and the New Testament authors were practicing a deliberate deceit on their readers.

Buzzard's article consists of some 18 A4 pages, including many quotes from commentators who share his views, as well as quotes from Christadelphian works he criticizes. It should be noted that Buzzard's original article is not quoted here in full. Since Buzzard frequently repeats his arguments, and often quotes from commentators who offer no arguments different to those which he has already presented, only his arguments have been reproduced here, not the entire text of his article.

It was not considered necessary to repeat every one of Buzzard's quotations from commentators who agree with him, but where Buzzard has borrowed an argument from a commentator by quoting him in order to **articulate or expand** his own arguments, these quotations have been included and replied to.

The reader may be assured, however, that although Buzzard's entire article is not presented here, every one of the arguments in it most definitely is. Those wishing to view Buzzard's complete article will find it online here:

<http://www.mindspring.com/~anthonybuzzard/satan.htm>

Passages of Scripture are quoted from the NRSV unless noted otherwise, and the emphasis in bold found in a number of quotations from both Scripture and other writings, has been added.

This work is divided into two sections. The first section deals specifically with Buzzard's arguments against the Christadelphian understanding of satan and demons, quoting Buzzard and then replying to his case. The second section provides an exposition of certain key passages relating to the topic of satan and demons, providing the Scriptural teaching on the subject.

It should also be noted that this work is largely directed towards replying to Buzzard's criticism of the Christadelphian position on satan and demons, and is therefore not intended to be a complete exposition of the subject itself. Whilst many of the key passages are in fact interpreted and explained, it is not the purpose of this work to repeat the work which has been carried out so well by others, in expounding the entirety of the Scriptural teaching concerning satan and demons.

For those seeking a more extensive exposition of Scriptural teaching concerning satan and demons, the following Christadelphian works are recommended:

- Brother John Allfree, 'Demon Possession'
- Brother Andrew Perry, 'Demons, Magic and Medicine'
- Brother Peter Watkins, 'The Devil, The Great Deceiver'

The Alleged Novelty Of The Christadelphian Interpretation

- **Argument:** Buzzard argues that the almost complete absence of the Christadelphian interpretation of satan and demons from Bible exposition for the first 1,800 years is evidence that it should be considered suspect.
- **Reply:** Buzzard's claim is proved false by the witness of a number of Christian expositors who held the same understanding as the Christadelphians, up to almost 300 years before Brother Thomas. In addition, the Christadelphian understanding is found among some of the earliest Jewish expositors, pre-dating Brother Thomas by over 1,600 years.

Buzzard writes:

'Alan Eyre's informative book, *The Protesters*, traces the fascinating history of those who through the centuries have shared the "unorthodox" beliefs of the Christadelphians and groups such as the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith. These tenets include the firm belief in the future millennial reign of Christ on earth, in the mortal soul, in One God, the rejection of the Trinity, and the refusal to take part in war. It is however very remarkable that Eyre was able to find only two references to the extraordinary belief that Satan in the Bible refers to the evil in human nature, and not to a personal being.

[...]

It would also be fair to ask them [Christadelphians] to produce some evidence of this belief having been seriously entertained by anyone other than those who came under the influence of John Thomas and Robert Roberts.'

Research by Brother Steve Snobelen has produced the evidence requested by Buzzard.

Men who rejected the concept of Satan or the Devil as a literal supernatural agent of evil, include the following:

- **1651:** Thomas Hobbes
- **1695:** Balthassar Bekker
- **1727:** Sir Isaac Newton
- **1761:** Hugh Farmer (at least in the account of Christ's temptation)
- **1791:** William Ashdowne
- **1804:** John Simpson
- **1842:** John Epps

Men who rejected the concept of demons as literal supernatural agents of evil (arguing instead that they were physical sicknesses and illnesses), include the following:

- **1651:** Thomas Hobbes
- **1695:** Balthassar Bekker
- **1727:** Sir Isaac Newton
- **1737:** Arthur Sykes
- **1742:** Nathaniel Lardner
- **1755:** Richard Meade
- **1804:** John Simpson
- **1842:** John Epps

A full copy of Brother Snobelen's research is found in Appendix A. It is unlikely that any of these men 'came under the influence of John Thomas and Robert Roberts'.

This same research was presented directly to Buzzard by Brother Snobelen during an email debate of the issue of satan, but no mention of it is to be found in Buzzard's article.

Though Buzzard's article was most likely written prior to the email discussion, it would have been appropriate for Buzzard to have at least updated his article on receipt of this information, to qualify the absolute claims he makes in it which have now been demonstrated inaccurate.

Buzzard writes:

'It is a fact that the believer in the non-personality of Satan must hold that belief against practically all of his brethren who share with him a rejection of traditional dogmas. The works of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, spokesmen for the Church in the second century, show no Trinitarianism in the later, Chalcedonian sense (though they do not retain belief in the fully human Messiah of the New Testament); they contain no belief in the survival of the soul in heaven after death, nor in eternal hell-fire; they are also strongly millenarian.

The notion that Satan is not a personal being, however, is utterly foreign to their writings. This will mean that Irenaeus, the "grand pupil" of John the Apostle, through Polycarp, had gone badly astray on this major point: the proper understanding of Satan. Is such a proposition credible?'

The proposition is equally credible with the proposition that these same men were astray in that 'they do not retain belief in the fully human Messiah of the New Testament'.

Buzzard finds no difficulties in understanding that these men could have 'gone badly astray' with regard to a fundamental doctrine of the gospel (without which it becomes meaningless), but unprepared to believe that they could have gone astray with regard to their understanding of satan and the devil.

This is curious enough, but becomes even more so given that Buzzard must surely be aware that the reason for their going astray on the subject of the devil is the same as the reason for their going astray on the nature of Christ. To the Greek mind, locked into the superstition of multiple divine beings and supernatural agents of evil, even the very concept of monotheism was a struggle, as we know not only from the writings of the early Greek Christians, but also from the witness of Scripture itself.

Several examples from Acts will help to demonstrate the extent of this superstition among the Greeks, whilst also providing a number of compelling arguments against Buzzard's overall case:

- In Acts 14:11, Luke records the incident in which both Paul and Barnabas were mistaken by the local people for gods, on account of Paul's miraculous healing of the lame man
- In Acts 17:18, Luke records the incident of Paul's preaching at Athens, on which occasion when he taught of Christ and the resurrection he was understood by some to be teaching people about new demons
- In Acts 28:6, Luke records the incident in which Paul (bitten by a poisonous snake), shakes it off and miraculously comes to no harm, by reason of which the local people conclude he is a god

Not only do these examples demonstrate the extent to which the Greek mind was possessed by superstition, they also stand as a powerful witness against the arguments of Buzzard.

The first and third incidents (Acts 14:11, 28:6) both show the difficulty which the Greek mind had in comprehending that a man could wield Divine power and authority without being, himself, Divine:

Acts 14:

8 In Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet and had never walked, for he had been crippled from birth.

9 He listened to Paul as he was speaking. And Paul, looking at him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed,

10 **said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And the man sprang up and began to walk.**

11 When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, **"The gods have come down to us in human form!"**

12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.

13 The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates; he and the crowds wanted to offer sacrifice.

Acts 28:

3 Paul had gathered a bundle of brushwood and was putting it on the fire, **when a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand.**

4 When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "his man must be a murderer; though he has escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live."

5 He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.

6 They were expecting him to swell up or drop dead, **but after they had waited a long time and saw that nothing unusual had happened to him, they changed their minds and began to say that he was a god.**

To the Jewish mind, accustomed to Old Testament teaching on the principles of agency and representation by which God appoints a man to speak or act on his behalf, such a concept was both familiar and acceptable. Whilst it is true that some of Christ's enemies believed him to be usurping or laying claim unlawfully to certain Divine rights or powers, not a single Jew ever thought that the miracles performed by Christ proved that he was a Divine being, and the gospel record indicates that many recognised that he was a man Divinely appointed to exercise power and authority on God's behalf.

Buzzard is well aware that many Christians today commit the same superstitious error as the Greeks - attributing Divinity to Christ on account of his exercise of Divine powers and authority - and rightly rejects it as an argument for the doctrine that Christ is God.

But his own use of the same error in his attempt to argue that the Satan of Job must necessarily be a supernatural agent of evil is equally flawed, and demonstrates a serious inconsistency in his reasoning.

The second incident in the list (Acts 17:18, in which Paul, preaching in Athens, is understood by some of his audience to be teaching of new demons), is a New Testament 'demon' passage of such importance to the issue under discussion that it is incredible that Buzzard has failed completely to address it.

Acts 17:

18 Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him. Some said, "What does this babbler want to say?" Others said, "**He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities [Greek 'demons']**." **(This was because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.)**

The word commonly translated 'gods' here is the Greek word *daimonia*, meaning demons. Other translations make this clear:

Rotherham:

18 But, certain both of the Epicurean and of the Stoic philosophers, were encountering him; and some were saying—What might this picker-up-of-scrap wish to be saying? And, others—**Of foreign demons**, he seemeth to be a declarer: because, of Jesus and the Resurrection, he was announcing the joyful tidings.

Darby (1890):

18 But some also of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers attacked him. And some said, What would this chatterer say? and some, He seems to be an announcer **of foreign demons**, because he announced the glad tidings of Jesus and the resurrection *to them*.

Young's Literal:

18 And certain of the Epicurean and of the Stoic philosophers, were meeting together to see him, and some were saying, 'What would this seed picker wish to say?' and others, '**Of strange demons** he doth seem to be an announcer;' because Jesus and the rising again he did proclaim to them as good news,

Given that Paul was preaching the gospel concerning Christ and the resurrection, how is it possible that some thought he was teaching of **demons**? The answer is that for the 1st century Jew and pagan, a demon was not the powerful, supernatural, but non-Divine being of evil in which so many Christians today believe – a demon was none other than a god. The Early Christian Fathers are a witness to this fact (see Appendix B), and we see further evidence of it here in Acts 17:18.

When Paul taught of Christ and the resurrection, certain of the Athenians interpreted his message as a doctrine of **new gods**. This is noted by a number of standard Bible commentaries:

'A setter forth of strange gods - **Ξένων δαιμονίων**

Of strange or foreign demons. That this was strictly forbidden, both at Rome and Athens, see on Act_16:21 (note).

There was a difference, in the heathen theology, between θεος, god, and δαιμων, demon: the θεοι, were such as were gods by nature: the δαιμονια, were men who were deified.

This distinction seems to be in the mind of these philosophers **when they said that the apostles seemed to be setters forth of strange demons, because they preached unto them Jesus**, whom they showed to be a man, suffering and dying, **but afterwards raised to the throne of God.**

This would appear to them tantamount with the deification of heroes, etc., who had been thus honored for their especial services to mankind.

Horace expresses this in two lines, 2 Epist. i. 5: -

Romulus, et Liber pater, et cum Castore Pollux,
Post ingentia facta, deorum in templa recepti.

“Romulus, father Bacchus, with Castor and Pollux, for their eminent services, **have been received into the temples of the gods.**”

Adam Clarke, 'Commentary On the Bible', note on Acts 17:18, 1813

'Of strange gods. Of foreign gods, or demons. They worshipped many gods themselves; and as they believed that every country had its own peculiar divinities, **they supposed that Paul had come to announce the existence of some such foreign, and to them unknown divinities.**

The word translated *gods* *daimoniwn*, denotes, properly, the genii, or spirits who were superior to men, but inferior to the gods. **It is, however, often employed to denote the gods themselves; and is evidently so used here.** The *gods* among the Greeks were such as were supposed to have that rank by nature. **The demons were such as had been exalted to divinity from being heroes and distinguished men.'**

Albert Barnes, 'New Testament Notes', note on Acts 17:18, 1851

'The meaning of this phrase is not clear. **Literally it reads “strange deities”** (see BDAG 210 s.v. **daimovnion** 1). The note of not being customary is important. In the ancient world what was new was suspicious. **The plural daimoniwn (daimoniwn, “deities”) shows the audience grappling with Paul’s teaching that God was working through Jesus.'**

The 'New English Translation', footnote on Acts 17:18, 2003

We have noted previously the difficulties encountered by the superstitious Greeks when confronted with the teaching regarding a man Divinely appointed to exercise power and authority on God's behalf.

To the Greeks, such a 'man' would be no man but a god. The footnote from the NET is especially significant here, demonstrating what we have already argued – that the Greeks experienced great difficulty in comprehending that Christ could wield such power and authority as the apostles taught, without himself being a Divine being. As the footnote says, they were 'grappling with Paul's teaching that God was working through Jesus'.

A few verses later, Paul describes the men of Athens using a Greek word which again shows that the word for 'demons' was understood to refer to gods:

Acts 17:

18 When Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how **extremely religious** you are in every way.

The Greek word here translated 'extremely religious' is in fact a compound word meaning 'demon-fearing'.

The well known Greek grammarian A T Robertson (quoted with great approval by Buzzard in his own article), comments in this way on the word:

‘**δεισιδαιμων** is a neutral word (from δειδω, to fear, **and δαιμων, deity**). The Greeks used it either in the good sense of pious or religious or the bad sense of superstitious.’

A T Robertson, 'New Testament Word Pictures', note on Acts 17:22

The same understanding is presented by the 19th century Baptist minister Edward Elliott:

'In the New Testament the word *daimonia* is similarly used in this sense.

First, it is used **as a simple designative of the imaginary heathen god**. So in the narrative of St. Paul's visit to Athens, Acts xvii. 18, 22, by the Athenians directly; " He seemeth to be a setter forth of **strange *daimonia*, or gods;**" *xenwn daimwniwn*: also impliedly by St. Paul ; "I see that ye are *deisidaimonesteroi* , very much given to **worshipping *daimonia*, demons, heathen gods.**"

His comment on which, as well as on the idol-inscription he had seen, is not to be forgotten; "Him, whom ye ignorantly worship, [God, not the *daemon*,] declare I unto you."

The same, I believe with Dr. Campbell, is the meaning of the term in 1 Cor. x. 20, 21 ; "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice *daimonois*, to *demons*, and not to God." For by Corinthians, as by Athenians, such would, I conceive, be understood as the meaning of the word.

St. Paul's representation of the case of the heathen, so understood by them, would then **precisely agree with that given in Deut. xxxii. 17, already commented on;** and indeed with **the Apostle's own notice of it at Athens.**

Nor, as to his argument against intercommunion in respect of things offered **to heathen gods**, would it be rendered nugatory by this view of them as mere idol vanities; any more than in the appeal made elsewhere in the epistle, "What communion hath the temple of God with (**not a devil but**) an **idol?**" 2 Cor. vi. 16.

There is certainly **no necessity here for the sense of devil**, so as Dr. Maitland would have it, on this ground.

And indeed Dr. C.'s remark seems unanswerable: - that the heathen **could not be said to have sacrificed to devilish satanic spirit**, either abstractedly considered, or in respect of intention; **seeing they had not even a notion of the Devil, or Satan, of Holy Scripture.**'

Elliott, 'Horae Apocalypticæ', volume II, pages 500-1, 5th edition, 1862

Elliott's study on demons is very useful to our examination of the subject, and more of it can be found in Appendix C. Importantly, we can see from Acts 17:18, 22 that to the 1st century Greek mind a demon was in fact a god. Later we shall see Scriptural evidence for the fact that the same definition was held among the Jews, since it had been taught consistently by the Old Testament.

The significance of this is immense. We now see that Buzzard's belief in the demons of contemporary Christian thought constitutes a belief in what Scripture identifies clearly as the gods of the pagans.

It is for Buzzard to explain to us why he wishes us to convert to a belief in the gods of the pagans which Scripture insists in so many places:

- Are false gods
- Are not to be acknowledged by true believers (to do so is idolatry)
- Do not exist

Of course Buzzard does not himself **actually** believe in the gods of the pagans, for he is a strict monotheist. His definition of demons identifies them as them as powerful supernatural agents of evil, but not as Divine beings, and certainly not as gods. In fact, Buzzard holds to the belief that the demons of Scripture are fallen angels, under the command of the chief of the fallen angels, satan.

But this does not change the fact that Buzzard's views contradict clear Scriptural teaching on this matter. It is not enough for Buzzard to appeal to a definition of demons which supports his idea – especially where the definition to which he appeals contradicts the definition found in the Bible.

By doing so, he repeats the error of those trinitarians who agree wholeheartedly that God is one (but who appeal to an unBiblical definition of 'one' which actually means 'three in one'), or those who worship dead 'saints' or who worship Mary the mother of Christ, under definitions of 'worship' which they believe avoid the Biblical charge of idolatry.

But attempting to excuse such behaviour by using definitions of these activities other than the definitions found in Scripture is hardly a valid practice, as Buzzard himself would readily acknowledge. It must be said, however, that Buzzard's own definition of demons is as entirely foreign to Scripture as are these.

The fact remains that according to the Biblical definition of demons, Buzzard is attempting to foster a belief in the gods of the pagans. Buzzard's attempts to redefine demons as fallen angels are futile if the Scriptural definition is acknowledged as true – and unless Buzzard's definition is to be considered as superior to the Bible's, then it is Buzzard's definition which must give way.

Buzzard writes:

'To say that the Trinity, in the popular sense, is not in the Bible is in fact only to say what numerous scholars admit. To proclaim the future millennial reign of Christ is to echo the opinions of the first 250 years of Christianity and of many noted theologians of all ages. To deny the immortality of the soul is to align oneself with scores of scriptural experts from all denominations. To deny that *the* Satan (i.e. Satan as a proper name) is an external being in Scripture, is, however, virtually unknown in the history of exegesis. Such a situation demands an explanation which will fit the facts of history as well as the facts of the Bible.'

We have already seen from Brother Steve Snobelen's research that the understanding of satan and demons held by Christadelphians is far from 'virtually unknown in the history of exegesis'. It was also held by Christians who lived prior to the formation of our community by almost three centuries.

An additional weight of evidence against the idea that the Christadelphian understanding is unique (or almost unique), is to be found among the Jewish commentaries.

The following Jewish sources contain expositions of 'satan' or 'Belial' which hold to the same interpretation as Christadelphians:

- Rabbi Jonathan Ben Uzziel's paraphrase of Zechariah 3:1, in Targum Jonathan (also known as Targum Pseuod-Jonathan), **1st to 2nd century AD**
- Numerous passages in Talmud Babylon (an early collection of rabbinical commentaries), compiled from the **4th to 5th centuries AD**
- The interpretation of satan in Job 1:6 given by Saadia Ben Joseph, **892-942**
- The interpretation of the prompting of David to number the people in 2 Samuel 24:1 and the satan in Zechariah 3:1-2 given by Rabbi David Kimchi, born **1160**
- The interpretation of the prompting of David to number the people in 2 Samuel 24:1 given by the medieval Jewish commentator Levi ben Gershon, **1280-1344**

Specific Jewish witnesses include:

- **100s AD:** Rabbi Jonathan Ben Uzziel
- **135-160:** Rabbi Joshua Ben Kar'ha
- **230-270:** Rabbi Simeon Ben Lakish
- **330-360:** Rabbi Nachman Ben Isaac
- **400s (?):** Rabbi Judah (approving Nachman's interpretation)
- **892-942:** Saadia Ben Joseph
- **1160 (b):** Rabbi David Kimchi
- **1344 (d):** Lay commentator Levi ben Gershon

Not only is this a significant list of independent witnesses to the antiquity of the Christadelphian interpretation, it is also remarkable for the fact that it is found consistently over so many centuries.

We shall now examine these witnesses individually, in chronological order. In the following examples a passage of Scripture will be quoted, and then the Jewish interpretation presented.

Our first witness is the 1st century Rabbi Jonathan Ben Uzziel. In his commentary on Psalm 103:14, Gill notes Ben Uzziel's reference to the 'evil inclination' as the cause of sin:

Psalm 103:

14 **For he knows our frame**; he remembers that we are dust.

'The word used ['frame'] is the same that is rendered "imagination", Ge 6:5 8:21, **and by which the Jews generally express the depravity and corruption of nature**; and so the Targum here paraphrases it,

"for he knows our evil concupiscence, [the 'evil inclination'] which causes us to sin;"

John Gill, 'Commentary On the Bible', note on Psalm 103:14, 1748

There is no suggestion here that the cause of sin is ever a supernatural evil being called 'Satan'.

In his commentary on Zechariah 3:1, John Gill notes another exposition of Rabbi Ben Uzziel's which is also exactly in keeping with the Christadelphian understanding of satan as a personification of sin:

Zechariah 3:

1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, **and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.**

'The Targum [the Targum of Jonathan Ben Uzziel] paraphrases it,

"and sin standing at his right hand to resist him:"

John Gill, 'Commentary On the Bible', note on Zechariah 3:1, 1748

The paraphrase '**sin** standing at his right hand to resist him' of the text '**the satan**' standing at his right hand to resist him', is precisely what Buzzard has insisted that the Jews **would never** have done, and yet we see here an exposition which contradicts Buzzard completely.

The fact that the phrase '**the satan**' was interpreted here as a personification of sin is noteworthy, since it demonstrates that such personification was current among the Jews even at the very time that the gospels were written – a fact in opposition to Buzzard's claims.

Our second witness is Rabbi Joshua Ben Kar'ha (135-160). In Talmud Babylon (the collected writings of the early rabbis, compiled between the 4th and 5th centuries AD), Ben Kar'ha is recorded as having said the following

'As we have learned in the following Boraitha: R. Joshua b. Kar'ha said: He whose eyes are shut to charity is likened unto an idolater; and this is to be taken from an analogy of expression in the following verses: Concerning charity it is written: **"Beware that there be not Belial in thy heart"**; and concerning idolatry, it is written: **"There have gone forth children of Belial."**

Talmud Babylon, Tractate Baba Bathra, Part I, Chapter 1, Rodkinson's 2nd edition, 1918

What is it that Rabbi Ben Kar'ha calls 'Belial' in Deuteronomy 15:9?

Deuteronomy 15:

9 **Be careful that you do not entertain a mean thought** [Hebrew 'word with thine heart of Belial'], thinking, "The seventh year, the year of remission, is near," and therefore view your needy neighbor with hostility and give nothing; your neighbor might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt.

It is the '**mean thought**' which Ben Kar'ha calls 'Belial', proving that there was a common understanding among the Jews that 'Belial' referred not to an external supernatural evil being, but to evil thoughts within the heart of men.

To have a 'heart of Belial' (a mean thought in one's heart), was described as having '**Belial in your heart**' – a phrase strikingly similar to the phrase found in these New Testament passages:

Luke 22:

3 **Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot**, who was one of the twelve;

John 13:

2 **The devil had already put it into the heart** of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him.

27 After he received the piece of bread, **Satan entered into him**. Jesus said to him, "Do quickly what you are going to do."

Acts 5:

3 "Ananias," Peter asked, "Why has **Satan filled your heart** to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land?"

We shall consider these passages in detail later, but the similarity of terms is worth noting here. Our third witness is Rabbi Simeon Ben Lakish (230-270 AD):

Resh Lakish said: Satan, the evil prompter, and the Angel of Death are all one. He is called Satan, as it is written, And Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord. **He is called the evil prompter:** [we know this because] it is written in another place, **[Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart] was only evil continually,** and it is written here [in connection with Satan] 'Only upon himself put not forth thine hand.

The same is also the Angel of Death, since it says, Only spare his life, which shows that Job's life belonged to him.'

Talmud Babylon, Tractate Baba Bathra, Part I, Chapter 1 (or Folio 16a), Rabbi I Epstein (editor), Soncino edition, (originally printed 1935-1948), quote here from the reprint 1952-1961

The phrase 'the evil imagination' (sometimes translated 'evil inclination'), is an English translation of the Hebrew phrase 'yetzer ha-ra', used in rabbinical teaching to speak of the natural inclination in men to do evil (the same inclination noted by Paul in Romans 7, where he calls it by metonymy 'sin which dwells in me').

Noteworthy here is Rabbi Lakish's identification of satan and the angel of death with the 'evil imagination'. To Rabbi Lakish, these three are one, meaning that satan and the angel of death are personifications or representations of the 'evil imagination'. This is once more a personification of the very kind which Buzzard insists would never have been understood by the Jews. Christadelphians would naturally disagree with Lakish that the angel of death is merely a personification, but the fact that he is appealing to this device remains.

It could be argued by Buzzard that Lakish's comment is not a personification of the 'evil imagination' as satan and the angel of death, but rather that the 'evil inclination' is being identified as being both the temptations of satan, and the destruction of the angel of death, but this would place a very strained interpretation on the text.

In his commentary on 2 Corinthians 12:7, John Gill (himself a skilled Hebraist and authority on rabbinical exposition), actually notes this comment by Lakish, and understands Lakish to be saying '**Satan, he is the evil imagination**', in accordance with the argument we are making here (we shall see Gill's note on this passage shortly).

Buzzard may have reason to believe that a Christadelphian would have cause to interpret the comment by Lakish in a manner favourable to Christadelphian doctrine, but he must acknowledge that Gill (an orthodox Baptist who believed firmly in satan as a supernatural evil being and who wrote a little over 100 years before Brother Thomas), has no reason at all to interpret Lakish in such a manner.

We see therefore that Gill's independent interpretation of Lakish in the same manner presented here is solid proof of the fact that Lakish was identifying satan as a personification of the 'evil imagination'.

Our fourth and fifth witnesses are Rabbi Nachman Ben Isaac (330-360), and Rabbi Judah (400s AD?), whose comments are also found in Talmud Babylon:

Micah 7:

5 Put no trust in a neighbor, have no confidence in a friend; guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your bosom;

'It is written: "Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a confidant." **It means, if the evil imagination say to thee, Do thou sin and the Lord will forgive**, be not persuaded, as it is written: "Trust ye not in **an evil one**"; and "**an evil one**" is **nothing but the evil imagination, as it is written: "The imagination of a man's heart is evil"**; and there is no "guide" but the Lord, as it is written: "My father, the guide of my youth art thou."

Talmud Babylon, Book III, Tractate Hagiga, chapter 2, Rodkinson's 2nd edition, 1918

This commentary was quoted with approval by Rabbi Judah, from the earlier Rabbi Nachman Ben Isaac, and is remarkable for two reasons. Firstly, because it clearly personifies the 'evil imagination' in a manner which Buzzard claims the Jews would never have understood.

Secondly – and even more strikingly – because it describes the 'evil imagination' as speaking to an individual, **as if it were an external personal tempter**.

There is no doubt that the 'evil imagination' here spoken of is the **internal** inclination of men to sin rather than an external source of temptation. This is proved not only by the quotation of Genesis 6:5 regarding the imagination of men's hearts, but also from the clear statement 'and "an evil one" **is nothing but the evil inclination**'.

Yet in this passage, we find that 'the evil imagination' (undoubtedly the natural inclination in men to sin), is personified to the exact extent that Christadelphians believe it to be personified in the gospel accounts of Christ's temptation in the wilderness:

- It is an **internal inclination** described as an **external** tempter (it must be remembered this commentary is given as the explanation of the passage in Micah 7:5 'Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide', which speaks very obviously of an external person, but is interpreted as the temptations of the **internal** 'evil imagination')
- It is an **internal inclination** which is personified as **speaking directly** to the person it tempts to sin (a figure which Buzzard has expressly denied that any Jew would understand)
- It is an **internal inclination** which is personified as attempting to **persuade** the individual, just as an **external tempter** would do

Of course there is no doubt that Rabbi Ben Isaac was in fact extrapolating from the passage in Micah a warning which was not actually there (the text does read naturally as a warning not to trust another literal human being, rather than a specific warning against the 'evil inclination').

Nevertheless, Ben Isaac's over-enthusiastic interpretation does not invalidate the argument we can draw from his commentary – that the 'evil inclination' was so well understood to be personified by early rabbis, that they even read it into passages which were more obviously speaking of literal men and women.

The extent to which this agrees with the Christadelphian 'internal source' understanding of the temptation of Christ in the wilderness is best illustrated by comparing the passage from the Talmud with the record of Christ's temptation:

- Rabbi Nachman Ben Isaac:

If the evil imagination say to thee, Do thou sin and the Lord will forgive,
be not persuaded, **as it is written**: "Trust ye not in an evil one"

- Matthew 4:2-4:

And he fasted forty days and forty nights, **and afterward he was hungry**.

And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

But he answered, "**It is written**, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'

The very fact that this temptation was preceded by a forty day fast, and introduced with the words 'and afterward, **he was hungry**', leads very naturally to the conclusion that we are being directed to understand this temptation as internal.

It is not possible for Buzzard to claim that no one reading the gospel record would interpret it as describing anything but the temptation of Christ by an external source (let alone a supernatural being).

That early rabbinical commentaries understood the 'evil inclination' to be personified in such a way as to refer to it as speaking to oneself is a strong corroboration of the argument that this manner of representing Christ's temptation would have been understood as depicting an internal struggle between himself and the 'evil inclination', despite the use of language which appears to speak of an external tempter.

This witness has much in common with the LXX translation of the following passage in Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy 15:

9 **Be careful that you do not entertain a mean thought**, thinking, "the seventh year, the year of remission, is near," and therefore view your needy neighbor with hostility and give nothing; your neighbor might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt.

LXX:

9 Take heed to thyself that there be not **a secret thing in thine heart, an iniquity, saying**, The seventh year, the year of release, draws nigh; and thine eye shall be evil to thy brother that is in want, and thou shalt not give to him, and he shall cry against thee to the Lord, and there shall be great sin in thee.

In the LXX, the 'secret thing', the 'iniquity' is personified as speaking to the man in whom it dwells, '**saying**, The seventh year, the year of release, draws nigh', and persuading the man to withhold a loan from his brother.

The personification here is identical to that used by Rabbi Ben Isaac in his exposition of Micah 7:5, and agrees very well with the Christadelphian 'internal source' interpretation of the temptation of Christ in the wilderness.

Our sixth witness is Saadia Ben Joseph (892-942), also known as Saadia Gaon ('Gaon' being a rabbinical title of honour), who interpreted the satan in Job as a man who 'envied Job's prosperity':

Job 1:

6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, **and Satan also came among them.**

'and Satan came also among them; which word signifies an "adversary", as in 1 Ki 11:14 but does not design here a man adversary, as there, **one that envied Job's prosperity, as Saadiah Gaon thinks...**'

John Gill, 'Commentary On the Bible', note on Job 1:6, 1748

This is an interpretation which Gill disputes, but it is an important witness all the same, for Buzzard has argued that no Jew reading '**the satan**' in Job 1:6 would interpret this passage as referring to any other than the supernatural being of evil in which he himself believes.

Our seventh witness is Rabbi David Kimchi (born 1160), who interpreted the satan in Zechariah 3:1-2 as being '**Sanballat and his comrades**' (cited in Keil and Delitzsch commentary, note on Zechariah 3:1-4), an ancient interpretation with which Christadelphians could agree entirely passage. It is also worth noting the following interpretation of Kimchi's:

Zechariah 13:

2 "And on that day, says the LORD of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more; and also I will remove from the land the prophets and **the unclean spirit.**

'**Jarchi and Kimchi interpret "the unclean spirit" of the corruption of nature;** but that will not cease as long as men are in a mortal state.'

John Gill, 'Commentary On the Bible', note on Zechariah 13:2, 1748

The 'corruption of nature' is another term used by the rabbis for the 'evil imagination (or 'evil inclination')', and demonstrates that neither Kimchi nor Jarchi interpreted this passage as referring to an evil spirit or demon which was plaguing the country (as Buzzard would expect them to).

Rather, they understood it to refer to the natural inclination in men to do evil, which would be removed from the land in the Messianic age (their belief that the 'evil inclination' would be restrained in the Messianic age has striking parallels with the Christadelphian understanding of the 'binding of satan' in Revelation 20:2).

Our eighth witness is the medieval Jewish commentator Levi ben Gershon (1280-1344), in a passage from Gill's commentary which also mentions Kimchi:

2 Samuel 24:

1 Again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, **and he incited David against them**, saying, "o, number Israel and Judah."

'...or "it moved him"; the anger of the Lord, as the last mentioned writer interprets it; **or the heart of David, as Ben Gersom; that is, the evil imagination of his heart, as Kimchi; the Lord left him to the corruption of his nature, sometimes called Satan,** 2 Co 12:7; which wrought powerfully in him, and stirred him up to take a step contrary to

the interest of Israel, and what was prejudicial to them, as the event showed: it moved him to say; to Joab and his captains:'

John Gill, 'Commentary On the Bible', note on 2 Samuel 24:1, 1748

Both Kimchi and Gershon interpreted David as being moved not by God or a supernatural evil being, but by his own heart, the 'yetzer ha-ra' (the 'evil inclination', or the 'evil imagination'), as we have found previously in Jewish exposition. This understanding was possibly reached by interpreting of 'satan' in the parallel passage (1 Chronicles 21:1), to refer to the 'evil inclination', but we cannot be certain.

What we can be certain of is that despite the reference to 'satan' in the parallel passage, both Kimchi and Gershon understood David to be led astray by nothing other than his own heart, his own 'evil inclination'.

Having now identified eight individual Jewish witnesses to the Christadelphian understanding of the personification of sin from the 1st century to the 14th century, we will now consider a range of more general Jewish witnesses found in Talmud Babylon and the early medieval Jewish mystic work, the Zohar (final compilation 1290 AD).

In his note on 2 Corinthians 12:7, John Gill provides so many examples from the Jewish rabbis of the personification of the 'evil inclination' (including repeated use of the terms 'satan' and 'the old serpent' to identify it), that it is a wonder he retained his own belief in satan as a supernatural evil being:

2 Corinthians 12:

7 And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, **a messenger of Satan**, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated.

'...it was usual with the Jews to call concupiscence, or the vitiosity of nature, **Satan**; for so they {a} often say, erh ruy awH Njvh, "**Satan, he is the evil imagination**", or **corruption of nature**; and particularly they call the lust of uncleanness by this name; and it is said {b} of a young man of Israel, being tempted by a young woman of Midian, through the counsel of Balaam, that Njvh wb rewB, "**Satan burned in him**", and he turned aside after her; and that the evil imagination is the old serpent; yea, they call this "**the messenger of hell**", a phrase very much like what is here used.

"R. Hona {c}, as he was preaching to the children of men to take warning, said unto them, children, beware Mnhyg lv axylvm, "of the messenger of hell"; **but who is this? the evil imagination, or concupiscence, is that which is "the messenger of hell";** "

{a} T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 16. 1. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 6. 2. 3. s. 3. 10. 4. 13. 3. 20. 2. 50. 3. 58. 3. 72. 4. 73. 2. 86. 1. 87. 2. 93. 1. 96. 1. 99. 4. 100. 4. 101. 42. 113. 1. & 133. 2. & 141. 3. & 149. 2. & 152. 3. Raya Mehimna in Zohar in Lev. fol. 7. 2.

{b} Bemidbar Rabba, sect. 20. fol. 229. 1.'

{c} Midrash Hannelam in Zohar in Gen. fol. 67. 4.'

John Gill, 'Commentary On the Bible', note on 2 Corinthians 12:7, 1748

The list of references to this personification of satan in Tzeror Hammor alone, which Gill provides under footnote '(a)', is impressive – his list of over 20 individual examples proves that he was right to note that this is what the Jews '**often say**'.

Note also the remarkable list of terms identified by Gill as being used by the Jewish rabbis to refer to the 'evil inclination':

- Satan
- The old serpent
- The messenger of hell

Buzzard would no doubt be interested to know that the Jewish rabbis frequently used such terms to describe the 'evil inclination' – terms which Buzzard insisted they would only have used to refer to the supernatural evil being of Buzzard's theology.

It is noteworthy that Targum Palestine (the Targums were early Jewish paraphrases of Scripture), includes an understanding of the personification of sin:

Genesis 4:

7 "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, **sin is couching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.**"

' And the Lord said to Kain, Why hast thou anger, and why are the features of thy face downcast? If thou doest thy work well, will not thy guilt be forgiven thee? But if thou doest not thy work well in this world, thy sin is retained unto the day of the great judgment, **and at the doors of thy heart lieth thy sin.**

And into thy hand have I delivered the power over evil passion, [the 'evil inclination] and unto thee shall be the inclination thereof, that thou mayest have authority over it to become righteous, or to sin.

Targum Palestine, paraphrase of Genesis 4:6-7, 1st – 2nd century AD

The same interpretation is given in the Jerusalem Targum:

'If thou makest thy work good in this world, will it not be forgiven and remitted thee in the world to come? But if thou doest not make thy work good in this world, thy sin is retained unto the day of the great judgment; **and at the door of thy heart it lieth. Yet into thy hand have I delivered power over evil passion, [the 'evil inclination] and to thee may be dominion over it, to become righteous or to sin.'**

Targum Jerusalem, paraphrase of Genesis 4:7, 1st – 2nd century AD

This passage is recognized even by 'orthodox' Christian commentators to be representing sin as an animal or evil man 'lying in wait' for Cain, and the fact that it was recognized by these early Jewish paraphrases as a reference to 'the evil inclination' is a witness to the early understanding of the personification device used in Scripture for man's internal inclination to sin.

Contrary to Buzzard's claims therefore, we see that certain of the Jews did indeed identify satan as a personification of sin in some passages of Scripture, as Christadelphians do. The witness to this fact commences as early as the 1st century AD, and finds of consistent support from Jewish commentators for up to 1,200 years later.

It must be noted, however, that there is no intention here to present this as the only view among the rabbinical commentators.

It is true that there were Jewish expositors who believed in fallen angels, evil spirits, and an evil angel who performed the role which Buzzard attributes to 'satan', (we shall examine the significance of these beliefs later).

By the 1st century AD, Jewish beliefs had become totally fragmented, and rival schools and doctrinal viewpoints all competed with each other for dominance. We know that the Pharisees represented one extreme (believing in ghosts, evil spirits, and some kind of life for the disembodied spirit of man after death), whilst the Sadducees represented another extreme (a complete rejection of all supernatural entities other than God, including a rejection of His angels, and a rejection even of the resurrection of the dead).

The rabbinical commentaries (the Targums, the Talmuds, the Mishnah and the Zohar), all share this same fragmentation, containing many expositions which conflict with each other, and which represent a broad spectrum of Jewish beliefs. But this does not alter the fact that within this collection of different teachings, there existed a position with regard to satan, 'unclean spirits', and the personification of the 'evil inclination', which is identical to that of Christadelphians, and that this position was held consistently, over many centuries, by a wide variety of Jewish scholars in different countries.

Buzzard writes:

'The idea that these are personifications and not a person is an invention created by liberal Protestants of the 19th century who rejected the supernatural and whose philosophy did not allow them to admit a spiritual personality in opposition to God.'

This claim has now been proved by to be completely false on three grounds:

- The interpretation which sees satan as a personification is found in Jewish commentaries as early as the **1st century AD**, and in Christian commentaries at least as early as **1651**
- Neither the Jews nor the Christians who first proposed this interpretation did so on the grounds of 'liberalism', 'rationalism', or rejection of the supernatural, but on sound exegetical grounds, comparing Scripture with Scripture
- Rather than deriving their ideas from a personal philosophy which 'did not allow them to admit a spiritual personality in opposition to God', the rejection of the 'orthodox' doctrine of demons by the 17th century Christians was founded in the clear and dogmatic Scriptural teaching that the gods of the heathen (also called 'idols' and 'demons'), are stated dogmatically by Scripture to be the vain imaginations of men, and not real entities

'The' Satan Cannot Be 'A' Satan

- **Argument:** Buzzard argues that the repeated use of the definite article to identify **the** satan, or **the** devil, is evidence that the Christadelphian interpretation of these words as referring to **generic** identities (**an** adversary, **a** devil), is both bad grammar and bad exposition.

It is argued that the use of the definite article in phrases such as '**the** devil' and '**the** satan' indicate that a 'one and only' devil and satan is being identified, as opposed to all others. That 'one and only' devil and satan, Buzzard claims, is the 'fallen' angel of his theology.

- **Reply:** A definite construction necessitates a definite subject in any given context, but it does not necessitate that the same subject is referred to in every context. In addition, it will be demonstrated that the Jews themselves used the phrase '**the** devil' to identify a human adversary, not a 'fallen' angel.

Buzzard writes:

'No one will deny that there are occurrences in the OT of the term "satan" where a human adversary is intended (just as in the New Testament "*diabolos*" (devil) can occasionally refer to human accusers, I Tim. 3:11). The question we are facing is what is meant by *the* Satan or *the* Devil in Job and Zechariah and some sixty times in the New Testament (not to mention numerous other references to the Satan under a different title).'

The issue is that Buzzard assumes - without evidence, and indeed against evidence to the contrary - that 'the satan' or 'the devil' refers to the same adversary in each case. As we shall see, there is no justification for doing so, and the evidence actually precludes such a conclusion.

Buzzard writes:

'When Matthew introduces the terms Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Heaven, he assumes that his readers are familiar with these phrases. When he introduces *the* Devil (Matt. 4:11), having already called him *the* Tempter (v. 2), he uses a title well recognized by his readers. He nowhere speaks of a tempter or *an* accuser. If we realize the importance of the definite article here our subject can be clarified without further difficulty.

The celebrated New Testament Greek authority, Dr. 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*, p.756).

Thus *a* savior may be one of many saviors. *The* Savior means the one and only Savior. *An* "ecclesia" is an assembly of people gathered for many different reasons (Acts 19:32, 39, 41).'

There is no need to dispute Robertson's statement, especially since it adds nothing to Buzzard's case (we agree with Buzzard that 'the satan' refers to a definite rather than an indefinite subject).

But Buzzard has chosen a particularly bad example with which to support his case. It is not true that the phrase '**the** saviour' refers to 'the one and only saviour'.

In fact, this phrase is used in Scripture of both God and Christ:

Isaiah 45:

15 Truly, you are a God who hides himself, O God of Israel, **the Savior**.

John 4:

42 They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly **the Savior** of the world."

This example therefore becomes critical in demonstrating the inaccuracy of Buzzard's entire argument regarding the definite article. For while it is true that where the article is used it indicates a particular rather than a general subject, it is undeniable that it does not always indicate the same subject in each instance.

Other examples include:

- The angel of the Lord
- The Lord's servant
- The Lord's anointed
- The king of the north
- The king of the south

Let's take as an example the phrase 'the angel of the Lord'. The NET notes:

26tn *Heb* "the messenger of the Lord." Some identify the angel of the Lord as the preincarnate Christ because in some texts the angel is identified with the Lord himself.

However, it is more likely that the angel merely represents the Lord; he can speak for the Lord because he is sent with the Lord's full authority. In some cases the angel is clearly distinct from the Lord (see Judg 6:11-23).

It is not certain if the same angel is always in view. Though the proper name following the noun "angel" makes the construction definite, **this may simply indicate that a definite angel sent from the Lord is referred to in any given context. It need not be the same angel on every occasion.**

Note the analogous expression "the servant of the Lord," **which refers to various individuals in the OT** (see BDB 714).'

Emphasis in bold has been added to those parts of this statement which address directly the argument Buzzard is making with regard to the use of the definite article and the word 'satan'. A definite construction necessitates a definite subject in any given context, but it does not necessitate that the same subject is referred to in every context.

This effectively destroys Buzzard's entire argument regarding the definite article.

As further evidence, let's examine another definite construction, the phrase 'The Lord's servant'. If what Buzzard says regarding definite constructions is correct, we should find that it is only ever used to refer to one subject, one individual, the one single servant 'everyone knows about'.

But this is what we find:

Deuteronomy 34:

5 Then Moses, **the servant of the Lord**, died there in the land of Moab, at the Lord' command.

Psalm 18 (superscription):

To the leader. A Psalm of **David the servant of the Lord**, who addressed the words of this song to the Lord on the day when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. He said:

Isaiah 42:

19 Who is blind but my servant, or deaf like my messenger whom I send? Who is blind like my dedicated one, or blind like **the servant of the Lord**?

2 Timothy 2:

24 And **the Lord's servant** [Greek '**the servant of the Lord**'] must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, patient,

We find this phrase being used of four different individuals, in four different contexts. We find that a definite construction does not necessitate that the same subject is referred to in every context.

Yet another example is found in the phrase 'The Lord's anointed'.

1 Samuel 24:

6 He said to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, **the Lord's anointed**, [Saul] to raise my hand against him; for he is the Lord' anointed."

2 Samuel 19:

21 Abishai son of Zeruah answered, "Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed **the Lord's anointed**? [David]"

Again we find that a definite construction does not necessitate that the same subject is referred to in every context.

Finally, we have conclusive evidence from the LXX that the definite article used with together with the word 'devil' was used by the Jews themselves to refer to a definite, but mortal and human, adversary.

In the LXX translation of Esther, we find the following passage:

Esther 7:

4 For both I and my people are sold for destruction, and pillage, and slavery; [both] we and our children for bondmen and bondwomen: and I consented not to it, for **the slanderer** [is] not worthy of the king's palace.

The phrase 'the slanderer' is in fact the Greek phrase HO DIABOLOS, the term which Buzzard claims can only ever refer to one definite 'devil', and no other (namely, the supernatural evil being of his theology).

The Greek text reads thus:

Esther 7:

4 επραθημεν γαρ εγω τε και ο λαος μου εις απωλειαν και διαρπαγην και δουλειαν ημεις και τα τεκνα ημων εις παιδας και παιδισκας και παρηκουσα ου γαρ αξιος ο **διαβολος** της αυλης του βασιλεως

What is the identity of HO DIABOLOS in this passage? If Buzzard is correct, then this must refer to the supernatural evil being of his theology, the tempter of Christ, the oppressor of Job, the adversary who rose up against Israel in 1 Chronicles 21, and the slanderer of Joshua in Zechariah 3. Certainly it cannot refer to a human adversary, if Buzzard's theory is accurate.

In the next two verses, Buzzard's theory is put to the test:

Esther 7:

5 And the king said, **Who [is] this that has dared to do this thing?**

6 And Esther said, **the adversary [is] Aman**, this wicked man. Then Aman was troubled before the king and the queen.

The identity of '**the** devil', HO DIABOLOS, is **Haman**, the entirely mortal human enemy of the Jews (though note that the Greek word here translated 'adversary' is not the word 'devil' or 'satan'). This invalidates completely Buzzard's entire argument regarding the definite article and the identity.

Here we have a text translated by Hellenized Jews who (if Buzzard's theory is correct), not only believed in 'Satan' as a 'fallen' angel and a supernatural evil tempter, but who identified him specifically from all other adversaries or tempters by use of the definite article. And yet they are translating the text in a manner which contradicts Buzzard's entire argument and demonstrates that to the Jewish reader of the Old Testament the definite article preceding the words 'devil' and 'satan' **did not** only ever refer to one definite 'devil' and 'satan' and no other.

Even more telling us the fact that this phrase '**the** devil', HO DIABOLOS, is used here to refer to a **human** adversary, not a supernatural evil being. If Buzzard's theory was correct, we would never find this.

According to Buzzard, the phrases '**the** devil' and '**the** satan' were understood by the Jews to refer **exclusively** to:

- '*the* Satan or *the* Devil in Job and Zechariah and some sixty times in the New Testament' (is it Haman who is mentioned in these passages?)
- 'the Satan, the Devil, the Tempter' (is Haman to be understood as the subject when we read these phrases?)
- 'that well-known Satan not requiring definition, because the writer knows that his readers understand who is meant' (why did the king ask who '**the** devil' was if everyone already knew, and why does Esther contradict Buzzard by saying that '**the**' devil is Haman, not a 'fallen' angel?)
- 'the *external* Satan of Job and Zechariah 3 and I Chronicles 21:1' (is it Haman who is mentioned in these passages?)

Buzzard's argument has now been proved false. We see from this passage that the phrase '**the** devil' is used to refer to:

- A human slanderer (not a supernatural evil being)
- A 'devil' who appears nowhere else in the entire Bible (not '*the* Satan or *the* Devil in Job and Zechariah and some sixty times in the New Testament', or in 1 Chronicles 21)
- A 'devil' who is a human adversary of the Jewish people, who slanders them and attempts to destroy them all (not a 'fallen' angel who tempts them individually to sin)

Buzzard writes:

'But no one would consider confusing this with *the* Church. Similarly, the Satan, the Devil, the Tempter is that 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? *The* Satan, *the* adversary, is the external personality who tempted Jesus and Job.'

Firstly, we agree with Buzzard that 'the satan' refers to a definite rather than an indefinite subject.

Secondly, there was no 'tempter' which is 'well known' in the whole of the Old Testament, other than the carnal mind. Satan never appears in the Old Testament as a tempter, though the word is used repeatedly:

- Job is not tempted to sin by a satan who confronts him personally (other than his wife), he is afflicted with disaster by an adversary he cannot see, and whom he understands to be God
- David is not tempted to number Israel by the convincing but deceitful arguments of a 'fallen' angel, he is provoked to do so when an adversary rises up to oppose Israel
- In Zechariah 3, Joshua is not represented as being tempted to transgress by the wiles of a supernatural evil being, but accused falsely by an adversary

Once more we must take note of the important fact that satan never appears in the Old Testament as a source of temptation - the New Testament uses this word in a manner unique to itself. Buzzard fails to even mention this significant fact, much less explain it, but it shall be examined later in this work.

Buzzard writes:

'It is proper that we establish our understanding of biblical terms both from the evidence of Scripture as a whole and from sources current at the time of Jesus.'

Buzzard says this on the one hand, but wishes to ignore in the other hand the wealth of information regarding satan which is found in the Old Testament. We must ask why this is.

We must also ask why the sources on which Buzzard relies for his understanding of satan as a 'fallen' angel are apocryphal works, rather than Scripture. The simple answer to this is that the Bible does not describe satan or the devil as a 'fallen' angel (see the chapter later in this work entitled 'Satan As A Fallen Angel'), so Buzzard is forced to step outside Scripture to find such a description.

The significance of this should be recognised - if someone has to seek support for their doctrine outside Scripture and in apocryphal writings, it is because support for their doctrine does not exist in Scripture. This is convincing evidence that the doctrine is unBiblical and uninspired - a false doctrine, to put it directly. Buzzard does not tolerate such an approach when it is used in attempts to support the doctrine of the trinity, so it is inconsistent of him to appeal to this approach in order to support his doctrine of satan.

Buzzard writes:

'We have ample evidence, for example, of the Kingdom of God referring to the future Messianic reign. We know from Matthew 4 that *the* Devil cannot be human nature; no such idea is to be found in the Old Testament.'

Firstly, Mathew 4 contains nothing incompatible with the concept of an internal tempter.

Secondly, the absence from the Old Testament of the devil as a description of internal temptation is noteworthy, but of greater importance is the fact that satan is never described as a tempter in the Old Testament at all, whether internal or external.

The New Testament's description of the devil and satan is unique, and illustrative of the New Testament's focus within man, not without.

Buzzard writes:

‘Nor can the Devil be an unknown human being. The presence of the definite article, which the Christadelphians have been keen to drop, forbids us to understand the Satan as an *unknown* person.’

Christadelphians have no need to disagree with this. Certainly the satan must be known, but he cannot be known as the supernatural being represented by Buzzard.

Buzzard writes:

‘The fact that Matthew introduces the Satan as well known to his readers shows that we must connect him with the *external* Satan of Job and Zechariah 3 and I Chronicles 21:1 (where Hebrew scholars take the reference to be a proper name).’

There are several issues to address here:

- The satan described in Matthew's record of the temptation of Christ is so radically different to the description of the satan of Job, the satan of 1 Chronicles 21:1, and the satan of Zechariah, that it is not possible to identify it as the same satan as appears in these passages (the satan in Matthew's account is a source of temptation - none of the satans in the Old Testament are sources of temptation, and none of them are described as have a personal encounter with the people they afflict)
- In the book of Job, it is **God** (not satan), who is considered the source of disaster by God (Job 2:3), Job (Job 1:21; 2:10; 6:4; 10:2; 19:21; 27:2), Job's servant (Job 1:16), Job's wife (Job 2:9), Job's three friends (Job 5:17; 8:4; 11:5-6), Job's acquaintances and relations (Job 42:11), and Job's satan himself (Job 1:12; 2:6)
- The account of the satan in 1 Chronicles 21 is dealt with later in this work, in the chapter entitled 'Satan In The Old Testament', where the true identity of the satan is demonstrated, and it is proved that 'satan' is not used in this passage as a proper name
- If one were to ask the Jews of Zechariah's day who 'the adversary' was, they would undoubtedly reply 'The people of the land', whereas if they were to be asked who 'the tempter' was, and when they were last tempted by him in person in the manner described in Matthew's account of Christ's temptation in the wilderness, they would be confused by the reference to something entirely beyond their personal experience; nothing approaching such a description is recorded anywhere in Zechariah
- Buzzard's argument regarding the definite article is completely undermined by his argument that 'satan' is a personal name in 1 Chronicles 21 - if 'satan' is a proper name, then there is absolutely no reason whatever to precede the word 'satan' with the article, since 'Satan' would be far more readily identified by means of his proper name; it is significant that 1 Chronicles 21 is the only place in the Bible where 'satan' is claimed to be used as a proper name, whereas we would expect it to be used consistently as such if it is indeed the proper name of 'the Satan everyone knows about'

- Even more significant is the fact that there is **not one individual in the whole of the Old Testament** who attributes evil, disaster, or temptation to the supernatural evil being in whom Buzzard believes

Finally, it is worth nothing Buzzard's objection that the impulse to sin not only is not, but **cannot** be referred to as anything but a generic adversary, and therefore none of its metonyms (such as 'satan' or 'devil'), would take the definite article.

This is demonstrably false, because the 'impulse to sin' is represented by metonyms which take the definite article.

These include the phrase '**the** law of sin':

Romans 7:

23 but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to **the law of sin** that dwells in my members

23 βλεπω δε ετερον νομον εν τοις μελεσιν μου αντιστρατευομενον τω νομω του νοος μου και αιχμαλωτιζοντα με τω νομω της αμαρτιας τω οντι εν τοις μελεσιν μου

Also the phrase '**the** flesh':

Romans 7:

25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but **with my flesh** [Greek 'with **the** flesh'] I am a slave to the law of sin.

25 ευχαριστω τω θεω δια ιησου χριστου του κυριου ημων αρα ουν αυτος εγω τω μεν νοι δουλευω νομω θεου **τη δε σαρκι** νομω αμαρτιας

Also the phrase '**the** sin':

Romans 8:

3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin [Greek '**the** sin'] in the flesh,

3 το γαρ αδυνατον του νομου εν ω ησθενει δια της σαρκος ο θεος τον εαυτου υιον πεμψας εν ομοιωματι σαρκος αμαρτιας και περι αμαρτιας κατεκρινεν **την αμαρτιαν** εν τη σαρκι

And also '**the** carnal mind' (or '**the** mind of **the** flesh'):

Romans 8:

7 For this reason **the mind that is set on the flesh** [Greek '**the** carnal mind' or '**the** mind of **the** flesh'] is hostile to God; it does not submit to God' law — indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

7 διοτι **το φρονημα της σαρκος** εχθρα εις θεον τω γαρ νομω του θεου ουχ υποτασσεται ουδε γαρ δυναται

Strangely, this enemy of God and men, concerning which the apostles write in such immense depth and detail, identifying it constantly as the source of all hostility between God and men, is almost entirely ignored by Buzzard in his exposition. It is necessary to ask why.

Christadelphians Divided Over Satan

- **Argument:** Buzzard argues that the divided opinion among Christadelphians as to the identity of the satan in the record of the wilderness temptation of Christ, is evidence our community is struggling to find a way to insert into the text an interpretation which is contrary to it, in order to avoid the conclusion that a supernatural being of evil is involved.

It is argued by Buzzard that this is evidence that Christadelphians are unable to reach agreement on their arguments for satan as a source of temptation or opposition other than a supernatural evil being.

- **Reply:** Buzzard's claim is overstated – differences of opinions among Christadelphians as to the identity of the satan in the wilderness temptation of Christ are not the same as differences of opinion as to the explanation of satan as an entire subject.

Christadelphians may be divided on the identity of the satan in the wilderness temptation of Christ, but we are not divided on the subject as a whole.

Furthermore, Buzzard and his 'orthodox' Christian contemporaries are divided on the entire subject of satan and demons to a far greater extent than Christadelphians are divided on the identity of the satan in the wilderness temptation of Christ.

Buzzard writes:

'When a group of Bible students arrive at the same conclusion but cannot agree amongst themselves on the arguments upon which the conclusion is built, there is usually cause for suspicion that the conclusion is faulty. They are accepting the creed because it has been dictated to them by their leader. They have very probably always believed the tenets of the group.

They have not personally examined the arguments in detail, very often because they have had so little exposure to contrary points of view and have never been challenged. They may accept the excellent truths taught by their founder and in their enthusiasm swallow an error as part of "the package." We are all prone to make this mistake. God requires of us a passionate desire to know the truth; we must stand personally responsible before Him for everything we teach as "the oracles of God."

There are two answers to Buzzard's objections here.

The first is that differences of opinions among Christadelphians as to the identity of the satan in the wilderness temptation of Christ are not the same as differences of opinion as to the explanation of satan as an entire subject. The fact that Christadelphians disagree amongst themselves as to the identity of satan in the wilderness temptation records is no evidence that their entire position on satan is invalid.

Given that the Christadelphian interpretation of satan actually **allows** the identification of satan in one passage as different to the identification of satan in another passage, and given that the Christadelphian interpretation of satan **allows** the identification of satan as external in one passage but internal in another, it is only to be expected that differences of opinion as to the precise identity of satan in any given passage will arise. This is not an argument against the Christadelphian interpretation.

The second is that when Buzzard's argument is leveled against himself and other Christians who believe in satan as a supernatural evil being, it is seen to be devastating to his own position.

Many Christians agree on the 'same conclusion' (as Buzzard puts it), that is that there is a supernatural evil being whose proper name is 'Satan', whose role is to tempt men and women to sin, and to attempt to frustrate the work of God.

But even Christians who share this view cannot agree among themselves as to the following issues:

- **How Satan is supposed to have originated:** Some say that Satan was an angel who rebelled against God and fell from favour, others say that Satan is a special angel created by God to cause disaster and bring evil.

What Scripture says: Psalm 103:19-21 speaks of the angels as being God's unswervingly obedient servants, Matthew 6:10 states that God's will is done in heaven (to the extent that it is used as an example of the general state of obedience to God which will exist in the Kingdom age), and Hebrews 1:14 also speaks of angels as being the obedient servants of God. There are no passages which speak of disobedient angels.

Scripture is also clear that God alone creates disaster (Psalm 78:49, Psalm 90:14-15, Isaiah 45:7, Amos 3:6, Micah 1:12), not a supernatural evil being called 'Satan'.

Scripture never speaks of satan having 'fallen' prior to the creation. The only passages in which satan is said to have 'fallen' places his 'fall' either during the ministry of Christ and the apostles (Luke 10:18), or at a time which was yet future in the time of John the apostle (Revelation 12:8-9), neither of which 'orthodox' Christians cannot reconcile with their understanding of Satan.

- **Which passages in Scripture describe the fall of Satan:** Over the years the number of passages supposed to describe the fall of Satan has become smaller and smaller, as even 'orthodox' Bible students acknowledge that passages originally appealed to in order to support the doctrine of Satan as a fallen angel were being taken out of context or misinterpreted. This must surely be an indicator to Buzzard that the doctrine rests on a very uncertain – and steadily diminishing – foundation.

What Scripture says: There are only two passages in Scripture which speak of satan as 'falling' from heaven (Luke 10:18, Revelation 12:8-9), and neither of them are compatible with 'orthodox' ideas on the fall of satan.

In addition, John 12:31 speaks of Christ's crucifixion as being the moment that 'the prince of this world' (commonly understood by 'orthodox' Christians to refer to satan), would be 'cast out', a statement in conflict with the 'orthodox' understanding of the crucifixion of Christ as a victory for satan.

There are too many passages here to reconcile with 'orthodox' views on the fall of satan. When did satan fall?

- During the ministry of Christ and the apostles, according to Luke 10:18?
- At the crucifixion of Christ, according to John 12:31?
- At some time after the life of the apostle John, according to Revelation 12:8-9?

The Christadelphian understanding of satan and the devil harmonises all of these passages perfectly – the 'orthodox' understanding finds them mutually contradictory and difficult to reconcile with the accepted view of satan's fall, especially since every instance in these passages places the fall of satan well after the fall of man.

- **Whether or not Satan is immortal:** Buzzard is one of those who inclines towards the idea that Satan is not immortal, but other Christians believe that as Satan is an angel, he is immortal like other angels.

What Scripture says: Luke 20:36 states without qualification that angels are immortal, whilst Romans 6:23 says that the wages of sin is death, 1 John 3:8 says that no murderer has eternal life in them (John 8:44 says that the devil is a murderer), and Hebrews 2:14 says that the devil was destroyed through the death of Christ (which contradicts the idea that the devil is immortal).

In addition, Revelation 20:10 indicates that the devil will ultimately be destroyed forever, along with the wicked (Revelation 20:13-15).

- **When Satan is supposed to be bound, as stated in Revelation 20:2-3:** Some Christians say that Satan will be bound in the future, other say he is bound already.

What Scripture says: Revelation 20:2-3 states clearly that the binding of satan is yet future, and will not occur until after the 1,000 year reign of Christ.

- **Whether or not the devil was destroyed through Christ's death on the cross:** Some Christians say that this is yet future, others say that the devil was not 'destroyed' as such, merely 'rendered powerless', which begs the question as to why they still fear him or consider him a danger in their lives (what is the functional difference between a devil who has been destroyed, and one who has been 'rendered powerless'?).

What Scripture says: Hebrews 2:14 states clearly that Christ destroyed 'that which has the power of death, that is, the devil' through his death on the cross, and 1 John 3:8 says that the purpose of Christ's work was to destroy the works of the devil.

Furthermore, it is indicated by Romans 6:23, Romans 7:13, and 1 Corinthians 15:56 that it is sin which has the power of death, and in Hebrews 9:26 that Christ came to 'put away sin' (a closer examination of this important issue can be found in Appendix D).

All of these passages together harmonise to identify the true adversary which Christ came to overcome – the evil in human nature. A fundamental flaw in the 'orthodox' view of satan is that it fails completely to address the purpose of Christ's ministry and sacrifice, and renders meaningless the victory over sin and the devil which he accomplished through his death.

- **By what means Satan is supposed to tempt people:** Many Christians point to the temptation of Christ as a supposed model of temptation by Satan, but will acknowledge that no Christian has ever experienced an external temptation by Satan physically appearing to them and enticing them to commit sin, as he is supposed to have done to Christ.

What Scripture says: Hebrews 2:18 says that Christ suffered temptation in order to identify with our temptation, and Hebrews 4:15 states clearly that the process of Christ's temptation was identical to that of our own.

These statements cannot be true if Christ was tempted by the devil in a manner which is totally different to the process of temptation to which we are subjected. If the 'orthodox' view of satan is true, then we should experience the same process of temptation as is supposed to have occurred to Christ – a literal and visible supernatural being coming up to us and engaging us in conversation in an effort to entice us to sin.

- **How Christians are supposed to resist Satan:** There are too many ideas here to list conveniently, but is worth pointing out that many Christians believe that Satan is to be resisted by use of the Holy Spirit, or through a process of exorcism.

What Scripture says: 1 Corinthians 7:5 advises married Christians against inconstancy, lest they be tempted by satan (this is the only reference to satan tempting people outside the account of the wilderness temptation of Christ), Ephesians 4:26-27 warns us not to 'give the devil an opportunity', in the context of not letting our anger provoke us to sin, 1 Peter 5:8-9 warns us to be 'sober and alert' in order to resist the devil, and James 4:7 instructs us to 'resist the devil, and he will flee from you', but 'orthodox' Christians cannot explain consistently what any of this means, or how any of this is supposed to happen.

Scripture nowhere speaks of men and women resisting satan by the Holy Spirit (in the wilderness temptation of Christ, the use of the Holy Spirit was part of the temptation to sin, not the means by which sin was overcome), and the description of the 'spiritual warrior' in Ephesians 6:11-17 (which instructs those in Christ as to how they can 'stand against the schemes of the devil' and 'extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one'), speaks of developing internal spiritual qualities to overcome the devil, rather than using the Holy Spirit.

In addition, the one offensive weapon listed in this description of the 'spiritual warrior' is 'the sword of the spirit, **which is the word of God**', indicating once more that the arena of the battle is **within**, and that it is **the development of spiritual qualities of character** which is the answer to succeeding in this warfare. Exorcism (which one would imagine to be the first resort of the Christian fighting 'Satan'), is notable by its absence.

- **By what means temptations prompted by Satan are supposed to be distinguished from temptations prompted by one's own heart:** The fact that Christians cannot identify any real distinction between temptations arising from within oneself, and temptations supposedly introduced by Satan, is a powerful argument in favour of the identification of the Biblical 'satan' as the inclinations of the flesh.

What Scripture says: There is nothing in Scripture to indicate that the heart of man requires any external prompting to evil. Repeatedly we are told that the human heart is the origin of **all** wickedness and sin (Genesis 8:21, Ecclesiastes 9:3, Jeremiah 17:9, Mark 7:15-23, Romans 7:14:25; 8:5-8, Ephesians 2:3, and James 1:13-16). The absence of any suggestion of a supernatural evil tempter from passages which examine the process of temptation in detail (such as Romans 7:14:25; 8:5-8, and James 1:13-16), is significant.

It is not only significant that 'orthodox' Christians cannot agree among themselves as to these issues, it is even more significant that they find themselves resorting to speculation in order to address them, when there is clear Scriptural teaching on every single one. It cannot be right that Christians attempting to defend a doctrine should find it necessary to abandon Scriptural teaching on an issue in favour of speculation. It suggests very strongly that the doctrine itself is absent from Scripture.

As if this were not enough, 'orthodox' Christians are even more divided on the issue of demons and evil spirits. Leaving aside the fact that they are divided on the origin and fate of demons and evil spirits, we also find:

- There is no agreement among Christians as to how to distinguish between people who are possessed with demons or evil spirits, and those who are not
- Even Christians who believe in Satan and demonic possession most frequently treat their illnesses as having natural causes
- There is no agreement among Christians as to how to respond effectively to those who are afflicted by demonic possession

Let's examine these issues in detail:

- **No accurate means of diagnosis:** The first and surely most telling issue is that there is no agreement among Christians as to how to distinguish between people who are possessed with demons or evil spirits, and those who are not. How are Christians to determine when an illness or infirmity is the result of demonic possession, or attack by an evil spirit, and when the sickness is the result of natural causes?

This is an important issue, if the stricken individual is to be treated appropriately – after all, if the sickness is due to Satanic influence, then the demon or evil spirit must first be cast out in order for healing to take place. If an accurate diagnosis of the infirmity's true cause cannot be made, then how can effective treatment be given?

It would be instructive to know how Buzzard conducts such a diagnosis, and how he ensures that his diagnosis is accurate. If he is sufficiently confident of his capacity in this regard, then he should certainly visit his local hospital, in order to assist the medical staff with their treatment of their patients. It would not be expected that he could heal them, or even that he could exorcise the demons and evil spirits, but it would certainly be useful for the staff to know which of their patients required theological as well as medical assistance.

Identifying which patients are blind, deaf, mute, lame, brain damaged or diseased as a result of demonic possession would ensure that the medical staff were aware of their special needs, and could arrange for them to be treated accordingly. Perhaps it would be equally instructive simply to ask Buzzard how many demonically possessed individuals he has met, and how he responded effectively to their affliction.

If, on the other hand, it is not possible to distinguish between infirmities which are the result of demonic possession, and those which are the result of more natural causes, then one must ask why it is that demonic possession is indistinguishable from naturally occurring medical disorders, and why demonic possession appears to respond equally well to the same medical treatment as that which is dispensed for infirmities of a non-supernatural origin? Where is the need for exorcism, for 'rebuking' the 'evil spirit', or for 'casting out' the 'demon'?

It is one thing for Buzzard to accuse Christadelphians of rejecting a Bible doctrine through 'rationalism', but when Buzzard other Christians who are allegedly orthodox on this issue cannot distinguish between the demonically possessed and the naturally infirm, and treat both in a manner identical to that which secular medical science treats them, then what in all honesty is the point of this 'doctrine of devils'? What does it contribute to our knowledge of people suffering from infirmities, and how does it help us assist them?

- **Illnesses treated as having natural causes:** Questions such as those we have just raised lead naturally to the next issue, which is that most Christians - even those who believe in demon possession – invariably treat their sicknesses and infirmities as having entirely natural causes.

Indeed, those Christians who take seriously the idea that their illnesses and sicknesses are the direct result of demonic possession tend to be 'fringe' Christians rather than the mainstream, holding much the same position in the Christian body as those who handle cobras and drink strychnine in alleged fulfillment of Mark 16:17-18.

Yet when we turn to this passage, we find that the two issues are related:

Mark 16:

17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: **by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues;**

18 **they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.**"

Casting out demons is placed in the same category as the other miraculous signs. If Buzzard believes in demons, does he believe that they may still be cast out today?

Are there any exorcists in his congregations? And if so, do they manifest the other signs which are listed here as being demonstrative of the believers of Christ?

It would probably be a reasonable generalization to make that the vast majority of Christians today – even those who believe in Satan, demons, and evil spirits – usually view their medical problems as having natural causes, and have them treated accordingly. If the response to medical problems of those who believe in demonic possession and evil spirits is identical to those who do not, then surely the former are being less consistent than the latter. If the accusation of rationalism may be leveled at the latter group, then certainly the charge of hypocrisy may legitimately be directed at the former.

When members of Buzzard's congregations (or even Buzzard himself), are ill, what do they do? Do they seek to determine whether they are the subject of a demonic attack, or do they seek medical advice? When was the last time that any of the members of Buzzard's congregations (or even Buzzard himself), successfully distinguished between a demonic possession and a naturally occurring illness, and when was the last time they treated any illness or infirmity of theirs by exorcism rather than medical means – or even by a combination of both?

After a consideration of these questions, Buzzard may wish to think twice before accusing Christadelphians of 'rationalism' in their unbelief of 'orthodox' views of demons.

- **No agreed upon response:** Christians who believe in the 'orthodox' view of demons are wholly unable to come to an agreement on how to respond effectively to those who are allegedly possessed by them.

In the absence of Scriptural instruction on how to cast out demons (an absence which is significant in itself), various 'exorcism', 'deliverance' and 'rebuking' formulas and rituals have been devised, but there is no uniformly agreed upon response to 'demonic possession'. Nor indeed is there any uniformly agreed upon method of ensuring success.

This is all very far removed from the New Testament record, in which Christ and the apostles cast out demons without repetitive formulas, or complicated exorcism rituals.

In the Old Testament, there is a single instance of a person being afflicted by an evil spirit:

1 Samuel 16:

23 And whenever **the evil spirit from God** came upon Saul, **David took the lyre and played it with his hand, and Saul would be relieved and feel better**, and the evil spirit **would depart from him.**

The playing of music was all that was necessary to cause this 'evil spirit' to depart. Are 'orthodox' Christians prepared to take David's example as a Biblical guide to responding to evil spirits and demonic possession? If not, why not?

Buzzard may wish to explain to us exactly why it is that the only instance of an evil spirit afflicting someone in the whole of the Old Testament is dealt with effectively without the use of the Holy Spirit, without any kind of 'exorcism', 'rebuking', or 'deliverance' ritual, but with a simple harp (for further study on the evil spirit which afflicted Saul, see 'Evil Spirits and Unclean Spirits In The Old Testament', in part two of this work).

Buzzard may also wish to explain to us why this method of responding to evil spirits is strangely unpopular among today's Christians, despite it being the popular recommendation among Saul's servants, and despite it being extremely effective in treating Saul.

According to Buzzard's understanding of Scripture, epileptics in particular are likely to be possessed by demons:

Matthew 17:

14 When they came to the crowd, a man came to him, knelt before him,
15 and said, "**Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly; he often falls into the fire and often into the water.**

16 And I brought him to your disciples, **but they could not cure him.**"

17 Jesus answered, "**You faithless and perverse generation**, how much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him here to me."

18 **And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was cured instantly.**

If Buzzard were to be presented with an epileptic, what would be his method for diagnosing whether or not their epilepsy was caused by demons, and what would be his recommendation for their treatment? Would he recommend an exorcism, would he recommend a course of medication, or would he recommend both?

If Buzzard recommended an exorcism, whom would he suggest to carry it out, and what procedure would he suggest be undertaken? Christ and the apostles 'cast out' demons with a single sentence – could Buzzard find anyone who could 'cast out' a 'demon of epilepsy' with equal effect?

If Buzzard only recommended medication, one would have to ask why, and how he could tell that the epileptic in question was not possessed by a demon, on whom medication is surely ineffective. If on the other hand Buzzard wished to tell us that medication **is** effective on demons, then perhaps he could explain to us why the 'demons' in which he believes both act and are treated effectively as if they are naturally occurring medical disorders.

If Buzzard recommended both an exorcism and medication, one would have to ask why – surely only one method of treatment would be necessary?

These questions are entirely serious, and not at all intended to demean either Buzzard or his views. The fact of the matter is that Buzzard and other Christians who hold the 'orthodox' understanding of demons and evil spirits allegedly have special information regarding the afflictions and infirmities of thousands (possibly millions), of people all over the world. They are dogmatic in their view, and insistent that it is to be taken seriously.

This being the case, let us take them seriously, and let them demonstrate the importance of their view by proving that it makes a significant difference to the diagnosis and treatment of people who are suffering from various forms of sickness. If this cannot be done, then we must conclude that however true or untrue the belief may be, it is totally irrelevant to human experience, contributing no advantage whatever.

We must also note that their belief and practice departs significantly from the description of the treatment of demonically possessed people in the New Testament – and ask why.

It is significant that Buzzard acknowledges some of the gaps in the 'orthodox' view of Satan – and it is even more noteworthy that he attempts to fill them with speculation.

Buzzard writes:

'Though the origin and ultimate fate of Satan are obscure, this is no excuse for not accepting the united testimony of the New Testament writers to his existence as an external personality. Would anyone refuse to accept the existence of angels in Scripture simply because the details of their origin and future are not made clear? There is nothing in the Bible to say that the life of Satan must be prolonged indefinitely. Immortality is conditional upon God granting it. He grants life to Satan at present as part of the divine plan.'

This paragraph conceals the real difficulties with the 'orthodox' view of satan, contains inaccurate statements regarding what Scripture reveals about satan, and misrepresents the reasons for rejecting this satan:

- It is misleading to state that 'the origin and ultimate fate of Satan are obscure'. It is more accurate to say that Scripture says absolutely nothing about the origin (or even fall), of a 'satan' who is a fallen angel, and that Scripture is totally explicit on the ultimate fate of satan – satan is destroyed in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). In addition, satan is said to have been destroyed by Christ by his death on the cross (Hebrews 2:14), a passage which Buzzard curiously overlooks, and never addresses.
- No Christadelphian rejects the 'orthodox' view of satan simply because 'the origin and ultimate fate of Satan are obscure'. But Buzzard must acknowledge that it is difficult to accept the 'orthodox' explanation for the existence of satan, when that explanation contradicts clear Scriptural teaching on certain fundamental principles.

It is not simply that 'orthodox' Christians cannot agree among themselves precisely when and how satan came into being (though this is itself significant), it is that the 'orthodox' doctrine of satan requires a process of origin for satan which is in direct violation of Scriptural teaching (disobedient angels falling from God's favour). That this process of origin is itself speculative, indicates that the 'orthodox' view of satan is flawed at the very foundation.

- There is no necessity for speculation on the origin of the angels, because the description of the angels in Scripture does not require any additional explanation of how they came into being. But the 'orthodox' view of satan as a **fallen** angel absolutely necessitates an explanation of how one of the Divine servants who are uniformly described in Scripture as obedient to God, could rebel against Him, 'fall' from favour, and subvert others to join him in an unceasing assault on God's creation.

Is it unreasonable to reject a view which not only contains details which even Buzzard acknowledges are 'obscure', but which necessitates an explanation for the origin of satan which cannot be found in Scripture, is necessarily speculative, and which contradicts clear Scriptural teaching?

- The very idea that God should grant **continuance of life** to an evil being, specifically in order to **enable him to cause others to sin**, contradicts the fundamental principle of Scripture that the continuance of life is dependent on **obedience** to God and walking in His ways. Buzzard's idea that God 'grants life to Satan at present as part of the divine plan' is utterly incongruent with Scriptural teaching. It suggests that one part of the Divine plan is running directly counter to the rest. That Buzzard is reduced to speculating in such an extreme manner only demonstrates that his case has no Scriptural support.

The Temptation In The Wilderness

- **Argument:** Buzzard argues that the Biblical record of Christ's temptation in the wilderness not only remains a problem unsolvable by Christadelphian expositors, but explicitly contradicts the Christadelphian interpretations, and that the most natural reading is that Christ was tempted by a supernatural being of evil.
- **Reply:** The gospel record of the temptation of Christ in the wilderness is not only entirely reconciled by an interpretation which understands it to be a temptation emerging from within Christ, but is also in complete harmony with the manner in which the rest of the New Testament speaks of **'the devil'** and **'the satan'** (a manner unique to the New Testament).

In addition, the language used in the wilderness temptation (though partly figurative), is the same language understood by early Jewish expositors to refer to the internal impulse to sin. This substantiates the case for an internal temptation of Christ significantly.

Finally there is nothing whatever in the text which even suggests that the tempter of Christ is supernatural, still less a 'fallen angel'.

Buzzard writes:

'Most contemporary Christadelphians insist that Jesus was talking to himself in the wilderness. Apart from the difficulty which this raises about the sinlessness of the Lord, it is arbitrary in the extreme to say that when Matthew reports that the Tempter "*came up to Jesus and spoke*" (Matt. 4:3), he meant that Jesus' *own* mind produced twisted versions of the Scriptures.'

Firstly, Buzzard is caricaturing the Christadelphian interpretation describing it as 'Jesus was talking to himself in the wilderness'. Christadelphians who believe that Christ was tempted from within himself do not believe that Christ was literally talking to himself, but that the exchanges between himself and the satan are figurative representations of the internal struggle he was having with the temptation to sin.

Secondly, it is false to say that this view raises any difficulties 'about the sinlessness of the Lord', since temptation itself is not sin. Since Christ was made in every way like his brethren (Hebrews 2:14-18), and since he was tempted in exactly the same way that they are (Hebrews 4:15), it must be acknowledged by Buzzard that an internal temptation could have taken place.

Thirdly, it is not 'arbitrary in the extreme' to interpret the coming of the tempter to Christ as an internal temptation. Buzzard deliberately over translates the Greek word for 'come' here, preferring to translate it **'came up'**, in order to create the sense of a greater distinction between Christ and the satan, giving the false the impression that the text wishes us to understand that Christ and the satan are two separate individual beings.

The Greek word here is translated simply 'came' in the KJV, NKJV, NLT, RSV, NRSV, ASV, NCV, TEV, NET, and Murdoch's translation of the 4th century Syriac Peshitta. There is no grammatical necessity for Buzzard to translate it as he does.

In any case, given that Christadelphians who view this as an internal temptation understand that the language here is language of personification, there is no difficulty in understanding that the Satan is said to have 'come' to Christ.

Indeed, this kind of personification language was used commonly by the 1st century Jewish rabbis in their paraphrases of Scripture. One of the most common instances was the personification of the Word of God, which was personified as a representative of God to such an extent that some trinitarians have interpreted it as an indication that the early rabbis understood the Word of God to be an actual person, the 'pre-incarnate' Christ.

Frequently in the Targums the Word of God is described as a person, using precisely the same language we find in the gospel account of Christ's temptation in the wilderness:

'And they heard the voice of the word of the Lord God walking in the garden in the repose of the day; and Adam and his wife hid themselves from before the Lord God among the trees of the garden.'

Targum Palestine, paraphrase of Genesis 3:8, 1st-2nd century

Here we find the Word of God personified to such an extent that it is said to have a **voice**, which Adam and Eve **heard**, whilst the Word of God was **walking in the garden**.

'And the Lord God called to Adam, and said to him, Is not all the world which I have made manifest before Me; the darkness as the light? and how hast thou thought in thine heart to hide from before Me? The place where thou art concealed, do I not see? Where are the commandments that I commanded thee?'

Targum Palestine, paraphrase of Genesis 3:9, 1st-2nd century

'And the Word of the Lord God called to Adam, and said to him, Behold, the world which I have created is manifest before Me; and how thinkest thou that the place in the midst whereof thou art, is not revealed before Me? Where is the commandment which I taught thee?'

Targum Jerusalem, paraphrase of Genesis 3:9, 1st-2nd century

Here again we see the Word of God being personified as the representative of God Himself. Whereas Targum Jonathan speaks of 'the Lord God' calling to Adam, Targum Jerusalem describes **'the Word of the Lord God'** calling to Adam, distinguishing between the Word and God.

The description of Adam's reply uses the same personification, to the extent of speaking of the Word of God as if it were a separate being from God Himself:

'And he said, **The voice of Thy Word heard I in the garden**, and I was afraid, because I am naked; and the commandment which Thou didst teach me, I have transgressed; therefore I hid myself from shame.'

Targum Palestine, paraphrase of Genesis 3:10, 1st-2nd century

Adam is not represented as saying 'I heard **Thy** voice in the garden', or even 'I heard **Thy Word** in the garden', but 'I heard **the voice of Thy Word** in the garden', as if he heard the voice of something separate to God Himself.

Later in the Targums, we find that the Word is personified even further:

[Moses] was to **hear the voice of the Word** but he was not to **see the glory of his face**, like a man who speaks with his friend.

And after **the voice of the Word went up**, he went back to the camp. And he told the decrees to the congregation of Israel.'

Targum Palestine, paraphrase of Exodus 33:1, 1st-2nd century

Here Targum Palestine speaks of the Word having a **voice**, even a **face** (the phrase 'the glory of his face' shows that the Word is being personified, not merely anthropomorphized), and records that it **went up**, as if it were a real person. We know that the writer of the Targum did not believe that the Word of God was a person or entity separate from God Himself, but we can see also that he personified the Word to such an extent that it seemed to be so.

Another example demonstrates the same level of personification:

'And when Moses entered into the tent of meeting to speak with him, he heard **the voice of the Spirit** which **spoke to him** when it **came down** from the highest heaven, above the mercy seat which was on the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubim.

And there **the Word spoke to him.**'

Targum Palestine, paraphrase of Numbers 7:89, 1st-2nd century

Here we read that the 'voice of the Spirit' (another term for the Word of God), **spoke** to Moses when it **came down**. Examples from the Targum of such extreme personification as 'Thine Almighty Word **leaped down from heaven out of Thy royal throne as a fierce man of war**' (Wisdom 28:15), could be multiplied, but the point has been made. Additional information on this topic may be found in Appendix E.

Buzzard writes:

'Matthew ends the description of the Temptation by saying that the Devil departed and angels "*came up to him*" (Matt. 4:11) to minister to him. On what principle of interpretation can we justify taking the words "came up to him" in two totally different senses in the same paragraph? Where in Scripture does human nature come up to a person and speak, and hold an extended conversation?'

Firstly, the word 'came' is not being taken in two totally different senses. It is being understood in both places to be speaking of something which came to Christ. It is the word 'satan' which is being interpreted figuratively, not the word 'came'.

Secondly, there is evidence that the personification of internal temptation conversing with the individual being tempted would have been perfectly comprehensible to a 1st century audience.

There is the LXX translation of the following passage in Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy 15:

9 **Be careful that you do not entertain a mean thought**, thinking, "he seventh year, the year of remission, is near," and therefore view your needy neighbor with hostility and give nothing; your neighbor might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt.

LXX:

9 Take heed to thyself that there be not **a secret thing in thine heart, an iniquity, saying**, The seventh year, the year of release, draws nigh; and thine eye shall be evil to thy brother that is in want, and thou shalt not give to him, and he shall cry against thee to the Lord, and there shall be great sin in thee.

In the LXX, the 'secret thing', the 'iniquity' is personified as speaking to the man in whom it dwells, 'saying, The seventh year, the year of release, draws nigh', and persuading the man to withhold a loan from his brother. The personification here agrees very well with the Christadelphian 'internal source' interpretation of the temptation of Christ in the wilderness.

Another personification, even more dramatic, is found in the Talmud:

Micah 7:

5 **Put no trust in a neighbor, have no confidence in a friend**; guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your bosom;

'It is written: "Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a confidant." **It means, if the evil imagination say to thee, Do thou sin and the Lord will forgive**, be not persuaded, as it is written: "Trust ye not in **an evil one**"; and "**an evil one**" is **nothing but the evil imagination, as it is written: "The imagination of a man's heart is evil"**; and there is no "guide" but the Lord, as it is written: "My father, the guide of my youth art thou."

Talmud Babylon, Book III, Tractate Hagiga, chapter 2, Rodkinson's 2nd edition, 1918

Here the 'neighbor' of verse 5 is understood by the rabbis to be the personification of the 'evil imagination'. Although the interpretation of the passage here is faulty (Micah 7:5 is actually referring to a literal neighbor), the fact that this rabbinical commentary interpreted it as personification of the 'evil inclination' demonstrates that the 'evil inclination' was so well understood to be personified by early rabbis that they even read it into passages which were more obviously speaking of literal men and women.

Buzzard writes:

'It is most unnatural to think that Jesus invited himself to fall down before himself and worship himself!'

This is a misrepresentation of the Christadelphian perspective. It is not argued that Jesus 'invited himself to fall down before himself and worship himself'. It is argued that the narrative represents the internal struggle in Christ using the language of personification.

Buzzard writes:

'If the departure of Satan means the cessation of human nature's temptation of Jesus, why may not the arrival of the angels be no more than the comfort of the spirit of God within him?!'

There is no reason to interpret the angels here as anything but actual angels. On the other hand, there is no necessity at all to interpret the satan as a literal person, and there are Scriptural reasons against interpreting the satan as an angel, particularly a 'fallen' angel.

Buzzard writes:

'Can anyone fail to see that the treatment of Scripture which the Christadelphians propose in this passage involves the overthrow of the plain meaning of language?'

Understanding that language may be used figuratively does not constitute overthrowing the plain meaning of language.

Buzzard writes:

'The older Christadelphians are rightly indignant that anyone could suggest that Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by his own mind. 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 [i.e. fellow Christadelphians] make him a sinner, their protestations notwithstanding" (*The "Devil" and "Satan" Scripturally Considered*, by E.J.R.M., pp. 14, 15).'

There are several arguments here:

- That the record of the departure of the devil proves an internal temptation cannot be referred to
- That an internal temptation was not possible for Christ
- That an individual who tempt another is a sinner, and an internal temptation would render Christ a tempter of himself (and therefore a sinner)
- That temptation is caused by illicit desires which are themselves sin, meaning an internal temptation would render Christ a sinner

Firstly, the fact that the record describes the departure of the devil for a time does not prove an internal temptation cannot be referred to. It only tells us that the source of the temptation left Christ, and this need only mean that the thoughts of temptation left him for a time.

It is significant that the record implies that this tempter returned at a later date, and yet we never read of Christ being tempted again by '**the** satan', '**the** devil', or '**the** tempter' in a manner identical to the narrative of the wilderness temptation (Buzzard gives no explanation for this fact), and we shall return to this point later.

Secondly, it is false to propose that Christ could never have encountered a temptation which had arisen from within himself. Quite apart from the fact that Christ was a human being identical to those he came to save (Hebrews 2:14-17), and therefore subject to the same temptations we ourselves experience (Hebrews 2:18), Scripture informs us explicitly that the process of his temptation was identical to our own (Hebrews 4:16). This not only means that Christ **could** have encountered a temptation which had arisen from within himself, it tells us that he **did**.

In any case, we either believe that Christ was tempted or not. Even if a temptation is presented to us by a source outside ourselves, that to which the temptation appeals is within, and it is within that the struggle against sin takes place.

The incident which demonstrates conclusively the fact that Christ was capable of being tempted internally - even when completely alone - is the struggle he faced in the garden of Gethsemane. There, no external tempter approached him with enticement, no 'fallen' angel urged him to sin. Rather, his own natural fears and desire for life caused him to contemplate the horror of the cross with such dread that he prayed to God that it might be removed if at all possible.

The fact that an angel came to provide him with support at this most difficult time (as angels had ministered to him in the wilderness), proves that the struggle he experienced against the temptation to save himself was extreme. And the temptation arose from within, not from without.

Thirdly, it is inaccurate to say that an internal temptation would render Christ a tempter of himself (and therefore a sinner), on the basis that an individual who tempt another is a sinner.

Whilst it is true to say that an individual who maliciously entices another to sin is a sinner, it is a false equivocation to say that this is an accurate description of a temptation arising from within oneself. If it were true that the very fact of temptation arising from within oneself rendered you a sinner, then all people would be deemed sinners by God simply because they had been tempted.

Finally, it is inaccurate to describe temptations as being, of themselves, sins. The brother quoted by Buzzard wrote:

'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.*'

James does not speak of desires which are 'illegitimate... forbidden and therefore sin', he speaks of people being 'drawn away and **enticed**' by 'lusts', which process he says **leads** to sin. James does not say that these desires **are** sin, but that they commence a process which **leads to sin** ('lust, **when it has conceived bringeth forth** sin'), drawing a sharp and clear distinction between the desires on the one hand, and the sin to which they lead on the other.

Buzzard writes:

'If the Devil is well known in Matthew's mind, we must go to the Old Testament, the Intertestamental Jewish literature, and to the rest of the early Christian literature of the New Testament to find out what was meant by the personal name Satan.'

Buzzard does not explain why the intertestamentals are to be considered sources of equivalence with Scripture on this issue. There is only one place in the Old Testament where Buzzard can find 'Satan' as a personal name, and this is disputed even by conservative evangelical scholars.

Buzzard writes:

'Moreover, the "spiritualizing" method of exegesis necessary to obscure the fact that a real person came up to Jesus and spoke to him will, if applied elsewhere, render the whole biblical account meaningless. This very technique has been successfully used by the churches to do away with the millennial Kingdom of the Coming Age.'

This is not a spiritualising away of the text, it is a careful reading which maintains faithfully the reality of the devil, whilst identifying it in a Scriptural manner. If the physical reality of the devil was being **denied**, Buzzard might have a point, but the devil of Christadelphian understanding is as physical as the Kingdom of God which we believe.

Elsewhere, Buzzard writes:

'It must be emphasized that belief in Satan as an external spirit does not excuse us from responsibility for our sins or false beliefs. We cannot blame Satan for our errors, claiming that "the Devil made me do it." We are responsible, with God's help, for learning the Truth, and turning from our sinful ways. The temptation which arises from the heart of man (James 1:14) and the evil thoughts which proceed "from within, out of the heart of man" (Mark 7:21) may be prompted by Satan; they may also arise naturally, since human nature has been poisoned by the disobedience of Adam and Eve.'

Where does Scripture ever say that 'The temptation which arises from the heart of man... may be prompted by Satan'? Not even the gospel record of Christ's temptation in the wilderness says any such thing, and this is the only record in the whole of Scripture of anyone being tempted by satan to sin (a fact significant in itself).

It will be noted from Buzzard's words here that he tacitly acknowledges the complete lack of distinction between being tempted by our own desires and being tempted by 'Satan'. This lack of distinction was noted previously when the issue of demonic possession was examined - there also we found that most Christians find it impossible to distinguish between demonic possession and naturally caused illnesses, to the extent that they invariably treat their illnesses as having natural causes.

Here we must ask Buzzard:

- By what means do we distinguish between temptations which arise from our our heart, and those which are prompted by satan?
- Is the manner in which we deal with temptations which are prompted by satan different to the manner in which we deal with temptations which arise from our our heart?
- Where are we told in Scripture that 'The temptation which arises from the heart of man (James 1:14) and the evil thoughts which proceed "from within, out of the heart of man" (Mark 7:21) may be prompted by Satan'? If this is true, how could it have been missed by the Scriptural record? The two passages quoted by Buzzard speak **exclusively of the heart** as the source of all such temptations and evil thoughts, but say absolutely nothing of satan.
- Why is it that Scripture only speaks of satan taking advantage of temptations which already exist in the human heart, and never of satan prompting them or putting them there?
- If, as Buzzard claims, the process by which the devil tempts us is by silently and invisibly prompting temptations and evil thoughts in our hearts, then why is he not described as having done this with Christ? Surely it would have been a far more subtle and effective attack than the open and direct confrontation which he allegedly used.

Buzzard writes:

'But we must not confuse the evil which comes "from within, out of the heart" with the Satan who comes up from the outside, as in the temptation story (Matt. 4).'

Unfortunately Buzzard offers us no advice on distinguishing 'the evil which comes "from within, out of the heart"' from 'the Satan who comes up from the outside'. Until he can do this, his warning is useless.

Not only that, but it is meaningless for Buzzard to speak of 'the Satan who comes up from the outside, as in the temptation story (Matt. 4)', because no Christian ever experiences the 'Satan' of Buzzard's theology 'coming up from the outside, as in the temptation story'.

'There is a close connection between sin and the original cause of sin, just as the conductor and the music he produces from an orchestra are connected. But no one would confuse the conductor with the orchestra.'

Buzzard's analogy is accurate, but his reasoning is not. Scripture maintains a clear distinction between sin and the original cause of sin, but never describes satan or the devil as the original source of sin. Personal desires (KJV 'lust'), are described as the cause of sin, and nowhere are they said to be 'prompted' by the devil.

In fact, Scripture is clear that the devil or satan becomes a problem when **we** have prompted our own desires to sin:

1 Corinthians 7:5 advises married Christians against inconstancy, lest they be tempted by satan (this is the only reference to satan tempting people outside the account of the wilderness temptation of Christ):

1 Corinthians 7:

5 Do not deprive one another except perhaps by agreement for a set time, to devote yourselves to prayer, and then come together again, **so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.**

- Ephesians 4:26-27 warns us not to 'give the devil an opportunity', in the context of not letting our anger provoke us to sin:

Ephesians 4:

26 **Be angry but do not sin**; do not let the sun go down on your anger,
27 **and do not make room for the devil.**

- 1 Timothy 3:7 commands that those appointed as bishops should have a good reputation with those outside the ecclesia, so that they do not fall into the snare of the devil:

1 Timothy 3:

7 Moreover, **he must be well thought of by outsiders**, so that he may not fall into disgrace **and the snare of the devil.**

We leave Buzzard to explain how a good reputation with those outside the ecclesia is a defense against 'the snare of the devil'.

- 1 Peter 5:8-9 warns us to be 'disciplined and alert, steadfast in your faith' in order to resist the devil:

1 Peter 5:

8 **Discipline yourselves, keep alert.** Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour.

9 **Resist him, steadfast in your faith,** for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering.

Finally, it is worth noting that the description of the 'spiritual warrior' in Ephesians 6:11-17 (which instructs those in Christ as to how they can 'stand against the schemes of the devil' and 'extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one'), speaks of developing internal spiritual qualities to overcome the devil.

In addition, the one offensive weapon listed in this description of the 'spiritual warrior' is 'the sword of the spirit, **which is the word of God**', indicating once more that the arena of the battle is **within**, and that it is **the development of spiritual qualities of character** which is the answer to succeeding in this warfare. Exorcism (which one would imagine to be the first resort of the Christian fighting 'Satan'), is notable by its absence.

Why is it that Scripture always warns against these desires which lead to sin being **prompted by us**, and never warns us against these desires being prompted by the devil? This is the exact opposite of what Buzzard claims. We must again ask Buzzard if resisting the devil the same process by which we resist our internal temptations and desires, and if it is then what is the difference between the devil of his theology, and the devil of ours?

Satan In The Old Testament

- **Argument:** Buzzard argues that the Old Testament bears witness to an external satan which cannot be reconciled with Christadelphian interpretations, but which must be a supernatural being of evil.
- **Reply:** The use of the word 'satan' in the Old Testament is completely contradictory to the 'Satan' of Buzzard's theology. Whilst it is true that the 'satans' of the Old Testament are all external, it is also clear that there is no one single 'satan' referred to consistently in the Old Testament. Most importantly, it is also clear that there is no reference in the whole of the Old Testament to 'Satan' as a proper name, or a 'satan' who is a supernatural evil being (still less a fallen angel), who tempts people to sin.

Buzzard writes:

'If the Devil is well known in Matthew's mind, we must go to the Old Testament, the Intertestamental Jewish literature, and to the rest of the early Christian literature of the New Testament to find out what was meant by the personal name Satan.'

Christadelphians would agree entirely that the Old Testament is the place to locate reliable information concerning satan. It is reasonable to assume that Matthew's gospel (inspired by God), will be in agreement with what God has previously revealed on the subject of satan, so it is only proper that we should seek information on satan from this source first, in order to gain an understanding of the Divine revelation on the subject which preceded Matthew.

But why would Buzzard suggest we also turn to the intertestamental literature? Is it reasonable to assume that Matthew would be speaking of any satan described in the uninspired apocryphal and apostate literature of the Jews written during the centuries of darkness when there was no Divine revelation? Why would not the Old Testament revelation concerning satan be sufficient?

The simple reason why Buzzard wishes to appeal to the intertestamental literature is that it is here that he knows he will find a description of 'Satan' which is more in keeping with the 'orthodox' doctrine which he himself holds. Let us be very clear about this – Buzzard seeks from the uninspired apocryphal and apostate literature ideas about 'Satan' which he **cannot find** in the Old Testament.

That Buzzard resorts to this tactic is extremely significant. It demonstrates that Buzzard knows full well that the satan described in the Old Testament bears no resemblance whatever to the satan of 'orthodox' doctrine. This being the case, he must find another source which describes a satan which is more in keeping with the doctrine in which he himself believes, and so he turns to the intertestamentals.

We must ask seriously if Buzzard genuinely believes that this is a legitimate form of enquiry? Is this letting the Bible interpret itself? Is it interpreting Scripture with Scripture? It is not.

Buzzard is right to acknowledge the Old Testament as the correct contextual background for the New Testament teaching on satan. But he is not right to suggest that the intertestamental literature is also part of that contextual background. The intertestamental literature may tell us a great deal about what the Jews wrote and thought on the subject of satan, but it will not tell us anything about what **God** wrote on the subject. Specifically, it is no place to be seeking for accurate information concerning an Old Testament subject which has been Divinely revealed.

The very fact that Buzzard wishes to step outside the Bible and seek information from other sources reveals that he is completely aware of the profound weakness of his own case – he realizes that his doctrine of satan is not found anywhere in the Old Testament, and that if the Old Testament **alone** is to be considered the correct contextual background for the subject of satan, then his case will have no support whatever.

Buzzard is right to tell us that we must come to the New Testament with some understanding of what or who satan is, but he is wrong to suggest that the source of our understanding should include not only the Old Testament but the apocryphal and apostate writings.

We can identify the key issues here by posing some questions to Buzzard:

- Why should the Old Testament revelation concerning satan be considered **insufficient** contextual background for the identification of satan in the New Testament?
- If the Old Testament (written by the inspiration of God), is to be considered insufficient contextual background, then why would the **uninspired** writings of the intertestamental era be considered sufficient?
- Is it credible to suggest that certain critical details concerning a fundamental doctrine of Scripture should be completely absent from the Divine revelation of the Old Testament, but somehow discovered by uninspired Jews living in the intertestamental era, and recorded accurately in the midst of obviously inaccurate apocryphal and apostate writings?
- How did the uninspired writers of the apocryphal and apostate works successfully discover accurate information regarding the true identity of satan, which had not been revealed by God through His inspired Word?
- If Buzzard is prepared to believe that the apocryphal writings contain additional accurate information (apparently omitted from the inspired record), concerning the identity of satan, then is he equally prepared to believe that they contain additional accurate information concerning immortal souls, torments of hellfire, and other doctrines which was somehow omitted from the Scriptural record, but which form a legitimate contextual background for the New Testament on these subjects?
- What Biblical evidence is there that critical information regarding the identity of satan was omitted from the Scriptural record, and what Biblical evidence is there that we are to seek this missing information from the uninspired works produced during the centuries of darkness between the two Divine revelations of Scripture?
- Can Buzzard suggest any reason why God should omit such critical information as the true identity of satan from the Old Testament, for several thousand years of Jewish history?
- Is it credible to suggest that God, having omitted this critical information from His own revelation, should leave it up to men to discover by themselves, and if so what other critical information may He have 'omitted to reveal, expecting us to stumble over it ourselves?

Questions such as these could be multiplied, but these will suffice to demonstrate the utter weakness of Buzzard's case. His entire argument for the legitimacy of the apocryphal writings as the context in which the New Testament should be read strikes a blow unashamedly against the completeness of the inspired record of the Old Testament, and undermines profoundly its teaching authority.

For Buzzard to decide arbitrarily that these apocryphal works are to be considered sufficiently authoritative to form the legitimate contextual background of the New Testament, accurately informing us of information omitted by the inspired record of the Old Testament, is surprising enough.

But we realise just how bold a claim it is when we consider that these works were not even considered by the Jews themselves to have the kind of authority which Buzzard attributes to them.

Josephus notes:

'8. (38) **For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us**, disagreeing from and contradicting one another [as the Greeks have], **but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine;**

(39) and of them **five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death.** This interval of time was little short of three thousand years;

(40) but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the **prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life.**

(41) It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but **hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time;**'

Flavius Josephus, 'Antiquity of the Jews', Book I, Chapter 8, sections 38-41, 1st century AD

Before we move on, let's summarize Buzzard's position here:

- Buzzard is unable to find in the Old Testament any description of the 'Satan' in which he believes
- Realising that the satan of the New Testament (if read in the context of the Old Testament), will not appear anything like the 'Satan' of 'orthodox' dogma, Buzzard attempts to find an alternate context with which to prepare the reader before they read of satan in the New Testament
- The alternate context which Buzzard suggests should inform our understanding satan in the New Testament, is the apocryphal and apostate literature of the intertestamental era, the works which the Jews themselves considered non-canonical, and to which Paul possibly refers when warning of 'Jewish fables' (Titus 1:14)
- Buzzard does not explain why this apparently vital information was omitted by God from the Old Testament, nor how the writers of the Jewish intertestamental literature secured this knowledge without Divine inspiration, or why we should consider them accurate sources of this information

There is no Scriptural justification for this approach. Buzzard is simply exposing the fact that the Old Testament does not speak of satan as he requires it to, and demonstrating his acknowledgement of the fact that the inspired Word of God – if read simply from Old to New Testament, without reading Jewish apocryphal works in between – will not lead us to the particular belief regarding satan which he himself holds.

It says a great deal about Buzzard's doctrine when he cannot find it in the Bible, and must seek it from apocryphal sources. Buzzard is in exactly the same position as the Catholic who (unable to defend his doctrines from the Word of God), turns to the apocryphal Jewish writings, and the writings of the 'Early Church Fathers', and insists that they contain the information vital to his doctrine which was omitted from Scripture.

We turn at last to Buzzard's approach to the Old Testament. Buzzard writes:

'There is not a single reference in the Old Testament to Satan as an *internal* tempter.'

This is understating the case – it is more accurate to say that there is not a single reference in the Old Testament to 'Satan' as a tempter at all, whether internal or external. The satans in the Old Testament had but one function - to oppose and obstruct, not to tempt with sin.

Buzzard attempts to argue that since the gospel writers refer to '**the** satan' in the record of Christ's temptation in the wilderness, that they must be referring to one satan in particular, a definite rather than an indefinite identity. He describes this as 'the Satan everyone knows about'.

With this we can agree, but Buzzard must acknowledge that 'the Satan everyone knows about' from the Old Testament is **not** a satan who tempts men to sin. We look in vain for 'the external tempter which everyone knows about' in the Old Testament.

For the gospels to refer to **the tempter** as the satan everyone knows about is to speak of **the tempter** which everyone knows about - and there is only one such tempter, the tempter **within**, not an external supernatural evil being.

There is no doubt that the satan who tempts men to sin is a uniquely New Testament subject, and we shall examine the significance of this later.

If Buzzard wishes to make his case from the Old Testament for an external satan **who is a tempter**, then he must find in the Old Testament consistent reference to Satan as an external tempter, and this he knows he cannot do (hence his efforts to appeal to the intertestamental literature).

Buzzard writes:

'The Serpent in Genesis was clearly not Eve's human nature! It was an *external* personality who spoke and reasoned with refined subtlety.'

Christadelphians would agree with this, but references to the serpent who tempted Eve are useless for Buzzard's case – he is supposed to be finding references to a **satan who tempts**, not a serpent.

Buzzard writes:

'Likewise the "satans" of the OT (without the definite article) who provided opposition were invariably *external* persons. It is therefore amazing that anyone should propose that the devil of Matthew 4 (where the term occurs for the first time in the New Testament) is an *internal* "person," i.e. human nature. The suggestion imposes an alien idea upon Scripture.'

As mentioned previously, the 'satan who tempts' is a subject unique to the New Testament. There is no point in Buzzard appealing to the external satans of the Old Testament, as if they are analogous to the tempting satan in the New. It is not at all 'amazing that anyone should propose that the devil of Matthew 4' is human nature. This does not impose an alien idea upon Scripture, for the simple reason that there is no 'satan who tempts' in the Old Testament.

Buzzard writes:

'It would be hard indeed to think that the Satan who appears amongst the Sons of God (whom the book of Job identifies with the *angels*: Job 38:7) and can "walk to and fro in the earth," call down fire from heaven, generate whirlwinds and inflict Job with boils, was a human being.'

Firstly, Buzzard is well aware that the error of attributing Divinity to men empowered by God was a major contributing factor to the Early Fathers' failing to 'retain belief in the fully human Messiah of the New Testament' (as he himself notes). He rightly rejects this error with regard to Christ.

But incredibly, Buzzard then falls into the trap of this very error when he comes to discuss the identity of satan. He asks how it could be possible for an ordinary mortal man to wield the power attributed to satan in Job - causing natural disasters, and striking Job with sickness. The answer, very simply, is in the text itself - satan seeks delegated authority from God, and it is God Himself whom Job, his wife, his three friends, his relatives and acquaintances all identify as the true source of Job's afflictions.

Most notably, God identifies **Himself** as the source of Job's disaster:

Job 2:

3 The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil. He still persists in his integrity, **although you incited me against him, to destroy him** for no reason."

Significantly, even the satan recognizes who is really afflicting Job, twice requesting God to touch Job with **His hand** to bring disaster upon him:

Job 1:

11 "**But stretch out your hand now, and touch all that he has**, and he will curse you to your face."

Job 2:

5 "**But stretch out your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh**, and he will curse you to your face."

The narrative tells us that God delegates the authority to touch Job in this way to the satan:

Job 1:

12 The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, **all that he has is in your power**; only do not stretch out your hand against him!" So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Job 2:

6 The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, **he is in your power**; only spare his life."

That it is actually God who is responsible for afflicting Job (though the Satan is the agent by which He does so), is recognized by Job himself, who identifies the hand which has afflicted him as being the hand of God:

Job 19:

21 Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends, **for the hand of God has touched me!**

It is noteworthy that Job does not consider himself to have been touched by the hand of a supernatural evil being called 'Satan'.

Job's servant attributes the destruction of Job's sheep to God:

Job 1:

16 While he was still speaking, another came and said, "**The fire of God fell from heaven** and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; I alone have escaped to tell you.

Job attributes the disasters which have fallen on him to God:

Job 1:

21 He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there; **the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away**; blessed be the name of the LORD.

Job 2:

10 But he said to her, "You speak as any foolish woman would speak. **Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?**" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Job 6:

4 **For the arrows of the Almighty are in me**; my spirit drinks their poison; **the terrors of God are arrayed against me.**

Job 10:

2 I will say to God, Do not condemn me; **let me know why you contend against me.**

Job 19:

21 Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends, **for the hand of God has touched me!**

Job 27:

2 As God lives, As God lives, **who has taken away my right**, and the Almighty **who has made my soul bitter**,

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar all attribute the disasters which have fallen to him to God:

Job 5 (Eliphaz):

17 "How happy is the one **whom God reproves**; therefore do not despise **the discipline of the Almighty.**

Job 8 (Bildad):

4 If your children sinned against him, [God] **he delivered them into the power of their transgression.**

Job 11 (Zophar):

5 But O that God would speak; and open his lips to you,

6 and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom! For wisdom is many-sided.

Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves.

Job's acquaintances and relations attribute the disasters which fell upon Job to God:

Job 42:

11 Then there came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and they ate bread with him in his house; they showed him sympathy and comforted him **for all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him**; and each of them gave him a piece of money and a gold ring.

It is noteworthy that not one person in the entire book attributes Job's sufferings to anyone but God. There is no evidence that they considered any of these disasters to be the result of persecution by a supernatural evil being. Buzzard is invited to explain this remarkable fact.

Why is it that in the very book in which satan appears most prominently as the afflicter of men, there is not one single individual who expresses a belief in the supernatural evil being of 'orthodox' doctrine?

Perhaps Buzzard may attempt to redeem his argument by claiming that Job and his wife, servant, friends, acquaintances and relations actually believed in the 'Satan' of his own theology, but were simply using language which demonstrated that God was **permitting** this supernatural evil being to afflict Job.

But note carefully that nowhere does anyone in the book of Job even express a belief that God is **permitting satan** to afflict Job, rather they are all attributing every disaster **directly to God Himself**. There is not the slightest hint anywhere in the book of any belief in a supernatural evil being called 'Satan' who afflicts men, whether by God's permission or not. We may well ask Buzzard why this is.

Buzzard writes:

'It would be hard indeed to think that the Satan who appears amongst the Sons of God (whom the book of Job identifies with the *angels*: Job 38:7) and can "walk to and fro in the earth," call down fire from heaven, generate whirlwinds and inflict Job with boils, was a human being.'

The satan in Job is not identified with the angels as Buzzard claims. He isn't even called one of the sons of God (appropriate, since he appears in opposition to Job). He is simply said to come 'among' the sons of God, from whom he is distinguished. Further, the 'sons of God' are predominantly human in Scripture, and the exception of Job 38:7 does nothing for Buzzard's case (resting an entire argument on a single exception is arguing from very slender foundation).

Buzzard writes:

'Was *the* Satan appearing opposite the Angel of the Lord a man? (Zech. 3).'

The prophecy of Zechariah was given during the reign of Darius Hystaspes (522-486 BC), at a time when the Jews had returned from the Babylonian captivity, had rebuilt Jerusalem, and were rebuilding the temple at the express command of God, and the encouragement of His prophets (Ezra 3:1-6; 5:1-2, 11-17, Nehemiah 2:4-8, 17-18, Haggai 1:1, 7-8, 13-15, Zechariah 1:1, 12-17; 2:4-7, 3:7).

Opposition to this work was made constantly by the enemies of Israel, (Ezra 4:4-24, Nehemiah 2:19; 4:1-12; 6:1-14). They are called generally the 'people of the land', more particularly the Arabs, Ammonites, and Ashdodites (Nehemiah 4:7), who had settled in Israel's absence.

We are told of their repeated efforts to oppose the work of Israel directly, either through bribery, attacks, or intrigues against Nehemiah:

Ezra 4:

4 **Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah**, and made them afraid to build,
5 and **they bribed officials to frustrate their plan** throughout the reign of King Cyrus of Persia and until the reign of King Darius of Persia.

Nehemiah 4:

7 But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and the gaps were beginning to be closed, they were very angry,
8 **and all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it.**

Nehemiah 6:

1 Now when it was reported to Sanballat and Tobiah and to Geshem the Arab and to the rest of our enemies that I had built the wall and that there was no gap left in it (though up to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates),
2 Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come and let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of Ono." **But they intended to do me harm.**

3 So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you?"

4 **They sent to me four times in this way, and I answered them in the same manner.**

We are told also of the false accusations they brought against the Jews generally, and Nehemiah in particular:

Ezra 4:

6 In the reign of Ahasuerus, in his accession year, **they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.**

Nehemiah 6:

5 In the same way Sanballat for the fifth time sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand.

6 In it was written, "It is reported among the nations—and Geshem also says it—that **you and the Jews intend to rebel**; that is why you are building the wall; and according to this report **you wish to become their king.**

7 You have also set up prophets to proclaim in Jerusalem concerning you, 'There is a king in Judah!' **And now it will be reported to the king according to these words.** So come, therefore, and let us confer together."

8 Then I sent to him, saying, "**No such things as you say have been done; you are inventing them out of your own mind**"

There was therefore during this time an opposition to Israel which was constant, well known, and definite – the 'people of the land', particularly the Arabs, Ammonites, and Ashdodites (Nehemiah 4:7), who had settled in Israel's absence. No record is found anywhere of anyone being tempted by satan, or of satan afflicting any of the people of Israel in the manner that Job was afflicted.

When we come to the passage in Zechariah to which Buzzard appeals, this is the context in which we must read it. Up to this point there has been absolutely no mention whatever in Scripture of a supernatural evil being who tempts, slanders, or otherwise afflicts men and women (contrary to Buzzard's belief), so there is no necessity whatever to pre-suppose that any such adversary will be referred to in Zechariah.

Zechariah 3:

1 Then he showed me the high priest Joshua standing before the angel of the Lord, **and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.**

2 And the Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this man a brand plucked from the fire?"

The scene established in this vision is akin to a court room, in which both Joshua and the satan stand in opposition to each other before 'the angel of the LORD' (God's representative angel), awaiting a judgment regarding the accusation. The satan stands at the right hand of Joshua to 'resist' him (literally to 'satan' him – this is the verb form of the Hebrew word 'satan'), and in the court room setting it appears that the satan is bringing an accusation against Joshua.

The RSV, NRSV, CEV, TEV, TLB, NLT, NAB, NCV, Rotherham, and the NET all translate this word 'accuse', 'accused', 'accusing' or 'accusation', which suggests that a natural reading of the text is that the satan's opposition is in the form of an accusation against Joshua.

This idea of the vision as a court room scene, and the satan as an accuser of Joshua, appears to have occurred to the Jewish translators of the LXX. It is significant that whilst in the Hebrew text the word here is 'satan', in the LXX it has been translated 'diabolos' ('false accuser'), suggesting again the idea that the satan is making a false accusation against Joshua.

This connection is strengthened when it is realized that the very image of a false accuser being set at the right hand of Joshua in a court room scene is taken straight from an earlier passage in Scripture, from one of David's psalms:

Psalms 109:

6 They say, "Appoint a wicked man against him; **let an accuser stand on his right.**

7 **When he is tried, let him be found guilty;** let his prayer be counted as sin.

LXX:

6 Set thou a sinner against him; and let **a false accuser [Greek 'diabolos', as in LXX Zechariah 3:1] stand at his right hand.**

7 **When he is judged, let him go forth condemned:** and let his prayer become sin.

The phrase 'a brand plucked from the fire' is also significant, since it has been used previously in the prophecy of Amos to speak of the remnant of Israel whom God spared from the punishment He brought on the nation for its wickedness (Amos 4:11).

That Joshua is identified in this way suggests strongly that he is representative of the remnant of Israel who have been spared from the captivity of Babylon, and who have returned to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple (this is not a Christadelphian invention, various standard Bible commentaries such as John Gill's commentary and the 19th century commentary by Keil and Delitzsch do the same). This has obvious parallels with Jude 1:9, 23, which we shall consider later (an examination of the satan in Jude is found in Appendix F).

Since Zechariah 3 is in the form of a prophetic vision rather than a simple narrative, such representation is a natural reading of the text. But if Joshua is representative of the remnant of Israel, then what is the identify of the satan?

We have seen previously that Rabbi Jonathan Ben Uzziel (1st century AD), interpreted the satan here as a personification of sin (a device which Buzzard rejects, insisting inaccurately that it would not have occurred to Jewish expositors, especially at the time of Christ). But there is a more natural reading of the text than this.

In the context of the adversaries of Israel which we have established, it is a natural reading of the text to understand the satan as representative of the enemies of Israel who brought a false accusation against both the Jews generally and Nehemiah specifically (Ezra 4:6-9 and Nehemiah 6:5-8).

In his article, Buzzard refers to the interpretation of this passage given by Brother Lynam Booth (in pages 101, 102 of Brother Booth's work 'The Mystery of Iniquity Explained, a Biblical Exposition of the Devil', 1929), an interpretation which he criticizes severely.

But it is interesting that whilst Buzzard objects profoundly to Brother Booth's understanding that Michael the arch-angel in Jude 1:9 is the Joshua of Zechariah 3:1, he makes no comment at all on Brother Booth's interpretation that the satan of Zechariah 3:1-2 is the governor Tatnai (referred to in Ezra 5:3, 6; 6:6, 13).

Buzzard did not overlook this interpretation (he not only makes mention of it, but also quotes it directly), so it is curious that he chose not to discuss it, though he spent almost an entire page arguing against Brother Booth's identification of Joshua the high priest in Zechariah 3 as Michael the arch-angel in Jude 1:9. It is not necessary to confine the satan to merely one individual (as did Brother Booth), especially given that Joshua is already representing a group of people himself (the people of Israel).

A natural reading of the text suggests that the satan could represent collectively all of the men who brought a false accusation against the Jews and Nehemiah, which would include not only the false accusation of Sanballat and Geshem against Nehemiah (Nehemiah 6:5-8), but also the false accusation of the officials who wrote against the people of Israel (four of whom are mentioned by name in Ezra 4:6-16).

Buzzard may object to this identification of a single adversary as representative of a collective adversary, so it will be useful to demonstrate the use of this device elsewhere in Scripture.

A number of passages could be brought forward, but one in particular is especially relevant to our argument:

Psalm 109:

- 6 They say, "Appoint a wicked man against him; let an accuser stand on his right.
- 7 When he is tried, let him be found guilty; let his prayer be counted as sin.

We have made use of this passage before, demonstrating that it is quoted directly by Zechariah 3:1. But what relevance has it to the matter of satan in Zechariah 3 referring to a collective rather than an individual adversary?

The point is obscured in the NRSV from which we quote here, so we shall turn to the NET for a useful comparison:

Psalm 109 (NRSV):

6 They say, "Appoint a wicked man against him; let an accuser stand on his right.

7 When he is tried, let him be found guilty; let his prayer be counted as sin.

Psalm 109 (NET):

6 Appoint an evil man to testify against him! May an accuser stand at his right side!

7 When he is judged, he will be found guilty! Then his prayer will be regarded as sinful.

The NRSV interprets this psalm as David's litany of the accusations brought **against him by his adversaries**, and thus interprets verses 6-7 as a quotation of their words (whilst noting that the words 'They say' are not in the Hebrew text).

On the other hand, the NET understands the psalm to be David's **supplication to God** to deal severely with his (David's), enemies.

The footnote in the NET in this place explains:

'In vv. 6-19 the psalmist calls on God to judge his enemies severely. Some attribute this curse-list to the psalmist's enemies rather than the psalmist. In this case one should paraphrase v. 6: "They say about me, 'Appoint an evil man, etc.'"

Those supporting this line of interpretation point out that vv. 2-5 and 20 refer to the enemies' attack on the psalmist being a verbal one. **Furthermore in vv. 1-5, 20 the psalmist speaks of his enemies in the plural, while vv. 6-19 refer to an individual.** This use of the singular in vv. 6-19 could be readily explained if this is the psalmist's enemies' curse on him.

However, it is much more natural to understand vv. 6-19 as the psalmist's prayer against his enemies. There is no introductory quotation formula in v. 6 to indicate that the psalmist is quoting anyone, and the statement "may the Lord repay my accusers in this way" in v. 20 most naturally appears to be a fitting conclusion to the prayer in vv. 6-19.'

If David is calling for God's judgment on multiple enemies in verses 1-5, then why represent them as a single foe in verses 6-7? The footnote in the NET goes on to explain, as well as providing another example of this device:

'But what about the use of the singular in vv. 6-19? Often in the psalms the psalmist will describe his enemies as a group, but then speak of them as an individual as well, as if viewing his adversaries collectively as one powerful foe.

See, for example, Ps 7, **where the psalmist uses both the plural (vv. 1, 6) and the singular (vv. 2, 4-5) in referring to enemies.'**

This is significant for two reasons:

- It demonstrates that the collective representation of a group of enemies by reference to a single enemy is a device **already used** in Scripture before Zechariah 3
- It is a device which occurs **in the very verse** from Psalm 109 **which is quoted directly in Zechariah 3**

Both of these facts provide supporting evidence for the interpretation of the satan in Zechariah 3 as a collective representation of those who were opposing and falsely accusing the Jews in Zechariah's day. The use of this device in Psalm 109:6 is especially significant, since this verse is quoted directly in Zechariah 3:1, and it is natural to read the quotation as occurring in the same context as it does in Psalm 109:6 (a reference to many enemies, not simply one).

The satan therefore is a collective representation of those who were opposing and falsely accusing the Jews in Zechariah's day. It is worth noting that this is neither an interpretation unique to Christadelphians, nor an interpretation unknown to the Jewish expositors. It may interest Buzzard to know that Rabbi David Kimchi (born 1160), interpreted the satan here in Zechariah 3 as **Sanballat and his co-conspirators** (see Keil and Delitzsch on Zechariah 3:1-3, noted previously).

This is an ancient interpretation with which Christadelphians could agree entirely, but which Buzzard would no doubt find frustrating, as it demonstrates that this reading could occur perfectly naturally to someone who had no interest in attempting to refute the doctrine of satan as a supernatural evil being.

The last passage which we must consider in our survey of Old Testament references to 'the satan' is the occasion of David's numbering of the people:

1 Chronicles 21:

1 Satan stood up against Israel, and incited David to count the people of Israel.

The NRSV translates 'satan' here as a proper name. Buzzard claims that it is a proper name here, but since the word lacks the definite article here, and another of his arguments is that where 'satan' lacks the definite article it refers a general satan (not **'the satan'**, whom he insists is distinguished by use of the definite article), then he is arguing against himself. In any case, other 'orthodox' Bible translations and commentaries translate it as a generic 'adversary' or 'a satan' (NAB, NET), so Buzzard has no real argument to make here.

The NET (a conservative evangelical translation) has:

1 Chronicles 21:

1 **An adversary opposed Israel**, inciting David to count **how many warriors Israel had**.

The footnotes on the passage in the NET read:

1tn Or "Satan." The Hebrew word [Hebrew text in original] can refer to an adversary in general or Satan in particular. **There is no article accompanying the term here, which suggests it should be understood generally.**

2tn *Heb* "stood against."

3tn *Heb* "and incited David to count Israel." As v. 5 indicates, David was not interested in a general census, **but in determining how much military strength he had.**'

If this was simply 'a satan', an adversary in the general sense, then what was it, and why would David be interested 'in determining how much military strength he had'?

The parallel account in Samuel reads:

2 Samuel 24:

1 Again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, **and he incited David against them**, saying, "Go, count the people of Israel and Judah."

This verse says that **God incited David to number Israel**. The question we must then ask is how did He move David against Israel?

Let's now return to the Chronicles record:

1 Chronicles 21 (NET):

1 **An adversary opposed Israel**, inciting David to count **how many warriors Israel had**.

In other words:

- An adversary opposed Israel (1 Chronicles 21:1)
- This adversary, though raised up by God (2 Samuel 24:1), was not God Himself (God is distinguished from the adversary in 1 Chronicles 21:7)
- David responded to the threat made by this adversary to Israel by numbering the people

So what was the adversary which rose up against Israel? The answer is to be found in David's response:

1 Chronicles 21 (NET):

2 David told Joab and the leaders of the army, "**Go, count the number of warriors from Beer Sheba to Dan. Then bring back a report to me so I may know how many we have.**"

2 Samuel 24 (NET):

5 **Joab reported to David the number of warriors**. In all Israel there were one million one hundred thousand sword-wielding soldiers; Judah alone had four hundred seventy thousand sword-wielding soldiers.

David numbered the people for war. What sort of activity would cause him to number the people for war? The hostile military activity of a foreign power, an attacking nation. The adversary opposed Israel, and that David actually chose to respond to this threat in manner which resulted in transgression.

What Buzzard neglects to mention is the fact that the satan in 1 Chronicles 21:1 bears no resemblance to the 'Satan' of 'orthodox' teaching. The record speaks of the satan **opposing Israel**, not enticing David to sin.

Whilst it is true that the action of opposing Israel **led** David to sin, it must be noted that the one responsible for the adversary coming against Israel was not Buzzard's 'Satan', but God Himself.

Buzzard writes:

'Where in these passages is there the faintest hint that the Satan means human nature?'

This is a false argument by Buzzard, since Christadelphians do not simply substitute 'human nature' for 'satan' in these passages. On the contrary, Christadelphians believe that in these passages men are referred to by the word satan.

In summary:

- Scripture states explicitly that God alone creates disaster (Psalm 78:49, Psalm 90:14-15, Isaiah 45:7, Amos 3:6, Micah 1:12), not a supernatural evil being called 'Satan'.
- This view was clearly held even by the individuals who appear in Job, (surely the textbook example of satan's work against men, if Buzzard is to be believed), in which satan is seen to be afflicting a righteous man.

In the book of Job, it is **God** (not satan), who is considered the source of disaster by God (Job 2:3), Job (Job 1:21; 2:20; 6:4; 10:2; 19:21; 27:2), Job's servant (Job 1:16), Job's wife (Job 2:9), Job's three friends (Job 5:17; 8:4; 11:5-6), Job's acquaintances and relations (Job 42:11), and Job's satan himself (Job 1:12; 2:6).

- Even more significant is the fact that there is **not one individual in the whole of the Old Testament** who attributes evil, disaster, or temptation to the supernatural evil being in whom Buzzard believes. Buzzard is invited to explain this remarkable fact.
- The satan of 1 Chronicles 21:1 bears no resemblance to the 'Satan' of 'orthodox' teaching, opposing Israel rather than tempting David. David clearly saw no supernatural influence involved, and responded by numbering the people for war, indicating that the satan was nothing other than an enemy nation which was raised up by God.
- The satan in Zechariah 3:1-2 is a collective representation of those who were opposing and falsely accusing the Jews in Zechariah's day. The passage quotes directly from Psalm 109:6, in which David's enemies are collectively represented as a single enemy, and it is natural to read the quote in Zechariah 3:1 as being in the same context.

The fact that this interpretation was given at least as early as Rabbi David Kimchi (born 1160), contributes significantly to the argument that it is a natural reading.

- Buzzard makes much of the fact that satan in the Old Testament is always external rather than internal, but fails to note that satan in the Old Testament is also always an adversary, never a tempter.

There is nothing in the Old Testament which provides any support for an external tempter called 'Satan', still less for a supernatural evil being who afflicts men with evil and tempts them to sin.

- It is worth noting that some of the very earliest Jewish paraphrases and rabbinical commentaries on Genesis 3 attribute the temptation of Eve entirely to the serpent, and say absolutely nothing of the involvement of any supernatural evil being (see Appendix G).

Satan As A Fallen Angel

- **Argument:** Buzzard argues that the Bible identifies satan clearly as a fallen angel, thus contradicting the Christadelphian understanding of satan.
- **Reply:** Scripture makes no such identification. There are no passages in the whole of Scripture which speak of immortal angels as disobedient, and there are no passages which describe any immortal angels as 'fallen'.

Buzzard writes:

'But man is in opposition to God. Why not a fallen angel?'

The answer to this question is that Scripture describes angels as invariably obedient, never as disobedient.

In fact there is no indication in Scripture that they are even capable of disobedience - Psalm 103:19-21 speaks of the angels as being God's unswervingly obedient servants, Matthew 6:10 states that God's will is done in heaven (to the extent that it is used as an example of the general state of obedience to God which will exist in the Kingdom age), and Hebrews 1:14 also speaks of angels as being the obedient servants of God. There are no passages which speak of disobedient angels, or which mention even the possibility that angels are capable of sin.

Buzzard writes:

'It is the teaching of the New Testament that Satan is an angel of darkness.'

This is untrue. Nowhere in the whole of Scripture is satan described as 'an angel of darkness'.

Buzzard writes:

'Paul describes him as transformed into an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14). A word study on the verb Paul used ("*metaschematizetai*") will show that Satan changes his *outward* appearance to masquerade as an angel of light. He is by inward nature an angel, but he changes himself into an angel of light by an *external* transformation.'

Firstly, the word 'metaschematizetai' does not refer in this passage to visible, physical, outward appearance. It is not used to describe how people appear physically to the naked eye, but how they present their identity to others. It is speaking of people who claim to be bringing the true gospel, but who preach another gospel (2 Corinthians 11:13). There is a parallel here to Christ's warning regarding wolves coming in sheep's clothing, a figure for false teachers who portray themselves as true.

Secondly, Paul nowhere says that satan 'is by inward nature an angel', or that he is an angel at all.

Thirdly, the entire passage to which Buzzard refers is speaking of mortal men who are bringing false teachings into the ecclesia:

2 Corinthians 11:

3 But I am afraid that just as the serpent deceived Eve by his treachery, **your minds may be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.**

Here Paul expresses his fear that just as Eve was turned away from God by the serpent, so the Corinthians might be turned away from the truth of the gospel. It is significant that Paul speaks of Eve having been beguiled by **the serpent**, not beguiled by the devil or Satan.

If Eve was turned aside by the serpent, whom does Paul fear may turn aside the Corinthians? He gives the answer in the next verse:

2 Corinthians 11:

4 For if someone comes and proclaims **another Jesus** than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive **a different spirit** from the one you received, or **a different gospel** from the one you accepted, **you submit to it readily enough.**

Paul is afraid of someone coming and preaching another gospel. In other words, he is warning them against false teacher - against men, not a supernatural evil being. His fear is that false teachers may come and corrupt the Corinthians by preaching another gospel. It is significant that he expresses no fear that a 'fallen angel' called 'Satan' will turn them aside.

Paul continues his description of these false teachers after a parenthetical passage (verses 5-12):

2 Corinthians 11:

13 For such boasters are **false** apostles, **deceitful** workers, disguising themselves as **apostles of Christ.**

Here he calls the false teachers of verse 4 'false apostles' - men claiming to bring the message of Christ, who are in reality bringing a message of deceit. It is this pretence that Paul calls 'disguising themselves as the apostles of Christ'.

To 'disguise oneself as an apostles of Christ' is therefore to bring a false message in the name of Christ, to claim to speak his message and yet to speak falsehood. This is significant, because it defines for us clearly what Paul means by this transformation - he means someone coming and teaching a false message in Christ's name, a false gospel in place of the true.

Paul is not speaking of people who change their physical appearance, or the way they look. He is speaking of people who present themselves as true teachers when in reality they are false. He is not talking about people putting on some kind of disguise to conceal their physical outward appearance.

2 Corinthians 11:

14 And no wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

15 So it is not strange if his ministers also disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness. Their end will match their deeds.

Finally, Buzzard does not explain what he means by this:

'Satan changes his *outward* appearance to masquerade as an angel of light. He is by inward nature an angel, but he changes himself into an angel of light by an *external* transformation.'

What does it mean for 'Satan' to change 'his outward appearance to masquerade as an angel of light', or to change 'himself into an angel of light by an external transformation'? Is Buzzard really saying that 'Satan' disguises himself as a 'good' angel? If so, why? What would be the point of such a disguise? Mortal men and women do not experience angels appearing to them, whether as 'angels of light' or 'angels of darkness'.

Furthermore, the only people to whom angels appear as angels are God, Christ, and other angels, and one must ask if it is reasonable to suggest that God, Christ, or another angel would really be deceived by an 'angel of darkness' pretending to be an 'angel of light' simply by changing their external appearance.

Buzzard writes:

'Only an angel can become an angel of light by this means.'

Buzzard does not explain what he means by this. The word 'angel' here need only mean 'messenger', and this being the case it is perfectly possible for a human to be an 'angel of light by this means'. Indeed, Paul speaks of people becoming 'apostles of Christ' by this means, and also speaks of people becoming 'ministers of righteousness' by this means. These three phrases are all equivalent - they are speaking of people who claim to be teachers of truth, when in fact they are teachers of error.

Buzzard writes:

'Paul states the belief, common to his contemporaries, that Satan is an angel, albeit a fallen one. He states the same thing in so many words in II Corinthians 11:3, 4, 14 where he identifies the Serpent with the transformed angel (verses 5-13 represent a parenthetical section).'

Firstly, Buzzard provides no evidence from Paul's 'contemporaries' to support his claim, so we are left in doubt as to what he means and how he intends to support it.

Secondly, the identification suggested by Buzzard (the serpent as the 'transformed angel'), is hardly a natural reading of the text.

Here is Buzzard's proposed reading:

2 Corinthians 11:

3 But I am afraid that just as the serpent deceived Eve by his treachery, **your minds may be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.**

4 For if someone comes and proclaims **another Jesus** than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive **a different spirit** from the one you received, or **a different gospel** from the one you accepted, **you submit to it readily enough.**

14 And no wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

Buzzard wishes to connect verse 3 with verse 14, treating verse 14 as a continuation of the reference to the serpent in verse 3. The first difficulty with this of course is that verse 4 comes between verses 3 and 14. This makes Buzzard's reading of the text extremely unlikely - verse 14 is more likely to be referring back to verse 4 than verse 3, even if we accept Buzzard's suggested parenthesis.

The next difficulty is that verse 3 is making a comparison between Eve and the ecclesia, and leading on from there to express his fear that the ecclesia will be led away by false teachers, not by satan.

Here is what Buzzard believes Paul is saying:

2 Corinthians 11:

3 But I am afraid that just as the serpent deceived Eve by his treachery, **your minds may be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.**

14 And no wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

This is the only way to 'identify the Serpent with the transformed angel', as Buzzard would have us believe Paul intends us to do.

When we realise that in order to read the passage in this way the words 'by Satan' have to be inferred from (or introduced), and that the whole of verse four must be removed completely (something even Buzzard's suggested parenthesis does not allow), we can see that this reading is impossible. It is not a natural reading, it is a forced reading, a contrived reading.

Here is Paul's argument, as it appears in Scripture:

1 Corinthians 11:

3 But I am afraid that just as the serpent deceived Eve by his treachery, **your minds may be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.**

'I am afraid that, just as the serpent deceived Eve through his cleverness so your minds may be deceived likewise.'

4 For if someone comes and proclaims **another Jesus** than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive **a different spirit** from the one you received, or **a different gospel** from the one you accepted, **you submit to it readily enough.**

'For if someone comes preaching another Jesus, another spirit, or another gospel than that which we have preached or which you have received from us, I am afraid that you will tolerate them.'

We can see that verse 4 expresses Paul's concerns that the ecclesia may be deceived by false teachers (mortals), just as Eve was deceived by the serpent. There is no reference to Eve being deceived by 'Satan', and no reference to the ecclesia being deceived by Satan. Whether parenthesised or not, Paul's explicit concern in verses 5 to 13 is that the ecclesia may be deceived by false teachers (mortals), not that they may be deceived by 'Satan'. His emphasis on this subject is unmistakable.

Attempting to read verse 14 as if it follows on directly from verse 3 not only ignores the fact that Paul is drawing a parallel between Eve's temptation and the temptation the Corinthians may undergo (not saying that they will be tempted by the same source, but saying that they may undergo a temptation similar in character), but takes no account at all of verse 4. It is not possible for this to be the correct reading.

What then is the identity of the satan in this passage? The text leads us naturally to the conclusion that the satan was a particular adversary of Paul's, a certain false teacher who - with his equally false messengers - was opposing the true teaching of Paul and the other apostles.

Noteworthy are the following facts recorded in the text:

- The 'servants' of satan are mortal men, not 'fallen' angels or demons: why are they mortal men, and not these supernatural evil beings?
- The 'servants' of satan are described as false apostles, false teachers: this suggests that they are servants of another false teacher who is like themselves
- The satan himself is a false teacher (falsely presenting himself as a 'messenger of light'): this means that he must be coming physically to the ecclesia and teaching them
- The satan is visible to and personally known by, the Corinthian ecclesia: does this really describe accurately the satan of Buzzard's theology, who is always silent, invisible never personally known, and indistinguishable from the temptations of the heart?

None of this is compatible with the concept of the satan as a supernatural evil being, or the 'fallen' angel of Buzzard's theology.

Buzzard writes:

'This identification is well known in the writings of Paul's contemporaries. It is clearly made in Revelation 12:9 and 20:2. The fact that the Serpent of Genesis is to be crushed by the seed of the woman Eve alerts us to the fact that the Serpent continued to exist until the times of the Messiah (Gen. 3:15). The Serpent was cursed for its wickedness. It should hardly be necessary to point out that the curse was imposed because of the Serpent's *guilt*.'

'We are left with the simple explanation that Satan is the chief of an army of demon spirits, fallen angels; that the Serpent of Genesis *is* the Devil (Rev. 12:9; 20:2). The identification of the Devil with the Original Serpent (Rev. 12:9) was the common belief of the times. It is merely confirmed by the Scriptures. Paul implies the same identification in II Corinthians 11 (discussed earlier). He equates the Satan with the Serpent in Romans 16:20 where he says that Satan will shortly be bruised, a reference to the future bruising of the Serpent by the Messiah, as promised in Genesis 3:15. The Nachash (serpent) of the third chapter of Genesis appears again in the third chapter from the end of the Bible, where he is bound and imprisoned so that he cannot deceive the world any longer (Rev. 20:1-3).'

Firstly, neither Revelation 12:9 or 20:2 identify satan as a 'fallen angel'. Nor do they 'identify the Serpent with the transformed angel'. They do however identify satan with the serpent, as well as with a dragon. This identification is significant, and should not have been overlooked by Buzzard.

From Genesis 3 onwards, the serpent is used as a symbol of opposition to God manifested through disobedient and antagonistic mortals:

Genesis 3:

15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, **and between your offspring and hers;** he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."

The enmity described here is not simply an antagonism between snakes and men, between children and the offspring of snakes. It is between two classes of people. One class is described as 'the seed of the woman' (those people who obey God), and one is described as 'the seed of the serpent' (those people who oppose God). The serpent is used as a symbol of this opposition to God - to be of the seed of the serpent is to belong to the class of people who are in opposition to God.

We see this expressed repeatedly in the gospels:

Matthew 3:

7 But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "**You brood of vipers!** Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

Matthew 12:

34 **You brood of vipers!** How can you speak good things, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Matthew 23:

33 **You snakes, you brood of vipers!** How can you escape being sentenced to hell?

Luke 3:

7 John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "**You brood of vipers!** Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

People who share the animal like thinking of the serpent, in opposition to God, are called the seed of the serpent. This proves to us that the serpent is used as a symbol for a particular way of thinking, not to represent a supernatural evil being.

Perhaps it might be argued that the serpent itself is simply being used as a symbol for 'Satan'. If this were the case, we would expect to see some evidence that the subtility and deceitfulness of the serpent was not his own, but that of the being behind him.

But on the contrary, repeatedly we find these attributes being described as the possession of the literal serpent itself, not a supernatural evil being using the serpent to hide behind.

In Genesis, we find the cunning of the serpent identified as the serpent's own:

Genesis 3:

1 **Now the serpent was more crafty** than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'"

In the gospels we find Christ identifying the wisdom of the serpent as its own:

Matthew 10:

16 "See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be **wise as serpents** and innocent as doves.

Paul likewise attributes the serpent's cunning to the serpent itself:

2 Corinthians 11:

3 But I am afraid that just as the serpent deceived Eve by his treachery, **your minds may be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.**

But what of these words of Christ in John?

John 8:

44 You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father' desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Doesn't this verse identify the devil very clearly as the one who told a lie from the beginning? Doesn't this tell us that the serpent in Eden is really just a symbol for the supernatural evil being called 'Satan'?

On the contrary in fact - this passage speaks of Cain, not the serpent. The entire context of Christ's words is the fact that the Pharisees want to kill him because he is telling the truth, just as Cain murdered Abel out of envy for his brother's acceptance by God.

Consider the following:

- It is not a lie which is presented here as the identifying feature of the devil, but murder
- Cain was the first murderer, not the serpent
- Cain is the one who 'abode not in the truth' (something which cannot Be said of the serpent), departing first from God's prescribed offering, and later from God Himself

The apostle John would later use this description of Cain in his own epistle, in the same context, confirming that it is Cain who is spoken of by Christ:

1 John 3:

12 We must not be like Cain who was from the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? **Because his own deeds were evil and his brother righteous.**

Cain is therefore called the devil who is the father of those who think likewise.

Secondly, the 'dragon' and 'serpent' of Revelation 12 is identifiable from Daniel 7 as the Roman empire, the 'dragon' being a symbol used in Scripture to represent nations and powers which are opposed to God and His people (see 'The Dragon In Revelation 12', in part two of this work). Not only is this significant from the point of view of proving that it is not representative of a supernatural evil being, it is also significant because it proves the Christadelphian understanding of the serpent, as well as the 'devil' and 'satan', as references to worldly manifestations of enmity against God and His people.

Thirdly, whilst it is true that Genesis 3:15 shows that the 'serpent' would exist from the time of Adam and Eve to the time of the Messiah, it must also be acknowledged that the enmity exists between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, demonstrating that the struggle represented here is between those who are carnally minded and those who are spiritually minded. Given that the seed of the serpent are those who are carnally minded, it is clear that their 'father' must be the carnal mind, and it is this which the serpent represents.

Buzzard's interpretation of the serpent in Genesis 3:15 as a figure or proxy for a supernatural evil being called 'Satan' has no support.

Fourthly, the statement that Buzzard makes concerning the punishment of the serpent ('The Serpent was cursed for its wickedness. It should hardly be necessary to point out that the curse was imposed because of the Serpent's guilt.'), defeats his own case. If it were '**Satan**' who was the guilty party, then why was it not '**Satan**' who was punished? Scripture instructs us that it was the serpent (a 'beast of the field'), who deceived Eve, and it was the serpent who was punished.

Finally, it is significant that no Bible passage attributes Eve's deception to satan - it is always attributed to the serpent, who is always described as an animal. It is also worth noting that the early rabbinical commentaries invariably describe Eve as having been deceived by the serpent, and not by an angel (whether 'fallen' or not). See Appendix G for further details.

Buzzard writes:

'Students of the Bible should never think that Satan is as powerful as God! He is not omniscient or omnipresent. Nor need he be feared by those who are properly instructed Christians and who seek the strength and protection of God, their Father. The Satan of the New Testament is the god of the present age - the age until the coming of the Kingdom (II Cor. 4:4).'

It is noteworthy that the Scriptures give no guidance whatever on the matter of combating supernatural foes.

Buzzard writes:

'As Beliar (a common Jewish term for Satan) he is contrasted with the supernatural Christ (not with the "good" in human beings - II Cor. 6:15).'

The term 'Belial' in the Old Testament simply meant 'worthlessness' or 'evil', and the term 'a man of Belial' simply meant 'a man of evil'. Buzzard argues however that by the first century the term 'Belial' had become 'a common Jewish term' for a literal supernatural being of evil - satan - and that the first century Jews understood the term in this way.

But Gill's commentary notes that it was also used by the Jews as a term for the 'evil inclination':

'...sometimes **the corruption of nature is called "Belial"** by the Jews (*q*), than which nothing can be more contrary to Christ...

(*q*) Tzeror Hammor, f. 148. 3, & 149. 2.'

John Gill, 'Commentary On the Bible', note on 2 Corinthians 6:15, 1748

The following references in Talmud Babylon attests to the fact that this word still retained its Old Testament meaning in the 1st century:

'As we have learned in the following Boraitha: R. Joshua b. Kar'ha said: He whose eyes are shut to charity is likened unto an idolater; and this is to be taken from an analogy of expression in the following verses: Concerning charity it is written: "**Beware that there be not Belial in thy heart**"; and concerning idolatry, it is written: "**There have gone forth children of Belial.**"'

Talmud Babylon, Tractate Baba Bathra, Part I, Chapter 1, Rodkinson's 2nd edition, 1918

What is it that Rabbi Ben Kar'ha calls 'Belial' in Deuteronomy 15:9?

Deuteronomy 15:

9 **Be careful that you do not entertain a mean thought** [Hebrew 'word with thine heart of Belial'], thinking, "The seventh year, the year of remission, is near," and therefore view your needy neighbor with hostility and give nothing; your neighbor might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt.

It is the 'mean thought' which the Ben Kar'ha calls 'Belial', proving once again that there was a common understanding among the Jews that 'Belial' referred not to an external supernatural evil being, but to evil thoughts within the heart of men.

Likewise the term 'sons of Belial' did not refer to fallen angels, but to evil men:

'The rabbis taught: There have gone forth men, but not their messengers. "Men" (plural) no less than two. And according to others "men" and not "women," "men" and not "minors," **"sons of Belial," sons who took off the yoke of Heaven from their necks.**'

Talmud Babylon, Tractate Sanhedrin, Part II, Chapter 11 (or Folio 111.2), Rodkinson's 2nd edition, 1918

The following quotation from 4Q175 (unidentified Qumran fragment 175 from cave 4), one of the 'Dead Sea Scrolls', further illustrates that the Old Testament term and meaning was still current in the first century:

'Behold, an accursed man, **a man of Belial**, has risen to become **a fowler's net to his people, and a cause of destruction to all his neighbors.**

And [his brother] arose [and ruled in li]es, **both being instruments of violence.** They have rebuilt [this city and have set up for it] a wall and towers to make of it **a stronghold of ungodliness in Israel, and a horror in Ephraim and in Judah...**

They have committed **an abomination in the land, and a great blasphemy** among the children [of Jacob. They have shed blood] like water upon the ramparts of the daughter of Zion and within the precincts of Jerusalem.'

4Q175, lines 21-30, 1st century AD

Buzzard writes:

'He is also the prince of the demons (Matt. 12:24).'

In this passage it is the Pharisees, not Scripture, who identify satan as 'the prince of demons':

Matthew 12:

24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "**It is only by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons**, that this fellow casts out the demons."

This is an important passage for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it is an example of an important fact which Buzzard has overlooked that it is only the apostate Jews (not Christ), who refer to satan as 'Beelzebub'. It is significant that there was a 'prince of the demons' already well established in 1st century Judaism, complete with his own unmistakable personal name, and yet he receives no mention whatever from Christ or the apostles.

Why is this? A complete systematic doctrine of demons existed, but it is never mentioned by Christ or the apostles. A 'prince of the demons' with his own personal name ('Baalzebub', not 'Satan'), was already widely recognised in Jewish theology, and yet he is ignored completely in the teachings of Christ and the apostles.

Secondly, Buzzard fails to note that this 'prince of the demons' was none other than Beelzebub, the false god of the Ekronites. The Old Testament identifies Beelzebub beyond question:

2 Kings 1:

2 Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and lay injured; so he sent messengers, telling them, "Go, inquire of **Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron**, whether I shall recover from this injury."

3 But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Get up, go to meet the messengers of the king of Samaraia, and say to them, '**Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?**'"

It is clear therefore that the Pharisees' apostasy had led them so far as to acknowledge the gods of the heathen, whom they viewed as 'lesser gods', with the god of Ekron as the most prominent among them. It is not even debatable whether or not a belief in the gods of the heathen is acceptable to God - there is no doubt He finds it blasphemous.

To claim that the Pharisees were correct to believe in the god of the Ekronites is to contradict one of the most important teachings of Scripture - that there is only one God, and all others are false. It makes no difference to call this false god by another name ('Satan'), or to claim that he is simply a 'fallen angel' (Scripture defines him unmistakably as a false god of Ekron).

It must be recognised that every attempt to claim that 'Baalzebub' is a genuine supernatural devil being contradicts a number of Biblical statements which are made clearly and dogmatically:

- That there is one God, and all others are false
- That 'Baalzebub' is a false god of Ekron
- That belief in the false gods of the heathen is blasphemy

Buzzard writes:

'Jesus made no effort to challenge this idea. He assumes it along with a belief in the reality of demons.'

As we have seen, if Christ had wished to adopt and support the contemporary beliefs regarding demons and 'Satan', he would have made some reference to them. That Christ assumed a belief in demons among his audience is true - that he supported this belief is not true. Arguments regarding this issue are presented in the chapter in this work entitled 'New Testament Teaching On Demons'.

But if Christ had wished to adopt and support the contemporary beliefs regarding demons and 'Satan', then why did he not make mention of the m n his teachings? An entire theology of demons existed among the Jews if this time, and yet it is never used by either Christ or the apostles.

The proper name for the supernatural evil being of common belief was 'Baalzebub', not 'Satan', and he is identified in Scripture as the god of the Philistines in Ekron, not as a fallen angel. Why does Christ not use this name to refer to satan or the devil, and why does he never describe satan or the devil as 'the prince of the demons', as the Pharisees do?

Buzzard writes:

'He had himself stated that Satan is chief of a host of *angels* (Matt. 25:41).'

Christ says no such thing:

Matthew 25:

41 Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels;

To claim that Christ here declares 'that Satan is chief of a host of angels' is a dramatic overstatement. These 'angels' are not immortal spirit beings but evil mortals, called 'messengers' of satan because they carry the 'message' or spirit of disobedience to God (just as the 'seed of the serpent' in Genesis 3:15 are not literal snakes, but disobedient human beings).

Scripture is consistent in only ever identifying evil mortals as 'angels' which have sinned (2 Peter 2:4-5, Jude 6, and see the exposition of these passages in 'The Angels Which Sinned', in part two of this work, as well as 'Slandering Celestial Beings', in Appendix [L]).

In addition, Scripture is adamant that only mortal men will appear at the Judgment, not 'evil angels' (Daniel 12:2, Matthew 7:21-23; 10:15; 11:22-24; 12:36-37, 41-42; 13:40-43; 16:27; 24:48-51; 25:24-34, 41, Mark 6:11, Luke 10:12; 13:28, John 5:28-9, Acts 17:30-31; 24:15, 24-25, Romans 2:5, 14:10-12, 2 Corinthians 5:9-10, 2 Timothy 4:1, 2 Peter 3:7).

Buzzard writes:

'Satan is also seen in conflict with Michael, the Archangel, in Jude 9.'

The issue of satan in Zechariah is addressed comprehensively in the chapter in this work entitled 'Satan In The Old Testament'.

Buzzard writes:

'The question that must be asked is: why should the phrase "came up to him" (v. 3) mean the onset of thoughts within him, when exactly the same phrase "came up to him" (v. 11) means a literal approach of angels? The method used by Booth is quite arbitrary. In the single sentence "the Devil leaves him and angels come up to him," the first half of the sentence is taken figuratively to mean the end of temptation in the mind of Jesus, and the second half is literally true! This is in contradiction to Booth's own principle of consistency, quoted above.

The proper and commonsense method is surely to compare the phrase "came up to him" in verse 3 with Matthew's use of the same phrase elsewhere, and then with the use of the same words in the New Testament as a whole. (In deciphering poor handwriting, we look for other occurrences of an obscure letter to see how it fits in different contexts.) In Matthew 8:2, a leper "came up to him"; in 8:5 a centurion "came up to him"; in 8:19 a scribe "came up to him"; and in 24:3 the disciples "came up to him." In Acts 22:27, "the chief Captain came up to Paul and spoke."

The words in the original text in all these cases and scores of others throughout the New Testament are exactly the words used of the approach of the Satan to Christ. In no case in the Bible are these words used of thoughts arising in the mind. This will suffice to show that the "figurative" view of "came up to him" in Matthew 4:3 has *no parallel anywhere in Scripture*.

No lexicon known to the writer will allow a figurative meaning for the phrase in question. The theory that no one approached Jesus in the wilderness temptation is a private one, which has simply been imported by ascribing to words meanings which they cannot bear. This involves a revolution in language which if applied elsewhere will effectively overthrow every fact stated in the New Testament.'

This entire part of Buzzard's article, formidable as it seems, is in fact mere sleight of hand. Buzzard is not only misrepresenting the text, he is entirely misrepresenting the manner in which the word 'came' is understood here by the Christadelphian interpretation.

Firstly, Buzzard deliberately over translates the Greek word for 'come' here, preferring to translate it '**came up**', in order to create the sense of a greater distinction between Christ and the satan, giving the false the impression that the text wishes us to understand that Christ and the satan are two separate individual beings.

The Greek word here is translated simply 'came' in the KJV, NKJV, NLT, RSV, NRSV, ASV, NCV, TEV, NET, and Murdoch's translation of the 4th century Syriac Peshitta. There is no grammatical necessity for Buzzard to translate it as he does.

Secondly, the word 'came' is not being taken in two totally different senses. It is being understood in both places to be speaking of something which actually came to Christ. It is the word 'satan' which is being interpreted figuratively, not the word 'came'. There is no point in Buzzard appealing to lexicons to support his understanding of the word 'came', because the

Christadelphian interpretation does not dispute the meaning of the word 'came'. It is the meaning of the word 'satan' which is under dispute here.

Surely Buzzard would not dispute that we can be 'drawn away' and 'enticed' by 'his own lusts' (James 1:14), whilst acknowledging that 'lusts' are internal desires rather than external individuals attempting to lead us astray. And would he say that to interpret 'lusts' here as internal desires is contradictory to the literal meaning of the words 'drawn away' and 'enticed'? What of the next verse, when 'lust' is suddenly personified and 'conceives'?

Is it contradictory to maintain that 'lust' here is being personified, whilst also agreeing that it has 'conceived' in some sense of the word? It is hardly likely that Buzzard would argue that the lexical definition of the words 'drawn away', 'enticed' and 'conceived' require that a literal being be the subject of these words here in James.

This entire argument of his regarding literal and figurative meanings of words is completely meaningless - it is a mere distraction from the real issues.

Elsewhere, Buzzard appeals to Jude's record of the dispute between Michael the archangel and satan regarding 'the body of Moses', claiming this is clear evidence satan is an angelic being.

Buzzard writes:

'If we consult contemporary Jewish writings (Jude himself quotes from the book of Enoch), we find a reference to the dispute over the body of Moses - which means Moses' body - in the Targum of Jonathan on Deuteronomy 34:6, and a reference in the church father, Origen, to the Ascension of Moses in which the story of a dispute over his body occurs. The event was clearly well known to Jude's readers and needed no explanation.'

There are several issues here:

- **Wrong date:** Neither of the sources cited by Buzzard (Targum pseudo-Jonathan and the reference to the 'Ascension of Moses' in Origen), are 'contemporary Jewish writings'.

The Targums are conservatively dated to the late 1st and early 2nd centuries AD, which means that Jude was written before they were, not the other way around. It is not possible for Jude to be quoting from works which had not been written in his day.

Origen lived even later, in the second half of the third century, so he is even more removed from the book of Jude and its original context. Not only that, but there is no textual evidence that the writing he mentions (the 'Ascension of Moses'), was a 1st century document.

- **Wrong content:** The reference in Targum Jonathan makes no mention of anything recorded in Jude (it simply speaks of Moses' body being buried by angels, four miles from where he died). The reference in Origen makes mention of Michael disputing with Satan, but does not describe it in the manner in which it is found in Jude.

Significantly, neither of them contains a reference to Michael's words 'The Lord rebuke thee'.

- **Wrong book:** Although there are several early apochryphal works within the 1st century which contain legends about Moses, none of them contain any references to Michael arguing with satan over the body of Moses. This is a significant absence, since it demonstrates that this legend was not contemporary with Jude. Many commentators assume that Origen was actually referring to a 1st century work found among the 'Dead Sea Scrolls' called the 'Testament of Moses'.

However, when this assumption is examined it is demonstrated that the commentators are pinning their theory to the wrong book - quite apart from the fact that it has a completely different name to the 'Ascension of Moses' to which Origen refers, the 'Testament of Moses

contains absolutely no mention of either Michael, satan, the body of Moses, or any dispute between Michael and satan.

There is an early 1st century work called the 'Testament of Moses', parts of which were found among the 'Dead Sea Scrolls', proving that it was written prior to AD 70 and could have been contemporary with Jude. Many modern commentators believe that this is the writing quoted by Jude and referred to by Origen.

There are major problems with this theory, however.

The first is that the 'Testament of Moses' contains absolutely no mention of either Michael, satan, the body of Moses, or any dispute between Michael and satan. Most commentators who assert that Jude is quoting from this work are totally ignorant of this fact, merely repeating this theory assuming has been proved (a similar myth also perpetuated by a large number of commentators, is that the Council of Nicea in 325 AD defined the New Testament canon of Scripture - in fact this Council made no pronouncements on the New Testament canon at all, the myth has arisen from a misreading of a single passage in one of the works of Jerome, written well over 50 years later).

Some scholars have suggested that the passage attributed to the 'Ascension of Moses' by Origen did originally occur in the 'Testament of Moses' (extant copies of the 'Testament of Moses' are incomplete, and it is suggested that the material to which Origen refers appeared in the last sections of the work, which are now lost).

Apart from the fact that this is needlessly speculative, it cannot explain why no mention of this legend appears in the 1st century, or even the 2nd century. If this material was part of the original 'Testament of Moses', it would have been in circulation before Christ, and some evidence of it is to be expected.

It is unlikely in the extreme that it could have been preserved and circulated as early as the pre-Christian era, and yet not be found, quoted, or even referred to in any Christian literature before the 3rd century AD, and be completely absent from all Jewish literature. For Buzzard to suggest that this material is a 'contemporary Jewish writing' is to make an assertion which flies in the face of the evidence.

The second is that the book referred to by Origen has a completely different name. Origen writes of the 'Ascension of Moses', whereas the 1st century work found among the 'Dead Sea Scrolls' is called the 'Testament of Moses'.

Some commentators have suggested that Origen is simply referring to the 'Testament of Moses', but it is unlikely that he either would quote from this work (which contains no reference to Michael or Satan), or refer to it using the wrong name. Other commentators suggest that the 'Testament of Moses' is simply another name for the 'Ascension of Moses', but this is even less.

Evidence providing confirmation that this theory is looking at the wrong book is the fact that the 'Ascension of Moses' is mentioned by name in the writings of other Christian commentators living before or after Origen. None of them appear to be confusing the 'Testament of Moses' with the 'Ascension of Moses', and there is no evidence that they considered this work to be circulating under two different names.

All available evidence leads to the conclusion that the 'Ascension of Moses' is an apocryphal Christian work known only to Christians after the 2nd century. This contradicts completely Buzzard's assertion that it was a 'contemporary Jewish writing'. A detailed examination of the textual evidence and various theories surrounding the issue may be found in Appendix I.

Buzzard writes:

'The mention of Satan in opposition to an Archangel is further 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." To explain these passages away, in an effort to suppress the scriptural evidence for Satan as an angelic being, is strongly discouraged by the verse in Revelation 22:19 which warns us not to "take away from the book of this prophecy.'

Firstly, the 'mention of Satan in opposition to an Archangel' does not prove that satan is a supernatural being.

Elsewhere in Scripture we find men in opposition to angels, and this does not make these men supernatural beings:

- Jacob wrestled with an angel, and even prevailed (Genesis 32:24-30)
- Balaam was in opposition to an angel (Numbers 22:22-32)
- The king of Persia resisted the work of an angel to the extent that Michael the archangel was required to give assistance (Daniel 10:13)

The last incident is particularly important, since it shows a mortal man in opposition to both an archangel and another angel. If opposition to an archangel is proof that someone is a supernatural being, then this king of Persia must, according to Buzzard's argument, have been a supernatural being. Such a conclusion demonstrates that Buzzard's argument is logically flawed.

Secondly, the reference to the war in heaven between satan and Michael with their angels contains nothing of use to Buzzard, for the simple reason that it is a symbolic dramatization of the struggle between pagan Rome and politically empowered Christianity, as has been demonstrated.

Thirdly, the fact that these 'angels' are not immortal spirit beings but evil mortals is demonstrated by Matthew 25:41, in which mortals who have been rejected by Christ at the Judgment are described as 'angels' of the devil. Scripture is consistent in only ever identifying evil mortals as 'angels' which have sinned.

Fourthly, no 'scriptural evidence for Satan as an angelic being' is being 'suppressed', because there isn't any to suppress. Buzzard is begging the question and using scare tactics.

Finally, the very fact that Buzzard is interpreting the dragon here as the supernatural evil being of 'orthodox' doctrine rather than interpreting it as a symbolic representation of the Roman empire (as Daniel 7 leads us to do), demonstrates that he is approaching this passage with his own theological preconceptions rather than allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture. This cannot be right.

Buzzard writes:

'And in the New Testament, on what principle shall we say that the "Prince of this world," "the Father of lies," "the Original Serpent," "the god of this age," "the roaring lion going about to destroy Christians," "the one who shoots darts at us" is internal human nature?'

The simple answer to this is that we shan't. These passages do not all refer to the same subject. They certainly do not all refer to human nature.

Buzzard writes:

'The believer in the non-personality of Satan will have to explain how it is that the Satan is everywhere *external* in the Old and New Testaments. In the parable of the sower the "birds of heaven" devoured the seed (the message of the Kingdom) which fell by the wayside. Jesus' explanation of the birds is that "the devil comes and takes away the Message from their heart so that they may not believe and be saved" (Luke 8:5, 12).'

It needs to be pointed out that satan is not 'everywhere external in the Old and New Testaments'. First of all, it is worth reminding Buzzard that satan only appears three times in the entire Old Testament, a fact for which he provides no explanation. This being the case, it is not significant that satan does not appear explicitly as internal. What is significant is the fact that in the Old Testament there is not a single individual who believes in satan as a supernatural evil being.

Secondly, it needs it be realized that in three places in the New Testament, satan is said to be within someone:

Luke 22

3 **Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot**, who was one of the twelve;

John 13:

27 After he received the piece of bread, **Satan entered into him**. Jesus said to him, "Do quickly what you are going to do."

Acts 5:

3 "Ananias," Peter asked, "why has **Satan filled your heart** to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land?"

Buzzard of course would point out that all of these passages prove that satan is an external force – a supernatural evil being – which enters the individual from without in order to corrupt them from within.

Just as he claims that the description of demons 'entering' individuals must prove that they are external forces which do not arise from within the individual themselves, so it is his argument that descriptions such as these, of satan 'entering' an individual, prove that satan is a force external to the individual, and cannot therefore be a reference to human inclinations to sin.

But there are three lines of evidence which contradict Buzzard's argument here.

The first is the fact that the Greek word 'entered' here is indeed used elsewhere for that which emerges from within an individual, rather than from without:

Luke 9:

46 An argument **arose among them** as to which one of them was the greatest.

In the highlighted phrase above, the word 'arose' is the same word translated 'entered' in the passages in which satan is said to have entered Judas. Here it is used of an argument which arose among the disciples.

But it is clear from the context that this argument did not enter in among them from an external source – it arose from within their own hearts, and was then spoken aloud between them.

There is therefore no necessity to insist that the Greek word here must always speak of that which enters the individual from without. It can be used to speak of that which arises from within one's own heart, which is the Christadelphian understanding of 'satan entering' in these passages.

Indeed, the exhaustive Greek lexicon of Liddell, Scott and Jones contains in its definition of this Greek word ('eiserchomai'), the metaphorical use 'come into one's mind', citing several Greek texts as examples of this usage (Herodotus 1.24, 86; 3.14, 42; 7.46; 8.137, Plutarch Tht 147c and Lg 835d, A Pr 1002). This demonstrates that the word was commonly used metaphorically to speak of that which arose from within, as well as that which entered from without.

The second line of evidence is drawn from the early rabbinical commentaries. In the following extract from Talmud Babylon (considered earlier in this work), we find that the expression 'Belial in your heart' was a phrase used to refer to having **an evil thought**:

'As we have learned in the following Boraitha: R. Joshua b. Kar'ha said: He whose eyes are shut to charity is likened unto an idolater; and this is to be taken from an analogy of expression in the following verses: Concerning charity it is written: "**Beware that there be not Belial in thy heart**"; and concerning idolatry, it is written: "**There have gone forth children of Belial.**"

Talmud Babylon, Tractate Baba Bathra, Part I, Chapter 1, Rodkinson's 2nd edition, 1918

Rabbi Ben Kar'ha here quotes Deuteronomy 15:9:

Deuteronomy 15:

9 **Be careful that you do not entertain a mean thought** [Hebrew 'word with thine heart of Belial'], thinking, "The seventh year, the year of remission, is near," and therefore view your needy neighbor with hostility and give nothing; your neighbor might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt.

It is the '**mean thought**' which Ben Kar'ha calls 'Belial'. To have a 'heart of Belial' (a mean thought in one's heart), was described as having '**Belial in your heart**'.

This proves that there was a common understanding among the Jews that 'Belial' referred not to an external supernatural evil being, but to evil thoughts within the heart of men, and that this evil thought was considered to arise from within oneself. Likewise, to have satan fill one's heart means to conceive within oneself an evil thought, not to be influenced by an external supernatural evil being.

This is proved by the third line of evidence, which is from Scripture itself. There is a parallelism in the passage concerning Ananias which expounds beyond argument the meaning of the phrase 'satan filled your heart':

Acts 5:

3 Ananias," Peter asked, "why has **Satan filled your heart** to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land?

4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, were not the proceeds at your disposal? **How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart?** You did not lie to us but to God!"

There is no disputing that when Peter says 'satan filled your heart', he means 'you have contrived this deed in your heart'. We have Peter's own statement that **Ananias** conceived this thought in **his own heart** – it was not suggested to him from an external source, nor was it conceived within him by means of his being possessed by a supernatural evil being.

This passage demonstrates:

- That Scripture may speak of a thought filling someone's heart in a way which sounds as if it is entering in from an external source, when in fact the thought emerged from within themselves
- That Scripture equates 'satan filled your heart' with '**you have conceived this** in your heart'

There is no escaping the force of the parallelism. This passage states the Christadelphian position explicitly.

Buzzard writes:

'Will anyone seriously suggest that the birds of the sky represent *internal* human nature?'

There is no necessity to make such a suggestion. The birds need only represent the things which lead the ignorant away from God. This is implied by the very fact that the birds themselves are plural in number. Can Buzzard explain to us why a single entity, 'Satan', should be represented by plural entities, the birds?

In fact, Buzzard's interpretation of this passage is completely inadequate, not least because it fails to actually explain what the parable is saying. In the parable of the sower, the birds are those things which actually **prevent** those who have heard the gospel **from believing**:

Luke 8:

11 "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

12 The ones on the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and **takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.**

This actually sounds nothing like the 'Satan' of Buzzard's theology, who tempts with sin those **who already believe**. This is something which is represented by plural entities (the birds), and which **removes** the gospel from people's hearts, in order that **they might not believe**. Buzzard fails to explain why this is an appropriate description of the devil.

The point is driven home further when we consider the parallel records. In Matthew's account of the parable of the sower, we find the following:

Matthew 13:

19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom **and does not understand it**, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path.

Here we are told that those who are represented by the seed on the path are those who heard the gospel, **but failed to understand it**. As a result, what was sown is soon taken away.

Buzzard is invited to explain what this means in the context of the devil. Why should the devil be concerned about people who don't even understand what they have been told about the gospel? Is it usually the devil's work to target those who have no comprehension of the gospel, and take the word of the kingdom out of their heart? What does this even mean? Does he make them forget about it? Why is there no mention of the traditional 'orthodox' work of satan – temptation, trial, and bodily affliction?

The most natural interpretation of this passage is that the birds represent those people who are in opposition to God, and who lead away those who are hear the gospel but who fail to understand it.

For such people as these we need look no further than the religious leaders of Christ's day, who were constantly perverting the minds of those who followed Christ to listen to his teachings, and who attempted to prevent people from being converted by him.

Indeed, Christ makes specific mention of this work of theirs:

Matthew 23:

13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! **For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven.** For you do not go in yourselves, **and when others are going in, you stop them.**

These, collectively referred to as 'satan', are the birds of Christ's parable.

Buzzard writes:

'The analogy is of course parallel to Paul's description of Satan as the Prince of the power of the air, the wicked spirit in heavenly places (Eph. 2:2; 6:12). How can the air be the seat of human nature? The air, in Paul's terminology, is located above the earth (I Thess. 4:17).'

There is no obvious analogy being drawn to the 'prince of the power of the air'. Why would birds (plural), be used to refer to the prince (singular), of the power of the air? And why does Buzzard speak of 'the wicked spirit in heavenly places', when the Bible says no such thing?

The passages in Ephesians to which he refers say the following:

Ephesians 2:

1 You were dead through the trespasses and sins

2 in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following **the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work** among those who are disobedient.

12 For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, **but against the rulers, against the authorities**, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the **spiritual forces of evil** in the heavenly places.

There is no mention of 'the wicked spirit in heavenly places' here. There is a specific mention of a struggle against **rulers** and **authorities** (of the kind referred to previously in Christ's parable), who are certainly justifiably represented by birds, if Buzzard wishes to extend the metaphor of their moving about in the air, above those from whom they rob the gospel. They are described here as **spiritual forces of evil**, not forces of evil spirits. They are thus those who are spiritually opposed to God and Christ, against whom the servants of Christ wrestle spiritually.

Buzzard writes:

'The very atmosphere is polluted by the presence of Satan and the demons who at present "energize" the children of disobedience, just as the Spirit of God "energizes" the children of God (see Eph. 2:2, Phil. 2:13, where the same Greek word describes the activity of Satan and God).'

Firstly, nowhere does Scripture speak of such a 'pollution' of 'the atmosphere'. Secondly, the passage in Ephesians 2 does not speak of the children of disobedience being 'energized' by

'Satan and the demons', but on the contrary speaks of 'the prince of the power of the air' as **being** 'the spirit which works among the children of disobedience'.

Here is the passage in question:

Ephesians 2:

- 1 You were dead through the trespasses and sins
- 2 in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following **the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work** among those who are disobedient.

This passage does not say that the children of disobedience are energized by 'the ruler of the power of the air', or that they are energized by his spirit, it says that the 'ruler of the power of the air' **is the spirit** which works among the children of disobedience.

Completely contrary to Buzzard's claim, this passage is identifying the 'ruler of the power of the air' as a spirit, or attitude, which is within those who are disobedient. This is precisely in accordance with Christadelphian view, which considers the 'ruler of the power of the air' to be the personification of the attitude which rules them, an attitude of disobedience. This is precisely why they are called **the children** of disobedience, a personification of disobedience which makes no sense in Buzzard's view, and is totally overlooked by him.

Buzzard writes:

'That the air is contaminated by evil spirits is evident from the need for Christ to reconcile to himself things both *in heaven* and on the earth (Col. 1:20).'

Buzzard here confounds himself further – he now attempts to identify the 'air' in Ephesians 2:2 as the very heavens themselves. But if this is the case, then the inescapable conclusion is that both 'Satan' and his demons currently occupy **the very same heavens as God and His angels**, an incredible conclusion.

Furthermore, Buzzard's use of the reconciliation passage in Colossians to claim that there are certain things in heaven which need to be reconciled to God (namely, 'Satan' and his demons), leads inescapably to the conclusion that both 'Satan' and his demons **will** be reconciled to God by Christ.

This is a conclusion which surely even Buzzard must acknowledge is completely unScriptural, for Matthew 25:41 tells us that both the devil and 'his angels' (whom Buzzard views as his demons), will be judged unworthy at the judgment of Christ, and cast into the eternal fire. Likewise, Revelation 20:10 speaks of the devil being cast into the lake of fire, not reconciled to God by Christ.

The conclusion to which Buzzard leads us is that both 'Satan' and his demons not only currently occupy the very same heavens as God, Christ and the angels, but will one day accept Christ and be reconciled to God through him. The passages of Scripture which contradict such a conclusion are numerous, and the absurdity of the idea demonstrates the errors which are inevitably compounded by following such an exposition of satan as Buzzard adopts.

New Testament Teaching On Demons

- **Argument:** Buzzard argues that the New Testament (especially the gospel records), speaks of demons using language which cannot be reconciled with the Christadelphian interpretation, unless it is to be assumed that both Christ and the New Testament authors were practicing a deliberate deceit on their readers.
- **Reply:** Scriptural evidence proves that the language used of demons in the New Testament (especially the gospel records), is not intended to teach the reality of demons, but used for the specific purpose of accommodating the beliefs of the uninformed and spiritually immature.

Scriptural evidence also proves that those writings addressed to mature Christian believers use no such accommodation, and speak of demons as the non-existent false gods of the heathen, never as evil supernatural beings which possess people and cause physical afflictions or illnesses.

There are several issues to be dealt with when examining Buzzard's case. They may be separated into those issues which provide negative evidence (evidence contradicting Buzzard's case, with which it cannot be reconciled), and those issues which provide positive evidence (evidence which substantiates the Christadelphian understanding).

Firstly, it is necessary to state the two conflicting cases - Buzzard's case, and the Christadelphian case.

Buzzard's case is as follows:

- Demons are supernatural evil beings, who were worshipped as gods by the pagans, and which cause physical afflictions such as disease by inhabiting humans
- The Old Testament describes demons being worshipped as gods by the pagans, but does not deny their existence
- A belief in demons does not compromise monotheism
- The demons of the synoptic gospels cannot be simply 'code words' for those who were ill from natural causes, since the Greeks had words for those ill from natural causes (including mental illness), and yet the Greek word for demons is used instead - furthermore, a distinction is drawn between those who are possessed by demons and those who were ill from natural causes, proving that the terms are not being used synonymously
- The synoptic gospels always distinguish the demon and its actions from the individual possessed by the demon, so the actions which the gospels attribute to the demons cannot be attributed to the sufferer and Christ is described as conversing with the demon, not the sufferer, proving once again that the demon is recognised a real being separate from the individual possessed by the demon
- Demons are repeatedly referred to in the synoptic gospels (and once in James 2:19), in ways which indicate a literal existence (they are depicted as inhabiting people, crying out, holding conversations with Christ, believing in God, and trembling)

- Neither Christ nor the writers of Scripture could have been using any form of 'accommodation' language, because to do so would have been pious fraud at best, and deceit at worst, for if this belief was false it would have been corrected by Christ and the apostles immediately, not left unchallenged - they must therefore be understood as having believed in the existence of demons as supernatural evil beings which cause physical afflictions such as disease by inhabiting humans, and of encouraging this belief in others

The Christadelphian case is as follows:

- Demons are the gods worshipped by the heathen
- The Old Testament not only describes demons as being the gods worshipped by the pagans, but also denies their existence
- A belief in demons is therefore a contradiction of monotheism
- The demons of the synoptic gospels are not simply 'code words' for those who were ill from natural causes, they are references to the gods of the heathen
- The synoptic gospels do not always distinguish the demon and its actions from the individual possessed by the demon and sometimes clearly attribute the action of the sufferer to the demon, so the actions which the gospels attribute to the demons can be attributed to the sufferer
- The description in the synoptic gospels (and once in James 2:19), of demons crying out, holding conversations with Christ, does not prove that the demon is recognised a real being separate from the individual possessed by the demon, but that the narrative wishes the audience to understand that the individual with whom Christ is conversing was considered to be an individual possessed by a demon - this is the use of the same phenomenistic language and 'accommodation' found in the Old Testament, and used elsewhere in the New
- The description in James 2:19 of demons believing in God and trembling is to be understood as using the same language device used frequently in the Old Testament to attribute life ironically to idols and false gods
- The 'accommodation' by both Christ and the writers of New Testament Scripture of the belief in demons is no more a pious fraud or 'deceit' than the use of phenomenistic language found elsewhere in Scripture, and Christ's own preparedness to 'accommodate' false beliefs rather than contradict them immediately and directly is attested to elsewhere in the gospels

We shall examine the Biblical evidence, and compare it with these two sets of arguments.

Since the Christadelphian case involves understanding the use of phenomenistic language and accommodation in the New Testament accounts of demons, we must at the outset define and distinguish between these two terms.

Phenomenistic language is the use of language to describe things as they appear to be, rather than as they are. This may be used when accommodating a particular belief, but is not itself accommodation.

Examples of phenomenalistic language in the Old Testament include:

- **Descriptions of the rising and falling of the sun:** The sun does not literally rise or fall, but it appears to (Numbers 2:3, Psalm 50:1; 113:3, Isaiah 45:6, Mark 16:2 are just a few examples)
- **References to the 'four corners of the earth':** The earth does not literally have four corners, but it appears to (Isaiah 11:12, Ezekiel 7:2, Revelation 7:1)
- **The 'miracles' performed by Egypt's magicians:** The magicians did not perform genuine miracles, but they appeared to (Exodus 7:22; 8:7)
- **The 'standing still' of the sun and moon on Joshua's 'long day':** The sun did not literally stand still, but it appeared to (Joshua 10:12-13)

Accommodation is the policy by which inaccurate beliefs are not directly contradicted or corrected immediately or explicitly, but are shown to be false indirectly. During the time that they are not corrected directly they may be treated as accurate either ironically, or for the sake of proving them false indirectly, or for some higher purpose.

Examples of accommodation in the Old Testament include:

- **Elijah's challenge to the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel:** Elijah's challenge to the prophets of Baal was made using statements which sounded as if he believed that Baal literally existed (1 Kings 18:27), he did not simply tell them that Baal was a false god who was not real
- **God's challenge to King Ahaziah regarding Baalzebub:** When King Ahaziah sought advice from Baalzebub as to whether or not he would die, the message God sent through the mouth of His prophet was not 'Baalzebub does not exist, why are you seeking to a false God?', but 'Is there no God in Israel, that you seek advice from the gods of the heathens?', as if the gods of the heathens actually existed, when we know that God elsewhere explicitly denies their existence (2 Kings 1:2-4)
- **References to idols trembling, and false gods bowing down:** Frequently Yahweh speaks of the false gods of the heathens as if they literally exist, when in fact He has declared that they do not, and describes inanimate idols as having life when they are obviously dead – He describes Himself as coming to visit judgment on the gods of the Egyptians (Exodus 12:12, Numbers 33:4), challenges the false gods of the heathen to worship Him (Psalm 97:7), describes the idols of Egypt as trembling at His approach (Isaiah 19:1), describes the gods of the Babylonians as bowing down and kneeling in submission to Him (Isaiah 46:1), says He will punish the gods of Egypt (Jeremiah 46:25), and says He will starve (or 'weaken'), the gods of the heathen (Zephaniah 2:11)

The Definition of Demons

Buzzard's argument:

- Demons are supernatural evil beings, who were worshipped as gods by the pagans, and which cause physical afflictions such as disease by inhabiting humans

As we have seen previously, demons are not merely described in Scripture as being **worshipped as gods**, they are identified **as being themselves gods**:

Leviticus 17:

6 The priest shall dash the blood against the altar of the Lord at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and turn the fat into smoke as a pleasing odor to the Lord,
7 so that they may no longer **offer their sacrifices for goat-demons**, to whom they prostitute themselves. This shall be a statute forever to them throughout their generations.

Deuteronomy 32:

16 They made him jealous with **strange gods**, with abhorrent things they provoked him.
17 They sacrificed **to demons**, not God, **to deities** they had never known, to new ones recently arrived, whom your ancestors had not feared.

2 Chronicles 11:

15 and had appointed his own priests for the high places, **and for the goat-demons**, and for the calves that he had made.

Psalm 106:

6 **They served their idols**, which became a snare to them.
7 They sacrificed their sons and their daughters **to the demons**;

1 Corinthians 10:

19 What do I imply then? That food sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?
20 No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, **they sacrifice to demons** and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons.

As we have also seen, there is no record whatever in the Old Testament of demons afflicting anyone. They are identified as the gods of the heathen, gods who are consistently identified as empty idols, the works of men's hands, who are powerless because they do not really exist.

The Existence of Demons Denied

Buzzard's argument:

- The Old Testament describes demons being worshipped as gods by the pagans, but does not deny their existence

The Scriptural evidence demonstrates otherwise. Firstly, we have already seen that Scripture identifies demons as the gods of the heathen.

Secondly, Scripture tells us that these are false gods, no gods at all, the mere work of men's hands:

Psalm 106:

6 **They served their idols**, which became a snare to them.

7 They sacrificed their sons and their daughters **to the demons**;

Isaiah 37:

18 Truly, O Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands,

19 and have hurled their gods into the fire, **though they were no gods, but the work of human hands**—wood and stone—and so they were destroyed.

Jeremiah 16:

20 Can mortals make for themselves gods? **Such are no gods!**

Given this body of evidence, it is not possible to claim that demons exist – Scripture denies their existence explicitly.

Monotheism Compromised By Belief In Demons

Buzzard's argument:

- A belief in demons does not compromise monotheism

We have seen that demons are identified By Scripture as the gods of the heathen. Scripture also tells us that there is no god but Yahweh:

2 Chronicles 13:

9 Have you not driven out the priests of the Lord, the descendants of Aaron, and the Levites, and made priests for yourselves like the peoples of other lands? Whoever comes to be consecrated with a young bull or seven rams becomes **a priest of what are no gods**.

Isaiah 37:

18 Truly, O Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands,

19 and have hurled their gods into the fire, **though they were no gods, but the work of human hands**—wood and stone—and so they were destroyed.

Isaiah 44:

6 Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; **besides me there is no god**.

8 Do not fear, or be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? You are my witnesses! **Is there any god besides me? There is no other rock; I know not one.**

Isaiah 45:

5 I am the Lord, and there is no other; **besides me there is no god**. I arm you, though you do not know me,

6 so that they may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, **that there is no one besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other**.

7 I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe;

I the Lord do all these things.

20 Assemble yourselves and come together, draw near, you survivors of the nations!
They have no knowledge—par those who carry about their wooden idols, and keep on
praying to a god that cannot save.

21 Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! Who told this long ago?
Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the Lord? **There is no other god besides me**, a
righteous God and a Savior; **there is no one besides me**.

22 Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! **For I am God, and there is no
other**.

Jeremiah 2:

11 Has a nation changed its gods, **even though they are no gods**?
But my people have changed their glory for something that does not profit.

Jeremiah 5:

7 How can I pardon you? Your children have forsaken me, and have sworn by **those
who are no gods**. When I fed them to the full, they committed adultery and trooped to
the houses of prostitutes.

Jeremiah 16:

20 Can mortals make for themselves gods? **Such are no gods!**

Ephesians 4:

4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your
calling,

5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 **one God and Father of all**, who is above all and through all and in all.

1 Timothy 2:

5 For **there is one God**; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ
Jesus, himself human,

This being the case, it is not possible to maintain that demons exist without compromising a belief
in monotheism. The apostle Paul makes precisely this point here:

1 Corinthians 8:

7 Indeed, even though there may be **so-called gods** in heaven or on earth— as in fact
there are many gods and many lords—

8 **yet for us there is one God, the Father**, from whom are all things and for whom we
exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we
exist.

A Christian cannot acknowledge the existence of both Yahweh and the existence of demons,
without compromising the monotheism taught by Scripture. For further study on this issue, see
Appendix K ('Demons As False Gods').

Demons Are Not 'code words' For The Sick

Buzzard's argument:

- The demons of the synoptic gospels cannot be simply 'code words' for those who were ill from natural causes, since the Greeks had words for those ill from natural causes (including mental illness), and yet the Greek word for demons is used instead - furthermore, a distinction is drawn between those who are possessed by demons and those who were ill from natural causes, proving that the terms are not being used synonymously

Buzzard writes:

'The New Testament records speak of demons entering and leaving their victims. They carefully differentiate between disease and demon possession (Mark 1:32; 16:17, 18; Luke 6:17, 18). The same outward disease may be attributed to natural causes in one case and to demon possession in another (compare Matt. 4:24 with 17:15 and 12:22 with Mark 7:32).'

Christadelphians can agree with Buzzard that the demons of the synoptic gospels are not simply 'code words' for those who were ill from natural causes. When the gospel writers spoke of people possessed by demons, they did so in order that their audience might understand them as referring to people possessed with demons, not merely those who were ill from natural causes.

The purpose of this was to demonstrate the power of God and Christ over the supernatural evil beings whom many of the Jews believed to exist.

It is significant that the New Testament descriptions of demons and unclean spirits are radically different to that of contemporary Jewish writings (see Appendix J, 'Bible Teaching On Demons Different To Jewish Fables'), which demonstrates that the New Testament writers were not drawing on existing beliefs regarding demons.

Why was this? Why, given the extensive demonology which was already well established among the Jewish religious community, do the New Testament writers not adopt it? Why do they construct their own? The answer is that they simply did not hold to the demonology current in 1st century Judaism. Their beliefs were not the beliefs of those around them, but an entirely different set of beliefs drawn not from apostate apocryphal writings, but from the Old Testament.

Demons Not Always Distinguished From The Sufferer

Buzzard's argument:

- The synoptic gospels always distinguish the demon and its actions from the individual possessed by the demon, so the actions which the gospels attribute to the demons cannot be attributed to the sufferer and Christ is described as conversing with the demon, not the sufferer, proving once again that the demon is recognised a real being separate from the individual possessed by the demon

Buzzard writes:

'Another problem is Luke's (and the other reporters' of Jesus' miracles) insistence that the demons spoke *in their own person*, and recognized Jesus as the Messiah when the ordinary people did not. The New Testament records make an absolute distinction

between the victim who is "demonized" and the demon who has possessed him. Jesus is concerned with addressing the demon as a person *distinct from* the sufferer.'

Since the gospel accounts use phenomenistic language in their description of demons, it is expected that they will distinguish between the sufferer and the demon. It appeared that the demon spoke, so the gospel writers recorded it thus.

But in addition to this, the gospel accounts do in fact sometimes attribute the actions of the sufferer to the demon.

Mark 3:

11 Whenever **the unclean spirits** saw him, **they fell down before him** and shouted, "You are the Son of God!"

If the question is asked 'Whom did the onlookers see fall down here?', the answer from even the most dogmatic believer in the existence of demons is 'The people suffering from the demons'. This is of course the correct answer. The onlookers did not see literal unclean spirits visibly prostrating themselves before Christ and acknowledging him as the son of God. They saw literal people (supposed by the onlookers to be possessed by demons), fall down before him.

This passage is the clearest example of the gospel records attributing the action of the sufferers to the demons which supposedly possessed them.

Another example is found here:

Luke 11:

14 Now he was casting out **a demon that was mute**; when the demon had gone out, **the one who had been mute spoke**, and the crowds were amazed.

Here a 'demon that was mute' really means a man who was mute due to demon possession (as demonstrated by the fact that he could speak again after the demon had been cast out). And yet it is the demon itself which is actually described as mute. So close is the identification of the demon with the one possessed that the affliction of the sufferer is actually said to be afflicting the demon.

Yet another instance in which no distinction is drawn between sufferer and demon is found here:

Luke 8:

27 As he stepped out on land, **a man of the city** who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs.

28 **When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice**, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me"—

29 for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.)

Mark 5:

7 **and he shouted at the top of his voice**, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me."

8 **For he had said to him**, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!"

Here the speaker is clearly the man who is afflicted, and not the demon. Yet in the very next verse the man speaks as if he is himself a multitude of demons:

Luke 8:

30 Jesus then **asked him**, "What is your name?" **He said**, "Legion" for many demons had entered him.

Mark 5:

9 Then Jesus **asked him**, "What is your name?" He replied, "**My name is Legion; for we are many.**"

In the next verse of Luke's record, it appears that the demons speak for themselves:

Luke 8:

31 **They begged him** not to **order them** to go back into the abyss.

But Mark has the man himself making a request regarding the demons:

Mark 5:

10 **He begged him** earnestly **not to send them** out of the country.

Mark's record is notable for the fact that the man himself resisted the expulsion of the demons, hardly what would be expected from someone afflicted by such beings, but demonstrative of the fact that the man identifies himself completely with the demons he supposes are possessing him. In addition, the demons are obviously not speaking here - the man himself is speaking, and he is making a request concerning the demons. The demons themselves say absolutely nothing - they are completely silent.

When harmonising these records, it is not possible to claim that the demons in Mark were speaking on behalf of the man, whilst the man was silent.

Why would 'he [the man] besought him [Christ] much that he would not send them [the demons] away' really mean 'they [the demons] besought him [Christ] that he would not command them [the demons]'?

These passages are sufficient to invalidate Buzzard's claim that gospels always distinguish the demon and its actions from the individual possessed by the demon. It is undeniable that the gospels **do not** 'make an absolute distinction between the victim who is "demonized" and the demon who has possessed him', for in some instances they make no such distinction.

Indeed, in passages such as these it is clear that the actions and words **of the afflicted man** are attributed to **the demons**. The demons themselves say nothing and do nothing - it is those who are afflicted by them who 'fall down', 'cry out', and converse with Christ.

This is not what we would expect if Scripture was intending to convince us that the demons have an existence separate and distinct from those they afflict. Buzzard is invited to explain this flaw in his argument.

Attribution Of Actions To Demons Does Not Prove They Exist

Buzzard's argument:

- Demons are repeatedly referred to in the synoptic gospels (and once in James 2:19), in ways

which indicate a literal existence (they are depicted as inhabiting people, crying out, holding conversations with Christ, believing in God, and trembling)

Buzzard writes:

'We must note that the demon spoke as a member of a class of demons: "What have *we* to do with you?" Jesus then addressed the demon as distinct from the man: "Come out of *him*." 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.

To suggest that the *men* cried out (though clearly the demon spoke through them) is to overlook the laws of the Greek language. Jesus then rebuked *them* (neuter plural, the *demons*, not the men). Throughout the accounts, as everywhere else in the New Testament, the demons are treated as a well-known class of personalities quite distinct from the victims they oppress. To blur this distinction, as Christadelphian literature does, is simply to undermine the truth of the historical records.'

As we have noted previously, Scriptures does not always describe the actions of the demons in a manner which distinguishes them as having an existence separate and distinct from those they afflict. But where it does describe their actions, it does so using phenomenalistic language – the demons appeared to speak, and so Scripture describes them as speaking.

If the Scriptures only ever described the actions of the demons as being their own, then Buzzard's argument would have some force. But as we have seen, the Scriptures do not always do this. Indeed, we have seen a passage in which one of the gospel records appears to attribute individual action to demons, whilst a parallel gospel makes it clear that these actions were in fact being carried out by the sufferer himself.

There is therefore no force to Buzzard's argument, and Christadelphians have clear Scriptural warrant for attributing the actions of demons to the sufferer.

Accommodation Is Not Deceit

Buzzard's argument:

- Neither Christ nor the writers of Scripture could have been using any form of 'accommodation' language ,because to do so would have been pious fraud at best, and deceit at worst, for if this belief was false it would have been corrected by Christ and the apostles immediately, not left unchallenged - they must therefore be understood as having believed in the existence of demons as supernatural evil beings which cause physical afflictions such as disease by inhabiting humans, and of encouraging this belief in others

Buzzard writes:

'The average Christadelphian will propose that the demons of Scripture are to be explained as an accommodation to the ignorance of the times. They will maintain that Jesus did not disturb the superstition of the contemporary Jews, in order to assist in the cure of the demon-possessed.

The important question is whether there is any other example of Jesus allowing superstition to pass uncorrected.'

Buzzard quotes from a number of commentators who share his view:

'The comment of Henry Alford, the distinguished British theologian and a leading

millenarian, is very much to the point:

"The Gospel narratives are distinctly pledged to the historic truth of these occurrences [the accounts of demon possession and expulsion]. Either they are true or the Gospels are false...They form part of the general groundwork upon which all agree.

Nor can it be said that they represent the opinion of the time, and use words in accordance with it. They relate to us words used by the Lord Jesus in which *the personality and presence of the demons is distinctly implied*. Now either our Lord spoke these words or he did not. If he did not then we must at once set aside the concurrent testimony of the evangelists to a plain matter of fact; in other words establish a principle which will overthrow equally every fact related to the Gospels.

If he did, it is wholly at variance with any Christian idea of holiness in him to have used such plain and solemn words repeatedly, before his disciples and the Jews, in encouragement of, and connivance at, a lying superstition. It will be unnecessary to refute the view of demoniacal possession which makes it identical with mere bodily disease...

We may observe that it is everywhere in the Gospels distinguished from disease..." (Alford, *Greek Testament*, Vol. I, p.79, emphasis his).'

'Henry Alford's well-worded statement is a defense against liberal theologians and critics of the reliability of the New Testament. It is sad that his defense must be used against Christadelphians.'

'As the *Smith's Bible Dictionary* says (quoting Trench, *On Miracles*, p. 135): "Can it be supposed that Christ would sanction and the Evangelists be permitted to record forever an idea itself false, which has constantly been the very stronghold of superstition.

Nor was the language used such as can be paralleled with mere conventional expression. There is no harm in our speaking of certain forms of madness as lunacy, not thereby implying that we believe the moon to have or to have had any influence on them...but if we begin to describe the cure of such as the moon's ceasing to afflict them, or if a physician were solemnly to address the moon, bidding it to abstain from injuring the patient, there would be here a passing over to a quite different region...There would be that gulf between our thoughts and words in which the essence of a lie consists. Now Christ does everywhere speak such language as this.

"In the face of the mass of evidence, it seems difficult to conceive how the theory of accommodation to the language of the time can be reconciled with anything like the truth of Scripture. We may fairly say that it would never have been maintained, except for the proposition that demoniacal possession was itself a thing absolutely incredible and against all experience" ("Demoniacs," *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*). '

This issue of 'deceit' is answered with two different arguments. The first is the argument from phenomenalistic language, and the second is the argument from accommodation.

Phenomenalistic language is the use of language to describe things as they appear to be, rather than as they are. The use of phenomenalistic language cannot be described as 'deceit', because there is no intention to mislead.

The language is simply used to describe an event from the point of view of an observer.

Examples of phenomenalistic language in the Old Testament include:

- **Descriptions of the rising and falling of the sun:** The sun does not literally rise or fall, but it appears to (Numbers 2:3, Psalm 50:1; 113:3, Isaiah 45:6, Mark 16:2 are just a few

examples)

- **References to the 'four corners of the earth':** The earth does not literally have four corners, but it appears to (Isaiah 11:12, Ezekiel 7:2, Revelation 7:1)
- **The 'miracles' performed by Egypt's magicians:** The magicians did not perform genuine miracles, but they appeared to (Exodus 7:22; 8:7)
- **The 'standing still' of the sun and moon on Joshua's 'long day':** The sun did not literally stand still, but it appeared to (Joshua 10:12-13)

Each of these instances involves the use of language to describe things as they appear to be, rather than as they are, but there is no intention to mislead in any of these instances. Would Buzzard claim that any interpretation of these words other than a strictly literal interpretation was equivalent to saying that these passages are 'deceitful' because they describe things as they appeared to be, rather than as they were?

It is worth noting that the question as to whether or not the use of phenomenalistic language in Scripture constitutes 'deceit' was a critical issue in a test case for this issue - the trial of Galileo. It was Galileo's understanding that the geocentric view of the universe was contrary to the facts revealed by physical observation of the planets and the sun. He argued that the geocentric language of the Bible was intended only to be a phenomenalistic description, that it was not intended to be understood as communicating astronomical facts regarding the movement of the planets.

Against this, the Catholic Church argued that if such language in Scripture was not taken literally it would be equivalent to saying that Scripture was both defective and deceitful - defective for not communicating astronomical truths, and deceitful for describing things as they appear to be, rather than as they are. Buzzard is invited to comment on whether he agrees with the argument of Galileo, or the argument of the Church.

We will now examine the argument of accommodation. Critical to Buzzard's objection to the argument of accommodation is his question of whether or not Christ is ever recorded as accommodating any other 'superstition' without correcting it:

'The important question is whether there is any other example of Jesus allowing superstition to pass uncorrected.'

If the answer to this question is 'No', then Buzzard's objection to the argument of accommodation stands. But if the answer is 'Yes', then Buzzard's objection collapses entirely.

In fact, there are two examples which demonstrate that the answer is 'Yes'. But before we turn to them, it is important to identify the fact that Christ was prepared (for certain reasons, and on certain occasions), to leave his audience without an accurate understanding of his own teaching.

Perhaps the most extreme example is the occasion on which Christ was prepared to see his disciples leave him, rather than to enlighten them as to his true meaning:

John 6:

53 So Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

54 **Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day;**

55 **for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink.**

60 When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "his teaching is difficult; who can accept it?"

66 Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him.

With this in mind, we turn now to two different superstitions which Christ left entirely uncorrected.

The first is the common superstition regarding the state of the dead, and the reward or punishment of their 'soul' in a place of bliss or torment subsequent to the death of the body.

Christ not only left this superstition uncorrected, he even used it as a device in one of his own parables, despite the fact that it contradicted his own teaching on the state of the dead and the judgment, reward and punishment of the good and evil at his return:

Luke 16:

22 The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried.

23 In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side.

Buzzard himself does not believe in the 'immortality of the soul', nor the doctrine that the dead are conscious.

Neither does he believe in the reward or punishment of the good and wicked in some kind of 'heaven' and 'hell' prior to the return of Christ. Buzzard would also agree that Christ himself did not believe in either of these doctrines, and that Christ's own teaching on judgment and the state of the dead was entirely opposed to such superstitions.

It is clear that Christ was accommodating these superstitions at this time in order to teach a more profound lesson. Indeed, careful examination of Christ's parable here reveals that it only agrees superficially with the superstition of the day, and Christ's adaptation of the belief in his parable would have surprised and undoubtedly shocked many of the listeners.

A popular idea of the time was that the rich were wealthy because God was rewarding them for their goodness, and the poor were destitute because of their sins, whereas Christ taught that the rich would hardly enter the Kingdom of God, if at all (Mark 10:23-26 shows Christ's own disciples struggling with this radical teaching), a teaching which the parable of the rich man and Lazarus declares explicitly. This parable of Christ's overturned a dominant theology of the day.

Since Buzzard must agree that Christ was in this instance using this superstition as a device for communicating his own teachings without correcting it, he cannot argue that Christ would never accommodate a false belief whilst leaving it without explicit correction.

On another occasion, Christ left uncorrected a superstition expressed by his disciples in private:

Luke 24:

37 They were startled and terrified, **and thought that they were seeing a ghost.**

38 He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?"

39 Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. **Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."**

Note that Christ corrects their mistaken belief that he is a 'spirit', or 'ghost', but does not correct their belief in ghosts, despite the fact that own teaching on the state of the dead was entirely opposed to such superstitions. Clearly Christ considered correcting their unbelief in his resurrection a higher priority than correcting their belief in ghosts.

From these two examples, it may be seen that Christ did on occasion accommodate the beliefs of

those he taught (whether the crowd in public, or his disciples in private), thus 'allowing superstition to pass uncorrected'.

It has already been noted that the Bible uses phenomenalistic language without the intention to deceive. It has now been demonstrated with two separate examples that Christ also accommodated certain superstitions other than a belief in demons, whilst leaving them uncorrected.

Buzzard is invited to comment on whether or not he believes such accommodation as this can legitimately be described as 'deceit'.

Buzzard quotes the work of Brother Peter Watkins, in an attempt to argue against the argument for accommodation.

He claims that Brother Watkins rejected such an argument:

'The notion that Jesus was accommodating to the ignorance of his times when he spoke of demons was so problematic to the Christadelphian writer Peter Watkins that he wrote:

"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).

Peter Watkins correctly opposes the arguments which his colleague Christadelphians almost always use to defend their belief in no Satan or demons.'

'Watkins, however, instead of accepting the New Testament facts, proposes a solution which no one, surely, including other Christadelphians, will take seriously. 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). What extraordinary lengths Bible students will go to avoid the truth! The idea that the exorcism stories are meant only to be parables is without foundation. We might just as well say that all the healing miracles are parables.'

These quotes from Brother Watkins give the impression that he not only rejected the argument of accommodation, but also suggested that the gospels' accounts of demon possession were mere parables – that they do not record literal events which actually took place.

But when we read these statements from Brother Watkins in their extended context (from chapter 10 of his work), we find that Buzzard is not presenting them accurately.

The first introduction of parables in Brother Watkins' argument is found here (emphasis added):

'Demons are spoken of as Satan's ministers or angels. Satan has a kingdom, and these unclean spirits are his servants. This seems to point to the conclusion that the whole subject is to be regarded as one recurring New Testament figure. Indeed, in his account of the Beelzebub dispute, **Mark tells us that Jesus was speaking in parables:**

"And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the demons casteth he out demons. And he called them unto him, **and said unto them in parables**, How can Satan cast out Satan?" (Mark 3: 22, 23).'

This gives Scriptural foundation to Brother Watkins' forceful argument that when Christ spoke of satan and demons, he did so in parables – that is, he did so in a manner which sought to teach the truth of these matters in a manner which required others to seek them out, rather than

speaking of them plainly.

It is Buzzard's contention that Christ would never have spoken in this way, but not only have we seen several instances in which Christ did indeed accommodate false beliefs by failing to correct them (and even making use of them in his own parables – including the parable of the rich man and Lazarus), we also have this clear statement from Mark that an apparently literal comment of Christ's ('How can satan cast out satan?'), is in fact a **parable**, a message with a meaning which must be sought out.

Brother Watkins' continues to develop his argument in a manner which proves that he does not dismiss the demon incidents of the gospels as non-literal events (as Buzzard has claimed):

'A Sustained Parable

By using this word "parable", Mark gives us a vital clue to the understanding of the subject as a whole. The subject of Satan and demons-or the devil and his angels-must be thought of as one elaborate, sustained New Testament parable. For we have been directed by Scripture to think of the "demon" passages as one aspect of the larger theme concerning the devil.'

'How does this affect the question of the existence of demons? Obviously there is some kind of factual basis for the demon episodes. These accounts may be parts of a sustained parable: **but it is acted parable**, like the feeding of the five thousand.

By using the word "parable", we do not necessarily dispose of the events, though we may be able to view them in a different light.'

'Some features of the demon stories **are clearly literal. The people were real, their suffering was real, and the miracles that the Lord performed to relieve their suffering were also real.**'

These statements (with emphasis added), demonstrate that Buzzard's unqualified claim that Brother Watkins was dismissing these events as non-literal, is inaccurate. The very fact that Brother Watkins describes them as an '**acted parable**' shows that he is not saying that they did not literally occur.

He is not saying that these events are merely parables told by Christ, or parables told by the gospel writers, which do not in fact speak of literal events. What Brother Watkins is saying is that the manner in which Christ acted in these events, and the manner in which they are described, was chosen by the Spirit in order to communicate important Scriptural truths, just as Christ did with the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

Brother Watkins continues (emphasis added):

'And so we proceed to the thought that the non-literal element in the narratives is the language used to describe the afflictions, and the methods of cure. Thus men suffering from madness, deafness and dumbness **are described as people possessed with demons, and their cures are represented as a casting out of these demons.**'

Here he makes it entirely clear that the people who were suffering from madness, deafness, or dumbness are described in the gospels as people possessed with demons, and their cures as a casting out of demons.

But why do this, if demons did not exist? Brother Watkins rejects the idea that the gospel writers

could not have chosen language which spoke of these people as simply ill. He also rejects the idea that the gospel writers used the language of demon terminology because they believed in the current superstitions of the day.

As has already been stated in this work, Brother Watkins rightly says that the New Testament writers chose to use the language of existing demon terminology in order to use the popular belief in demons as a basis for teaching the truth about the origin of evil and the cause of affliction:

'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 is undoubtedly true that the demon superstition had left its mark upon the language of the day, but this is not the only relevant truth. Nor indeed is it the most important truth. 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 pagan superstition concerning an evil overlord and his minions provided an admirable basis for a parable concerning the real enemy.

Instead of denying the existence of an arch-enemy and his demons, the New Testament writers acknowledge their existence, but regard them in an entirely different way. The real arch-enemy lurks within the heart of man himself.'

This last paragraph (with emphasis added), is critical to Brother Watkins' argument, and is the same statement which has been made in this work.

The gospel writers do not deny the existence of these beings, but regard them **in a way which is entirely different** to that of the superstitions of the day. Whilst accommodating the language and terminology of demon beliefs, they use it to present the truth which is in direct contrast to the superstitions of their contemporaries.

We have now examined the Scriptural evidence, and seen that there is overwhelming positive evidence for the Christadelphian view of satan and demons, but no positive evidence for Buzzard's view, and formidable negative evidence against it.

We come now to address another issue critical to the Christadelphian case. If the argument from accommodation is correct (that it was a concession to the uninformed and the spiritually immature), then we would expect to see evidence in the New Testament that the issue of demons is treated differently among mature Christians.

We would expect to find:

- Illnesses and physical afflictions being referred to simply in medical terms (no mention of illness or physical affliction being attributed to demons)
- Healings being spoken of simply as the restoration of physical function (no mention of any healings requiring demons being 'cast out' of people)
- A clear identification of demons as the gods of the heathen (no mention of them being 'evil spirits', 'fallen angels', or supernatural evil beings which are not gods)
- A denial that there exist any gods other than Yahweh

The presence of such references is to be expected in writings addressed to mature Christians, who have no need for accommodation of a weak or undeveloped faith. It would strengthen the argument for accommodation considerably to find such references, since it would provide evidence of a clear distinction of comprehension being made between these two groups when the subject of demons is addressed.

In which books of the New Testament would we expect to find each form of description? We would expect that the writings directed to established congregations and to individual Christians, are addressing mature Christians who have no need of such accommodation.

On the other hand, we would expect that the writings which are clearly of an evangelical nature (intending to preach the gospel and convert non-Christians), are addressing the uninformed and the spiritually immature, who require accommodation of this nature.

If this is true, then we should expect to find accommodation in:

- The gospel of Matthew
- The gospel of Mark
- The gospel of Luke
- Acts

All of these books were written with the aim of preaching to non-Christians.

We would not expect to find accommodation in:

- The gospel of John
- The letters and epistles of Paul
- The letters of Peter, James, and John
- The Revelation of Christ, written through John

An examination of the gospels alone proves that accommodation is reserved for the unconverted, the uninformed and the spiritually immature.

In three of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), we find frequent references to demonic possession, to exorcism, and to physical afflictions and illnesses being attributed to demons.

John's gospel, however, is radically different. It has long been recognised that John's is a thematic gospel, not one of the synoptics, and that it was written not to unbelievers or even new converts, but to mature Christians with a profound knowledge of the faith. If the Christadelphian case is sound, we should find that John's gospel is entirely free of the accommodation found in the synoptics, that physical afflictions and illnesses are never attributed to demons, and that acts of healing never include any reference to exorcism.

If Buzzard's case is sound, then of all four gospels we should expect John's to be the greatest source of information on Satan and demons. John's gospel has a unique focus on the things of the spirit, and it is natural to expect that the arch enemy of man and God, the evil spirit being with untold numbers of demons at his command, should receive a particular mention, and that his activities - together with those of his minions - should be recorded in especial detail.

It is significant therefore that John's gospel contains the very opposite of what we would expect if Buzzard's case was sound.

In John's gospel, there is no mention whatever of:

- Baalzebub
- Evil spirits
- Unclean spirits

Nor is any sickness attributed to satanic or demonic activity. Instead, those who are physically afflicted are described simply as:

- The blind (John 5:3)
- The lame (John 5:3)
- The withered (John 5:3)
- Sick (John 4:47; 11:1-4, 6)
- Impotent (John 5:3-4, 7)
- Suffering from 'infirmity' (John 5:4)
- Suffering from 'disease' (John 5:4; 6:2)

It is clear that John's gospel refers to an entire range of afflictions and illnesses (including some attributed to demons in the synoptics), but not once does John's gospel identify these afflictions as having been caused by supernatural evil beings.

Likewise, the treatment of these afflictions is always described as the healing of a physical ailment, never a struggle with satan or demons.

Words used to describe treatment are:

- Made whole (John 5:6, 9, 11, 14-15)
- Opened the eyes of the blind (John 9:17, 32; 10:2; 11:37)
- Heal (John 4:41; 5:13)
- Cured (John 5:10)

There is not a single instance in John of:

- Anyone being possessed by a demon
- Anyone having a demon cast out of them
- Any action or speech attributed to a demon
- Anyone conversing with a demon

Whilst Christ is accused by some of being possessed by a devil (and of being mad as a result), it is recognized by others that his words are not those of one who has a devil, and that a devil cannot heal those who are physically afflicted, as Christ does (John 10:20-21).

Note also that in John's gospel, there is no record of the temptation of Christ - a significant absence in this gospel for mature believers. In fact, references to '**the** devil' or '**the** satan' are so rare that they are almost non-existent (two references to '**the** devil' in John 8:32; 13:2, and one reference to '**the** satan' in John 13:27).

The evidence is overwhelming that John's gospel, written for mature believers, contains none of the accommodations which the synoptics present to their audience. This establishes the Christadelphian case on a sure foundation. An examination of the other New Testament books previously mentioned will indicate to us whether the treatment of demons in John's gospel is unique, or if it is part of a consistent pattern outside the synoptics and Acts.

In fact, we find the pattern in the rest of the New Testament is indeed identical to that which we find in the gospel of John. Outside the four gospels and Acts, we find only seven references to demons.

Of these references:

- Three identify demons as false gods, the object of heathen worship (1 Corinthians 10:20-21, Revelation 9:20)

- A fourth is a warning against false doctrines ('seducing spirits', see 1 John 4:1-3 for another passage in which doctrines are referred to as 'spirits'), including teachings concerning demons (1 Timothy 4:1), and a fifth speaks of people who are led astray by these teachings (Revelation 16:14)
- A sixth is an affirmation that there is only one God, and an ironic reference to demons trembling in the same manner as the Old Testament speaks of idols trembling (James 2:19)
- The seventh is a reference to the desolation of the harlot city 'Babylon' in Revelation, characterized as full of false worship (demons and unclean spirits, see a parallel passage in Zechariah 13:2, where an unclean spirit filling the land is a symbol of false worship), and punished because of this by being made waste and devoid of human habitation (Revelation 18:2)

We find therefore that demons are almost completely absent from the rest of the New Testament.

We also see exactly the kind of references we would expect to see if the Christadelphian case is correct:

- No one being possessed by a demon
- No one having a demon cast out of them
- No action or speech attributed to a demon
- No one conversing with a demon
- A clear identification of demons as the gods of the heathen (no mention of them being 'evil spirits', 'fallen angels', or supernatural evil beings which are not gods)
- A denial that there exist any gods other than Yahweh

Likewise, there are no passages in the New Testament, outside of the synoptics and Acts, which attribute any illness or affliction to demons.

This is a significant absence, given that the letters and epistles speak frequently of the Holy Spirit gifts, and mention healing as one of them, but never exorcism. Indeed, James even describes a protocol for the healing of the sick without the miraculous gift of healing (see James 4:14-15, where it is **the prayer of faith** which heals the sick), but says nothing of a protocol for exorcism. Neither the gift of casting out demons, nor a protocol for exorcism are found anywhere in the letter and epistles.

This absence is made the more apparent by the fact that the exorcism rituals of modern Christians are based largely on the gospel accounts of Christ casting out demons, and on the healing protocol described by James, reinforcing the fact that no exorcism ritual or protocol is found anywhere in the entire New Testament, which has resulted in these Christians inventing their own.

As in the gospel of John, we find in the letters and epistles:

- Illnesses and physical afflictions being referred to simply in medical terms (no mention of illness or physical affliction being attributed to demons)
- Healings being spoken of simply as the restoration of physical function (no mention of any healings requiring demons being 'cast out' of people)

Is it really credible that the letters and epistles would speak only on the healing of physical afflictions and illnesses which are the result of natural causes, and yet remain utterly silent on the subject of those caused by demons, especially if this activity was as common as Buzzard appears to believe, and especially if a correct understanding of demons and their evil work of causing such disorders is as critical as Buzzard believes it to be?

The most significant statements in the letters and epistles concerning demons are those defining them clearly as false gods, the object of heathen worship:

1 Corinthians 10:

19 What do I imply then? That food sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?

20 **No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God.** I do not want you to be partners with demons.

Revelation 9:

20 The rest of humankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands **or give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk.**

There are no passages in the letters and epistles which describe demons as supernatural evil beings which cause physical afflictions and illnesses. They are defined as the false gods of the heathen, the existence of which New Testament Scripture also denies, insisting that there is only one God:

1 Corinthians 8:

7 Indeed, even though there may be **so-called gods** in heaven or on earth— as in fact there are many gods and many lords—

8 **yet for us there is one God, the Father**, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

1 Corinthians 10:

19 What do I imply then? That food sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?

20 **No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God.** I do not want you to be partners with demons.

Ephesians 4:

4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling,

5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 **one God and Father of all**, who is above all and through all and in all.

1 Timothy 2:

5 For **there is one God**; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human,

The evidence in the New Testament is therefore overwhelmingly in favour of the Christadelphian case - that certain beliefs concerning demons were accommodated where they were held by the non-Christians, uninformed and the spiritually immature, but that no accommodation of such beliefs was extended to mature Christians, who were expected to have come to a true understanding of these matters.

The repeated identification of demons as the false gods of heathen worship, the insistence that there is only one God, the treatment of physical afflictions and illness as purely medical

conditions, and the complete absence of any role of exorcist or protocol of exorcism (in contrast to the existence of the role of healer, and a protocol for healing in the absence of the healer), all substantiate the Christadelphian case. This is the complete opposite of what we would find if Buzzard's case was true.

Similarly, demons in the New Testament follow a certain geographical and economic distribution pattern, identified by Brother Steve Snobelen (see Appendix M, 'Demon Distribution Patterns In The New Testament').

Buzzard writes:

'Until the important matter of Satan and the demons is properly explained, according to the Scripture, there is little hope of a group being counted worthy of the task of bringing to the world the whole counsel of God. We must beware of putting a barrier between us and others who are unable to see how we can fail to understand a matter as straightforward as the existence of the personal Satan.'

Christadelphians would agree that the correct understanding of satan and demons is an important issue in the understanding of the gospel – a critical issue, in fact, since a belief in demons contradicts the gospel's message of monotheism, and a belief in satan as a supernatural being of evil (whether 'fallen' angel or otherwise), contradicts clear Biblical statements which identify God as the source of all disaster other than that caused by humans, and the human heart as the source of all wickedness and evil.

Buzzard writes:

'We would invite from the exponents of "no supernatural evil" an explanation of the ability of the magicians in Egypt to imitate the miracles performed by Moses and Aaron, and also some reasonable account of the Parousia (i.e. spectacular arrival, as used of the Coming of Christ) of the Man of Sin (II Thess. 2:9), who is able to produce every "power, and sign and wonder" through the energy of Satan. The very same words are used constantly in the New Testament of the supernatural feats of Jesus. How can these be produced by human power alone apart from the intervention of an unseen evil agent?'

The supposed miracles of the Egyptian magicians may be dismissed as the mere sleight of hand and skillful trickery of today's secular 'magicians', who certainly perform wonders even more extraordinary. There is nothing in the Scriptural record to indicate that their feats were the product of genuine supernatural power from any source.

Indeed, the 'miracles' they supposedly performed are highly suggestive of this:

- They claimed to turn water miraculously into blood, in a nation in which almost all available water had already been turned to blood - surely turning blood into water would have been a far more impressive miracle
- They claimed to miraculously produce frogs, in a nation which was already filled with frogs to plague proportions of an unprecedented extent - surely actually ridding the Nation of the frogs would have been a far more impressive miracle
- They failed completely to miraculously produce gnats in a nation which was totally infested with them, and acknowledged that their enchantments were inadequate to the task - a clear indictment of their supposedly supernatural powers

The supposed transformation of the magicians staves into serpents need only to have been the dexterous illusion well known to have existed among Egyptian practitioners of 'magic'. The commentary of Jameison, Fausset and Brown observes:

'The magicians of Egypt in modern times have been long celebrated adepts in charming serpents, and particularly by pressing the nape of the neck, they throw them into a kind of catalepsy, which renders them stiff and immovable - thus seeming to change them into a rod.

They conceal the serpent about their persons, and by acts of legerdemain produce it from their dress, stiff and straight as a rod. Just the same trick was played off by their ancient predecessors, the most renowned of whom, Jannes and Jambres (2Ti_3:8), were called in on this occasion. They had time after the summons to make suitable preparations - and so it appears they succeeded by their "enchantments" in practising an illusion on the senses.'

Likewise, there is no reason to assume that the deceitful 'signs' and 'wonders' of the 'man of sin' (or 'man of lawlessness'), in 2 Thessalonians 2 are performed by supernatural means, still less by power supplied by 'Satan'.

Buzzard claims that the man of sin 'is able to produce every "power, and sign and wonder" through the energy of Satan', but this is not what the text says:

2 Thessalonians 2:

9 The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders,

It is the **arrival** of the man of lawlessness which is according to the working of Satan. There is no mention here of 'Satan' as the source of the alleged miracles.

Furthermore, the text clearly identifies these supposed miracles wonders and signs as merely pretence, and no genuine miracles at all, as other translations, versions and paraphrases indicate:

ESV:

9 The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and **false signs and wonders**,

CEV:

9 When the wicked one appears, Satan **will pretend to work all kinds of miracles, wonders, and signs**.

TEV:

9 The Wicked One will come with the power of Satan and perform all kinds of **false miracles and wonders**,

NCV:

9 the one whose coming springs from the power of Satan in every mighty deed and in **signs and wonders that lie**,

NLT:

9 This evil man will come to do the work of Satan **with counterfeit power and signs and miracles**.

10 **He will use every kind of wicked deception** to fool those who are on their way to destruction because they refuse to believe the truth that would save them.

The Message:

9 The Anarchist's coming is all Satan's work. All **his power and signs and miracles are fake**,

10 **evil sleight of hand** that plays to the gallery of those who hate the truth that could save them.

In summary:

- Demons are the gods worshipped by the heathen
- The Old Testament not only describes demons as being the gods worshipped by the pagans, but also denies their existence
- A belief in demons is therefore a contradiction of monotheism
- The demons of the synoptic gospels are not simply 'code words' for those who were ill from natural causes, they are references to the gods of the heathen
- The synoptic gospels do not always distinguish the demon and its actions from the individual possessed by the demon and sometimes clearly attribute the action (or even the affliction), of the sufferer to the demon, thus actions which the gospels attribute to the demons can be attributed to the sufferer
- The description in the synoptic gospels (and once in James 2:19), of demons crying out, holding conversations with Christ, does not prove that the demon is recognised a real being separate from the individual possessed by the demon, but that the narrative wishes the audience to understand that the individual with whom Christ is conversing was considered to be an individual possessed by a demon - this is the use of the same phenomenological language and 'accommodation' found in the Old Testament, and used elsewhere in the New
- The description in James 2:19 of demons believing in God and trembling is to be understood as using the same language device used frequently in the Old Testament to attribute life ironically to idols and false gods
- The 'accommodation' by both Christ and the writers of New Testament Scripture of the belief in demons is no more a pious fraud or 'deceit' than the use of phenomenological language found elsewhere in Scripture, and Christ's own preparedness to 'accommodate' false beliefs rather than contradict them immediately and directly is attested to elsewhere in the gospels
- Such accommodation was a concession to the uninformed and the spiritually immature, evidence of which is seen in the fact that outside the synoptic gospels and Acts (written for preaching to the uninformed), the issue of demons is treated radically differently among mature Christians
- In books written for mature Christians, we find:
 - No one being possessed by a demon
 - No one having a demon cast out of them
 - No action or speech attributed to a demon
 - No one conversing with a demon
 - A clear identification of demons as the gods of the heathen (no mention of them being 'evil spirits', 'fallen angels', or supernatural evil beings which are not gods)
 - Illnesses and physical afflictions being referred to simply in medical terms (no mention of illness or physical affliction being attributed to demons)
 - Healings being spoken of simply as the restoration of physical function (no mention of

any healings requiring demons being 'cast out' of people)

- The New Testament descriptions of demons and unclean spirits are radically different to that of contemporary Jewish writings (see Appendix J, 'Bible Teaching On Demons Different To Jewish Fables'), which demonstrates that the New Testament writers were not drawing on existing beliefs regarding demons

The overwhelming weight of Scriptural evidence provides complete support for the Christadelphian position. Buzzard's argument fails when confronted with the lack of positive evidence it finds in the Bible to support it (there is in fact no positive evidence, as we have seen), and the considerable negative evidence which contradicts it (the significant negative evidence we have already examined).

A reasonable assessment of the evidence provided in this chapter leads naturally to a rejection of Buzzard's argument, and the adoption of the Scriptural position held by Christadelphians.

Conclusion

During the writing of this work, a lengthy and detailed correspondence was taken up by the author with Anthony Buzzard himself. In the course of that correspondence, a number of the arguments in this work were raised (on both sides), and the reader may find it useful to identify those areas in which Buzzard's case is particularly weak, as well as those questions he prefers not to address.

The following is a list of questions which Buzzard commonly refuses to answer:

- **Concerning the Old Testament:**

- It is critical to Buzzard's case that the serpent in Genesis 3 is in fact none other than 'Satan' himself. When asked for Scriptural evidence of this, he appeals to Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 (where satan is described as 'the old serpent').

But when challenged with the fact that neither Revelation 12:9 or 20:2 say nothing of the serpent in Eden being 'Satan', challenged with the fact that Genesis 3 speaks twice of the serpent being one of the 'beasts of the field' (Genesis 3:1, 14), challenged with the fact that Eve states that she was deceived by the serpent (Genesis 3:13), and challenged with the fact that Paul also states that Eve was deceived by the serpent (2 Corinthians 11:3), Buzzard declines to answer.

The most he will say is that the New Testament provides a greater revelation of the facts which is not contained in the Old Testament. The correct response to this is to press him on why such a fundamental truth should be concealed for the entire duration of the Old Testament era, concealed from all the apostles including Paul, and revealed only to John near the end of his life. Buzzard should also be requested to present those passages of Scripture which identify this important truth as a new revelation which was previously concealed.

It is noteworthy that such appeals to 'later revelation' are common among trinitarians who are trying to explain why the doctrine of the trinity was completely unknown among God's people prior to Christ. Buzzard does not take these claims seriously when they are used in an attempt to support the doctrine of the trinity, but inconsistently appeals to them when attempting to support his doctrine of satan and demons.

Buzzard should also be asked to explain why so many standard 'orthodox' Christian commentaries identify the serpent in Genesis 3 as simply the serpent rather than 'Satan' (see the footnotes in the NET, for example), and why the early Jewish paraphrases and commentaries (Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Targum Jerusalem, and Talmud Babylon), identified the serpent as one of the beasts of the field, rather than an angel (whether 'fallen' or otherwise), or a beast through whom such an angel was speaking.

- Buzzard makes a great deal of the fact that 'satan' in the Old Testament is used only of external adversaries, never of an internal adversary (certainly never of human nature). But when challenged to explain why 'satan' in the Old Testament is never described as a 'fallen' angel, nor ever described as a tempter of men, he cannot answer.

- Buzzard appeals to the account of satan in Job (though he treads warily here, aware that this book creates more problems for his theology than it solves), but is unable to explain why it is that not one of the individuals in the entire book appears to be aware of **'the Satan'** whom Buzzard assures us was commonly recognized in the Old Testament era.

Furthermore, he is unable to explain why it is **God** (not satan), who is considered the source of disaster by God (Job 2:33), (Job 1:21; 2:20; 6:4; 10:2; 19:21; 27:2), Job's servant (Job 1:16), Job's wife (Job 2:9), Job's three friends (Job 5:17; 8:4; 11:5-6), Job's acquaintances and relations (Job 42:11), and Job's satan himself (Job 1:12; 2:6).

The most he will do with Job is to claim that God permitted 'Satan' to afflict Job, so that the text represents God as the **primary** cause, and 'Satan' as the **secondary** cause.

This fails completely to deal with the fact that nowhere in Job does anyone make a distinction between God as the primary cause and 'Satan' as the secondary cause. Rather, God is represented as the primary and only cause, and the satan is represented as the agent by which He acts. The fact that God acts through an agent demonstrates that God Himself is still responsible, not the satan.

- Even more significant is the fact that there is **not one individual in the whole of the Old Testament** who attributes evil, disaster, or temptation to the supernatural evil being in whom Buzzard believes.

From Genesis to Malachi, not a single individual can be found who expresses such a belief. If **'the Satan'** is supposed to be 'the Satan everyone knows about' (in Buzzard's words), then why does no one seem to know about him?

Buzzard prefers not to answer this question.

- Buzzard appeals to his favourite New Testament lexicons (written by 'orthodox' Christians), in an attempt to claim that the correct definition of the Greek word for 'demons' describes them as supernatural evil beings.

In doing so, he ignores the following facts:

- That the definition 'supernatural evil beings' is not used in the Old or New Testament (in fact it does not appear to be used among Christians until the 2nd century – see Appendix B)
- That the Old Testament uses the definition 'gods', not the definition 'supernatural evil beings' (Leviticus 17:6-7, Deuteronomy 32:16-17, 2 Chronicles 11:5, Psalm 106:6-7)
- That the New Testament also uses this definition (Acts 17:18, 1 Corinthians 10:20), even quoting the Old Testament usage directly (1 Corinthians 10:20, quoting Deuteronomy 32:17)

When challenged with these facts, Buzzard prefers not to reply.

- Buzzard is extremely reluctant to address the 'evil spirits' of the Old Testament (Buzzard believes that 'evil spirits' are the same as 'demons').

He will insist that the lack of 'demonic activity' in the Old Testament is no proof that demons as he understands them do not exist, but cannot explain why the Old Testament contains nothing like the 'demonic activity' of the synoptic gospels and Acts.

Regarding the only two occurrences of 'evil spirits' afflicting people in the Old Testament, Buzzard refuses to address:

- Why in both cases (Judges 9:23, 1 Samuel 16:14-23). the 'evil spirit' is sent by God, not 'Satan' (Buzzard's one reply with regard to the 'evil spirit' sent to Saul was to claim that the text is actually saying that God **permitted** an evil spirit to afflict Saul, but this is clearly not what the text is saying)
 - Why in neither case did anyone identify the 'evil spirit' as a supernatural evil being sent by 'Satan', nor why there is no recognition of 'evil spirits' or 'demons' as Buzzard understands them, in the entire Old Testament
 - Why in neither case did anyone suggest an 'exorcism' of the kind commonly carried out by modern Christians who believe in the 'orthodox' understanding of satan and demons
 - Why in both cases modern translations (even those written by 'orthodox' Christians who believe in the same supernatural evil 'Satan' and demons as Buzzard himself), render these passages in a manner which represents the 'evil spirit' as a disorder of the mind, or a feeling of ill will
- Buzzard will not address the issue of why the only supernatural source of evil or disaster is said in the Old Testament to be God (Judges 9:23, 1 Samuel 16:14-23, 2 Samuel 24:1 and 1 Chronicles 21:1, 1 Kings 11:14, 23, 1 Kings 22:22-23 and 1 Chronicles 18:21-22, Job, Psalm 78:46, Isaiah 45:7, Amos 3:6, Micah 1:12).

Specifically, Buzzard refuses to address:

- The evil spirit sent by God between Abimelech and the men of Shechem (Judges 9:23)
- The evil spirit sent by God to Saul (1 Samuel 16:14-23)
- The raising up of a satan against Israel during the reign of David (2 Samuel 24:1 and 1 Chronicles 21:1), and the reign of Solomon (1 Kings 11:14, 23)
- The 'lying spirit' sent by God to the false prophets of the king of Israel (1 Kings 22:22-23 and 1 Chronicles 18:21-22)
- The fact that all the individuals in the book of Job consider his calamities to have come from God, including Job (Job 1:21; 2:20; 6:4; 10:2; 19:21; 27:2), Job's servant (Job 1:16), Job's wife (Job 2:9), Job's three friends (Job 5:17; 8:4; 11:5-6), Job's acquaintances and relations (Job 42:11), and Job's satan himself (Job 1:12; 2:6)

- The 'evil angels' sent by God on Egypt (Psalm 78:46)

None of these passages agree with Buzzard's theology, so he prefers not to mention any of them. When they are raised in a discussion, he refuses to comment on them.

The most he is prepared to say is that God 'allowed' an evil spirit to possess Saul, and 'permitted' Satan to persecute Job (neither of these 'explanations' actually deal with what the text says, nor with the interpretation of the event by those actually involved), and that 'satan' in the record of 1 Chronicles 21:1 is a personal name (Buzzard prefers to avoid the parallel account in 2 Samuel 24:1, where it is God who opposes Israel).

- **Concerning the New Testament:**

- Buzzard is quick to head straight for the record of Christ's temptation in the wilderness (though it is notable that he prefers to stay within the account given by Matthew), but refuses to answer a number of questions which cause difficulties for his view of satan:

- Why would God lead Christ into the wilderness to be tempted by a supernatural evil being? The accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke all make it clear that Christ was led by God into the wilderness in order to undergo this temptation (Matthew 4:1, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-2).

Why would God deliberately lead His son to a supernatural evil being in order that he might be subjected to 40 days of temptation?

- Why would Christ find the temptations offered by an external supernatural evil being remotely enticing? Confronted by a 'fallen' angel, would he really be likely to succumb to his Father's worst enemy?
- Why would Christ follow this 'fallen' angel out from the wilderness, walking several kilometers to Jerusalem, then ascending the Temple (still led by this 'fallen' angel), just so that 'Satan' could ask him a single question?

Is it really credible that Christ would dutifully follow a 'fallen' angel for several kilometers, for the sake of a single question, and then follow him back into the wilderness for more? Why would Christ do this?

- How is it at all possible that the 'Satan' of Buzzard's theology could have offered Christ rulership of the kingdoms of the world? Are they really his to bestow on whomsoever he desires, or do they belong to God?
- Why is it that no one else in the entire New Testament (or Old Testament for that matter), is recorded as having a temptation experience identical to Christ, despite the fact that the process of Christ's temptation is described in Hebrews 2:14-18 as identical to ours? Why is it that no Christian ever reports having this same temptation experience?

Buzzard supplies no answer for these questions.

- Buzzard writes:

'The temptation which arises from the heart of man (James 1:14) and the evil thoughts which proceed "from within, out of the heart of man" (Mark 7:21) may be prompted by Satan; they may also arise naturally, since human nature has been poisoned by the disobedience of Adam and Eve.'

But when asked how we are to distinguish between temptations arising naturally and temptations 'prompted by Satan', Buzzard refuses to answer.

The reason why he refuse to answer this question, of course, is that he does not wish to acknowledge that there is in fact no way to distinguish between temptations arising naturally, and temptations which are allegedly 'prompted by Satan', despite the fact that temptations arising naturally are internal, and temptations allegedly 'prompted by Satan' are supposedly external.

Why is it that supposedly external temptations allegedly 'prompted by Satan' are indistinguishable from temptations arising naturally from the heart of man?

This identifies a critical weakness in Buzzard's case, since it demonstrates that temptations allegedly 'prompted by Satan' are **completely indistinguishable** from temptations arising from the heart of man. The logical conclusion is obvious – there is no supernatural evil external tempter such as Buzzard proposes.

- Buzzard remains silent when asked to explain:
 - How to distinguish 'demonic possession' from naturally caused illness
 - Why it is that no cases of 'demonic possession' occur outside the synoptic gospels and Acts
 - Why it is that there was not Holy Spirit gift of 'exorcism', and why in none of Paul's lists of appointments in the congregation is the role of 'exorcist' to be found, despite the specific mention of a role of healer (1 Corinthians 12:28)
 - How to 'cast out' a demon, and which Scriptural guidelines are to be followed
 - Why it is that modern Christians commonly treat their sicknesses as being the result of natural causes, rather than 'demonic possession'
 - Whether the methods of 'casting out' demons which are used by himself or anyone he knows are the same as the methods recorded in Scripture (especially the use of harp playing by David in 1 Samuel 16:14-23)

Buzzard claims (in public correspondence on an internet forum), to have been present at the exorcism of demons from an individual, but will not provide details which address these questions.

Regarding those cases of 'demonic possession' which he has observed, he claims that 'The cases of demon possession are just like the stories in the NT'.

However, he also says that in every case 'there has been a history of extreme "odd" behaviour, pacts with the Devil and drinking blood etc, or other vagaries', which are supposedly indicators that the individual is possessed by a demon, and that 'In every case there is a rather scary crisis in which the demon often producing a voice unlike that of the human person, speaks'.

It is clear that none of the New Testament cases of demon possession describe 'a history of extreme "odd" behaviour, pacts with the Devil and drinking blood etc, or other vagaries'.

Nor is it true to say that in the New Testament accounts of demon possession 'In every case there is a rather scary crisis in which the demon often producing a voice unlike that of the human person, speaks'.

It is therefore inaccurate for Buzzard to say that the cases of demon possession he has encountered are 'just like the stories in the NT'. It is true, however, to say that the cases of demon possession he has encountered are just like the depictions of demon possession in the popular media, and draw on ideas of 'demonic possession' which are found no earlier than the medieval era (certainly not the 1st century).

Buzzard has further said that:

'Not every attempt at getting rid of the demon has been successful but in one particular case in S America the victim was obviously freed of the problem and has done very well since.'

When asked why 'Not every attempt at getting rid of the demon has been successful', Buzzard refuses to answer.

The only instances in the Bible of unsuccessful treatment of those supposedly suffering from demon possession, are instances in which those attempting to 'get rid' of the demon had insufficient faith (Christ's disciples in Matthew 17:19-20), or those attempting to 'get rid' of the demon were wicked impostors with no real ability to help those who were possessed (Acts 19:13-16).

Here at last is an example in which Buzzard can rightly say that his experience was 'just like the stories in the NT' But unfortunately neither of these New Testament parallels with Buzzard's own experiences speak well for the methods used by himself or those he knows to 'get rid of' demons.

The alleged success story in South American remains undocumented and unverified.

- Buzzard is not prepared to discuss Acts 5:3-4, in which the apostle Peter describes the filling of Ananias' heart by 'satan' in terms which are identical to the Christadelphian exposition:

Acts 5:

3 Ananias," Peter asked, "why has **Satan filled your heart** to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land?

4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, were not the proceeds at your disposal? **How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart?** You did not lie to us but to God!"

There is no disputing that when Peter says 'satan filled your heart', he means 'you have contrived this deed in your heart'. We have Peter's own statement that Ananias conceived this thought in his own heart - it was not suggested to him from an external source, nor was it conceived within him by means of his being possessed by a supernatural evil being.

When presented with this argument, Buzzard chose not to respond.

- Buzzard does not explain the 'messenger of satan' which plagued Paul:

2 Corinthians 12:

6 But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, even considering the exceptional character of the revelations.

7 Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated.

8 Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me,

9 but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

John Gill – though believing the affliction here to originate from 'Satan' (permitted by God), gives an excellent commentary on the Jewish understanding of this phrase:

'... others think that the corruptions of nature are intended which in regenerate persons are left, as the Canaanites were in the land, to be "thorns" in the eyes and sides of the Israelites, Jos 23:13 Jud 2:3.

These, to be sure, were felt by the apostle, and were very grievous and humbling to him, and were no doubt sometimes stirred up by Satan, which made him complain bitterly, and groan earnestly; and it may be observed, to strengthen this sense, that it was usual with the Jews to call concupiscence, or the vitiosity of nature, Satan; for so they {a} often say, *erh ruy awb Njvh*, "**Satan, he is the evil imagination**", or corruption of nature; and particularly they call the lust of uncleanness by this name; and it is said {b} of a young man of Israel, being tempted by a young woman of Midian, through the counsel of Balaam, that *Njvh wb rewb*, "Satan burned in him", and he turned aside after her; and that the evil imagination is the old serpent; yea, they call this "the messenger of hell", a phrase very much like what is here used.

"R. Hona {c}, as he was preaching to the children of men to take warning, said unto them, children, beware *Mnhyg lv axylvm*, "**of the messenger of hell**"; **but who is this? the evil imagination, or concupiscence, is that which is "the messenger of hell"**;"

and this sense is agreeable...'

John Gill, 'Commentary On the Bible', note on 2 Corinthians 12:7, 1748

- Buzzard does not explain why Paul corrected erring members of the congregation by giving them over to satan:

1 Corinthians 5:

1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife.

2 And you are arrogant! Should you not rather have mourned, so that he who has done this would have been removed from among you?

3 For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present I have already pronounced judgment

4 in the name of the Lord Jesus on the man who has done such a thing. When you are assembled, and my spirit is present with the power of our Lord Jesus,

5 you **are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.**

1 Timothy 1:

18 I am giving you these instructions, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies made earlier about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight,

19 having faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have suffered shipwreck in the faith;

20 **among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have turned over to Satan, so that they may learn not to blaspheme.**

Standard Bible commentaries agree that this phrase refers to withdrawal of fellowship, not the handing over of these individuals to the power of some supernatural evil being:

'Unto Satan. Beza, and the Latin Fathers, suppose that **this is only an expression of excommunication.**'

John Gill, 'Commentary On the Bible', note on 1 Corinthians 5:5, 1748

'Some think that this is to be understood of a mere ordinary excommunication, and that delivering him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh **is only meant of disowning him, and casting him out of the church,** that by this means he might be brought to repentance, and his flesh might be mortified.'

Matthew Henry, 'Commentary On the Bible', note on 1 Corinthians 5:5, 1748

' Ver. 5. What this delivering to Satan is, (of which also we read, 1Ti 1:20), is something doubted by interpreters. **That by it is to be understood excommunication, or casting out of the communion of the church, can hardly be doubted by any** that considereth:

1. That the apostle speaketh of an action which might be, and ought to have been, done by the church of Corinth when they met together, and for the not doing of which the apostle blameth them.

2. That the end of the action was, taking away the scandalous person from the midst amongst them, 1Co 5:2; purging out the old leaven, that they might become a new lump, 1Co 5:7.

3. It was a punishment inflicted by many.'

Matthew Poole, 'Commentary On the Bible', note on 1 Corinthians 5:5, 1685

'{To deliver such an one unto Satan} (παραδουναί τον τοιουτου τον σατανα). We have the same idiom in 1Ti 1:20 used of Hymenius and Alexander.

In Co 12:7 Paul speaks of his own physical suffering as a messenger (αγγελος) of Satan. **Paul certainly means expulsion from the church** (verse 2) and regarding him as outside of the commonwealth of Israel (Eph 2:11).'

AT Robertson, 'Word Pictures', note on 1 Corinthians 5:5

'To deliver such a one unto Satan. Not only this one, but all such persons. **To deliver unto Satan is to excommunicate**; to extradite from the kingdom of God to the prince of this world. The expression is used in 1Ti 1:20.'

People's New Testament Notes, note on 1 Corinthians 5:5, 1891

- Buzzard does not explain in what way the 'devil' of his theology can possibly be likened to a roaring lion:

1 Peter 5:

9 Discipline yourselves, keep alert. **Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour.**

10 Resist him, steadfast in your faith, **for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering.**

This passage is practically expounded for us by the verse in Proverbs which Peter is quoting directly:

Proverbs 28:

5 Like a roaring lion or a charging **bear is a wicked ruler over a poor people.**

The NET footnote explains the imagery extremely well:

^{42sn} The comparison uses animals that are **powerful, terrifying, insensitive, and in search of prey. Because political tyrants are like this**, animal imagery of this sort is used in Dan 7:1-8 for the series of ruthless world powers.'

It is clear why this animal imagery is used by Peter – he is speaking of the rulers of the day, who persecuted the followers of Christ, which were 'powerful, terrifying, insensitive, and in search of prey', as the NET footnote describes both the lion and bear, and 'political tyrants'. Note only is the direct quote indisputable, but the context is extremely appropriate.

Also indisputable is the fact that the imagery here requires that the 'devil' of which Peter speaks actually **acts in a manner appropriate to the imagery.**

A 'political tyrant' is appropriately described as a 'roaring lion', because he is both **very visible**, and **very audible** – when he goes seeking for prey, he is both **seen** and **heard** very obviously. The persecutions of the Christians were not carried out in secret, they were carried out openly, in public.

In what way is this imagery at all appropriate for Buzzard's 'Satan'? The supernatural evil being in which he believes carries out his attacks on people **secretly**, he is **invisible**, he is **never heard**, and he is **indistinguishable from the temptations of the heart.**

Is it likely that such an image would be used to describe an enemy which is invisible, inaudible, and in every way undetectable? How does this possibly make any sense?

The NET footnote rightly says that 'political tyrants are like this', but is it reasonable to say that 'Satan' is like this? If so, in what way?

Buzzard should be pressed on these issues.

There are a number of arguments which Buzzard has made which have been answered without receiving further comment from him. Since he commonly uses these arguments, and since he appears unable to respond to certain answers to them, it is useful to know both what these arguments are, and the answers to them which Buzzard avoids dealing with.

- Buzzard argues that the condemnation of the serpent in Genesis 3 speaks in such a way as to require the same serpent in Eden to be living at the time of tge Messiah. Since a natural serpent could not possibly live this long, he claims that this is evidence that the serpent here is not really a reference to a literal serpent, but rather a reference to 'Satan' the 'fallen' angel.

'The serpent in the prophecy of Gen 3 is said to be in contact with the Messiah. How then can that little snake just be an animal?'

The answer to this is simple, and is well articulated in the NET footnote on this passage:

44sn You will attack her offspring's heel. **Though the conflict will actually involve the serpent's offspring (snakes) and the woman's offspring (human beings), v. 15b for rhetorical effect depicts the conflict as being between the serpent and the woman's offspring, as if the serpent will outlive the woman.**

The statement is personalized for the sake of the addressee (the serpent) and reflects the ancient Semitic concept of corporate solidarity, which emphasizes the close relationship between a progenitor and his offspring.

Note Gen 28:14, where the Lord says to Jacob, "Your offspring will be like the dust of the earth, and you [second masculine singular] will spread out in all directions." **Jacob will "spread out" in all directions through his offspring, but the text states the matter as if this will happen to him personally.**

When presented with this answer, Buzzard replied that he disagreed, but failed to explain why he disagreed, or to identify any errors in the case made here. Requests that he clarify these matters were ignored.

- Buzzard argues that the reference to the 'prince of the kingdom of Persia' in Daniel 10:13 is a reference to a 'fallen' angel:

Daniel 10:

13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia opposed me twenty-one days. So Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia,

When asked for evidence that the 'prince of the kingdom of Persia' should in fact be understood as referring to a 'fallen' angel, Buzzard refuses to reply. Although occasionally alluding to commentaries which have the same view of the passage, Buzzard never presents the line of reasoning which leads to his conclusion (the reason for this being that there is no such line of reasoning, Buzzard's argument is a complete assumption).

Likewise, Buzzard remains silent when invited to comment on the significant fact that many Christian commentaries (including those written by Christians who believe in the 'orthodox' view of Satan and demons), do not read this passage as he does (expositors from as early as the 16th century saw nothing here other than a mortal ruler of Persia).

- Buzzard argues that the use of the word PROSERCHOMAI in the Matthew account of Christ's temptation in the wilderness is proof that the source of Christ's temptation was an individual external to himself. He argues further that this Greek word can never be used figuratively, or refer to something within an individual.

It was demonstrated to Buzzard that both of these claims are false. The entry for PROSERCHOMAI in Liddell, Scott and Jones Greek Lexicon (a standard lexical authority), shows that in the Greek literature it is used:

- Of increasing pain: 'O my foot, how great will be the pain you cause me! It is creeping, it is **coming nearer**, [PROSERCHETAI] wretched that I am!' (Sophocles 'Philoctetes' 788)
- Of an **expectation** having come: 'Alas! my expectation [ELPIV] has **come** [PROSHLQHN]' (Euripides 'Orestes' 859)

Both of these are, of course, within a person.

A different compound of the same Greek word (**EISERCHOMAI**), is used to speak of something entering an individual which is non-physical, such as a thought. The entry for EISERCHOMAI in Liddell, Scott and Jones shows that in the Greek literature it is used:

- Of courage entering men:

'that daring fearless spirit which **lays hold** [EISERCHETAI] of men who are engaging in the struggle' (Iliad 17.157)

- Of a thought coming into one's mind:

'even though he was in such a wretched position **it occurred to him** [EISHLQEIN]', literally '**it came to him**' (Herodotus 'Histories' 1.86)

'The men, **pleased at the thought of** hearing the best singer in the world [KAI TOISI EISHLQEIN GAR HEDONEN EI MELLOEIN AKOUSESQAI TOU ARISTOU ANTROWPON AIDOU] (Herodotus 'Histories' 1.24)

'**Never think** [ESELQETW] that, through terror at the will of Zeus, I shall become womanish [ESELQHTW SE MHPOQ HWS EGW DIOV GNQMEN FWBHQEIV QHLUNOUV GENHSOMAI]', literally '**Let it never come to you that**', etc (Aeschylus 'Prometheus' 1002)

- Of something coming up among a group of people:

'the kind of thing that **came up** [EISHLQH] among us lately' (Plato 'Theaetetus' 147c, as in Luke 9:46)

It is clear that both of these compounds are used to describe something as **entering into** an individual, when in actual fact it originated **from within** the individual.

It is noteworthy that Anthony Buzzard's open challenge has received numerous replies from Christadelphians, both in public and in private (a list of at least a dozen brethren could be made), and yet no mention of them is made on his website or in his article. Even more significant is the fact that the historical evidence for expositors holding the same position as the Christadelphians has been presented to Buzzard (as requested by him), but has received no response. Despite a statement from Buzzard assuring that he would update his original article to acknowledge this evidence, no such alteration has been made, and to date the article remains in its original form as posted in 2001.

Given Buzzard's silence on this issue, and the appearance his article gives that he has never yet received a reply to his challenge, it was considered important to present this work to the Brotherhood at large, in order for the truth to be known. Contributing to this decision was the fact that both Buzzard's challenge and his arguments are known to some other Christian groups, who have adopted them in their opposition to Christadelphian doctrine.

It is the author's prayer that this work will be of assistance to brethren and sisters confronted by such opposition, as well as to members of the Christian group with which Buzzard associates (Church Of God General Conference), who may be interested in examining their own position on this subject.

More important still, it is the author's prayer that this work will help others come to a deeper appreciation of the Divine teaching on temptation, sin, and death, as well as the plan of salvation designed by a loving God for His erring creation.

Evil Spirits and Unclean Spirits In The Old Testament

The first instance of an 'evil spirit' in Scripture occurs in the following passage:

Judges 9:

23 **God sent a spirit to stir up hostility** between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem. He made the leaders of Shechem disloyal to Abimelech.

If this 'spirit' is an evil supernatural being who is the servant of satan and does his evil will, then why does the record attribute the sending of the evil spirit to God? Contemporary Christians believe that an evil spirit **enters into a person**, and stays there to do its work. This account says nothing of such an idea. What do other translations say?

The Living Bible:

22-23 Three years later **God stirred up trouble** between King Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem, and they revolted.

New American Bible:

23 **God put bad feelings between Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem**, who rebelled against Abimelech.

New King James Version:

23 **God sent a spirit of ill will** between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech,

New Living Translation:

23 **God stirred up trouble** between Abimelech and the people of Shechem, and they revolted.

Contemporary English Version:

22 Abimelech had been a military commander of Israel for three years,
23-24 when God decided to punish him and the leaders of Shechem for killing Gideon's seventy sons. **So God turned the leaders of Shechem against Abimelech.**

Today's English Version:

23 Then **God made Abimelech and the men of Shechem hostile to each other**, and they rebelled against him.

There is no evidence here that this was an evil supernatural being. The description is so radically different to the 'orthodox' Christian doctrine of evil spirits that modern translators now render the passage in a manner which follows an understanding of the passage identical to that held by Christadelphians – and which was held by Christadelphians long before Bible translations saw fit to depart from the translation of the KJV.

The second instance of an evil spirit occurring in Scripture is found here:

1 Samuel 16:

14 Now the Spirit of the Lord had turned away from Saul, **and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him.**

What is the Spirit of the LORD here? It is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is referred to in the Old Testament as the Spirit of Yahweh. Where does the evil spirit come from? Does it come from satan? Does it do his will? No. It comes from God, and it does His will.

If the Spirit of Yahweh in the first part of the verse is supernatural, then why isn't the evil spirit in the second part of the verse supernatural? The answer to this is that the Spirit of Yahweh is demonstrably used in the Old Testament to refer to the Holy Spirit (this is verifiable), whereas the only previous use of the Hebrew phrase here translated 'evil spirit' is demonstrably a feeling of ill will between two parties. This is verifiable.

Since the Hebrew phrase translated 'evil spirit' in the KJV has only been used once before this passage, and since it did not there refer to a supernatural being doing the will of God, then there is no reason to understand the 'evil spirit' here in any other way than the meaning in Judges 9.

What do the servants of Saul think? Do they believe he is being tormented by a minion of satan?

1 Samuel 16:

15 Then Saul's servants said to him, "Look, **an evil spirit from God** is tormenting you!"

No. They believe that this is an affliction sent by God. Where is satan in all this? Why did none of Saul's servants attribute this assault to the supernatural being of evil which Buzzard claims was well known to them as **'the satan'**?

Do the servants of Saul insist on an exorcism, or resort to a priest to have the 'evil spirit' cast out?

1 Samuel 16:

Let our lord instruct his servants who are here before you to look for a man **who knows how to play the lyre**. Then whenever the evil spirit from God comes upon you, **he can play the lyre and you will feel better.**"

No. They recommend that they find a skilled musician, insisting that when the musician plays, Saul will be well. They make no suggestion that anything supernatural is occurring. Do Christians who believe in demonic possession recommend that the best response to an attack by one of satan's minions is to play some music, in order to send it away? If not, why not?

Does the suggestion of Saul's servants work?

1 Samuel 16:

23 So whenever the spirit from God would come upon Saul, David would take his lyre and play it. **This would bring relief to Saul and make him feel better.** Then the evil spirit **would leave him alone.**

Yes. Whenever David plays, Saul is 'refreshed and well', and the 'evil spirit' goes away. There is no suggestion that anything supernatural is occurring. We are told very directly that music causes evil spirits to leave, though we know that this 'evil spirit' returned to Saul at times. Does the record here indicate a supernatural minion of satan, or a troubled spirit sent by God as an affliction?

All the evidence points to the latter. God removed His Holy Spirit from Saul, and instead sent him an 'evil spirit' or 'distressing spirit' (NKJV), a psychological trouble of the mind. This is entirely contrary to 'orthodox' Christian beliefs on the subject, but entirely in agreement with the Christadelphian view. Why is it that the only two references to evil spirits in the Old Testament are described in terms which identify them as mental or emotional disturbances?

Would Buzzard dare to call this 'rationalism' on the part of the Old Testament authors, or would he accuse them of having 'rejected the supernatural'? If not, then why level this accusation at Christadelphians when we follow carefully the guidance of the Old Testament?

There are no other references in the Old Testament to evil spirits. There is one reference in Zechariah 13:2 to an 'unclean spirit':

Zechariah 13:

1 "In that day there will be a fountain opened up for the dynasty of David and the people of Jerusalem for sin and impurity.

2 And also on that day," says the sovereign Lord, "I will remove the names of the idols from the land and they will never again be remembered. **Moreover, I will remove the prophets and the unclean spirit from the land.**

3 Then, if anyone prophesies in spite of this, his father and mother who bore him will say to him, 'You cannot live, for you lie in the name of the Lord.' Then his father and mother who bore him will run him through with a sword when he prophesies.

What is this 'unclean spirit'? Is it the evil demon, the 'fallen angel' of Buzzard's theology? If so, it would be the first instance of such a being which we have found in the Old Testament, but the description given of it here does not match either the demons or the fallen angels of Buzzard. This is an unclean spirit which does not possess an individual, but an entire land.

As noted previously, commentaries by rabbis which one would expect to share Buzzard's view made no mention of demons or fallen angels:

'Jarchi and Kimchi interpret "the unclean spirit" of the corruption of nature; but that will not cease as long as men are in a mortal state.'

John Gill, 'Commentary On the Bible', note on Zechariah 13:2, 1748

The 'corruption of nature' is another term used by the rabbis for the 'evil imagination (or 'evil inclination'), and demonstrates that neither Kimchi nor Jarchi interpreted this passage as referring to an evil spirit or demon which was plaguing the country (as Buzzard would expect them to).

Rather, they understood it to refer to the natural inclination in men to do evil, which would be removed from the land in the Messianic age (their belief that the 'evil inclination' would be restrained in the Messianic age has striking parallels with the Christadelphian understanding of the 'binding of satan' in Revelation 20:2). This interpretation is of interest in that it is precisely the kind of explanation which Buzzard insists would **not** naturally occur to the Jewish rabbis, but is not likely to be the correct interpretation.

The reference here in Zechariah 13 is to the idolatrous spirit of the people which is elsewhere called the 'spirit of whoredoms' (Hosea 5:4, where in fact both Rabbi Ben Uzziel and Rabbi Kimchi interpret the 'spirit of whoredoms' as another reference to the 'evil inclination'). It is the apostate sentiment among the people which filled the land with idols and the worship of pagan gods. In Zechariah 13:1-3, God is telling the people that this spirit will be removed from the land when the false teachers (prophets), and apostate worship is brought to an end.

Buzzard must explain why we should not understand evil and unclean spirits in the New Testament, according to the way they are clearly presented in the Old.

The Angels Which Sinned

Comparing the records of both Peter and Jude, what do we find Scripture tell us of these 'angels which sinned'?

- They were cast down into the deepest parts of the ocean (2 Peter 2:4, where 'hell' is 'tartarus', a word used in the LXX to speak of the deepest parts of the ocean, Job 41:32), when Noah was saved from the flood by the providence of God, in the ark (2 Peter 2:5).

This tells us who they were, and when they lived – they were mortal men destroyed in the flood. This proves that they cannot be 'evil angels' who fell from heaven during a rebellion led by 'Satan' against God.

- They have not yet received their final punishment, being kept 'imprisoned' until the day of Judgment (2 Peter 4:4, Jude 1:6).

This tells us that they must be mortal men, for only mortal men will appear at the Judgment, not 'evil angels' (Daniel 12:2, Matthew 7:21-23; 10:15; 11:22-24; 12:36-37, 41-42; 13:40-43; 16:27; 24:48-51; 25:24-34, 41, Mark 6:11, Luke 10:12; 13:28, John 5:28-9, Acts 17:30-31; 24:15, 24-25, Romans 2:5, 14:10-12, 2 Corinthians 5:9-10, 2 Timothy 4:1, 2 Peter 3:7).

Repeatedly we are told that the Judgment is for the reward of the disobedient, and the punishment of the wicked. If the 'evil angels' are to be judged and punished at that time, then are the 'good angels' to be judged and rewarded as well? Scripture is silent on the matter of any day of judgment other than that which is appointed for men.

- They are described as 'locked up in chains of darkness to be kept until the judgment' (2 Peter 2:4), and 'kept in eternal chains in utter darkness, locked up for the judgment of the great Day' (Jude 1:6).

This speaks of death as 'chains', using a figure found in the Old Testament, where described using the figure of 'chains', 'ropes', or 'bonds' (Psalm 18:4-5; 116:3), proving once more that these are mortal men (angels cannot die, Luke 20:36).

Additionally, the fact that these 'angels' are bound in this way proves that they cannot be the 'fallen angels' of Christian orthodoxy, who are allegedly roaming around the world freely, causing havoc on mankind. The 'angels' in Peter and Jude will stay where they are, imprisoned, until the day of Judgment.

With these facts established, we shall now examine each passage in context, and determine precisely what is being taught by the example of these 'evil angels'. Additional information is found in Appendix [X]

Let's start with Peter:

2 Peter 2:

4 For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but threw them into hell and locked them up in chains in utter darkness, to be kept until the judgment,

5 and if he did not spare the ancient world, but did protect Noah, a herald of righteousness, along with seven others, when God brought a flood on an ungodly world,

God spared not those which sinned, and spared not the old world, but saved Noah from the flood. Clearly one and the same incident is referred to here - the flood. Those that sinned were killed in the flood, but righteous Noah was saved.

6 and if **he turned to ashes the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah** when he condemned them to destruction, having appointed them **to serve as an example to future generations of the ungodly,**
 7 and if **he rescued Lot**, a righteous man in anguish over the debauched lifestyle of lawless men,
 8 (for while he lived among them day after day, that righteous man was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)
 9 —if so, then the Lord knows how to **rescue the godly from their trials**, and to **reserve the unrighteous for punishment at the day of judgment,**
 10 especially those who indulge their fleshly desires and who despise authority.

Again, a contrast. Sodom and Gomorrha were condemned and overthrown, while Lot was saved. One and the same incident is referred to here - the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha.

Note the parallel structure:

{A} The men of the old world sinned and were destroyed, because of their wickedness	{A} But Noah was righteous, and was therefore preserved by God from the destruction
{B} The men of Sodom and Gomorrah sinned, and were destroyed for being ungodly	{B} But Lot was just, and was therefore preserved by God from the destruction

This is Peter’s entire argument in this passage – he is assuring the brethren and sisters that God knows how to judge the wicked for their unGodly deeds, whilst sparing the righteous (he concludes with this very statement in verse 9).

here is Peter’s argument, with the ‘if/then’ structure in bold:

2 Peter 2:
 4 **For if God did not spare the angels who sinned**, but threw them into hell and locked them up in chains in utter darkness, to be kept until the judgment,
 5 **and if he did not spare the ancient world**, but did protect Noah, a herald of righteousness, along with seven others, when God brought a flood on an ungodly world,
 6 **and if he turned to ashes the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah** when he condemned them to destruction, having appointed them to serve as an example to future generations of the ungodly,
 7 **and if he rescued Lot**, a righteous man in anguish over the debauched lifestyle of lawless men,
 8 (for while he lived among them day after day, that righteous man was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)
 9 —**if so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from their trials**, and to reserve the unrighteous for punishment at the day of judgment,

If in the past (at the time of the flood) God has condemned the ungodly, and spared the righteous (Noah), in the day of judgment (verses 4-5), and if in the past (in the days of Lot), God has condemned the ungodly, and spared the righteous (Lot), in the day of judgment (verses 6-7), then God will do the same likewise in the future, by delivering the Godly and reserving the ungodly to the day of Judgment.

Peter's argument is that God is consistent in His judgment of the ungodly and His preservation of the righteous.

The passage in Jude uses the same argument and structure:

Jude:

6 You also know that **the angels who did not keep within their proper domain** but abandoned their own place of residence, **he has kept in eternal chains in utter darkness, locked up for the judgment of the great Day.**

7 **So also Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring towns**, since they indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire in a way similar to these angels, are now displayed as an example **by suffering the punishment of eternal fire.**

This is a direct parallel argument to that of Peter. Peter, however, was contrasting the judgment on the wicked with the salvation of the righteous, and thus makes mention of those saved from the flood, and those saved from Sodom.

Jude, on the other hand, simply refers to the judgment on the wicked of both incidents and tells us that their judgment was **the same**:

7 **So also Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring towns**, since they indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire in a way similar to these angels, are now displayed as an example **by suffering the punishment of eternal fire.**

So the judgment on those mentioned in verse 6 is the same as that mentioned in verse 7. Both were punished with death, and reserved for judgment (that Sodom and Gomorrah are reserved for judgment is not stated explicitly here in Jude, but is seen in Matthew 10:15; 11:23, Mark 6:11, and Luke 10:12).

Not only was the judgment the same, but the same incident is given as an example for us - and example of exactly what Peter's argument is, that God will condemn the wicked, and reward the just in the day of judgment.

The following layout of the verses under discussion shows the clear parallelisms which Jude uses, and helps to expound the meaning of the text:

6 You also know that the angels who did not keep within their proper domain	7 So also Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring towns
but abandoned their own place of residence,	since they indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire in a way similar to these angels,
he has kept in eternal chains in utter darkness , locked up for the judgment of the great Day.	are now displayed as an example by suffering the punishment of eternal fire.

Jude pairs these two statements:

6 ...who did not keep within their proper domain	6 ...but abandoned their own place of residence,
--	--

This means that the clauses in each pair are saying the same thing. We can use the more clear of the two phrases to explain the less clear.

Likewise, Jude pairs these two statements:

7 ...they indulged in sexual immorality	7 ...and pursued unnatural desire
---	-----------------------------------

This means that the clauses in each pair are saying the same thing. We can use the more clear of the two phrases to explain the less clear.

The following table shows the pairs of correlating statements:

6 ...who did not keep within their proper domain	6 ...but abandoned their own place of residence,
7 ...they indulged in sexual immorality	6 ...but abandoned their own place of residence,

This is a correct use of the Biblical principle of interpretation that the clear texts always inform and clarify the more obscure, and also shows us how parallelisms are used to clarify and emphasise a statement.

Finally, let's place the original reference in Genesis next to the passages in Jude:

Genesis 6	Jude
1 When mankind began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, 2 the sons of God saw that the daughters of mankind were beautiful. Thus they took wives for themselves from any they chose.	6 You also know that the angels who did not keep within their proper domain but abandoned their own place of residence,
6 and if he turned to ashes the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah when he condemned them to destruction, having appointed them to serve as an example to future generations of the ungodly,	7 So also Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring towns, since they indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire in a way similar to these angels, are now displayed as an example by suffering the punishment of eternal fire.

The sons of men fell from their original exalted position in fellowship with God, and (as Israel would do after them), committed fornication with the daughters of men.

It is significant that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is said to be **the same kind of sin** as that of 'the angels' in verse 6:

7 **So also Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring towns,** since they **indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire in a way similar to these angels,**

Whatever the sin of these 'angels' in verse 6, it is clear that it was the **same kind of sin** as that committed by the men of Sodom and Gomorrah. This demonstrates that sexual immorality is referred to in both cases, and further identifies the 'angels' of verse 6 as the sexually immoral 'sons of God' in Genesis 6.

As we have seen, the parallelisms are not merely confined to these two couplets. The two verses themselves are placed in a parallelism - the one informing the other.

Here are the parallel passages in Jude, for clarity:

The fallen sons of God	Sodom and Gomorrah
6 You also know that the angels	7 So also Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring towns
who did not keep within their proper domain	since they indulged in sexual immorality
but abandoned their own place of residence,	and pursued unnatural desire in a way similar to these angels,
he has kept in eternal chains in utter darkness, locked up for the judgment of the great Day.	are now displayed as an example by suffering the punishment of eternal fire.

The sinners	Their sin	Their punishment
6 You also know that the angels	who did not keep within their proper domain but abandoned their own place of residence,	he has kept in eternal chains in utter darkness , locked up for the judgment of the great Day.
7 So also Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring towns	since they indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire in a way similar to these angels,	are now displayed as an example by suffering the punishment of eternal fire .

So the angels who sinned were the 'sons of God' who lived before the flood, abandoned their position as sons of God to sin with the daughters of men, and were destroyed by God.

Peter's words help to prove this beyond doubt, because he tells us that the angels who sinned were cast down **to tartarus**. The word 'tartarus' was an excellent word to use. In the LXX, it simply means 'the lowest depths' of the **ocean**.

Speak of Leviathan, we read in the LXX:

Job 41 (LXX chapter numbering):

31 He makes the deep boil like a brazen caldron; and he regards the sea as a pot of ointment,

32 **and the lowest part of the deep [tartarus]** as a captive: he reckons **the deep** as his range.

Note the parallelism – ‘tartarus’ here is the deepest parts of the ocean. Thus Peter reads:

2 Peter 2:

4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to **the lowest depths [tartarus]**, and delivered them into **chains of darkness**, to be reserved unto judgment;

The LXX is the Bible which both Peter and his audience would have used, and his use of language would have been very much determined by this. Describing those killed in the flood as being cast down to the lowest depths of the ocean, is very appropriate. Exactly what it is supposed to mean when applied to ‘evil angels’, we leave Buzzard to explain.

Finally, here are the two passages together, for comparison:

2 Peter 2	Jude
<p>4 For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but threw them into hell</p> <p>and locked them up in chains in utter darkness,</p> <p>to be kept until the judgment,</p>	<p>6 You also know that the angels who did not keep within their proper domain but abandoned their own place of residence,</p> <p>he has kept in eternal chains in utter darkness,</p> <p>locked up for the judgment of the great Day.</p>
<p>6 and if he turned to ashes the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah when he condemned them to destruction,</p> <p>having appointed them to serve as an example to future generations of the ungodly,</p>	<p>7 So also Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring towns, since they indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire in a way similar to these angels,</p> <p>are now displayed as an example by suffering the punishment of eternal fire.</p>
<p>5 and if he did not spare the ancient world, but did protect Noah, a herald of righteousness, along with seven others, when God brought a flood on an ungodly world,</p> <p>7 and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man in anguish over the debauched lifestyle of lawless men,</p> <p>8 (for while he lived among them day after day, that righteous man was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)</p> <p>9 —if so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from their trials,</p> <p>and to reserve the unrighteous for punishment at the day of judgment,</p> <p>10 especially those who indulge their fleshly desires and who despise authority.</p>	<p>5 Now I desire to remind you (even though you have been fully informed of these facts once for all) that Jesus, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt,</p> <p>later destroyed those who did not believe.</p>

The Dragon of Revelation 12

It is maintained by many 'orthodox' Christians (as well as by Buzzard), that the dragon in Revelation 12 is symbolic of the supernatural evil being he calls 'Satan'. There is nothing in this passage to warrant such an interpretation, and when the passage is expounded with reference to other parts of Scripture, the true understanding is unavoidable.

Firstly, the connection between Revelation 12 and Daniel 7 must be noted. In Daniel 7 we find a beast revealed to Daniel in a vision, which appears very much like the beast of Revelation 12:

Daniel 7:

7 After this I saw in the visions by night a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth and was devouring, breaking in pieces, and stamping what was left with its feet. **It was different from all the beasts that preceded it, and it had ten horns.**

Revelation 12:

3 Then another portent appeared in heaven: a great red dragon, **with seven heads and ten horns**, and seven diadems on his heads.

The similarity of these two beasts is significant, especially given the context of Daniel's vision, in which **empires** are represented by beasts:

Daniel 7:

15 As for me, Daniel, my spirit was troubled within me, and the visions of my head terrified me.

16 I approached one of the attendants to ask him the truth concerning all this. So he said that he would disclose to me the interpretation of the matter:

17 "As for these four great beasts, four kings shall arise out of the earth.

23 This is what he said: "**As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth** that shall be different from all the other kingdoms; it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces.

The explicit interpretation of the angel is that these beasts represent empires, with the fourth beast representing the fourth empire on earth. The vision in Daniel 7 is related directly to the vision of the image in Daniel 2, in which four empires were represented by the four metals of the image of a man.

The fourth beast therefore represents the 'fourth empire on earth', the fourth in a list of empires of which Babylon is the first. This fourth beast must therefore represent the Roman empire, and when the same beast is seen in Revelation 12, there is every reason to conclude that it is speaking of the same empire.

This conclusion is strengthened by other Scriptural connections. The Greek word 'drakwn' here translated 'dragon' (also translated 'serpent' in some places), is used in the LXX to speak of kingdoms which were in opposition to God, and which took into captivity and persecuted His people:

Jeremiah 51:

34 He has devoured me, he has torn me asunder, airy darkness has come upon me; **Nabuchodonosor king of Babylon has swallowed me up, as a dragon** has he filled his belly with my delicacies.

Ezekiel 32:

2 Son of man, take up a lamentation for **Pharao king of Egypt**, and say to him, Thou art become like a lion of the nations, **and as a serpent [Greek 'drakwn', dragon] that is in the sea**: and thou didst make assaults with thy rivers, and didst disturb the water with thy feet, and didst trample thy rivers.

The use of this particular word in Bible prophecy to identify the heathen enemies of God and His people, should already suggest to us the truth of its meaning in Revelation 12. When combined with the connection with Daniel 7, and its obvious use of beasts to represent empires, the conclusion is unavoidable – the dragon here in Revelation is not being used to represent a supernatural evil being, but to represent an empire which is hostile to God and His people – an adversary.

The following comment from Matthew Poole's exposition demonstrates that this interpretation has been widely held for centuries, even among those Christians who believe in 'Satan' as a supernatural evil being:

'And behold a great red dragon: see Re 12:7,9,17. Most judicious interpreters, by the great red dragon, understand the Roman emperors that first persecuted: the Christian church, of which Claudius was the first; yet some understand it of the devil, the old serpent; but the most and best interpreters understand it of the pagan emperors, by whom the devil did this work, called a great dragon, because of the vastness of that empire; a red dragon, for their cruelty against the Christians.'

Matthew Poole, 'New Testament Commentary', note on Revelation 12:3, 1685

The fact that Poole informs us that **most** interpreters understand the dragon here to represent Rome (those he calls '**the most and best** interpreters'), whilst only **some** understand it of 'the devil, the old serpent', is significant, confirming that this is a natural reading.

Appendix A: Historical Research By Brother Steven Snobelen

10/3/1998

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

More elaborate testimonies of the biblical belief on the devil and demons came in the seventeenth century. One crucial and seminal exposition on demons came from the pen of Cambridge scholar Joseph Mede, who has been called the "father of English premillenarianism," and is thus a very important exegete in the history of the biblical belief in the Kingdom.

Mede's influential innovation was twofold. First, he raised the question of why demon possession should suddenly appear in the Gospels and then disappear immediately thereafter (Mede limited demon possession to the Gospel accounts). Second, he argued that demon possession was to be equated with the pathology that in his day was called madness and lunacy.

It is not exactly clear whether Mede himself denied the literal existence of demons (in my opinion, it is safer to assume that he did not), but he nevertheless helped open the door to later exegetes who did come to this conclusion.

The important exposition comes in a dissertation entitled: "S. Iohn 10.20. He hath a Devill, and is mad," published in his posthumous DIATRIBAE. DISCOVERSES ON DIVERS TEXTS OF SCRIPTVRE: Delivered upon severall occasions (London 1642), pp. 120-131.

Below are two illustrative excerpts:

p. 122:

"Now, to come toward my Text; a like instance to this, I take to be that of the Daemoniacks so often mentioned in the Gospel: For I make no question, but that now and then [123] the same befalls other men; whereof I have experience my selfe, to wit, To marvell how these Daemoniacks should so abound in, and about that Nation, which was the People of God; whereas in other Nations and their writings wee heare of no such; And that too, as it should seem, about the time of our Saviours being on earth onely; because in the time before we finde no mention of them in Scripture. The wonder is yet the greater, because it seems notwithstanding all this, by the Story of the Gospel, not to have been accounted then by the people of the Jews, any strange or extraordinary thing, but as a matter usuall; nor besides is taken notice of by any forraine Story.

To meet with all these difficulties, (which I see not how otherwise can be easily satisfied) I am perswaded (till I shall heare better reason to the contrary) that these Daemoniacks were no other then such as well call mad-men, and Lunaticks; at least that we comprehend them under those names, and that therefore they both still are, and in all times and places [124] have been, much more frequent then we imagine. The cause of which our mistake, is that disguise of another name, and notion, then we conceive them by; which makes us take them to be diverse which are the same."

Whether or not Mede is saying demons are real and still afflict mankind, this was a crucial move that allowed others to go further and to use the same argument of uniformity of pathology to prove that what they called demons were nothing other than we call madness. Note also that Mede wants to confine demons possession to the Gospels--another crucial move.

p. 126:

"Having thus sufficiently stated, and explicated my assertion; now you shall hear what grounds I have for the same. First therefore, I prove it out of the Gospel it selfe, & that in the first place from this Scripture, which I have chosen for my text, *Daimonion echei kai mainetai* [transliterated from the Greek], he hath a Devil & is mad. Where I suppose the latter words to be an explication of the former. Secondly, I prove it out of Mat. 17.15. where it is said, There came to our Saviour a certain man kneeling down to him, and saying; Lord have mercy on my sonne, *hoti seleniazetai* [transliterated from the Greek], because he is Lunatick and sore vexed; For oft times he falleth into the Fire, and [127] oft into the water. That this Lunatick was a *Δαμονιακκ*, is evident both out of the 15. ver. of this Chapter, where it is said, Our Saviour rebuked the Devill and he departed out of him, and the child was cured from that very houre: As also out of the 9. of the Gospel of Saint Luke, where it is said of the self-same person, Lo, a spirit taketh him, and he cryeth out, and it teareth him, that he foameth againe, and bruising him, hardly departeth from him. By comparing of these places, you may gather, what kind of men they were which Scripture calls *Daimonizomenoi* [transliterated]."

It is also interesting that Mede points out that Josephus and Justin Martyr believed demons to be departed spirits (pp. 128-9)

Mede also wrote an entire commentary on 1 Timothy 4:1, in which he outlined the rise of Gentile demonology. Mede took the phrase "doctrines of demons" in this work to be an objective genitive, that is, he believed the prophecy had reference to doctrines **about** demons, not doctrines **from** demons. This work was also published in 1642 and its full title is:

THE APOSTASY OF THE LATTER TIMES. In which, (according to divine prediction) the world should wonder after the Beast, the Mystery of Iniquity should so farre prevaile over the Mystery of Godlinesse, whorish Babylon over the virgin-Church of Christ; as that the visible glory of the True Church should be much clouded, the True unstained Christian Faith corrupted, the purity of the true worship polluted. OR, THE GENTILES THEOLOGY OF DAEMONS, i.e. inferiour divine powers:

Supposed to be mediators between God and man: Revived in the Latter Times amongst Christians, in worshipping of Angels, deifying and invocating of Saints, adoring and templing of Reliques, bowing downe to Images, worshipping of Crosses, &c.

All which, together with A true discovery of the Nature, Originall, Progresse, of the great, fatall, and solemn Apostasy, are cleared. Delivered in publique some years since upon I Tim. 4. 1,2,3. By Ioseph Mede B.D. and late Fellow of Christs Colledge in Cambridge. London 1642.

In this work Mede focused on demons as departed spirits and argued that the Catholic doctrine of saint worship and mediation was a form of demonology.

The next important work to deal with this general subject was Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651). Usually treated as a study of political theory, a full half of *Leviathan* deals with theology--and a very radical theology at that. On almost every point, Hobbes presents doctrines that are in accord with biblical truth and directly at odds with orthodox teachings: he denies the immortal soul, eternal hell-fire, the orthodox trinity and heaven-going, and presents sound arguments for baptism by immersion and a Kingdom on earth. On the devil and demons, he rejects the orthodox conceptions as unbiblical

Hobbes, like Mede, took the phrase "doctrines of demons" (1 Timothy 4:1) to be an objective genitive: "the Doctrine of Devils, signifieth not the Words of any Devill, but the Doctrine of Heathen men concerning Daemons, and those Phantasms which they worshipped as Gods (ch. 36, p. 288).

In another place, Hobbes asserts that those who are "in Tartarus, or in the bottomless pit [are] Corah, Dathan, and Abirom, [who] were swallowed up alive into the earth (ch. 39, p. 312).

Hobbes saw demons as pagan and as mere "Idols, or Phantasms of the braine, without any reall nature of their own, distinct from humane fancy; such as are dead mens Ghosts, and Fairies, and other matter of old Wives tales" (ch. 44, p. 418).

Note here again the association made between demons and ghosts.

Hobbes explains the presence of the language of demon possession in the Gospels with a variant of the accommodation approach (ch. 45, p. 442).

Like Mede, Hobbes noticed that preponderance of demons in the Gospel accounts and the lack of demon-possession in his own time. On this problem, he came to the same conclusion as Mede (indeed, Hobbes may have been dependent on Mede to this):

"That there were many Daemoniaques in the Primitive Church, and few Mad-men, and other such singular diseases; whereas in these times we hear of, and see many Mad-men, and few Daemoniaques, proceeds not from the change of Nature; but of Names" (ch. 45, p. 445).

As for Satan, Hobbes rejected the literal, orthodox doctrine. In speaking of "The Enemy, or Satan; The Accuser, or Diabolus; The Destroyer, or Abaddon," Hobbes argues that these:

"significant names, Satan, Devill, Abaddon, set not forth to us any Individuall person, as proper names use to doe; but onely an office, or quality; and are therefore Appellatives; which ought not to have been left untranslated, as they are, in the Latine, and Modern Bibles; because thereby they seem to be the proper names of Daemons; and men are the more easily seduced to beleieve the doctrine fo Devills; which at that time was the Religion of the Gentiles, and contrary to that of Moses, and of Christ.

And because by the Enemy, the Accuser, and Destroyer, is meant, the Enemy of them that shall be in the Kingdome of God; therefore if the Kingdome of God after the Resurrection, bee upon the Earth, (as in the former Chapter I have shewn by Scripture it seems to be,) The Enemy, and his Kingdome must be on Earth also. For so also was it, in the time before the Jews had deposed God. For Gods Kingdome was in Palestine; and the Nations round about, were the Kingdomes of the Enemy; and consequently by Satan, is meant any Earthly Enemy of the Church." (Ch. 38, p. 314).

(Incidentally, Hobbes' material on the terrestrial, political and future nature of the Kingdom of God makes wonderful reading, and can hold its own against the best exegesis of Christadelphians and members of the Church of God in this subject).

Hobbes treats the language of Satanic influence in the following way:

" . . . where St. Luke sayes of Judas Iscariot, that Satan entred into him, and thereupon that he went and communed with the Chief Priests, and Captaines, how he might betray Christ unto them: it may be answered, that by the Entring of Satan (that is the Enemy) into him, is meant, the hostile and traitorous intention of selling his Lord and Master. For as by the Holy Ghost, is refrequently understood, the Graces and good Inclinations given by the Holy Ghost; so by the Entring of Satan, may bee understood the wicked Cogitations, and Designs of the Adversaries of Christ, and his Disciples. For as it is hard to say, that the Devill was entred into Judas, before he had any such hostile designe; so it is impertinent to say, he was first Christs Enemy in his heart, and that the Devill entred into him afterwards. Therefore the Entring of Satan, and his Wicked Purpose, was one and the same thing" (ch. 45, p. 444).

It is interesting to see how similar this presentation is to that of the yetzer hara of the ancient Jews.

Finally, Hobbes took the wilderness temptation of Christ to be a vision (ch. 45, p. 443).

Another example of someone who came to understand the devil and demons in a less literal, orthodox way, was Isaac Newton, who may have arrived at these ideas through his own independent exegesis. Newton saw Satan as a symbol and demons and ghosts as fictions, and he explained the language of demon possession with a variant of the accommodation approach. I will be posting excerpts from Newton's remarkable writings on the devil and demons separately.

Another example of someone who came to understand the devil and demons in a less literal, orthodox way, was Isaac Newton, who may have arrived at these ideas through his own independent exegesis. Newton saw Satan as a symbol and demons and ghosts as fictions, and he explained the language of demon possession with a variant of the accommodation approach. I will be posting excerpts from Newton's remarkable writings on the devil and demons separately.

At the end of the seventeenth century, perhaps the most important work on the non-orthodox view of the devil and demons was published by the Amsterdam Calvinist pastor Balthassar Bekker. His extensive treatise on this topic was originally published in Holland in 1693 as *De betoverde wereld*.

A full translation was made into French, and an English translation was begun from the French, but it was unfortunately suppressed after the first volume appeared. It is fortunate, however, that the first English volume contains summaries of the rest of the work. The bibliographic details of the English partial publication are as follows:

The World Bewitch'd; Or, An examination of the common opinions concerning spirits: their nature, power, administration, and operations. As also, the effects men are able to produce by their communication. London: Printed for R. Baldwin, 1695.

This was a very influential and controversial work. Bekker argues against a literal view of Satan. He claims that the satan of Job was a human adversary and also presents arguments against literal demons. He takes the temptation of Christ in the wilderness to be a vision. He also sought to undermine and eliminate belief in witchcraft.

10/3/1998

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

With the eighteenth century came a number of works on demons. One of the more important and seminal of these was Arthur Ashley Sykes's *An enquiry into the meaning of demoniacks in the New Testament* (London 1737).

Below are some gleanings from the second edition (also from 1737).

In his preface Sykes begins by alluding to Mede's treatise on John 10:20 and then argues that in either case, Christ's miracles of healing are still real: this is a crucial point.

p. 2f: general notion of demons among the Greeks that of departed souls

p. 3: demons also used by Greeks of gods in general

p. 4: [omitting footnotes]

Fourthly, This Notion of Demons, that they were the Souls of such as once had lived upon Earth, is so universally allowed by Jews and Christians as well as by Heathens, that scarce will any one dispute it. Justin Martyr says The Gods of the Heathens are Demons: and more expressly still he calls them The Souls of the deceased. And defining what he meant by Demoniacs, he says, They, who are seized by the Souls of deceased Persons, are such as all Men agree in calling Demoniacs. Josephus calls them the Souls of wicked Men.

p. 7:

The Epilepsy, I say, was looked upon as a Sacred Disease, and was supposed to have its Origin immediately from some or other of the Gods, according as its Symptoms were stronger, or less so; and thence it was called *Lues deisica*, and *Morbus sacer*.

pp. 9-10: demon possession believed by some Greeks

p. 30:

We meet with nothing of Demoniacs excepting the Case of Saul, in the Old Testament. But yet Josephus, (who professes a strict Regard to the Sacred Writings,) mentions certain Charms which Solomon left behind him, by which they could cure Diseases, and so expel Demons, that they should no more return: and this Manner of Cure, says he, continues amongst us even to this Day.

p. 35:

"It must be remembered likewise, that Demon in none of the Instances already produced, signifies what we in English call Devil, but always is applied to the departed Souls of Dead Men. And lastly, that Epilepsy and Madness were peculiar Disorders attributed to the Gods."

p. 36 Sykes appears to use John 10:20 in a similar way to Mede, i.e. he argues that to say someone had a demon, was equivalent to calling someone mad.

p. 39: when people claimed others had demons they did it purely on the basis of observable effects (of health) and thus argue from the effect to the cause

p. 53ff: the python account

p. 54: "Satan is nothing else but Adversary, and is to be understood according to the Subject to which it is applied."

p. 55: "Thus being bound of Satan "means no more than that which was an Adversary to Health, be it what it would."

"Why then should we imagine the Devil, or the Prince of the Devils, to have been in her so many Years? Might not one have Grounds to think that he would have perverted her Mind, and not her Body; or have distorted her Soul, and not have made her Carcase crooked?"

pp. 55-6: Sykes then goes on to give examples from the Bible of human adversaries/satans

p. 69: the gospel writers speak of the unclean spirits falling down before Christ: but it was the humans that did so: an example of metonymy.

p. 70:

"It was a Remark made at least as long ago as the Author of the Questions and Answers to the Orthodox, usually annexed to Justin Martyr, That the Scripture attributes to the Demoniack the Works of the Demon. The Reverse of this is as true, That the Scriptures attribute to Demons the Acts of the Demoniack: which shews, that in these Cases, we are not to regard the Letter, but the real and exact Meaning of the Sacred Writers.

p. 79: "Q. What then were those Possessions which are so frequent in the New Testament?

A. They appear all to be such Cases of Madness, or of Epilepsy, as all the Antients agreed in imputing to their Gods, or Demons. The New Testament Writers made use of the Terms and Language usual in their Times: And as the Hypotheses they then had in Philosophy equally served the Purpose of our Saviour in his great Designs, as the very exactest Truth would have done, it had been to no Purpose for him to have engaged in Disputes, or to have opposed the received Notions. His Cause would not have been in a better Way; nor would the Cause of the One God in Opposition to Vice, have been better promoted, by refuting the Demonology then received, than by using the common ordinary Language: it was enough that our Saviour shewed a Power over all that was before Him, and cured the Diseases with a Word, which to every body else were incurable."

[This is the concluding paragraph]

Sykes, who was indirectly involved in Newton's circle, met objections to his initial work with his A further enquiry into the meaning of Demoniacks in the New Testament. Wherein the Enquiry is vindicated against the Objections of the Revd. Mr. Twells, and of the Author of The essay in answer to it (London 1737).

In this work he responds to Twells and possibly others like Waterland who argued against him that demons in the NT were fallen angels. Sykes goes into origin of idolatry in a similar way to Newton.

Pages 105-107, present a variant of the accommodation approach. For Sykes, demons are ghosts, nothings, vanities.

Sykes' works created a small controversy and there were several replies and at least one supporter.

See also:

[D.N. Sharte?]

A review of the controversy about the meaning of demoniacs in the New Testament.
London: Printed for J. Roberts, 1739

Cites Mede's Discourse on John x. 20 on title page. Argues for accommodation, similar to Sykes and looks at idolatry.

The physician Richard Mead, who claimed to be related to Joseph Mede and who cared for Isaac Newton in the latter's last illness, also wrote on demons in his *Medica Sacra; Or, A commentary on the most remarkable diseases, mentioned in the Holy Scriptures* (London 1755).

The crucial section is "Of dæmoniacks" (ch. IX, pp. 73-92), but see also ch. X, "Of lunatics" (pp. 93-102).

Mead argues that demoniacs were afflicted with purely natural causes--clearly a medical advance in itself.

Mead hints at accommodation as the means to explain the biblical language. He links belief in demons to idolatry, and cites Isaac Newton's *Chronology* for support.

He cites his namesake and relative Joseph Mede's short treatise on demons. He then concludes with a non-exorcist method of treating those so afflicted.

p. 73: opening sentence:

That the Doemoniacs [sic], daimonizomenoi [transliterated], mentioned in the gospels, laboured under a disease really natural, tho' of an obstinate and difficult kind, appears to me very probable from the accounts given of them.

p. 82:

"From what we have said, it manifestly appears, how many different ways the lessons of imagination, when they are confirm'd by long habit, are capable of affecting a man, and entirely ruining his whole frame. But everybody knows, that the human mind is disturbed by nothing more than by fear; the cause of which is self-love ingrafted in all men. Where[83]as then, as Cicero very justly observes, there is no nation so savage, no man so rude, as not to have some notion of the gods; 1 [1 Tusc. quaet. Lib. i. 13.] it is no wonder, that men conscious of wicked deeds, should be struck with the fear of God, whose empire over all created things they acknowledged.

For, as they attributed every good thing, every benefit of this life, to the gods; so they were of opinion, that evils and calamities were sent down by them in punishment of crimes. Now, idolatry, as I said above,² [2 Cap. i. p. 5.] had its origin among the Chaldeans; and at first it consisted in the worship of the sun and moon, but afterwards it was extended to the adoration of daemons.³ [3 See Sir Isaac Newton's *Chronology*, p. 160.]

But these were believed to be divine ministers; and that they were originally the souls of heroes and [84] great men, who were worshipped for services done to mankind in general, or to their native country in particular. And this daemonic religion being propagated from the Chaldaeans to the Phoenicians, then to the Egyptians, came afterwards to the Greeks, thence to the Romans, and in progress of time to the other nations."

Another important very important work is Nathaniel Lardner's *The case of the demoniacs mentioned in the New Testament: Four discourses upon Mark v. 19. with an appendix for farther illustrating the subject* (London 1758).

The preface notes that the discourses were first spoken to an audience in 1742. Lardner argues against the literal existence of demons.

We should not omit Hugh Farmer's *An inquiry into the nature and design of Christ's temptation*. (1761), which argues against a literal, orthodox Satan in the wilderness temptation of Christ.

See also *A dissertation on the Demoniacs in the Gospels* (London 1775), which mentions two main opinions: that sick people were possessed by literal demons and that they were just sick. The second opinion is thus inferred to exist by this time.

Finally, we can conclude our summary of the eighteenth century with reference to William Ashdowne's *An attempt to shew that the opinion concerning the Devil, or Satan, as a fallen angel, and that he tempts men to sin, hath no real foundation in Scripture*. Canterbury 1791.

10/3/1998

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Two major works on the biblical Satan appeared near the beginning of the nineteenth century. The first is *The Satan of theology and how we came by him* (Boston, Mass.: American Unitarian Association, 1801).

The second is John Simpson's *An attempt to explain the meaning of the words satan [Hebrew], SATAN, SATANAS, DIABOLOS, and of other supposed synonymous expressions, in the Old and New Testament* (Bath 1804).

Simpson flatly denies the literal existence of a personal evil devil.

Simpson uses James 1 to show that sin comes from within a man (p. 17).

The heading for p. 39: Satan in the NT is:

An adversary to piety and virtue, and a tempter to sin; whether a human being, an emblem of temptation, or evils desires.

Heading for p. 51: diabolos in the NT is:

An adversary to Jesus and his religion; either human or symbolical

pp. 77 and ff. uses Barker's *Inquiry* to argue that the angels that sinned in 2 Pet and Jude were human messengers: the spies who spied out the land

Simpson's work is so close in argument to later works by Christadelphians that it is virtually indistinguishable from them.

A very important work was produced in the 1840s by a London homeopath named John Epps. This work was published anonymously and was entitled simply, *The Devil* (London 1842). His arguments are indistinguishable from those of Christadelphians in the 1850s and later.

This work was revised by another writer and republished in Glasgow in 1899 under the title:

The Devil: A biblical exposition of the truth concerning "that old serpent, the Devil and Satan" and a refutation of the beliefs obtaining in the world regarding sin and its source.

This work has also been republished in a photo-reprint by the Detroit Christadelphian Ecclesial Library. I also believe it was reprinted by some Australian Christadelphians in the 1940s. A new reprint by a brother in India should be available soon, if not already.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century several works arguing against a literal devil and demons appeared. Of course, by this time many works on this subject were being published by Christadelphians as well.

In conclusion, we have seen in this summary that there is a long, noble tradition of expositionally (as opposed to rationally) based arguments against the orthodox notion of a literal satan and demons. From this summary we can also see that it is incorrect to label the biblicist denial of the orthodox satan and demons as a "Christadelphian" position, since many expositors who lived long before the Christadelphian movement emerged in the mid-nineteenth century arrived at similar positions. If early Christadelphian writers borrowed their ideas on this subject from earlier sources, as is possible, then the position can be viewed as even less distinctively "Christadelphian."

One interesting feature of this survey is that it shows how at least some expositors independently came to similar conclusions on the non-reality of a personal devil and demons. This phenomenon is something we still encounter today. This speaks volumes: the doctrine is there in the Word to be discovered.

It is also worth noting that most of the expositors mentioned above were unorthodox in other ways as well. They were often antitrinitarians and mortalists who denied hell-fire and other orthodox teachings. In fact, in a very real way, those who arrived at these unorthodox views on the devil and demons were part of those radical reforming movements to which we--Christadelphians and members of the Church of God alike--are heir.

Of course, what we have outlined above is based on a survey of available *printed* works. For much of the early modern period, and even well into the nineteenth century, denials of a literal devil and demons were seen as extremely radical.

This environment almost certainly limited the publication on this subject, and we can only wonder how many other Bible students came to realize that orthodoxy was astray from the Bible on the devil and demons. With the recent availability of the unpublished theological manuscripts of Isaac Newton, however, we can gain a glimpse of what this private world of exegesis was like. Our next posting in this series will include some sample excerpts from Newton that show he, too, came to a very similar or even identical position as the authors cited above.

Appendix B: Demons In the Early Christian Fathers

When the early Christian apologists attempted to convert the heathen from their gods, they did not try to deny that these gods existed. What they attempted to do was offer an explanation for their origin. They attempted to convince the heathen that these were either divine beings who had fallen from grace ('fallen angels'), or the spawn of such fallen angels and mortals.

In their efforts to convince the pagans that their 'gods' were really fallen angels (or their spawn), they forgot or did not realise that the Hebrew Old Testament actually explicitly denies the existence of demons, which it identifies clearly as the gods of the heathen.

In every case, however, it's clear that they knew that the word 'daimonia' referred - **as far as the pagans were concerned** - to gods. What we see here is the attempt by the early Fathers to **redefine** a word which was already used by both Scripture and the pagans **to refer to gods**.

The 'demons' of which modern Christians speak are the result of this change of definition. They are a complete invention of the Early Fathers. Such ideas were foreign to the Old Testament, to the New Testament, to the first century Christians, and the pagans themselves.

The following quotations from the Early Fathers demonstrate this. All emphasis in bold has been added.

'For Trajan, in the ninth year of his reign, being lifted up, after the victory he had gained over the Scythians and Dacians, and many other nations, and thinking that the religious body of the Christians were yet wanting to complete the subjugation of all things to himself, and **threatening them with persecution unless they should agree to worship daemons, as did all other nations, thus compelled all who were living godly lives either to sacrifice [to idols] or die.**

[...]

Ignatius answered, "**Thou art in error when thou callest the daemons of the nations gods.**

For there is but **one God, who made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that are in them;** and **one Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God,** whose kingdom may I enjoy."

Ignatius, 'The Martyrdom of Ignatius', Chapter II, 30–107 AD

Note in passing the confession of Ignatius that there is only **one God**, whom he identifies as **the Father**, who is the **creator of all things**, and that Jesus Christ is **His son**. This extremely early confession of faith is an accurate expression of the simple message of Scripture – that the Father is the only true God, who made all things, and that Jesus Christ is His son (John 17:3, 1 Corinthians 8:6).

The words of Ignatius here are almost a direct quote from Scripture:

1 Corinthians 8:

5 Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth — as in fact there are many gods and many lords —

5 **yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ,** through whom are all things and through whom we exist.'

This confession of Ignatius contradicts completely the trinitarian doctrine which makes the Father, son and Holy Spirit one God, and contradicts also the doctrine that Christ created all things, not the Father.

To find such a confession so early is significant, demonstrating that at this point the gospel message was still held by some Christians in its original form, without the corruption of the later trinitarian dogma.

'The poets and mythologists did not know that it was the angels, and those demons who had been begotten by them... For they called them by whatever name each of the angels had given to himself and to his children.'

Justin Martyr, 'The First Apology', Chapter V, 110–165 AD

'For the truth shall be spoken; **since of old these evil demons, effecting apparitions of themselves... not knowing that these were demons, they called them gods**, and gave to each the name which each of the demons chose for himself...

...we not only deny that they who did such things as these are gods, but assert that they are wicked and impious demons...'

Justin Martyr, 'The First Apology', Chapter V, 110–165 AD

'And neither do we honour with many sacrifices and garlands of flowers such deities as men have formed and set in shrines and called gods; since we see that these are soulless and dead, and have not the form of God (for we do not consider that God has such a form as some say that they imitate to His honour), **but have the names and forms of those wicked demons which have appeared.**

For why need we tell you who already know, into what forms the craftsmen, carving and cutting, casting and hammering, fashion the materials? And often out of vessels of dishonour, by merely changing the form, **and making an image of the requisite shape, they make what they call a god**; which we consider not only senseless, but to be even insulting to God, who, having ineffable glory and form, thus gets His name attached to things that are corruptible, and require constant service.'

Justin Martyr, 'The First Apology', Chapter IX, 110–165 AD

'But I shall repeat the whole Psalm to you, that you may perceive what has been said. It is thus:

'Sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, and bless His name; show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all people. For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised: He is to be feared above all the gods.

For all the gods of the nations are demons but the Lord made the heavens.'

Justin Martyr, 'The First Apology', Chapter LXXIII, 110–165 AD

It is noteworthy that Martyr quotes here from the following Psalm, rendered in the LXX thus:

Psalm 96:

5 For all the gods of the heathen are devils: [demons, Greek 'daimonia'] but the Lord made the heavens.

This is yet another witness to the fact that the **Biblical definition** of demons is the false gods of the heathen.

'These angels, then, who have fallen from heaven, and haunt the air and the earth, and are no longer able to rise to heavenly things, and the souls of the giants, who are the demons who wander about the world, perform similar actions.'

Athenagoras, 'On the Resurrection Of the Dead', 175 AD

'For, as they did not speak to the Gentiles in compliance with their notions, **but told them with boldness that their gods were no gods, but the idols of demons;**

Ireneaus, 'Against Heresies', Chapter XII, Section 6, 180 AD

When Almighty God, to beautify the nature of the world, willed that that earth should be visited by angels, **when they were sent down they despised His laws.**

Such was the beauty of women, that it turned them aside; so that, being contaminated, they could not return to heaven.

Rebels from God, they uttered words against Him. Then the Highest uttered His judgment against them; and from their seed giants are said to have been born.

By them arts were made known in the earth, and they taught the dyeing of wool, and everything which is done; and to them, when they died, men erected images.

But the Almighty, because they were of an evil seed, did not approve that, when dead, they should be brought back from death. Whence wandering they now subvert many bodies, **and it is such as these especially that ye this day worship and pray to as gods.'**

Commodianus, 'The Instructions of Commodianus In Favour of Christian Discipline, Against the Gods of the Heathens', 240 AD

It is significant that the 'fallen angels' explanation did not appear until quite late – around the second half of the 2nd century – demonstrating that it was an invention of the Early Christian Fathers.

Appendix C: Edward Elliott On Demons

The 19th century Baptist minister Edward Elliott (author of 'Horae Apocalypticae', the 2,400 page exposition of Revelation which remains the largest extant commentary on the book), writes intelligently on the subject of demons.

He demonstrates that in both the Old and the New Testaments, the word was used to refer to **pagan gods**, not fallen angels (as the Early Fathers claimed), nor supernatural (but non-Divine), entities of evil (as modern Christians claim).

In the following quotes from Elliott, Hebrew words in Elliott's original text have not been transcribed or transliterated. Their absence has been noted in each case. All emphasis in bold has been added.

'Next as to *daimonion*, *daemon*. This is a word used both in the Septuagint and New Testament, alike in the plural as the singular, in two senses.

In the Septuagint, its **first and clearest signification is as a simple designative of the imaginary heathen gods.**

So in Psalm xcvi. 5; *oi theoi tw n ethnwn daimonia eisin* '**the gods of the heathen are daemons**'; also in Deuteronomy xxxii, 17; *ethusan daimoniois, ka ou thew* 'they sacrificed to **daemons**, and not to **God**:' and again Psalm cvi. 37; *ethusan tas thugateras autwn daimoniois*.

In these passages the Hebrew words corresponding to *daimonia* are [Hebrew word in original text] and [Hebrew word in original text]: the one, according to Gesenius, signifying **vanities**; the other, **lords or rulers**. [2]

So that there is nothing in them to fix on these spirits the character of **devilish, or satanic**; as the word *satanim*, or some indubitable equivalent, would have done. [2]

Nor, though the tone of the two latter statements be deemed objurgatory, does there need any such explanation of the word to account for it.

It is sufficiently explained, on the hypothesis of its simple meaning, by multitudes of parallel Scriptural passages: in the which Israel's sin is depicted as made up of two evils; viz., 1st, forsaking God; 2ndly, forsaking Him (**not for devilish or satanic spirits**, but) for them that **were no gods**, but profitless **idol vanities**. (Deut. xxxii. 21, &c.)

Thus, there being **nothing implied of devilish, or satanic, in the original Hebrew**, so neither, we may reasonably infer, as it seems to me, **in the daimonia of the Septuagint translation.**

It is plain that the Alexandrine translators used the word in its popular meaning, simply to signify **the gods or daemons of heathen mythology**; Alexandria being a place where the Platonic philosophy had necessarily made that meaning most familiar to them.

[1] In 1 Chron xvi, 26 the former of these two Hebrew words also occurs; but in the Septuagint it is rendered *eidwla*, instead of *daimonia*. Buxtorf derives [Hebrew word in original text] from [Hebrew word in original text], *vastavit*. whence the word in Psalm xci. 6, noted in the next page.

[2] Compare too 2 Chron. xi. 15; where it is said of Jeroboam, *katesthsen eautw iereis twn upshlwn, kai tois eidwlois, kai tois mataiois, kai tois mosxoios, a epoisen*, answering to our authorized version, 'priests for the **devils**, (*daemons*,) and for the calves which he had made.' Heb. [Hebrew word in original text] the same word as in Is. xiii. 22, xxxiv. 14. referred to overleaf.'

Elliott, 'Horae Apocalypticæ', volume II, pages 498-9, 5th edition, 1862

'Nor must I forget to remind the reader, that there was one particular notice in the Hebrew Scriptures on the subject of the heathen gods or demons spoken of, which must have appeared to the Seventy to make the word *daimonia* peculiarly appropriate in the translation.

For, just as the *daimonia* of the Greek religion were recognised by the Platonics, agreeably with the doctrine of all their older poets and philosophers, **to be the spirits of dead men, raised to rank of demigods**, - so the Hebrew Scriptures declared that the Baalim, or god., to whom Israel turned aside to worship, **were also dead men deified**: as it is said in Psalm cvi. 28 ; 'They joined themselves to Baal-peor, and ate the **sacrifices of the dead**;' Hebrew [Hebrew word in original text]Septuag. *twn nekrown*. - (Compare Numb. xxv. 2, 3.)

The same fact is also intimated in Isaiah viii. 19, lxxv. 14 in which latter passage the heathen worship is further described as celebrated **at the tomb, of the dead**.

Such is the primary use of the word in the Septuagint, and in passages where heathen worship is the direct subject.'

Elliott, 'Horae Apocalypticæ', volume II, pages 499-500, 5th edition, 1862

'In the New Testament the word *daimonia* is similarly used in this sense.

First, it is used **as a simple designative of the imaginary heathen god..** So in the narrative of St. Paul's visit to Athens, Acts xvii. 18, 22, by the Athenians directly; "He seemeth to be a setter forth of **strange daimonia, or gods**;" *xenwn daimwniwn*: also impliedly by St. Paul ; "I see that ye are *deisidaimonesteroi*, very much given to **worshipping daimonia, demons, heathen gods.**"

His comment on which, as well as on the idol-inscription he had seen, is not to be forgotten; "Him, whom ye ignorantly worship, [God, not the *daemon*,] declare I unto you."

The same, I believe with Dr. Campbell, is the meaning of the term in 1 Cor. x. 20, 21 ; "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice *daimonois*, to *daemons*, and not to God." For by Corinthians, as by Athenians, such would, I conceive, be understood as the meaning of the word.

St. Paul's representation of the case of the heathen, so understood by them, would then **precisely agree with that given in Deut. xxxii. 17, already commented on**; and indeed with **the Apostle's own notice of it at Athens**.

Nor, as to his argument against intercommunion in respect of things offered **to heathen gods**, would it be rendered nugatory by this view of them as mere idol vanities; any more than in the appeal made elsewhere in the epistle, "What communion hath the temple of God with (**not a devil but**) an **idol**?" 2 Cor. vi. 16. There is certainly **no necessity here for the sense of devil**, so as Dr. Maitland would have it, on this ground.

And indeed Dr. C.'s remark seems unanswerable: - that the heathen **could not be said to have sacrificed to devilish satanic spirit**, either abstractedly considered, or in respect of intention; **seeing they had not even a notion of the Devil, or Satan, of Holy Scripture.**'

Elliott, 'Horae Apocalypticæ', volume II, pages 500-1, 5th edition, 1862

Let it be known, however, that Elliott still maintained a belief in 'daimonia' as malignant evil spirits:

'Now then, such being the *twofold* Scripture use of the word *daimonia*, when applied to the objects of Gentile worship, – **it being in its *direct and primary* meaning simply a designative of those objects, the heathens' gods and goddesses**, very much as an **adoption of their own phrase**, and with their own ideas of the term attached to it, - but conveying secondarily, and **by inference** from its use elsewhere, **the idea of the agency of real malignant spirits**, not as worshipped in the system, but as suggesting, acting and deceiving in it...'

Elliott, 'Horae Apocalypticæ', volume II, page 502, 5th edition, 1862

It is sad that such a good expositor should be led to cling to 'orthodox' doctrines by appealing to 'inference', after having clearly refuted the position with sound Bible study.

Appendix D: How Christ Destroyed The Devil

Appendix E – Personification In Jewish Commentary

The following article is taken from the Jewish Encyclopedia. In this article we see the extent to which the 'Word of God' was personified by apocryphal Jewish writings, as well as the rabbinical commentaries, from the pre-Christian era to the Christian era.

The extent to which the 'Word of God' was spoken of as a being **separate to God** in these writings and commentaries, demonstrates that even exaggerated personification of attributes was understood and used by the 1st century Jewish audience. They recognized that the 'Word of God' was not a being separate from God Himself, but they personified the 'Word of God' in such a way as it appeared that they did.

'Memra

"The Word," in the sense of the creative or directive word or speech of God manifesting His power in the world of matter or mind; a term used especially in the Targum as a substitute for "the Lord" when an anthropomorphic expression is to be avoided.

—Biblical Data:

In Scripture "the word of the Lord" commonly denotes the speech addressed to patriarch or prophet (Gen. xv. 1; Num. xii. 6, xxiii. 5; I Sam. iii. 21; Amos v. 1-8); but frequently it denotes also the creative word: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made" (Ps. xxxiii. 6; comp. "For He spake, and it was done"; "He sendeth his word, and melteth them [the ice]"; "Fire and hail; snow, and vapors; stormy wind fulfilling his word"; Ps. xxxiii. 9, cxlvii. 18, cxlviii. 8). In this sense it is said, "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Ps. cxix. 89). **"The Word," heard and announced by the prophet, often became, in the conception of the seer, an efficacious power apart from God, as was the angel or messenger of God:** "The Lord **sent a word into Jacob**, and it hath lighted upon Israel" (Isa. ix. 7 [A. V. 8], lv. 11); "He sent his word, and healed them" (Ps. cvii. 20); and comp. **"his word runneth very swiftly"** (Ps. cxlvii. 15).

Personification of the Word.

—In Apocryphal and Rabbinical Literature:

While in the Book of Jubilees, xii. 22, the word of God is sent through the angel to Abraham, **in other cases it becomes more and more a personified agency:** "By the word of God exist His works" (Ecclus. [Sirach] xlii. 15); "The Holy One, blessed be He, created the world by the 'Ma'amar'" (Mek., Beshallah, 10, with reference to Ps. xxxiii. 6). Quite frequent is the expression, especially in the liturgy, "Thou who hast made the universe with Thy word and ordained man through Thy wisdom to rule over the creatures made by Thee" (Wisdom ix. 1; comp. "Who by Thy words causeth the evenings to bring darkness, who openest the gates of the sky by Thy wisdom"; . . . "who by His speech created the heavens, and by the breath of His mouth all their hosts"; through whose "words all things were created"; see Singer's "Daily Prayer-Book," pp. 96, 290, 292). So also in IV Esdras vi. 38 ("Lord, Thou spakest on the first day of Creation: 'Let there be heaven and earth,' and Thy word hath accomplished the work"). "Thy word, O Lord, healeth all things" (Wisdom xvi. 12); "Thy word preserveth them that put their trust in Thee" (I.c. xvi. 26).

Especially strong is **the personification of the word** in Wisdom xviii. 15: "Thine Almighty Word **leaped down from heaven out of Thy royal throne as a fierce man of war.**"

The Mishnah, with reference to the ten passages in Genesis (ch. i.) beginning with "And God said," speaks of the ten "ma'amarot" (= "speeches") by which the world was created (Abot v. 1; comp. Gen. R. iv. 2: "The upper heavens are held in suspense by the creative Ma'amar"). Out of every speech ["dibbur"] which emanated from God an angel was created (Hag. 14a). "The Word ["dibbur"] called none but Moses" (Lev. R. i. 4, 5). "**The Word ["dibbur"] went forth from the right hand of God and made a circuit around the camp of Israel**" (Cant. R. i. 13).

—In the Targum:

In the Targum the Memra figures constantly as the manifestation of the divine power, **or as God's messenger in place of God Himself**, wherever the predicate is not in conformity with the dignity or the spirituality of the Deity.

Instead of the Scriptural "You have not believed in the Lord," **Targ. Deut. i. 32 has "You have not believed in the word of the Lord"**; instead of "I shall require it [vengeance] from him," **Targ. Deut. xviii. 19 has "My word shall require it."** "The Memra," instead of "the Lord," is "the consuming fire" (Targ. Deut. ix. 3; comp. Targ. Isa. xxx. 27). **The Memra "plagued the people"** (Targ. Yer. to Ex. xxxii. 35). "**The Memra smote him**" (II Sam. vi. 7; comp. Targ. I Kings xviii. 24; Hos. xiii. 14; et al.). Not "God," but "the Memra," is met with in Targ. Ex. xix. 17 (Targ. Yer. "the Shekinah"; comp. Targ. Ex. xxv. 22: "I will order My Memra to be there"). "I will cover thee with My Memra," instead of "My hand" (Targ. Ex. xxxiii. 22). Instead of "My soul," **"My Memra shall reject you"** (Targ. Lev. xxvi. 30; comp. Isa. i. 14, xlii. 1; Jer. vi. 8; Ezek. xxiii. 18). "**The voice of the Memra,**" instead of "God," is heard (Gen. iii. 8; Deut. iv. 33, 36; v. 21; Isa. vi. 8; et al.).

Where Moses says, "I stood between the Lord and you" (Deut. v. 5), the Targum has, "**between the Memra of the Lord and you**"; and the "sign between Me and you" becomes a "**sign between My Memra and you**" (Ex. xxxi. 13, 17; comp. Lev. xxvi. 46; Gen. ix. 12; xvii. 2, 7, 10; Ezek. xx. 12). Instead of God, the Memra comes to Abimelek (Gen. xx. 3), and to Balaam (Num. xxiii. 4). **His Memra aids and accompanies Israel, performing wonders for them** (Targ. Num. xxiii. 21; Deut. i. 30, xxxiii. 3; Targ. Isa. lxiii. 14; Jer. xxxi. 1; Hos. ix. 10 [comp. xi. 3, "the messenger-angel"]). T

The Memra goes before Cyrus (Isa. xlv. 12). The Lord swears by His Memra (Gen. xxi. 23, xxii. 16, xxiv. 3; Ex. xxxii. 13; Num. xiv. 30; Isa. xlv. 23; Ezek. xx. 5; et al.). **It is His Memra that repents** (Targ. Gen. vi. 6, viii. 21; I Sam. xv. 11, 35). **Not His "hand," but His "Memra has laid the foundation of the earth"** (Targ. Isa. xlvi. 13); **for His Memra's or Name's sake does He act** (I.c. xlvi. 11; II Kings xix. 34). Through the Memra God turns to His people (Targ. Lev. xxvi. 90; II Kings xiii. 23), becomes the shield of Abraham (Gen. xv. 1), and is with Moses (Ex. iii. 12; iv. 12, 15) and with Israel (Targ. Yer. to Num. x. 35, 36; Isa. lxiii. 14). It is the Memra, not God Himself, against whom man offends (Ex. xvi. 8; Num. xiv. 5; I Kings viii. 50; II Kings xix. 28; Isa. i. 2, 16; xlv. 3, 20; Hos. v. 7, vi. 7; Targ. Yer. to Lev. v. 21, vi. 2; Deut. v. 11); through His Memra Israel shall be justified (Targ. Isa. xlv. 25); with the Memra Israel stands in communion (Targ. Josh. xxii. 24, 27); **in the Memra man puts his trust** (Targ. Gen. xv. 6; Targ. Yer. to Ex. xiv. 31; Jer. xxxix. 18, xlix. 1).

Kaufman Kohler, article 'Memra', in 'The Jewish Encyclopedia', volume VIII, pages 464-466, 1901-1906

Appendix F: The Satan In Jude

Appendix G: Genesis 3 In Rabbinical Interpretation

The earliest Jewish commentaries on the passage (the Targums, rabbinical paraphrases of Scripture which preceded the Talmud), are noteworthy for their complete lack of reference to any supernatural evil being in Genesis 3.

Take the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan as an example:

'And the serpent was wiser unto evil than all the beasts of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, Is it truth that the Lord God hath said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said to **the serpent**, From the rest of the fruits of the trees of the garden we have power to eat; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden the Lord hath said, You shall not eat of it, nor approach it, lest you die.

In that hour **the serpent spake accusation against his Creator**, and said to the woman, Dying you will not die; for every artificer hateth the son of his art: for it is manifest before the Lord, that in the day that you eat of it, you will be as the great angels, who are wise to know between good and evil.'

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, paraphrase of Genesis 3:1-5, 1st century

It is clear that Rabbi Jonathan Ben Uzziel (the supposed author of this Targum), did not see anything other than the serpent in this passage. He identifies the serpent as one of the 'beasts of the field which the Lord God had made', describes the serpent as speaking 'accusation against his Creator', and three times identifies him as the serpent, nothing more.

There is no suggestion here that Ben Uzziel believed in the involvement of any supernatural evil being, still less a 'fallen angel'. The serpent is a 'beast of the field', one of the animals created by God, who tempts Eve to eat of the fruit.

It is significant that there is one single mention of an angel Ben Uzziel's paraphrase of this passage:

'And the woman beheld Sammael, the angel of death, and was afraid; yet she knew that the tree was good to eat, and that it was medicine for the enlightenment of the eyes, and desirable tree by means of which to understand.'

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, paraphrase of Genesis 3:6, 1st century

This is the only reference the Targum makes to angels in the entire paraphrase of Genesis 3. And yet we find that the reference here is entirely contrary to Buzzard's belief:

- This is not 'Satan', but **the angel of death**
- The angel here is not represented as **tempting Eve** at all
- On the contrary, when Eve sees the angel of death she is **afraid** – the presence of the angel of death is represented as **restraining her from sin**, not tempting her

In this paraphrase, Eve is deterred for a moment when she catches sight of the angel of death, a powerful reminder of the punishment Adam had told her would follow any attempt to touch or eat the fruit. But her desire for the fruit overcomes her fear, and she eats.

This is not the temptation account which is commonly described by 'orthodox' doctrine – here the only angel is the angel of death, whose presence **withholds** Eve from sin (the complete opposite of the 'orthodox' role of satan). There is no account here of Eve being tempted by an angel, whether good or evil.

In the record of the punishment, once more we see the serpent identified as a mere beast, and there is no mention whatever of an evil angel being involved:

'And the Lord God said to the woman, What hast thou done? And the woman said, **The serpent beguiled me with his subtilty, and deceived me with his wickedness**, and I ate. And the Lord God brought the three unto judgment; and He said to the serpent, Because thou hast done this, **cursed art thou of all the cattle, and of all the beasts of the field**: upon thy belly thou shalt go, and thy feet shall be cut off, and thy skin thou shalt cast away once in seven years; and the poison of death shall be in thy mouth, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between the seed of thy son, and the seed of her sons; and it shall be when the sons of the woman keep the commandments of the law, they will be prepared to smite thee upon thy head; but when they forsake the commandments of the law, thou wilt be ready to wound them in their heel. Nevertheless for them there shall be a medicine, but for thee there will be no medicine; and they shall make a remedy for the heel in the days of the King Meshiha.'

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, paraphrase of Genesis 3:6, 1st century

'And it shall be when the sons of the woman consider the law, and perform (its) instructions, they will be prepared to smite thee on thy head to kill thee; and when the sons of the woman forsake the commandment of the law, and perform not (its) instructions, thou wilt be ready to wound them in their heel, and hurt them.

Nevertheless there shall be a medicine for the sons of the woman, **but for thee, serpent**, there shall be no medicine: but it is to be that for these there shall be a remedy for the heel in the days of the king Meshiha.'

Targum Jerusalem, paraphrase of Genesis 3:6, 1st century

Note the following:

- It is **the serpent** to whom Eve attributes her temptation and sin
- The serpent is referred to as one of the **cattle** and one of the **beasts of the field**, demonstrating that the serpent is being treated here simply as a literal animal
- It is **the serpent** who is addressed and punished by God, not a fallen angel or some other supernatural evil being

Turning to Talmud Babylon, we find that the very earliest rabbinical commentaries on Genesis 3 likewise attribute the temptation of Eve entirely to the serpent:

'We see, then, that Adam did not want to give Eve the exact words he received, but he added: "Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die," in order that they should take care even not to touch the tree. At that time **the wicked serpent said to himself**: "As it is impossible for me to make Adam stumble (for he himself received the words from the Lord), I will make Eve stumble." **He sat by her and had a long conversation with her**. He said to her: "As thou sayest that the Holy One, blessed be He, has forbidden thee to touch it, see that I am touching it and will not die, and the same will be with thee." And so he did: he arose and shook the tree with his hands and feet till the fruit fell down.

[...]

The serpent said again to her (Eve): "If thou sayest that the Holy One, blessed be He, forbade to eat it, see I eat of it, and do not die, and thou mayest do the same and thou wilt not die." So Eve said to herself, the injunctions of my master are unfounded.

[...]

What were the thoughts of **the wicked serpent** at that time? "I will slay Adam and marry his wife, and I will be king of the whole world, I will walk erect, and will banquet on the best of the land." Then the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "Thou hast thought to slay Adam and marry his wife, therefore I will put enmity (between thee and the woman); thou hast thought to be king of the world, therefore be thou cursed **among all the cattle**; thou hast thought to walk erect, therefore upon thy belly shalt thou go; thou hast thought to banquet on the best of the land, therefore dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life."

R. Simeon b. Menassia says: "Woe that a great servant was lost to the world, **for if the serpent had not been accursed, every one would have had two serpents in his house**. He would send one to the West, and the other to the East, and they would bring him diamonds, precious stones and pearls, and all the valuable things of the world, and no creature could stand against them, and furthermore they could be used instead of a camel, ass, and mule in the field, garden," etc.

R. Jehudah b. Bathyra says: "Adam was sitting in the Garden of Eden and the angels served him with roasted meat and chilled wine." **When the serpent saw this and observed this honor, he became jealous**.

[...]

The Holy One, blessed be He, said then: "**If I will not punish the serpent**, that would be as if I Myself were destroying the world, because it would be said that the one that I set up as king over the entire world has disobeyed My command and ate of the forbidden fruit"; **therefore immediately He turned to the serpent and cursed him, as it is written**: "And the Lord God said unto **the serpent**," etc. R. Jose said: "**If the serpent** had not been cursed, the world would have been destroyed immediately afterward."

Talmud Babylon, Tractate Aboth, Chapter 1, Rodkinson's 2nd edition, 1918

Amusing as some of these speculations are, it is significant that none of them make any mention of the serpent as a figure for an evil angel. Also interesting is the fact that it is **the serpent** who is said to be motivated by jealousy of Adam (later Christian interpretations would attribute 'Satan's' actions to jealousy). There is no room here for Buzzard's interpretation.

Appendix I – Jude, Enoch, and Apocryphal Writings

In the following article ('Not Giving Heed To Jewish Fables, Part 6', Christadelphian Tidings magazine, April 2001), Brother Steven Cox examines the claims that Jude's account of Michael rebuking Satan is quoted by Jude from apocryphal Jewish sources, and proves it false.

1. Considering the Enoch myth

The introduction of Michael at this point is relevant because, according to the Enoch legend, it was none other than Michael who was the leader in bringing the accusation against the fallen angels to God:

"And then Michael, Uriel, Raphael, and Gabriel looked down from heaven and saw much blood being shed upon the earth, and all lawlessness being wrought upon the earth. And they said one to another: 'The earth made without inhabitant carries the voice of their cryings up to the gates of heaven. And now to you, the holy ones of heaven, the souls of men make their suit, saying, "Bring our cause before the Most High."' And they said to the Lord of the ages: 'Lord of lords, God of gods, King of kings, and God of the ages, the throne of Thy glory standeth unto all the generations of the ages, and Thy name holy and glorious and blessed unto all the ages!

Thou hast made all things, and power over all things hast Thou: and all things are naked and open in Thy sight, and Thou seest all things, and nothing can hide itself from Thee. Thou seest what Azazel hath done, who hath taught all unrighteousness on earth and revealed the eternal secrets which were preserved in heaven, which men were striving to learn: And Shemihazah, to whom Thou hast given authority to bear rule over his associates. And they have gone to the daughters of men upon the earth, and have slept with the women, and have defiled themselves, and revealed to them all kinds of sins. And the women have borne giants, and the whole earth has thereby been filled with blood and unrighteousness" (I En. 9:1-10, translated by R.H. Charles, 1912).

So, according to I Enoch 9:1-10, it was Michael who accused Shemihazah and Azazel, but according to Jude, Michael *"would not dare to bring a slanderous accusation,"* even against the devil himself. In other words, the story of Michael making an accusation against the angels in Enoch is false, and if the story of the accusation is false then so is the story of the angels' sin.

The above explains why Jude chose to substitute *"Michael"* for Peter's more general *"angels,"* but it doesn't explain the mention of the devil and the body of Moses. The devil, Satan, does not appear in Enoch, and cannot be identified with Shemihazah and Azazel, the leaders of the 200 rebel angels. Therefore there must be another reference to Michael and the devil elsewhere. The remaining two possible sources are:

2 - The Assumption of Moses

3 - Zechariah 3'

2. The Assumption of Moses

Many of today's popular commentaries, such as M. Green (Tyndale 1968), N. Hillyer (Paternoster 1992), J.N.D. Kelly (Blacks 1969), and D. Lucas & C. Green (IVP 1995), all take it for granted that Jude is quoting from a Jewish source called *The Assumption of Moses* which describes how Michael had a dispute with the devil over the burial of Moses.'

Michael the undertaker of the righteous

The one strong piece of evidence in favour of this outside *The Assumption of Moses* itself is the fact that Michael is credited in Jewish myth as being the angel who buries the body and escorts the soul to paradise. This Michael does with Adam, Abel and Eve in *Life of Adam* (Vita Adae) and again with Abraham in *Testament of Abraham*.

Both these traditions are old enough to have been well-known in Jude's day, but in any case it is only a logical extension from the superstition that the angels transported the dead to be with Abraham (as Luke 16) to the belief that, when someone as important as Adam, Abraham or Moses died, an angel as important as Michael would be needed to perform the burial and collect the soul. (Philo adds to Deuteronomy 34:6 that Moses was buried by celestial beings [Vita Mosis 2:3].)

Targum *Pseudo-Jonathan* on the same passage records that the angels buried Moses four miles away from where he died. In a Falasha legend the three gravediggers are Michael, Gabriel and Zagzagel [Ginzberg, Vol. 6, p.952 cites Faitlovich, Mota Musa 9-20].)

What would the devil want with a body?

Undermining this possible source, however, is the fact that the genuine Jewish sources above are all missing the key element of Jude 9 -- a dispute. In none of these Jewish sources does the devil ever make an attempt to steal the bodies of Adam, Abraham or Moses. In fact, only in *Life of Adam* is there even mention of the devil and once Adam is dead the devil's interest in him is finished.

There are a few cases of angel disputes in Jewish myth. In the Dead Sea Scrolls two angels dispute over Moses' father Amran (Q4 Amran). In a first-century legend it is Satan, not God as in Exodus 4:24, who tries to kill Moses but is prevented by an angel (*Jubilees* 48:5). In later Rabbinic legend, Michael brought a ram but Satan wanted Isaac to be sacrificed (*Yal. Rub.*43:3). But in each of these examples Amran, Moses and Isaac are alive, not dead, and Satan is trying to kill them, not gain their bodies. There are also half a dozen fragments of Moses legends in the Dead Sea Scrolls, but again none of them shows any link to Jude 9.

Early Christian evidence

Suspiciously, the dispute between Michael and the devil featured in *The Assumption of Moses* survives only in Christian quotations, and there is a small mountain of Christian evidence on the subject. Most of this consists of a long list of churchmen, including the anonymous "*scholiast on Jude*," Clement of Alexandria, Didymus the Blind, Origen, Gelasius and Severus of Antioch, all of whom note *The Assumption of Moses* or "*an apocryphal book*" in connection with Jude 9, but are unable to quote from it except by hearsay.'

'There are also some Christian sources which have preserved legends fitting Jude 9, such as the Byzantine *Palaea Historica*, the *Slavonic Life of Moses*, Pseudo-Oecumenius and Catenae, but all of these contain the phrase "*the Lord rebuke you*," which is obviously drawn from Jude. Therefore they are suspect as being after Jude, not before it, and are likely false attempts to explain Jude. They also all lack the references to Deuteronomy 34 that would be found in a genuine Jewish midrash on the burial of Moses.

'The Testament of Moses

In order to give the Christian evidence some credibility, the commentaries assure us that *Assumption of Moses* is the "*lost ending*" of a surviving Jewish text – *Testament of Moses*. But anyone taking the trouble to read this text (Charlesworth Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Vol.1 p.919-934), will find the claim very unlikely indeed. *Testament of Moses* is a fairly sober fiction concerning Moses' farewell to Joshua. It contains no reference to either the devil or angels, and tacking the Christian fragments on to the end of this book just makes their non-Jewish origins all the more obvious.

In conclusion, the *Assumption of Moses* can be consigned to the trash can. This is not being done because of squeamishness about myths, but because the evidence is contradictory, hearsay, and verbally dependent on Jude 9. It all "*fits*" too well to be convincing (a bit like the so-called Josephus Discourse on Hades mentioned in connection with Luke 16 in the second article of this series).

None of the Christian evidence has support, or even parallels, in any Jewish material. Comparing the evidence for *Assumption of Moses* with the very strong evidence for Enoch, one can't help thinking that apologists for the devil have been a little too eager to jump on a flimsy bandwagon.

§ While one much-cited scholar, (Bauckham 1983), has argued that the Greek vocabulary in *Palaea Historica* suggests that it is independent of Jude 9 and must be drawn from a Jewish source, the differences are no more than one would expect from a Byzantine fiction based on Jude 9.

For example, "*the Lord rebuke you*" in Jude is *epitimesai soi Kurios*, while *Palaea Historicae* has *epitima se Kurios, diabole*. The difference is nothing more than a minor grammatical change driven by the sentence structure. And so on for other examples. This is hardly proof that a genuine Jewish source underlies the Christian evidence.'

Appendix J – Bible Teaching On Demons Different To Jewish Fables

Despite the wealth of commentary on demons from extra-Biblical Jewish sources, and the existence of an entire demonology within Judaism at the time of Christ, the Biblical descriptions of demons bear no resemblance whatever to their extra-Biblical counterparts.

Indeed, it has been noted by a number of scholars that the Biblical description of demons **radically different** to the descriptions found in Jewish literature (both at the time of Christ and later), whilst the Jewish commentaries on the subject of demons grew ever more embellished and bizarre as the centuries passed.

Clearly the Biblical descriptions of demons were not simply lifted complete from the existing superstitions. They represent existing superstitions re-presented in a manner which challenges their veracity.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia (a standard conservative Christian reference work), has the following extremely noteworthy comments to make on this subject:

'There is no direct evidence that the narrative of the Fall (Ge 3:1-19) has any connection with demonology (see HDB, I, 590 note), and the suggestion of Whitehouse that the mention of satyrs and night-monsters of current mythology with such creatures as jackals, etc., implies "that demons were held to reside more or less in all these animal denizens of the ruined solitude" **is clearly fanciful.**

It is almost startling to find that all that can possibly be affirmed of demonology in the Old Testament **is confined to a small group of passages which are either legal or poetical and which all furnish examples of the inhibiting power of high religious conceptions upon the minds of a naturally superstitious and imaginative people.**

Even if we add all the passages in which a real existence seems to be granted to heathen deities (e. g. Nu 21:29; Isa 19:1, etc.) and interpret them in the extreme sense, **we are still compelled to affirm that evidence is lacking to prove the influence of polytheism in the formation of the Biblical doctrine of demons.**

[...]

The most marked and significant fact of New Testament demonology **is that it provides no materials for a discussion of the nature and characteristics of demons.** Whitehouse says (HDB, I, 593) that New Testament demonology **"is in all its broad characteristics the demonology of the contemporary Judaism stripped of its cruder and exaggerated features."**

How much short of the whole truth this statement comes will appear later, but as it stands it defines the specific direction of inquiry into the New Testament treatment of demons; namely, **to explain its freedom from the crude and exaggerated features of popular demonism.** The presence among New Testament writers of an influence curbing curiosity and restraining the imagination is of all things the most important for us to discover and emphasize. In four of its most vital features the New Testament attitude on this subject **differs from all popular conceptions:**

- (a) in the absence **of all imaginative details** concerning demons;
- (b) **in the emphasis placed upon the moral character of demons and their connection with the ethical disorders of the human race;**
- (c) in the absence **of confidence in magical methods** of any kind in dealing with demons;

(d) **in its intense restrictions of the sphere of demoniacal operations.**

[...]

(a) **In the New Testament we are told practically nothing about the origin, nature, characteristics or habits of demons.** In a highly figurative passage (#Mt 12:43) our Lord speaks of demons as passing through "waterless places," and in the story of the Gadarene demoniac (Lu 8:31) the "abyss" is mentioned as the place of their ultimate detention.

The method of their control over human beings is represented in two contrasted ways (compare Mr 1:23 ff; Lu 4:33 ff), indicating that there was no fixed mode of regarding it. With these three scant items our direct information ceases. We are compelled to infer from the effects given in the limited number of specific instances narrated. And it is worthy of more than passing mention that **no theoretical discussion of demons occurs.** The center of interest in the Gospels is the person of Jesus, the sufferers and the cures. Interest in the demons as such is absent.

Certain passages seem to indicate that the demons were able to speak (see Mr 1:24,26,34; Lu 4:41, etc.), **but comparing these statements with others (compare Mr 1:23; Lu 8:28) it is seen that no distinction is drawn between the cries of the tormented in the paroxysms of their complaint and the cries attributed to the demons themselves.**

In other particulars the representation is consistent. The demons belong to the unseen world, they are incapable of manifestation except in the disorders which they cause—there are no materializations, no grotesque narratives of appearances and disappearances, no morbid dealing with repulsive details, no license of speculation in the narratives.

[...]

In contrast with this reticence is not merely the demonology of primitive people, but also that of the non-canonical Jewish books. In the Book of Enoch demons are said to be fallen angels, while Josephus holds that they are the spirits of the wicked dead. In the rabbinical writings speculation has run riot in discussing the origin, nature and habits of demons. They are represented as the offspring of Adam and Eve in conjunction with male and female spirits, as being themselves sexed and capable of reproduction as well as performing all other physical functions. Details are given of their numbers, haunts and habits, of times and places where they are especially dangerous, and of ways and methods of breaking their power (see EXORCISM). Full sweep is also given to the imagination in descriptive narratives, oftentimes of the most morbid and unwholesome character, of their doings among men.

After reading some of these narratives one can agree with Edersheim when he says, **"Greater contrast could scarcely be conceived than between what we read in the New Testament and the views and practices mentioned in Rabbinic writings"** (LTJM, II, 776).

[...]

Conclusions:

A summary of the entire material leads to the conclusion that, in the New Testament cases of demon-possession, **we have a specific type of disturbance, physical or mental**, distinguishable not so much by its symptoms which were often of the most general character, as by its accompaniments. The aura, so to say, which surrounded the patient, served to distinguish his symptoms and to point out the special cause to which his suffering was attributed.

Another unique feature of New Testament demonology should be emphasized. While this group of disorders is attributed to demons, **the victims are treated as sick folk and are healed.**'

Louis Matthews Sweet, article 'Demon; Demonic; Demonology', in 'The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia', 1915

Edersheim notes:

'As the remedy against blindness has been adduced **to point the contrast to the Savior's mode of treatment**, it may be mentioned that quite a number of remedies are suggested for the cure of a bloody flux - of which perhaps wine in which Persian onions, or anise and saffron, or other plants have been boiled, seem the most rational - the medicament being, however, in each case accompanied by this formula: 'Be cured of thy flux!'

[...]

It has been a weary and unpleasant task to record such abject superstitions, **mostly the outcome of contact with Parsee or other heathen elements**. Brief though our sketch has been, we have felt as if it should have been even more curtailed.

But it seemed necessary to furnish these unwelcome details **in order to remove the possibility of comparing what is reported in the New Testament about the 'demonised' and 'demons' with Jewish notions on such subjects.**

Greater contrast could scarcely be conceived than between what we read in the New Testament and the views and practices mentioned in Rabbinic writings - and if this, as it is hoped, has been firmly established, even the ungrateful labor bestowed on collecting these unsavory notices will have been sufficiently repaid.'

Alfred Edersheim, appendix 16 of 'Life And Times of Jesus The Messiah', 1883

Again, Edersheim:

'The difference between the Satanology of the Rabbis and of the New Testament is, if possible, even more marked than that in their Angelology. In general we note that, with the exception of the word Satan, **none of the names given to the great enemy in the New Testament occurs in Rabbinic writing.** More important still, the latter contain no mention of a Kingdom of Satan. In other words, the power of the evil is not contrasted with that of good, nor Satan with God. The devil is presented rather as the enemy of man, than of God and of good. This marks a fundamental difference.

The New Testament sets before us two opposing kingdoms, or principles, which exercise absolute sway over man. Christ is 'the Stronger one' who overcometh 'the strong man armed,' and taken from him not only his spoils, but his armour (St. Luke xi. 21, 22). It is a moral contest in which Satan is vanquished, and the liberation of his subjects is the

consequence of his own subdual.

This implies the deliverance of man from the power of the enemy, not only externally but internally, and substitution of a new principle of spiritual life for the old one. It introduces a moral element, both as the ground and as the result of the contest.

From this point of view the difference between the New Testament and Rabbinism cannot be too much emphasised, and it is no exaggeration to say that this alone - the question here being one of principle not of details - would mark the doctrine of Christ as fundamentally divergent from, and incomparably superior to, that of Rabbinism. 'Whence hath this Man this wisdom?' Assuredly, it may be answered, not from His contemporaries.

Since Rabbinism viewed the 'great enemy' only as the envious and malicious opponent of man, the spiritual element was entirely eliminated.¹³ **Instead of the personified principle of Evil, to which there is response in us, and of which all have some experience, we have only a clumsy and - to speak plainly - often a stupid hater. This holds equally true in regard to the threefold aspect under which Rabbinism presents the devil: as Satan (also called Sammael); as the Yetser haRa, or evil impulse personified; and as the Angel of Death - in other words, as the Accuser, Tempter, and Punisher.**

13. An analogous remark would apply to Jewish teaching about the good angels, who are rather Jewish elves than the high spiritual beings of the Bible.

[..]

Critical ingenuity may attempt to find a symbolic meaning in many of the details of the Jewish legend of the Fall, although, to use moderate language, they seem equally profane and repulsive. But this will surely be admitted by all, that the Rabbinic account of the fall of the Angels, as connected with fall of man, **equally contrasts with the reverent reticence of the Old Testament narrative and the sublime teaching of the New Testament about sin and evil.**

[...]

Satan, or Sammael, is introduced as the seducer of man in all the great events of Israel's history. With varying legendary additions the story of Satan's attempts to prevent the obedience of Abraham and the sacrifice of Isaac is told in Sanh. 89 b, Ber. R. 56, and Tanchuma, p. 30 a and b. Yet there is nothing even astute, only a coarse realism, about the description of the clumsy attempts of Satan to turn Abraham from, or to hinder him in, his purpose; to influence Isaac; or to frighten Sarah.

Nor are the other personages in the legend more successfully sketched. There is a want of all higher conception in the references to the Almighty, a painful amount of downright untruthfulness about Abraham, lamentable boastfulness and petty spite about Isaac, while the Sarah of the Jewish legend is rather a weak old Eastern woman than the mother in Israel.

To hold perversions of the Old Testament by the side of the New Testament conception of the motives of lives of the heroes of old, or the doctrinal inferences and teaching of the Rabbis by those of Christ and His Apostles, were to compare darkness with light.

[...]

Where such views of Satan could even find temporary expression, **superstitious fears may have been excited; but the thought of moral evil and of a moral combat with it could never have found lodgment.**

[...]

III. Evil Spirits (Shedim, Ruchin, Rucoth, Lilin).

Here also, as throughout, we mark the presence of Parsee elements of superstition. In general, these spirits resemble the gnomes, hobgoblins, elves, and sprites of our fairy tales. They are cunning and malicious, and contact with them is dangerous; but they can scarcely be described as absolutely evil. Indeed, they often prove kind and useful; and may at all times be rendered innocuous, and even made serviceable.

[...]

3. Character and habits of the Shedim. **As many of the Angels, so many of the Shedim, are only personifications. Thus, as diseases were often ascribed to their agency, there were Shedim of certain diseases, as of asthma, croup, canine rabies, madness, stomachic diseases, &c.** Again, there were local Shedim, as of Samaria, Tiberias, &c. On the other hand, Shedim might be employed in the magic cure of diseases (Shabb. 67 a). In fact, to conjure up and make use of demons was considered lawful although dangerous (Sanh. 101 a), while a little knowledge of the subject would enable a person to avoid any danger from them.

Thus, although Chamath, the demon of oil, brings eruptions on the face, yet the danger is avoided if the oil is used out of the hollow of the hand, and not out of a vessel. Similarly, there are formulas by which the power of the demons can be counteracted. In these formulas, where they are not Biblical verses, the names of the demons are inserted.

[...]

Other and kindred questions, such as those of amulets, &c., will be treated under demoniac possessions. But may we not here once more and confidently appeal to impartial students **whether, in view of this sketch of Jewish Angelology and Satanology, the contention can be sustained that the teaching of Christ on this subject has been derived from Jewish sources?**

Alfred Edersheim, appendix 16 of 'Life And Times of Jesus The Messiah', 1883

Appendix K – Demons As False Gods

Other gods	Idols	Demons
<p>Work of men's hands:</p> <p>2 Kings 19:18 Isaiah 37:18-19; 44:9-10 Jeremiah 16:20</p>	<p>Work of men's hands:</p> <p>Isaiah 37:18-19; 44:9-10 Jeremiah 1:16; 2:25-28 Revelation 9:20</p>	<p>Work of men's hands:</p> <p>2 Chronicles 11:15 Revelation 9:20</p>
<p>Worshipped:</p> <p>Exodus 20:23 Deuteronomy 4:28; 32:16-17 Isaiah 37:18-19 Jeremiah 16:20</p>	<p>Worshipped as gods:</p> <p>Exodus 20:23 Deuteronomy 4:28; 32:16 Psalm 96:5, 106:36 Isaiah 37:18-19; 44:9-10 Jeremiah 16:20 Revelation 9:20</p>	<p>Are gods:</p> <p>Leviticus 17:7 Deuteronomy 32:17 2 Chronicles 11:15 Psalm 96:6 (LXX); 106:37 Acts 17:18 1 Corinthians 10:19-20 Revelation 9:20</p>
<p>There is only one God – no other gods exist:</p> <p>2 Kings 19:18, 2 Chronicles 13:9, Isaiah 37:19; 44:9-10; 45:5-7, 20-22, Jeremiah 2:11; 5:7; 16:20, John 17:3, 1 Corinthians 8:7-8; 10:19-20, Galatians 4:8, Ephesians 4:4-6, 1 Timothy 2:5</p>		

The following is an appendix from Brother John Allfree's work 'Demons and Demon Possession' (pages 15-16). It addresses specifically the assertion raised by Buzzard that the gods of the heathen **do in fact literally exist**, though they are not to be considered 'true gods'.

'Do Pagan Deities Have Real Personal Existence?'

Correspondence with readers of the first edition, especially with members of the Restoration Fellowship, demonstrated a need for a more detailed consideration of this question than could be conveniently inserted in a footnote.

Whilst accepting that demons in the Old Testament (and on occasion in the New Testament) are pagan deities it has been argued by correspondents that these false gods had real existence and are the same wicked spirits as were responsible for demon possession in the Gospels.

Amazingly, in spite of the Apostle's very emphatic declaration in 1 Corinthians 8:4 (RV) that "there is no God but one", his statement concerning the pagan world that "there are gods many, and lords many" (1 Corinthians 8:5 RV) is taken as proof that these gods really do exist. Such scriptures as, "Beside me there is no God" (Isaiah 45:5 RV) are said to be teaching merely that Yahweh is the *true* God.

The following is submitted as showing without doubt that pagan demon-deities have no real existence.

(a) Those who believe that the demon-deities had real existence maintain that the gods which the pagans worshipped were *represented* by their idols—the gods themselves were demons with real spirit existence. But this does not agree with such scriptures as: "There ye shall serve gods, *the works of men's hands*, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell" (Deuteronomy 4:28). "Ye shall not *make* with me gods of silver, neither shall ye *make* unto you gods of gold ..." etc. (Exodus 20:23).

In this connection we are told that Israel made a golden calf and said, "*This* is thy god, O Israel" (Exodus 32:4 RVm). In great detail the prophet Isaiah argues the folly of heathenism. From part of a tree a man makes a fire and from another part of the same tree "He *maketh a god*, and worshippeth it... and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for *thou art my god*" (44:15,17).

The Bible teaching regarding the restoration of Israel as the Kingdom of God with Jesus as King is dealt with in "The Kingdom of God on Earth", and "Israel: God's People, God's Land", obtainable from the C.A.L.S., PO Box 316, Kings Norton, Birmingham B30 3EA.

From these scriptures it is clear that what they made was the god. Clearly, any powers it possessed could have existed solely in the minds of the worshippers. This accords with Paul's description of apostasy from the Truth in Romans chapter 1— "[They] became vain in their imaginations ... and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts and creeping things ... and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (verses 21-25 RV)—there is no indication that in reality they were worshipping demon-spirit beings.

(b) Time and again the fact that these gods did not exist in any real sense is proclaimed from scripture: "The gods of the people are idols [Hebrew, *ELIL* = things of nought]" (1 Chronicles 16:26). "Thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods" (Jeremiah 5:7). "Shall a man make unto himself gods, which yet are no gods" (Jeremiah 16:20 RV).

Isaiah is particularly emphatic: "Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me" (43:10). The context of this is YAHWEH versus PAGAN GODS and has no bearing on the purpose of the Deity to bring "many sons to glory" of whom Jesus, the "mighty God" of Isaiah 9:6, is the firstborn. The theme of this section of Isaiah is that the gods of the nations have no real existence—not, as is argued by the Resoration Fellowship and others, that they exist but are not the true God. So, "the workman melteth a graven image... he that is so impoverished ... chooseth a tree ... he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image..." etc. (40:19,20).

To the gods thus *manufactured* Yahweh challenges, "Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods ... Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought" (41:23,24). "Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God, I know not any" (44:8). "I am God, and there is none else" (45:22).

Of course, those who worshipped these pagan gods believed in their real spiritual existence, and the phenomenon of "possession" that took place at their frenzied worship (explained in the main text of these notes) gave credence to this belief. But as far as the Bible is concerned the gods did not exist in any real sense, just as today we deny the real existence of, say, the Voodoo deities, in spite of the "possession" phenomena that can be observed.

Similarly, we would deny the existence of the orthodox trinity (actually imported from paganism) in spite of so called "possession" by the third person of the trinity which is seen at pentecostal and other "charismatic" meetings.

The teaching of the Bible is so definite—the gods of the pagans have no real existence. Once it is admitted that in both Old Testament and New Testament pagan deities are referred to as demons, then it must be conceded that these demons do not have any real existence. It then becomes necessary to find an alternative explanation for the phenomenon of demon possession which is more or less confined to the synoptic Gospels. Such an explanation is set out in this booklet.'

Appendix L: The Slanderers In Peter And Jude

The following is taken from the pamphlet 'Slandering Celestial Beings', by Brother Steven Cox:

'2 Peter 2:1-3 "Stories they have made up"

Where should we look for an explanation of Peter and Jude's mentions of "angels that sinned"? Rule No.1 of good Bible study is 'always read the context'. And yet most Christian readers of the 'angels that sinned' passages read only the angels-flood-Sodom sequence in 2 Peter 2:4-8 (or the Sinai-angels-Sodom sequence in Jude 5-7) without noticing what precedes or follows. What precedes is clear:

"In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up" (2 Peter 2:3)

This alerts us that what follows is related to these stories which are being spread by false teachers 'among the church' just as they had once been spread by false teachers "among the people" of Israel. (This is confirmed in Jude's parallel example of apostasy at Sinai (Jude 4-5).

2 Peter 2:4 "If . . ."

Peter refers here to Enoch 10:4 where the archangel Raphael chains the angels that sinned in Tartarus. But note that Peter is using a hypothetical "if": "if the angels sinned... then...". It does not mean that Peter is presenting Enoch 10:4 as historical fact, only that he is presenting a logical argument. His conclusion (the "then..." part) comes in 2:9.

2 Peter 2:5-8 Old Testament examples

Some will say that because Peter follows his reference to the chaining of the angels (Enoch 10:4) with the Old Testament examples of Noah (Genesis 7-9), and Sodom (Genesis 19) that Peter is granting Enoch the same authority as Genesis. But why should this be the case? Wouldn't it be more natural to think that Peter simply does not consider that an example taken from the uninspired Book of Enoch is sufficient to prove his point?

We could also ask why, if Peter considered that the story of the fallen angels was true, he did not quote Genesis 6:2 rather than Enoch 10:4? Although people who believe in fallen angels often assert that the 'sons of God' in Genesis 6 are angels it is striking that Peter and Jude will quote from Genesis on Noah and Sodom but never, **without exception**, quote Genesis as the source of the 'angels that sinned' story. Because, of course, Genesis knows no such story.

Likewise in the parallel Jude 7 "punishment of eternal fire" Jude does not refer to the Genesis sons of God, (who were destroyed with water not fire), but instead the fallen stars who are chained "in a great fire that was burning and flaming" (1 Enoch 21:7). This is another sign that the 200 angels are mythical.

2 Peter 2:9 - Nothing to fear from angels

Peter now comes to his conclusion: if God has already reserved the angels "to the day of judgment" (as in Enoch 10:4) then there is nothing to fear from "angels that sinned".

"if God did not spare angels when they sinned...if this is so then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment (2 Peter 2:4 . . . 9)"

Peter's argument was picked up by the Canadian Christadelphian author Ron Abel:

"Why bother to chain these angels if, as one Jehovah's Witnesses publication contends, 'they can still exercise dangerous power over men and women'?"
(Wrested Scriptures, p.180)

This was the best answer to the fallen angels myth in Peter's time, and it is still the best answer today. If the part of Book of Enoch about the angels marrying is true, then why not the part about the angels having been chained in Tartarus? If they are chained in Tartarus, then (as Peter argues in 2:9) logically these angels aren't a threat to anyone are they?

Of course people may claim that there 'must have been' other falls, and other angels who 'got away'. But apart from the lack of any evidence for this (and the inconsistency that God would chain 200 angels and then let another band of rebel angels escape!) such a claim contradicts Peter's fundamental point which is that, even if Enoch were true, that book itself shows that "God knows how to deliver the godly from temptation" (2:9).

This is one of the most clear arguments against the existence of fallen angels in the whole Bible.

2 Peter 2:10-12 Slandering Celestial Beings

Peter's main argument against Enoch is found in the sections immediately following the mentions of the "angels that sinned". This often passes unnoticed by those seeking in 2 Peter and Jude support for their own belief in fallen angels:

- (A) 2 Peter 2:10 the false teachers slander celestial beings. Jude 8
- (B) 2 Peter 2:11 but angels, although much greater (than the teachers), do not dare bring an accusation against such (celestial) beings. Jude 9
- (C) 2 Peter 2:12 so the false teachers slander things they do not understand (or beings they do not know). Jude 10

2 Peter 2:10 Dominion and Glories

*"This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and **despise authority**. Bold and arrogant these men (false teachers) are not afraid to slander **celestial beings**."* (2 Peter 2:10)

"Authority" (literally 'dominion') is elsewhere in the New Testament always associated with heavenly 'principalities and powers' (Ephesians 1:21, Colossians 1:16)

"Celestial beings" literally is 'glories' plural and is used in this sense only by Peter and Jude in the New Testament. In 1 Peter 1:11 Peter speaks of the future glories of Christ, but in the Old Testament the term describes the glories surrounding God:

*"Who is like you among the gods O Lord? Who is like you, glorified in holiness, marvellous in **glories** (plural), doing wonders?" (Exodus 15:11)*

It is also used in this sense in 1st Century Jewish literature:

*"Moses said.. I am not able to bear the visible appearance of your form but I ask you that I may behold the **glories** (plural) that are around you". (Philo, On the Special Laws 1:45)*

*"And the Lord blessed Levi; the Angel of the Presence blessed me; the powers of **glories** (plural) blessed Simeon, the heaven blessed Reuben; the earth blessed Issachar..". (Testament of Judah 25:2)*

That 'dominion' and 'glories' mean more than just human government and dignities is confirmed by Peter's next verse:

Humans slandering celestial beings

These verses, parallel in 2 Peter and Jude, are key to explanation of both letters. Both writers state (twice) that the false teachers were slandering celestial beings, namely angels. "Slander" implies two conclusions; (a) that they were accusing the glories of wrongdoing, (b) that their accusations were unfounded. Surprisingly the obvious impact of the verses, that the false teachers allegations were lies, that the angels did not sin, and that the whole story of angels that sinned is slander, is usually completely ignored.

*"In the very same way these dreamers (the false teachers) pollute their own bodies, **reject authority and slander celestial beings.**" (Jude 8)*

If the allegations (specifically of angels having sex with women) were "slanderous accusations" then it can hardly be used as proof that the accusations were true. If the 'slander' consisted of allegations that angels rebelled, descended to earth and fathered demons, then Peter and Jude's evidence must be taken to mean that no such thing happened, and that it is not acceptable to believe or teach such things in the church.

2 Peter 2:11 Angels themselves do not slander

Peter and Jude then repeat the charge, that not only are the charges human slander against heavenly beings, but that real angels would never make such an accusation.

"Yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord." (2 Peter 2:11)

In Jude 9 the same is said of Michael, yet according to Enoch Michael was the leader in bringing the accusation against the fallen angels to God:

"And then Michael, Uriel, Raphael, and Gabriel looked down from heaven and saw much blood being shed upon the earth, and all lawlessness being wrought upon the earth. And they said one to another: 'The earth made without inhabitant cries the voice of their crying up to the gates of heaven.

And now to you, the holy ones of heaven, the souls of men make their suit, saying, "Bring our cause before the Most High." And they said to the Lord of the ages: 'Lord of lords, God of gods, King of kings, and God of the ages, the throne of Thy glory stands unto all the generations of the ages, and Thy name holy and glorious and blessed unto all the ages!

Thou hast made all things, and power over all things hast Thou: and all things are naked and open in Thy sight, and Thou seest all things, and nothing can hide itself from Thee. Thou seest what Azazel hath done, who hath taught all unrighteousness on earth and revealed the eternal secrets which were preserved in heaven, which men were striving to learn: And Shemihazah, to whom Thou hast given authority to bear rule over his associates.

And they have gone to the daughters of men upon the earth, and have slept with the women, and have defiled themselves, and revealed to them all kinds of sins. And the women have born giants, and the whole earth has thereby been filled with blood and unrighteousness. (Enoch 9:1-10)

Thus according to Enoch it was Michael and three other archangels, who accused Shemihazah and Azazel, but according to Peter angels (specifically Michael, Uriel, Raphael and Gabriel) "do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord", and Jude adds that Michael would not accuse the devil himself. In other words the story of Michael making an accusation against the angels in Enoch 9 is false - and if the story of the accusation is false then so is the story of the angels' sin.

(A sobering thought here is that if the teachings of Book of Enoch, and the false teachers, were considered as "blaspheming glories" then what does that mean for modern churches which have similar teaching on fallen angels?).

2 Peter 2:12 - 14 Consequences

Peter repeats again that the teachers 'blaspheme' or slander in matters (the matter of angels) about which they understand nothing. This is paralleled in Jude with the additional comment "these are the very things that destroy them". This is a serious comment. We might not see a direct relationship between incorrect *ideas on angels and the kind of behaviour described by Peter and Jude*, but Jude does: these things, their talking about things they do not understand, "are the very things that destroy them" (Jude 10).

2 Peter 2:15-16 Rebukes from the Bible

Peter now takes the example of Balaam (from Numbers 22-24). Jude expands this to include Cain (Genesis 4) and Korah (Numbers 16) in Jude 11.

2 Peter 2:17 Rebukes taken from Enoch

It is at this point that Peter returns to Enoch with three references to the false teachers as "dry springs" (Hosea 13:15 but connected to Enoch 48:1,96:6), "waterless clouds" (Enoch 18:5,41:4-5,100:11-12) and "reserved for blackest darkness" (Enoch 21:3).

These rebukes are expanded in much greater detail by Jude 12-13 taking language used in Enoch about false shepherds of Israel: "trees without fruit" (Enoch 80:3), "plucked up" (Enoch 83:4), "raging waves" (Enoch 101:3-5?). And finally "wandering stars for whom blackest darkness has been reserved for ever" (Enoch 21:3). In this Jude uses language about 'angels that sinned' and applies it to the false teachers. This is a powerful way of repeating his charge that "these are the very things that destroy them" (Jude 10).

It might seem strange to us that Peter and Jude describe those who taught from the Book of Enoch in language drawn from the same false book, but this is blaspheming, the above three verses tend to be overlooked by those who have already decided that angels can marry, and can sin. This seems ridiculous but there are those who will read the above verses as follows:

"In the resurrection the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die, for they are like those angels which do not marry, (but unlike those angels which do marry)."

"Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation, (excepting those angels who are not ministering spirits, and are sent to obstruct those who will inherit salvation)?"

That may seem humorous. It is not intended to be, not at all. This is a serious subject. Remember what Jude said about slandering celestial beings: "these are the very things that destroy them" (Jude 10).

How much better it would be to simply accept the overall teaching of the Bible, found in 288 references to angels, that angels really are all, meaning all without exception, ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation:

"The angel of the Lord encamps around those that fear him" (Psalm 34:7)

Appendix M: New Testament Demon Distribution Patterns

The following is a paper by Brother Steve Snobelen:

THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF DEMON-POSSESSION: MAPPING DEMON BELIEF IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Abstract

Demon-possession in the Gospel accounts is not a geographically-uniform phenomenon. Specific cases of demon-possession in the synoptics occur in regional clusters, always in northern environs such as Galilee, rather than occurring throughout every location through which Christ travelled and performed healings.

Conversely, not a single case of demon-possession in Judea or Jerusalem is recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. Moreover, the Synoptics include several quantitative summaries of demon-possession that imply that demon-possession was a common and even characteristic phenomenon in Galilee and the northern regions. No comparable statements for Judean areas are found in the Gospel records.

Finally, certain ostensibly physical pathological conditions, such as blindness, deafness and muteness, which are sometimes attributed to demon-possession in the north, are never so characterized in the south, even though descriptions of these conditions do occur in texts commenting on the Judean ministry.

The evidence: a geographical survey of demon possession in the synoptics

Jesus was raised in Nazareth, a town in the Roman province of Galilee. Aside from the intense period leading up to his crucifixion, the synoptic Gospel accounts show that Christ spent most of his three years' ministry in the north, particularly, but not exclusively, in Galilee. The records themselves attest to a great number of cases where Christ healed demoniacs, although only a few of the cases are commented upon in detail. The following will summarize the data.

First, we find evidence from particular statements in the synoptics that demon possession was common in Galilee and the north. A few examples will reveal the general tenor of these statements. In the opening chapter of Mark we are told that Jesus "cast out many demons" (*daimonia polla*) and that "he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons" (1:34 and 39; all quotations from the RSV). Mark also recounts that the twelve disciples both healed many who were sick and "cast out many demons" (*daimonia polla*; 6:13). Matthew records the same occasion as that described in Mark 1, and mentions the locals in Capernaum bringing "many who were possessed with demons" (*daimonizomenous pollous*; 8:16; cf. Luke 4:41).

On another occasion in Luke 7:21, we find Jesus, while near Nain, curing "many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits." These examples, with their deliberate emphasis on the great number of demoniacs, demonstrate that whatever the situation elsewhere, demon possession was common in Galilee—even endemic.

As with these quantitative summaries, when we turn to examine specific examples, we see that all such cases of demon possession occur in the north, and usually in Galilee. For example, the first healing of a demoniac recorded in Mark occurs in the synagogue of Capernaum (1:21-8). Mark also mentions the case of a demon-possessed girl from Syrian Phoenicia in 7:24-30, another northern region. Mary Magdalene, from whom seven demons were cast out, was from Magdala, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

The most celebrated case of demon possession in the New Testament—that of the Gadarene demoniac—occurred in the north as well, beside the Sea of Galilee (Matthew; Mark; Luke).

When we turn to the fourth Gospel account, we discover that John does not record a single case of demon possession, although he does mention people with sickness. Many scholars have noticed this and have offered suggestions as to why this should be so.

One theory is that John came from a Sadducean background and, since Sadducees did not believe in demons, he refrains from mentioning them. Aside from the fact that there is no strong evidence for this theory (and in any case, the Book of Revelation tells us that John certainly believed in angels), a better explanation of this apparent anomaly lies in the fact that John, unlike the synoptics, concentrates almost entirely on the south.

The disproportionate ratio of coverage between north and south in the synoptics is reversed in John. With John we have almost an entire Gospel account devoted to the Judean ministry in which demons could appear. Yet, they do not. This is further evidence for the clustering of demons in the north.

In order to confirm the northern bias of demon-possession during the ministry of Jesus, I analysed every reference to demons and evil spirits in the Gospel accounts, paying close attention to the location of each occurrence. The results of this survey are displayed in the accompanying table and map.

To strengthen the above-outlined pattern even further, we can take an additional step and note that there is a difference between the way some examples of physical ailments are described in the north when compared with the south. Illnesses mentioned in the south are always treated as purely organic conditions, while in the north they are sometimes treated as afflictions caused by demons. Thus we see some cases of blindness, deafness and muteness in the north attributed to demons. In Mark 9:14-29 we are provided with an account of a boy possessed by a “dumb and deaf spirit” (9:25; cf. 9:17).

Moreover, Matthew 9:32-3 records an incident in which Jesus healed a mute man, who was thought to be possessed by a demon. Furthermore, another man afflicted by a demon is described in this same Gospel account as “blind and dumb” (12:22; cf. Luke 11:14). Cases of the blindness in the south are depicted quite differently. After his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus healed people in the Temple who are simply described as being blind (Matthew 21:14). The man born blind in John 9 did not find himself in his condition because of demonic affliction.

As for blind Bartimaeus from Jericho—he is just “blind Bartimaeus,” not “blind, demon possessed Bartimaeus” (Mark 10:46-52). All this, even though his actions are similar to that of a demoniac: he cries out and attributes Biblical titles to Jesus (Mark 10:47-48). This demonstrates that even demon-like behaviour in the south was not readily attributed to evil spirits.

Why is it that such physical problems are sometimes attributed to demonic agency in the north, but never so in the south? What was so special about Judea that drove away demons? These examples also demonstrate that it is wrong to assume that all cases of demon possession relate to mental illness.

To sum up, the results reveal that every single case of demon-possession in the Gospel accounts occurs in the north, outside Judea; there are no examples of demon-possession in Judea or Jerusalem recorded in any of the four Gospel accounts.

What is more, there are several occasions in the Synoptic treatments of the Galilean ministry where we are told that Jesus healed many people possessed by demons. Again, this is in stark contrast to the lack of even a single reference to demon possession in the Judean ministry.

Possible objections considered

Next, we must test this pattern for flaws or alternative explanations. If the pattern is real and significant, it must be able to stand up to rigorous objections. Could it be that there are no accounts of demon possession in Judea because no miracles of healing are recorded there at all? No, there are miracles of healing recorded in both Judea and Jerusalem. Could this pattern be the simple result of the fact that the synoptics spend so much time focusing on the Galilean and northern ministry? No, because, once again, miracles of healing are recorded in Judea.

The accounts of the southern ministry in the synoptics, while not as extensive as the accounts in the north, are by no means insignificant: there was ample opportunity to record cases of demon-possession, if they occurred in that region.

Also, when we turn to John, we see that the majority of his Gospel account deals with the Judean ministry and there is not a single reference to a healing of a demon-possessed person (the only references to demons in John occur when Christ is accused of having a demon — which seems to have been a standard form of slander and abuse among Jews). Thus the pattern holds up in the Gospel accounts.

It is only when we leave the Gospel accounts that we find two possible exceptions to this general pattern. First, in Acts 5:16 we read that those with unclean spirits were brought from the towns “around” or “in the vicinity of Jerusalem” to be healed by the Apostles.

The Greek is not overly precise, so it is hard to say from how far away these demon-possessed people came, but the language does show that wherever they were from, they were not from Jerusalem itself—the main centre for Jewish religious teaching in Judea. But it is worth noting that this is the only example in the book of Acts of demon-possession in a predominantly Jewish region. Based on the pattern of the Gospel accounts one would expect examples around every corner. Yet this is not the case.

The other apparent exception comes in Acts 10:38 where Peter, giving an account of Christ’s ministry, noted that Christ healed all who were oppressed of the devil (ho diabolos). First, it must be stressed that Peter does not specifically use the word demon (daimonion), and it is possible that this distinction is not without import.

Second, while it is true that Peter mentions that the ministry of Christ took him through first Galilee and then Judea (10:37), he does not specifically mention where the healings of those oppressed by the devil took place. His is a general statement about Christ’s ministry as a whole, and since most of Christ’s ministry took place in Galilee, the greatest force of the statement about demons (assuming the reference is to demons) would naturally apply to that region.

As a Galilean himself, the cases of demon possession would have left a strong impression on him, and it is thus not surprising that he should mention them in such a summary of Christ’s ministry. Also, the summary statement of healing is no less true if Peter knew that those oppressed by the devil lived in Galilee. There is no necessary contradiction in stating that Christ worked in Galilee and Judea on the one hand, and that he healed all oppressed by the devil (or demons) in the north.

Furthermore, it is a long established principle of Biblical exegesis that unclear passages should be interpreted by those more easily understood. In this case, as we have seen, the wealth of testimony from the Gospel accounts confirms that every example of demon possession during the ministry of Jesus occurred in the north. Nevertheless, even if, for the sake of argument, Peter's summary statement is meant to include otherwise unrecorded cases of demon-possession in the south, such information would in no way counter what would still be an overwhelming trend.

Christ's words to his disciples in Mark 16:17 offer another possible exception: "In my name shall they cast out demons." Once again, however, we are dealing with a general statement with no specific geographical cues. Nevertheless, the statement is clearly prophetic, so we can confirm just how it was fulfilled by consulting the rest of the New Testament. Here we see that the Apostles (including, later, Paul) did in fact encounter cases of demon-possession after Christ's ascension.

But, the point is that with the possible exception of Acts 5:16, these cases occurred in Gentile dominated regions outside Judea. Absolutely no cases occurred in Jerusalem, and no individual cases are highlighted from Judea.

With regard to any unrecorded cases, we may expect that the pattern revealed during the ministry of Jesus would continue in the years immediately afterward his ascension. But the force of the impressive pattern of clear examples from the Gospel accounts cannot be taken away by the three above possible exceptions. If belief in demons was much weaker in Judea than in Galilee, we would still expect to see some belief in demons in the south, just as we should not be surprised if some in the north did not believe in demons. The "demons" may not have travelled, but people and ideas certainly did.

The point is: the general pattern holds up even if there are some limited exceptions. What is more, even if we are only dealing with a general pattern of demonic activity during the ministry of Christ (i.e. including some possible unrecorded Judean cases as well), it is still true that none of the examples explicitly listed in the Gospel accounts occurred in the south. There must be a reason for this inbuilt into the inspired Word. And even if we are only witnessing a general pattern, this fact alone gives us a compelling reason to seek for explanations.

Given this very powerful evidence, therefore, we must ask: what is going on? Why do we find so many demons in the north and so few (if any) in the south? Why are organic ailments in the north sometimes attributed to demonic activity, but never in the south? For the person who believes in the inspiration of Scripture these examples can be neither accidental nor without purpose. Something is being taught by this pattern.

There are two general explanations: the first is historically-based, the second comes straight from the Bible. We will begin with the historical explanation, and outline the biblical one at the conclusion of this article.

Belief in demons in Galilee and Judea

Based on his studies of the relevant Talmudic literature, Cambridge rabbinical scholar Herbert Loewe concluded that during the first century AD rabbis in Galilee and Mesopotamia generally believed in the literal existence of demons, while those in Judea did not.

Loewe first of all includes a commendable appeal for the need to exercise great care and sensitivity with respect to local and chronological distinctions:

'...references must be examined to see whether they are the utterances of individuals or genuine examples of popular belief; and distinctions must be drawn between local and general beliefs, between Semitic and non-Semitic, and between Jewish beliefs and those borrowed by Jews from their neighbours in European countries.

A requirement more vital than any of the foregoing, is the exercise of careful analysis in selecting Talmudic material. It is absolutely necessary to assign each authority to its proper local and chronological category; that is to say, evidence which applies to Babylon is inadmissible for Palestine; that which is found to occur in Galilee cannot be used to prove arguments for Judaea; and the same care must be exercised in respect of chronology.'

Loewe next summarizes the results of his findings:

'In investigating Talmudic evidence as to spirits, the reader will notice, at the outset, different attitudes adopted by the Rabbis in dealing with this question. In some cases the reality of demons seems to be taken for granted absolutely; in others it seems, with no less certainty, to be denied. Stories occur in which both these attitudes may be traced simultaneously. The reason for this may be found if the nationality of the respective teachers be sought.

It has already been stated that Galilee was the centre of Palestinian demonology, and it will almost invariably be found that Galilaean teachers accepted, while Judaeian teachers rejected, the existence of spirits. The numerous instances which the NT furnishes would have been impossible save in Galilee; there is a strong similarity between these and those adduced by Galilaean Rabbis. The same must be said of those Rabbis who came from Mesopotamia. And they were brought up in surroundings in which superstition was rife, their teaching was tinged by a belief in spirits, and in comparison with them the clarity of Palestinian teaching stands out in bold relief.' [2]

[2] Loewe, "Demons and Spirits (Jewish)," *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (Edinburgh, 1911), 4:612-13 (emphasis as in original). See also H.A. Kelly, *Towards the death of Satan: the growth and decline of Christian demonology* (London, 1968), p. 68

Loewe then goes on to cite supporting evidence from the Talmud to show that superstitious belief in demons was a characteristic feature of rabbinical teaching in Galilee, while a sceptical tradition prevailed among rabbis in Judaea. We have just seen this regional historical phenomenon played out in vivid fashion against the New Testament documents.

There is additional confirmation of this trend in the teachings of the Sadducees, who occupy the extreme sceptical end of the spirit-belief continuum. We know from history and the Bible that the Sadducees (who were associated with the Temple and Jerusalem) believed in neither demons nor angels (Luke). The effect of Sadducean teaching would have reinforced the general trend in the south.

This background information opens a window on demonic activity during the ministry of Christ. Belief in demons was taught and fostered in the north by the local rabbis; conversely, those in the south were encouraged by a sceptical outlook by the Judaeen teachers. Since belief in demons was rampant in the north, many people attributed sickness to demons.

Because demon belief was much less common in the south (the above-cited scholarly source implies that it was virtually nonexistent among Judaeen rabbis), then the demons did not exist either. Does all of this sound familiar? People who believe in ghosts, see ghosts. Those who don't, don't.

Those who put their faith in televangelist healings are "healed" by televangelists. Those who do not, are not. Enthusiasts who believe in UFOs sometimes see UFOs. Those who do not are much more inclined to attribute unidentified flying objects to more mundane entities like airplanes, unusual cloud formations and swamp gas. We can even extend this phenomenon across time. In eras when belief in ghosts, witches and devils was rife, sightings of all three were much more common. Yet no-one reported seeing a flying saucer, as such, until well into the twentieth century when alien life and technology had entered the popular consciousness.

Now we can extend this pattern even further to our current topic. Those who believe in demons, experience or attribute demon possession. Those who don't, don't. Strange, anomalous happenings once attributed to ghosts, fairies and demons are now attributed to UFOs, the laws of chance and medical causes. People often see and experience what they believe—regardless of whether these things exist in reality.

This also explains why one can talk to many evangelicals who have "seen" or "experienced" the devil, but one will be hard pressed to find a Christadelphian who has either seen the devil of orthodoxy or been demon-possessed. Why does the devil and his demons afflict those who believe in them and leave those alone who do not?

This pattern strongly infers that putative cases of demon-possession in the Gospel and other New Testament accounts are positively related to local belief. In other words, where local folk belief encouraged or allowed for belief in demons, cases of possession exist—often in large groupings. Where such belief was either not taught or even actively discouraged, cases of demon-possession are severely reduced or non-existent.

The implications of this unmistakable pattern in the New Testament have profound ramifications for the ontological status and reality of personal, malevolent demons in the New Testament period. This striking pattern cannot be adequately explained by recourse to the argument that demons are fallen angels ruled by satan (spirit beings not restricted by geography), and intent on attacking Christ and his ministry. If demons were literal spirit beings under the direction of satan, the distribution of demonic activity should be uniform, or even close to uniform, in all locales visited by Christ. That the distribution instead shows marked clustering, provides powerful Biblical testimony that confirms the non-existence of demons as personal spirit beings under the control of satan.

Demons in Acts, the Epistles and the Book of Revelation

This analysis can be extended further to the rest of the accounts of demons in the New Testament. We see in Acts 8:7 healings of unclean spirits in Samaria, which is to the north of Judea and thus fits the general pattern. Next, we see a reference to a woman with a spirit of python in the Gentile area (Philippi; Acts 16:16-21). This reflects a Gentile belief and not a Jewish one, so this example also fits the pattern: the people of a region are afflicted by "beings" that are believed to be real in their particular area.

Additionally, we are told of further activity of evil spirits in Acts 19:12-18, but once again, although Jews were involved, these examples occur in the Gentile region of Ephesus.

To summarize the rest of the New Testament, for Paul demons are worthless idols that have no existence in reality (1 Corinthians 8:4, 10:19-21, 12:2); he does not touch on the phenomenon of demon-possession in any of his writings.

When writing to the mainly Gentile Corinthians, he does not record a gift of casting out demons. Here it is probably relevant to note that Paul was not a Galilean Jew, and thus may have had more contact with Gentile demons than Jewish evil spirits. Demons in Revelation are idols and seducing spirits (Revelation 9:20, 16:14): there is no talk of possession. It is only when we turn to James that we see what appears to be a general reference to demon-possession (James 2:19).

That this should be so is hardly surprising: James, the brother of the Lord, was raised in Galilee and was familiar with demon-possession. He was also writing to Jews and Jewish Christians (cf. James 1:1 and 2:2, which uses the term synagogue), who would be familiar with demon-possession, even if they had not witnessed it in their regions. Paul, in writing to a predominantly Gentile audience, does not feel he needs to mention demon-possession at all.

James also wrote at a very early date, perhaps as early as the late 40s AD, when his memories of such events in Christ's Galilean ministry were still fresh (I think James' allusion is to the Gadarene demoniac—other Galilean case). James' references, then, are likely reminiscences of Galilean demon-possession. Thus, the general geographical patterns holds up for the entire New Testament.

This evidence presents a serious obstacle to the believer in fallen angels. Not only does this pattern imply accommodation (or something like it), but it cannot be assimilated easily into the other main alternative: literal, personal, malevolent demons. If this is what the Bible is speaking about, why the regionalization? If Satan was trying to attack Christ in his ministry, why were the demons so ineffective and virtually absent in the south? If the demons of the Gospel records really were fallen angels acting under diabolical orders, why were they not powerful enough to swarm into the southern regions and continue to afflict hapless victims and further attempt to impede the ministry of Christ?

If they had power to enter into a person and bring on that person debilitating illnesses, could they not travel to all regions? Was Christ's power more effective in the south? Yet he spent more time in the north. Some might argue that the demonic onslaught started with the beginning of Christ's ministry and that part-way through his ministry Christ gained control over them, thus when he went down to Judea late in his ministry, they had already been driven away.

But this will not do, because although references to demons and evil spirits are much reduced in the book of Acts, there are examples nonetheless, after this supposed victory. Once again, the geographical distribution of demon-possession cannot be explained by literal demons.'

The Temptation In The Wilderness

In their eagerness to adapt the account of Christ's temptation in the wilderness to the 'orthodox' understanding of Satan, the overwhelming number of Christians fail completely to explain the actual purpose of this event. When pressed as to why God would immediately drive His son into the wilderness, there to be allegedly tempted to sin by his worst enemy, they have no answer.

Is it likely that God - who tempts no man - would subject His own son to 40 days of temptation by an evil being intent on enticing him to transgress? What would the purpose of this be?

The true purpose of the temptation is found in the obvious symmetry between the temptation of Israel in the wilderness of Sin, and the temptation of Christ in the wilderness of Judea. The parallels between the two records reveal that the purpose of the temptation of Christ was not to give a supernatural being the opportunity to try and incite him to sin, but rather to test the son of God in order to see if he would acknowledge his Divine sonship by obedience to his Father.

The very fact that these parallels go completely unnoticed by 'orthodox' Christians demonstrates the fact that they do not come to this passage in order to discern what it means and what it is intended to teach, they come to it because they wish to adapt it to a preconceived idea, in order to support a doctrine they already hold. This is symptomatic of unsound exegetical technique.

The oft repeated challenge (unexplained by 'orthodox' readings of the passage), is 'If you are the son of God'. As a challenge addressed by a 'fallen angel' to the son of God, what sense does this make? Does it make sense if understood as a challenge to prove Jesus' Divine sonship? It is hardly likely that 'Satan' would want Christ to prove that he is the son of God, and yet this is the challenge made explicit in two of the temptations, and implicit in the third.

It may be argued that 'Satan' is simply using this challenge in order to entice Jesus to sin, but this makes even less sense. If this were the case, then the only real temptation here is 'Satan' daring Jesus to prove his Divine sonship by means of a gratuitous display of his powers. But is it really likely that Christ would be remotely tempted by the urge to 'show off' in front of his worst enemy?

Furthermore, if this is the true reading of the temptation, then this inevitably reduces all three temptations into one - the temptation to boast of oneself. If this is the case, then why are Christ's answers not more relevant? Where is the stinging rebuke of the sin of pride, the stern repudiation of the sin of self-worship? Christ does not address these temptations as repeated enticements to display his powers wantonly before his enemy in a spirit of personal aggrandisement, he treats each individual challenge as a specific temptation leading to a sin distinct from the others.

If, on the other hand, the temptations are simply presented by 'Satan' as enticements to sin, then the problems for the 'orthodox' reading only increase.

Firstly, what would be the point of the challenge 'If you are the son of God'? How would this make the suggested action any more tempting, and what would it mean in this context?

Secondly, acknowledgement of the fact that Christ was tempted by these suggestions is acknowledgement of the fact that they could just as easily have occurred to Christ without the necessity of a third party. The temptations could easily have come from within himself.

The interpretation of this narrative as a representation of Christ's inner struggle with his own temptations accounts very naturally for these issues, whereas the 'temptation by supernatural evil being' interpretation not only fails to do this, but ignores all contextual indicators that this is the case.

At the outset, it must be recognized that the gospel accounts of the temptation are all highly compressed - none of them describe the temptation with a detailed narrative. The actual temptations recorded in all three accounts are represented as typical of the experience, not as exhaustively descriptive.

The three recorded temptations represent the kind of trial which Christ faced, the character of the 40 days of temptation, they do not describe the entire process in a literal day by day narrative of events in chronological order.

There is clear evidence that each of the temptation accounts is compressed. The account in Mark is obviously the most compressed:

Mark 1:

11 And a voice came from heaven: "You are my one dear Son; in you I take great delight."

12 The Spirit immediately drove him into the wilderness.

13 He was in the wilderness forty days, enduring temptations from Satan. He was with wild animals, and angels were ministering to his needs.

This account is noteworthy for containing no reference to the three specific temptations which are found in Matthew and Luke. Yet the very fact that Mark's account is so brief requires us to examine it with close attention, for if Mark is compressing the wilderness temptation to this extent, then whatever he does record must be of considerable importance.

An examination of Mark's account demonstrates that he wishes the reader to take particular note of the following:

* The temptation was immediately subsequent to the baptism of Christ, at which God had declared publicly that Christ was His son (verse 11)

* The wilderness temptation was initiated by God (verse 12)

* Christ was tempted by Satan for the entire 40 days that he was in the wilderness (verses 12-13)

* Christ was with the wild beasts (verse 13)

* Christ was ministered to by angels subsequent to the entire temptation experience (verse 13)

All of these details are of particular importance to Mark, and they therefore comprise his entire description of the temptation in the wilderness. From the attention given them by Mark, we know that they must be important to our understanding of the temptation in the wilderness.

If this is the case, then we will find that the other two accounts repeat, expand, or at least allude to these details, and that all of these details are necessary for our understanding of the other accounts.

Confirmation of the proposal that Mark's account is a template containing the essential details of the wilderness temptation is found in the agreement of the other two accounts with Mark's:

* The temptation was immediately subsequent to the baptism of Christ, at which God had declared publicly that Christ was His son (Mark 1:11 with Matthew 3:17 and Luke 3:22)

* The wilderness temptation was initiated by God (Mark 1:12 with Matthew 4:1 and Luke 4:1)

* Christ was tempted by Satan for the entire 40 days that he was in the wilderness (Mark 1:12-

13 with Luke 4:1, and inferred from Matthew 4:1-2)

* Christ was with the wild beasts (Mark 1:13, no direct reference in Matthew or Luke)

* Christ was ministered to by angels subsequent to the entire temptation experience (Mark 1:13 with Matthew 4:11, no direct reference in Luke)

The extent to which the other two accounts refer directly to the key details of Mark's, demonstrates the importance of these details to the entire temptation narrative. The absence from Matthew and Luke of a direct reference to the 'wild beasts' in Mark's account may appear to prove that this is a unessential comment, but this is counterintuitive to the entire structure and content of Mark's description, highly compressed and containing only key details.

It does not make sense that Mark's account (deliberately brief), would include an irrelevant detail, which has no relation to the other two accounts. In fact, it will be seen that this statement of Mark's regarding the wild beasts is deeply significant, and a detail essential to an understanding of the entire temptation process.

Furthermore, it must be noted that both the temptation records of Matthew and Luke are also compressed. From Luke's account we know that Christ was being tempted for the entire forty days that he was in the wilderness, and yet both Matthew and Luke record only three specific temptations, at the end of the forty days.

One of the main objections to the proposal that Christ's temptations in the wilderness were not presented to him by another individual, but arose from within himself, is that there appears to be no evidence in the gospel accounts of the temptation that Christ's temptations arose from within himself.

It is argued that to sustain this position, it is necessary to provide:

* Evidence that it was possible for these temptations to arise within Christ

* Evidence that these temptations were prompted by a source other than an individual external to Christ

The first of these challenges is simple to prove. If it is acknowledged that these were genuine temptations, then it must be acknowledged that Christ found each and every one of them to be tempting. Unless each of them genuinely appealed to him in some way, they were not temptations. Once it has been acknowledged that he did in fact find each of them to be genuinely tempting, it must be acknowledged that they could have occurred to him independent of the prompting of another individual.

This does not prove, of course, that they did occur to him independent of the prompting of another individual, which is why the second challenge remains. Is there any evidence in the temptation records that these temptations were prompted by a source other than an individual external to Christ, and arose from within his own heart as a result?

A close examination of all three temptation records reveals that there is indeed clear evidence that each of the temptations arose not from an individual external to Christ, confronting him with seemingly random temptations, but that they arose from within Christ himself, as a result of his own personal observations and reflections on his circumstances.

It is significant that the first temptation is presented explicitly as arising in this manner:

Matthew 4:

1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

2 After he fasted forty days and forty nights **he was famished.**

3 The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, **command these stones to become bread.**"

Luke 4:

1 Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness,

2 where for forty days he endured temptations from the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were completed, **he was famished.**

3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, **command this stone to become bread.**"

Allegedly 'orthodox' interpretations of this passage overlook completely the significance of what is said here. Both Matthew and Luke inform us that Christ fasted for forty days and nights (an obvious parallel with both Moses' forty day fast at Sinai, and Elijah's 40 day fast), and that when his fast came to an end, he hungered.

That Christ must have been sustained by God during this fast is clear from the fact that he could not have lived otherwise, and the parallel with Elijah strengthens this conclusion.

That Christ is specifically said to have hungered after this fast (rather than during it), is further corroboration. The record wishes us to understand that Christ felt hunger as a result of his fast only after the fast had concluded.

Immediately after telling us that Christ was hungry as a result of his fast, the record tells us that he was tempted. The natural reading is that the fast was the cause of his hunger, and the hunger was the prompter of the temptation.

This conclusion is strengthened formidably when it is realised that Christ was the only one who would have known that he was hungry. Even if he had been accompanied for the last 40 days by another individual, those 40 days of fasting could have done nothing but give the overwhelming impression that he was not hungry, or at the very least that hunger was something he could resist indefinitely.

No one but Christ himself would have known that he was hungry, and that this was the time at which he would be vulnerable to this specific temptation.

The record in Matthew could be read as saying that the devil only approached Christ subsequent to his fast:

Matthew 4:

2 After he fasted forty days and forty nights **he was famished.**

3 **The tempter came** and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread."

But the record in Luke makes it clear that the tempter was with Christ for the whole time:

Luke 4:

2 where for forty days he endured temptations from the devil. **He ate nothing during those days, and when they were completed, he was famished.**

3 **The devil said** to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."

This strengthens the case that this temptation was from within, because it proves that the tempter was with Christ for the whole of the forty days, and was tempting him throughout the entire time.

The order of the temptations differs in Matthew and Luke, but this is no problem when it is recognised that both accounts are only summary descriptions of the entire temptation process, and intended to convey to us the sense and character of the wilderness temptation.

Following the account of Matthew, we find that the next temptation was introduced with the challenge 'If you are the son of God', as the previous temptation had been:

Matthew 4:

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city, had him stand on the highest point of the temple,

6 and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you' and 'with their hands they will lift you up, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

Luke 4:

9 Then the devil brought him to Jerusalem, had him stand on the highest point of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here,

10 for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,'

11 and 'with their hands they will lift you up, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

This temptation is unique in appealing explicitly to Scripture (Psalm 91:11-12), in order to justify an action by identifying a legitimate expectation of the son of God - that his Father would protect him from harm, as He had promised.

For what reason did Christ reject this suggestion? Why is it described as a temptation? The answer is found in the fact that the passage from Psalm 91 which is quoted here is being misrepresented.

These are the words used in the temptation:

Matthew 4:

6 and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written, '**He will** command his angels concerning you' and 'with their hands **they will** lift you up, so that **you will not** strike your foot against a stone.'"

Luke 4:

10 for it is written, '**He will** command his angels concerning you, to protect you,'

11 and 'with their hands **they will** lift you up, so that **you will not** strike your foot against a stone.'"

The highlighted words are significant - the temptation is to suppose that the Messiah would be granted unconditional protection from harm.

Reading the text in its full context in Psalm 91 reveals that the words of the temptation are a misquotation:

Psalm 91:

9 **For you have taken refuge in the Lord**, my shelter, the Sovereign One.

10 No harm will overtake you; no illness will come near your home.

11 For he will order his angels to protect you in all you do.

12 They will lift you up in their hands, so you will not slip and fall on a stone.

Verse 9 proves that the protection provided by the Father is not unconditional, as the temptation implies ('He will command his angels ... they will lift you up... that you will not strike your foot against a stone'), but is the response of the Father to the trusting obedience of the son ('For you

have taken refuge in the Lord, my shelter, the Sovereign One').

To test the love of the Father would be to abandon this trust.

Having identified the passage which is being used as the temptation, and having seen how it is being misapplied through selective quoting, the next issue is how this psalm came to Christ's mind.

Those who argue that the temptations were introduced by a supernatural evil being would say that 'Satan' chose this passage specifically in order to tempt Christ to sin.

But why this passage? Once again we see that a fundamental weakness in the 'orthodox' case is that it provides no explanation as to the reasons behind each temptation. Why were these temptations chosen? The 'orthodox' interpretation provides no answer, seemingly content to view these as random temptations selected arbitrarily by 'Satan'.

What evidence is there then that this passage, with its attendant temptation, would have come to the mind of Christ independent of the prompting of another individual? It is at this point that we return to an apparently insignificant comment by Mark:

Mark 1:

13 He was in the wilderness forty days, enduring temptations from Satan. **He was with wild animals**, and angels were ministering to his needs.

We noted previously that it would be unlikely for Mark to record a detail with no particular significance, given the extent to which his account is compressed to obviously essential details. But we find no obvious parallel with this detail in either Matthew or Luke. Neither account makes specific mention of Christ being with the wild beasts, and yet Mark is careful to inform us that he was. What is Mark's purpose in providing this detail?

We could infer the following:

- * That Mark is emphasising the fact that Christ was alone in the wilderness, that his only company was the wild beasts (this would, however, require the assumption that the satan was not an individual, other than Christ himself)

- * That the comment is illustrative of the character of the satan - Mark is drawing a parallel between the bestial nature of the satan, and the bestial nature of the wild animals with whom Christ found himself ('enduring temptations **from Satan...** with **the wild animals**'), without actually identifying the satan specifically

- * That Mark is providing an important detail of fact which is connected with, and helps to explain, a detail in both of the other two accounts

The first of these inferences is reasonable, but requires an assumption to which those who believe in a 'supernatural evil being' tempter would object - the assumption that there was no other individual with Christ during his temptation (whether supernatural evil being, angel, or human).

At the very least, however, the text is saying that Christ was isolated from others, and had to face his temptations alone, without human or angelic support (note that Matthew supports this by informing us that the angels did not minister to him until after his temptations were ended). This is a conclusion with which even those who believe in a 'supernatural evil being' tempter could agree.

The second of these inferences is a natural reading (both the wilderness and the presence of wild beasts are used in the Old Testament to speak of isolation and the absence of human habitation,

Isaiah 13:21-22; 34:14, Jeremiah 50:39, Ezekiel 31:13).

Whilst it tells us nothing of the specific identity of the satan, it contributes to our understanding of the purpose of the temptation in the wilderness, which was clearly to determine whether or not Christ would prove himself to be the seed of the woman or the seed of the serpent (to which would he listen - the words of the serpent, or the word of God?), and that he would have to face this challenge alone.

The third reading is possible, but requires that a natural connection be found between Mark's reference to 'wild beasts', and a significant detail in both of the other two accounts. Is there such a connection?

There is indisputable evidence within the temptation records of both Matthew and Luke that Christ's mind was occupied with a passage of Scripture which was plausibly prompted by the company of the wild beasts.

Such a passage would have to be explicitly relevant to Christ's circumstances (in the wilderness with the wild beasts), and to the temptation being presented (a challenge to take advantage of the rights of the Messiah, the son of God).

The following details of correspondence would have to be present:

- * The passage must be demonstrably Messianic
- * The passage must refer to the wild beasts
- * The passage must place the Messiah in the company of the wild beasts
- * The passage must be directly relevant to the temptation to take advantage of the Divine protection granted to the son of God by his Father

Which passage was this, and what evidence is there that Christ was thinking of it?

One passage which appears relevant is the following:

Ezekiel 34:

25 "I will make a covenant of peace with them and will rid the land of wild beasts, so that they can live securely in the wilderness and even sleep in the woods.

This verse is in a chapter of Ezekiel which describes the blessings of the Messianic age. The chapter begins with a condemnation of the false shepherds who have led Israel astray and left the flock to the mercy of the wild beasts, before announcing the promise of the true shepherd the Messiah, in whose reign the flock of Israel would be delivered from the wild beasts, and would dwell safely in the wilderness.

It is possible that this passage came to the mind of Christ, but it is unlikely to have been the passage prompted by the presence of the wild beasts.

In this chapter the wild beasts are driven from the land by the Messiah (rather than keeping company with him), it is Israel who is dwelling in the wilderness (not the Messiah), and they are able to do so specifically because the wild beasts are no longer there (as opposed to Mark's account, in which they are explicitly mentioned as inhabiting the wilderness together with Christ).

When parallels between this detail of Mark's and passages in the Old Testament are sought, it soon becomes apparent that the context in Mark is so specific, and the number of details requiring correspondence so great, that there is in fact only one passage in the Old Testament to

the Mark which can possibly be alluding:

Psalm 91:

9 For you have taken refuge in the Lord, my shelter, the Sovereign One.

10 No harm will overtake you; no illness will come near your home.

11 For he will order his angels to protect you in all you do.

12 They will lift you up in their hands, so you will not slip and fall on a stone.

13 You will subdue a lion and a snake; you will trample underfoot a young lion and a serpent.

This passage corresponds with every detail of Mark's reference to the wild beasts:

* It is demonstrably Messianic

* It refers specifically to the wild beasts

* It places the Messiah in the company of the wild beasts

* It is directly relevant to the temptation to take advantage of the Divine protection granted to the son of God by his Father

It cannot be disputed that this passage was in the mind of Christ at the moment of the temptation to cast himself down from the temple, because it is the very passage which is quoted directly (from verses 11-12), by the satan.

This then was the source of the temptation - 40 days of Divine protection from the wild beasts, leading the mind of Christ to this passage, and tempting him to cast himself down from the temple.

The third temptation in Matthew's record is unique in not being preceded with the challenge 'If you are the son of God':

Matthew 4:

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their grandeur.

9 And he said to him, "I will give you all these things if you throw yourself to the ground and worship me."

Luke 4:

5 Then the devil led him up to a high place and showed him in a flash all the kingdoms of the world.

6 And he said to him, "To you I will grant this whole realm—and the glory that goes along with it, for it has been relinquished to me, and I can give it to anyone I wish.

7 So then, if you will worship me, all this will be yours."

8 Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You are to worship the Lord your God and serve only him.'"

Once again, it is difficult to understand how this record can be reconciled with the concept of the 'Satan' of popular theology. Is it at all credible that the greatest enemy of God and Christ would have been given the power of all the kingdoms of the world by God? Is it likely that he would give them all away for a simple bow of recognition from Christ? Was it true that 'Satan' had the authority to give the kingdoms of this world to whomsoever he wished?

If however it is argued that this temptation arose within Christ independently of the influence of another individual, then how might it have arisen in this way and what evidence is there that it did?

We return at this point to the Divine proclamation made at Christ's baptism:

Matthew 3:

17 And a voice from heaven said, **“This is my one dear Son; in him I take great delight.”**

Mark 1:

11 And a voice came from heaven: **“You are my one dear Son; in you I take great delight.”**

Luke 3:

21 Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized. And while he was praying, the heavens opened,
22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, **“You are my one dear Son; in you I take great delight.”**

As we observed earlier, these words set the entire context for the temptation of Christ, the purpose of which is to prove him, whether or not he would be the son of God.

They are words which had a profound influence on Christ at this time, and we can be sure that he continued to reflect on them. We have only to observe the use of them in two of the temptations ('If you are the son of God'), to recognise that even 40 days after his baptism the declaration of the Father remained prominent in his mind.

It was this very statement by the Father which prompted the struggle in the mind of the son, heralding the wilderness temptation to which the Spirit of the Father then led Christ. God had declared His Fatherhood, and called on Christ to acknowledge and take up his sonship.

That declaration at the baptism of Christ - a declaration which we are shown had been with him for 40 days - now prompted a third temptation.

In order to understand how this declaration could have led to the temptation of the kingdoms of the world, we must first identify the passage of Scripture from which the Father's words are quoted.

There are in fact only three Old Testament passages which use equivalent language:

- * Psalm 2:7: 'You are my son' (compare 'This is My son')
- * Psalm 89:27: 'I will appoint him to be my firstborn son' (compare 'This is My son')
- * Isaiah 42:1: 'my chosen one in whom I take pleasure. I have placed my spirit on him' (compare 'in him I take great delight' and 'the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove')

A direct quote from any one of these passages is not being made. In fact, it appears that the declaration conflates elements from all three passages. All three passages are, however, explicitly Messianic, and Isaiah 42:1 in particular appears to be the most obvious source of the expression of the Father's delight.

This declaration, as we know, was constantly in the mind of Christ during the entire time that he was in the wilderness. But how could it have led to a temptation, more specifically, to the temptation of the kingdoms of the world?

The answer is found in the surrounding context of the passages to which Christ's mind would have been led by his Father's declaration. As with the challenge to cast himself down from the temple, Christ was led to reflect on passages of Scripture which gave rise to temptation.

Knowing that the Divine declaration was prominent in his mind, it is not unnatural to consider that Christ would have thought also about the three passages from which these words were most likely taken.

This conclusion is strengthened when the context of these three passages is examined. We find that each of these three passages leads inevitably to the thought of Christ ruling the kingdoms of the world:

Psalm 2:

7 The king says, "I will tell you what the Lord decreed. He said to me: 'You are my son! This very day I have become your father!

8 You have only to ask me, and **I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the ends of the earth as your personal property.**

9 You will break them with an iron scepter; you will smash them as if they were a potter's jar.'"

Psalm 89:

27 I will appoint him to be my firstborn son, **the most exalted of the earth's kings.**

Isaiah 42:

1 "Here is my servant whom I support, my chosen one in whom I take pleasure. I have placed my spirit on him; **he will make just decrees for the nations.**

It doesn't matter which of these three passages comes to mind when the Divine declaration at Christ's baptism is considered - they all lead inexorably to the thought of Christ ruling the kingdoms of the world.

Is it mere coincidence that all three passages from which the Father's words could have been taken just happen to be passages which speak also of the rulership of the son over the earth? Is it mere coincidence that all three gospel records of the temptation place the Father's declaration in close proximity with the temptation? Is it mere coincidence that the words so obviously in the mind of Christ for 40 days are drawn from three passages of Scripture which all speak explicitly of the subject of this very temptation?

Perhaps these are only coincidences - that is possible. Given the combined weight of the evidence, however, it seems unlikely. It is a natural reading of the text to conclude that the declaration made at his baptism, occupying his mind for 40 days, led Christ to reflect on one or more of these three passages, and then to be tempted by the promise of rulership to which each passage also referred.

There remains a question regarding this temptation, however. Why is it that this temptation, unlike the other two, was not preceded by the challenge 'If you are the son of God'? If the words 'This is my son, in whom I take delight' had led to reflection on the three passages which prompted the temptation, then why are they not used to introduce it as they introduce the other two?

The answer is that the nature of this temptation is very different to that of the other two. Whereas the previous temptations invited Christ to exercise a legitimate right of his sonship (providing food for himself, availing himself of Divine protection), this temptation encouraged him to usurp a privilege not granted to him.

To succumb to this temptation would not be a demonstration of sonship, it would be a repudiation of sonship. This temptation invited Christ to take for himself, now, what God had said He would grant at an appointed time.

The temptation was to seize the birthright of the son in his own strength, ahead of time, without

acknowledgement of the Father or petition to Him.

Note the contrast between the words of the temptation and the words of Scripture:

Matthew 4:

9 And he said to him, "**I will give** you all these things if you throw yourself to the ground and worship me."

Luke 4:

6 And he said to him, "To you **I will grant** this whole realm—and the glory that goes along with it, for **it has been relinquished to me**, and **I can give** it to anyone **I wish**.
7 So then, **if you will worship me**, all this will be yours."

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

In contrast, each of the Old Testament passages which we have considered emphasise that the rulership of the son is dependent entirely on the Father:

Psalm 2:

8 You have only to **ask me**, and **I will give** you the nations as your inheritance, the ends of the earth as your personal property.

Psalm 89:

27 **I will appoint him** to be my firstborn son, the most exalted of the earth's kings.

Isaiah 42:

1 "Here is my servant **whom I support**, my chosen one in whom I take pleasure. I have placed my spirit on him; he will make just decrees for the nations.

Who else other than God Himself had the power to deliver to Christ the kingdoms of the world? None other than Christ himself, to whom the Father had given such power and authority that even in the very shadow of the cross he could have called on twelve legions of angels and delivered himself with the heavenly host.

If he had the power and authority to deliver himself from the crucifixion (which he knew was the Father's request), he certainly had the power and authority to subdue kings and take dominions.

But to do so would be to place in his own hand that which his Father had promised to give. It would be a snatching of Divine authority, an eager grasping at that which had been promised for a later time. To seize the inheritance before it was voluntarily bestowed by the Father would not be the act of a son, but a usurper.

It is likely that Paul had this very temptation in mind when he described Christ as having not grasped at equality with God, but submitting to the role of a servant (Philippians 2:6), and it seems a natural connection to make. No other moment in the gospel records describes so explicit an opportunity to usurp the Father.

This was the moment at which Christ would prove whether he was the son of Joseph (son of Adam), or the son of God.

In his rejection of the temptation, Christ does not argue over technicalities, does not even acknowledge the inheritance whilst recognising that this is not the time to inherit. For Christ there is a higher principle at stake. This is not merely a matter of bad timing, this is a temptation which involves a rejection of both his Father and his God.

So it is that Christ responds by quoting Deuteronomy a third time, identifying the higher principle, and conforming his life to the spirit of the law, rather than the letter:

Matthew 4:

10 Then Jesus said to him, "Go away, Satan! For it is written: 'You are to worship the Lord your God and serve **only him.**'"

Luke 4:

8 Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You are to worship **the Lord your God** and serve **only him.**'"

Deuteronomy 6:

13 **You must revere the Lord your God**, serve him, and take oaths **using only his name.**

Deuteronomy 10:

20 **Revere the Lord your God**, serve him, be loyal to him and take oaths **only in his name.**

Deuteronomy 13:

4 **You must follow the Lord your God and revere only him;** and you must observe his commandments, **obey him, serve him, and remain loyal to him.**

The issue, as Christ identified, was not a trifling matter of timing, of seizing ahead of time an inheritance which was rightfully his by promise. The issue, at its most fundamental, was one of love - love of the Father over love of himself. To take the kingdoms of the world by his own hand would not prove him to be the son of God, but the son of Joseph, of Adam - the seed of the serpent, in fact.

What would demonstrate his sonship would be to reject such an opportunity, out of love for his Father. To seize the kingdoms ahead of time would be idolatry - self worship, not love of the Father.

If there was any doubt as to Christ's capacity to seize the kingdoms of the world for himself, John the Baptist's words inform us that the Father, in His great love, had given **all power to the son:**

John 3:

34 For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, **for he does not give the Spirit sparingly [or 'by measure'].**

35 The Father loves the Son **and has placed all things under his authority.**

Christ had the power of the Holy Spirit **without measure**, and **all things** had been placed under **his authority**. This passage destroys any argument that God had delivered the kingdoms of the world into the hands of 'Satan', as some of those who believe in the 'orthodox' reading claim.

There was only one who could say 'it has been **relinquished to me**, and **I can give** it to anyone I **wish**', and that was Christ himself. This proves that the temptation had its origin within Christ himself.

The issue to be decided by the temptation was whether or not Christ would respond to the love and trust of the Father by dedicating himself to the Father's service, using the power invested in him to do the works of God rather than to please himself.

Christ's response is found not only in the temptation record itself, but in his own explicit teaching on his relationship with the Father:

John 5:

18 For this reason the Jewish leaders were trying even harder to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was also calling God his own Father, **thus making himself equal with God.**

19 So Jesus answered them, "I tell you the solemn truth, **the Son can do nothing on his own initiative**, but only what he sees the Father doing. **For whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise.**

Not only had Christ rejected the opportunity in the wilderness to grasp at equality with God, here he refutes the accusation that he had ever expressed such a desire. Like a true son, he subordinates himself to his Father in love, and attributes even his own good deeds to the example shown by the Father.

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At a later time in Christ's life, the same kind of temptation presented itself, the temptation to use his power to save himself and escape the suffering which would result from submitting to the Father's will:

Matthew 16:

21 From that time on Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and experts in the law, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

22 So Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him: "God forbid, Lord! [or 'God have mercy on you'] This must not happen to you!"

Mark 8:

31 Then Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and experts in the law, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Significantly, Christ replies with the very same words he had used when this temptation arose in the wilderness:

Matthew 16:

23 But he turned and said to Peter, "**Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me, because you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but on man's.**"

Mark 8:

33 But after turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "**Get behind me, Satan. You are not setting your mind on God's interests, but on man's.**"

Christ recognised this as the same temptation with which he had been confronted in the wilderness - to follow God's interests, or his own. Not only does his rebuke of Peter use identical words to those used in the rejection of the original temptation, but his next words to the disciple enlarge on the principle which is at stake - the denial of self:

Matthew 16:

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone wants to become my follower, **he must deny himself**, take up his cross, and follow me.

25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Mark 8:

34 Then Jesus called the crowd, along with his disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wants to become my follower, **he must deny himself**, take up his cross, and follow me.

35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and for the gospel will save it.

Luke 9:

23 Then he said to them all, "If anyone wants to become my follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.

24 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

The issue is whether or not a man will love himself more than God, will love his own life more than he loves the Father.

That Christ's mind has returned at this moment to the temptation of the kingdoms of the world is confirmed by the following words in Mark and Luke:

Matthew 16:

26 For what does it benefit a person **if he gains the whole world** but forfeits his life? Or what can a person give in exchange for his life?

Mark 8:

36 For what benefit is it for a person **to gain the whole world**, yet forfeit his life?

Luke 9:

25 For what does it benefit a person **if he gains the whole world** but loses or forfeits himself?

The temptation presented here by Peter was the same temptation Christ had faced in the wilderness, and his response was the same.

Both Matthew and Mark deliberately highlight this issue by placing the Divine declaration of sonship within immediate proximity of the wilderness temptation:

Contrary to 'orthodox' readings of the passage, the temptation in the wilderness was not a deliberate abandonment of the son to the wiles of 'Satan', nor was it a test by which he would simply be presented with the opportunity to break a number of commandments. The temptation in the wilderness operated on a higher level entirely.

The issue to be addressed was whether or not Christ would be the son of God in the fullest sense of the term. This is the issue which is identified repeatedly in the temptation record, both explicitly and implicitly.

To be the son of God in the truest and most complete sense did not merely mean to be created miraculously by God, it meant to bear the character of the Father in heaven.

Matthew 3:

17 And a voice from heaven said, "**This is my one dear Son; in him I take great delight.**"

Matthew 4:

1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Mark 1:

11 And a voice came from heaven: "**You are my one dear Son; in you I take great delight.**"

12 The Spirit immediately drove him into the wilderness.

13 He was in the wilderness forty days, enduring temptations from Satan. He was with wild animals, and angels were ministering to his needs.

It is no coincidence that Christ was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness immediately after this declaration. This was a test first undergone by God's firstborn son Israel, and for exactly the same reason:

Exodus 4:

22 You must say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord, "**Israel is my son, my firstborn,**

Deuteronomy 8:

2 Remember the whole way by which he has brought you **these forty years through the desert** so that he might, **by humbling you, test you** to see if you have it within you **to keep his commandments or not.**

This was the test to which the national firstborn was subjected, and Christ, as the individual firstborn, was to undergo the same test. Just as God declared Israel to be His son and then led them into the wilderness to determine whether or not they would uphold their exalted position, so Christ himself was declared publicly to be the son of God, and then led into the wilderness to be tested in the same way.

It is not to be expected that such a critical element in the temptation account, so obviously emphasised by both Matthew and Mark, would be overlooked by Luke, especially as Luke's account tends to be the most enlarged and detailed.

For this reason, it seems incongruous that Luke does not place the wilderness temptation in immediate proximity to the declaration of sonship at Christ's baptism. Instead, the two are separated in Luke by an extraordinary digression of 15 verses which apparently describe the genealogy of Christ through Joseph.

By the time this digression has ended, Luke has seemingly led the reader far away from the issue of Christ's Divine sonship, as declared in verse 22, and has apparently taken great care to collate and emphasise a physical genealogy of Christ as a son of men.

Indeed, the starting point of Luke's genealogical account presents Christ as supposedly the son of **Joseph**, and ends with **Adam**, expressly declared to be the son of **God**.

If anything, Luke's genealogy appears superficially to be contrasting Christ as the son of Joseph, with Adam as the son of God. Yet Luke deliberately includes the declaration of Christ's Divine sonship before embarking on this apparent digression, so it is clear he is not abandoning the Biblical teaching that Christ was the unique son of God, Divinely begotten of the Father.

What then is the purpose of Luke's digression?

Far from isolating the Divine sonship of Christ from the account of the temptation, Luke is in fact emphasising the vital connection between the two by means of a dramatic - almost hyperbolic - enlargement of the issue of Divine sonship.

This enlargement consists of a 'genealogy' which is not a literal physical genealogy of Christ, but an ancestral list commencing with the commonly held false belief regarding Christ, and ending with a Biblical truth which reintroduces the very issue which is at stake in the temptation experience.

The first important point to identify is that Luke's genealogy is not a description of Christ's physical descent.

Much confusion has resulted from attempts to read this passage as a description of Christ's natural descent, or at least as a description of Christ's 'legal' lineage.

It has been argued that the genealogy is Mary's, and that it represents a 'Levirate' line of descent. Writing in the 5th century, Augustine was sufficiently misguided to argue that Christ could be **legitimately** called the son of Joseph, on the basis that he was born to Mary, who was married to Joseph ('On the Harmony of the Gospels', book II, chapter i, section 2), whereas Luke never graces this a view with the slightest suggestion of legitimacy.

All such arguments completely miss the point of what Luke is actually saying. Remarkably, men such as Augustine have misread Luke entirely. A careful reading of Luke's words will demonstrate to us the foundation on which he is building, and help us to understand the true purpose of his genealogy:

Luke 3:

23 So Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years old. He was the son (**as was supposed**) of Joseph, the son of Heli,

From the very start of this section, Luke makes it transparently clear that he **is not** about to justify the common idea that Christ was the son of Joseph.

On the contrary, he records this as the view of common supposition, in complete contrast to the declaration of Christ's Divine sonship which he has already presented.

This verse is not, as many seem to see it, the commencement of a totally new section completely unrelated to what has gone before, but the deliberate contrast of the Divine perspective with the mortal.

It should be read in the context of the preceding verse, thus:

Luke 3:

21 Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized. And while he was praying, the heavens opened,

22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "**You are my one dear Son; in you I take great delight.**"

23 So Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years old. He was the son (**as was supposed**) of Joseph, the son of Heli,

These verses contain two statements which are directly opposed to each other, and Luke places them together in deliberate contrast:

- You are **my** dear son
- The son of **Joseph**

These statements are mutually exclusive. They cannot both be correct. One is the Divine declaration, and the other is the opinion of men, and lest there be any confusion as to which view is Luke's, he makes it abundantly plain here:

Luke 3:

23 So Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years old. He was the son (**as was supposed**) of Joseph, the son of Heli,

As far as Luke is concerned, the idea that Christ is the son of Joseph is the mere supposition of men. But why does he mention this here?

Luke's intention is to confirm the Divine declaration made at Christ's baptism. Writing for a Gentile audience, his purpose is to confront the skeptical assumptions regarding Christ, and overturn them with incontrovertible evidence. He also wishes to demythologize a term which his Gentile readers may misinterpret - 'son of God'. That this is an important issue for Luke, is seen from his description of the birth of Christ:

Luke 1:

The angel replied, "**The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore** the child to be born will be holy; **he will be called the Son of God.**"

The description given by Luke is deliberately written to inform the Gentile audience that Christ's conception occurred in a manner radically different to that of the pagan demigods, who were products of a physical union between the gods and mortals.

Whilst Divine in origin, Christ's birth was completely different to the birth of the Greek and Roman 'sons of the gods'.

The juxtaposition of 'You are **my** dear son' with 'The son of **Joseph**', is Luke's introduction of the issue of sonship which will be settled by the temptation of Christ.

By means of this method of introduction, Luke gives us the reason for the public declaration of the Father at Christ's baptism - it was to confirm publicly a critical issue which was under question, a matter of public dispute.

How then does the genealogy which follows contribute to Luke's aim? Superficially, it appears to lead the reader in the opposite direction entirely.

We must first identify Luke's purpose in providing this apparently misleading genealogy. At the outset we must dismiss the idea that it is intended to be an accurate description of Christ's literal physical lineage. On what basis can we do this?

Firstly, because Luke makes no claim that this is a literal genealogy of Christ (unlike Matthew's declaration 'This is the record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham', Matthew 1:1, though even Matthew does not represent his genealogy as a description of Christ's physical descent from Joseph).

Secondly, because Luke introduces this 'genealogy' as being what people **supposed** regarding Christ, as opposed to the reality (Luke 3:23).

Thirdly, because we know from Luke 1:27, 34-35 that it cannot be a literal physical lineage through Joseph, since Luke takes great care to inform us that Christ's birth to Mary was not the result of the usual physical union between man and woman (verse 27 'to a virgin', verse 34 'How will this be, since I have not had sexual relations with a man?', verse 35 "'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. **Therefore** the child to be born will be holy; **he will be called the Son of God**').

Fourthly, because the 'genealogy' given by Luke makes no sense as a literal physical lineage of Christ. What point is it trying to make? Matthew's genealogy explicitly identifies Christ as 'the son of David, the son of Abraham', commences with Abraham, refers to David as king, and moves down to Christ through **Mary**, once Joseph's genealogy is complete.

Luke's genealogy is inverted, starting with Joseph, making no specific mention of Christ's relation to any of the important figures in Jewish history, and moving **backwards** all the way to Adam, of all people.

Matthew's genealogy (although also describing the lineage of Joseph, not Christ), is intended to emphasise two of the most renowned individuals in Jewish history (Abraham and David), so much so that he actually commences with Abraham (Matthew 1:2), and makes specific reference to David's kingship (Matthew 1:6). It is theologically important for Matthew to refer to these two ancestors, and their exalted position.

But Luke's genealogy makes no such connection. It starts with a common man of no distinction (Joseph), omits to identify either David or Abraham as significant, and ends with Adam.

What importance could possibly be attached to either Joseph or Adam in Christ's ancestry? Matthew's genealogy starts with an individual of great importance - the father of the Jewish nation, but Luke starts with the commoner Joseph. Having commenced in mediocrity, Luke's genealogy leads to no stunning conclusion, no exalted finale - it ends with Adam, the 'universal father'.

This is certainly not a way of making Christ look 'special', of distinguishing him from other men - **everyone** can claim Adam as their ultimate ancestor. This genealogy (if it were literally Christ's), would represent him in exactly the opposite manner - as just another man.

It is true that Luke's genealogy then moves further back from Adam to God, but this conveys nothing significant regarding Christ (who is at this point very far removed from Adam by Luke's genealogy, and even further removed from God).

If anything, it would appear to be saying that Adam was the son of God, whereas Christ was merely the son of Adam. There is an important reason why Luke actually ends his genealogy with the reference to Adam as the son of God, but it is not to prove that Christ was 'son of God' by way of a protracted physical descent from Adam.

The genealogy in Luke, therefore, is intended to present what was **commonly supposed** regarding Christ - that he was the literal son of Joseph, with a mundane genealogy of no particular importance, that he was just another descendant of Adam, like everyone else:

Luke 3:

23 So Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years old. He was the son (**as was supposed**) of Joseph, the son of Heli,

It is important to note that verses 23 to 38 are all one extended sentence. Everything following this verse is part of what was 'supposed' - not the specific details of the genealogy, but the general ideal that Christ had an earthly father and a mundane genealogy. Luke's point is that it

was 'supposed' that Christ had a genealogy just like other men - that he was, at the end of the day, nothing more than just another **son of Adam**.

For this reason, precise historical accuracy in this genealogy is completely unimportant. It is a sample of the thoughts men had of Christ, the attribution to him of a mundane physical descent just like that of any other man.

There are certainly reasons behind Luke's choice of whom to include in this genealogy of Joseph (Matthew's genealogy is similarly selective, being likewise theologically motivated rather than historically motivated), but his reasons do not include the description of Christ as the son of Joseph, whether physical, 'legally adopted', or 'Levirate', nor is he merely interested in drawing Joseph's family tree.

For Luke has a far higher purpose in mind - he intends to prove that Christ is the son of God.

It is important to note at this point that the subtleties of Luke's presentation in this chapter would not have gone unnoticed by his intended audience. Though undoubtedly writing for a Gentile, Luke assumes a certain Bible knowledge on the part of his reader, for Theophilus is not ignorant of the Christian faith:

Luke 1:

3 So it seemed good to me as well, because I have followed all things carefully from the beginning, to write an orderly account for you, **most excellent Theophilus**,
4 so that you may know for certain **the things you were taught**.

We cannot be certain to what extent Theophilus had been instructed, but we can be certain that he had been made aware of the gospel, and that he had some knowledge of Scripture. Throughout his gospel Luke makes frequent mention of Abraham, Moses, David, and other key Biblical figures without so much as an explanatory aside, assuming a certain prior knowledge on the part of his audience.

For this reason, we can be assured that Luke's careful construction both of the temptation narrative and its introduction, is not lost on his reader. Theophilus would be aware of the true teaching regarding Christ's birth (described in careful detail in Luke 1:34-35), and would be aware also of the importance of men such as David (whose kingship and throne are given particular emphasis in Luke 1:32).

The genealogy in Luke 3 appears totally incongruous in the context of Luke 1, and would have lead the reader to a close examination of the text, in order to determine the purpose of this seemingly contradictory digression.

Given these facts, it is reasonable to expect Luke's reader to be treating the text with the same scrutiny to which we are subjecting it, and likewise reasonable to consider that Theophilus would have discerned the same meaning we find here.

To summarise Luke's message in verses 22-38, this is what he is saying:

At his public declaration of his mortality and need of salvation from God, Jesus was in return publicly declared by God to be **His son**. For popular opinion supposed that Jesus was the son of **Joseph**, with the same kind of genealogy that many people could claim, just another son of Adam (who actually **was** the son of God).

This is a paraphrase, but true to the sense of the text, as we can see:

Luke 3:21-23, 38:

21 Now **when all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized**. And **while he**

was praying, the heavens opened,
 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came
 from heaven, "**You are my one dear Son**; in you I take great delight."
 23 So Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years old. He was the son (**as
 was supposed**) of Joseph, the son of Heli,

[...]

38 the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

The conclusion of this passage with a reference to Adam as the son of God returns the mind of the reader to the key issue raised in verses 22-23 - is **Jesus** the son of God?

If what was 'supposed' regarding Jesus was true, then he would be just another son of Adam, and the temptation in the wilderness would prove this. In fact, Luke's narrative of the temptation will not only prove that Jesus **is** the son of God, but prove that he is the son of God on a way that Adam never was.

Given Luke's care to demythologize the term 'son of God' as applied to Christ, we may ask why it is that he uses the term so readily of Adam, without qualification.

The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, Luke is probably taking for granted the fact that Theophilus is aware of the manner of Adam's creation (and that he was not physically sired as the pagan demigods were). Secondly, Luke does in fact wish to make a point of the unique circumstances of Adam's origin, that he was at least as much a son of God through a miracle as Jesus himself.

Luke is going to demonstrate that a miraculous Divine origin is not what constitutes a true son of God. The sonship of Scripture operates on principles which are above and beyond the mechanics of merely physical origin.

This is what Luke wishes his reader to understand from this entire introductory passage (Luke 3:21-38). It is in this context that he then describes the wilderness temptation. Concluding his genealogical list with 'Adam, the son of God', enables Luke to prove this by a number of contrasts between Adam and Christ which are made apparent by means of the wilderness temptation narrative.

Here is Adam, the first 'son of God', and here is Christ, another 'son of God'. One would expect them to have much in common. Will they demonstrate the same characteristics or not?

With 'Adam, the son of God' as the words immediately preceding the description of the wilderness temptation, a contrast between the two is naturally prompted in the mind of the reader as a result of Luke's record:

- Adam grasped for equality with God; Christ subjected himself to the will of the Father
- Adam was led by the words of the serpent; Christ was led by the words of his Father
- Adam sought to provide for himself; Christ trusted his Father to provide for him
- Subsequent to his temptation and fall, Adam was opposed by cherubim; subsequent to his temptation and triumph, Christ was ministered to by angels

One of the most striking contrasts is that Adam was placed by God in a garden to test him, but because of disobedience was sent into a wilderness, whereas Christ was placed by God in a wilderness to test him, but because of obedience will be received into a garden. This is not

described entirely by Luke here in the temptation narrative, but is initiated by him here - the contrast will be completed later in his gospel account (Luke 4:1-13, with 22:43).

We now see that Luke's genealogy in verses 23-38 is not a digression, and that although it seems to separate the Divine declaration of sonship from the account of the temptation (whereas both Matthew and Mark place the two in immediate proximity), in fact Luke has not lost sight of the key issue - that the question of whether Jesus is the son of Joseph (son of Adam), or the son of God, will be answered conclusively by the temptation.

The genealogy in Luke, therefore, is not a distraction from this issue, but an amplification. When we keep reading through the artificial chapter break to the temptation narrative, we find that Luke's account of the temptation is written in such a way as to take up certain key elements in his introduction, again demonstrating that the two passages are closely related:

Luke 3:21-23, 38; 4:1-2:

21 Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized. And while he was praying, the heavens opened,

22 and **the Holy Spirit descended on him** in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "**You are my one dear Son**; in you I take great delight."

23 So Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years old. He was the son (**as was supposed**) of Joseph, the son of Heli,

[...]

38 the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

1 Then Jesus, **full of the Holy Spirit**, returned from the Jordan River and was **led by the Spirit in the wilderness**,

2 where for forty days **he endured temptations** from the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were completed, he was famished.

There are three significant phrase pairs in this section:

- 'The Holy Spirit descended on him' (Luke 3:22), with 'full of the Holy Spirit' (Luke 4:1)
- 'You are my one dear Son' (Luke 3:22), with 'led by the Spirit in the wilderness' (Luke 4:1)
- 'He was the son (as was supposed) of Joseph' (Luke 3:23), with 'he endured temptations from the devil' (Luke 4:2)

These phrase pairs emphasise the close relation between Luke's temptation narrative and the preceding section, demonstrating that the former have been written carefully, with the latter in mind.

By means of these three pairs, Luke takes the reader's mind back to the critical verses in the previous chapter (Luke 3:22-23), in order to maintain the continuity of his message. He does not wish us to be distracted by the genealogy, and so forget the key issue - is Jesus the son of God?

The connection between the first phrase pair is very clear:

Luke 3:

22 and **the Holy Spirit descended on him** in bodily form like a dove.

Luke 4:

1 Then Jesus, **full of the Holy Spirit**, returned from the Jordan River and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness,

Luke is confirming Christ's Divine sonship by making specific mention of the fact that when he entered the wilderness he was full of the same power which had been granted to him by his Father in heaven at his baptism. This establishes the continuity of thought between Luke 3:22-23 and Luke 4:1, as if the genealogy were not there.

Luke wishes the reader to leave behind the spurious speculations of ignorant men, and recall the Divine declaration made publicly at Christ's baptism. He is affirming that this **is** the son of God.

The very first temptation (deliberately described by Luke in detail), adds weight to Luke's case, for such a temptation **could not** have challenged an ordinary man, a mere 'son of Adam'.

Only a man invested with Divine power could be tempted to turn stones into bread to feed himself. Luke thus begins the process of using the temptation of Christ to prove his Divine sonship.

The connection between the second phrase pair is less obvious:

Luke 3:

22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "**You are my one dear Son**; in you I take great delight."

Luke 4:

1 Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River and was **led by the Spirit in the wilderness**,

In what way is the description of Christ being led by the spirit in the wilderness related to his sonship?

Firstly, it is a reiteration of the fact that Christ had been given the Holy Spirit by his Father at his baptism, reminding us again that God publicly declared him to be His son at that time.

Secondly, it identifies Christ as the anti-type of the first 'son of God' who was led into the wilderness to undergo a process of testing:

Exodus 4:

22 You must say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord, "**Israel is my son, my firstborn**,

Deuteronomy 8:

2 Remember the whole way by which **he has brought you these forty years through the desert** so that he might, **by humbling you, test you** to see if you have it within you **to keep his commandments or not**.

Christ was to be subjected to the same process of testing as Israel, God's national son. The very fact that he is being led into the wilderness by the Spirit of God proves that he is the son of God - this is the Divinely orchestrated test of the firstborn.

The connection between the third phrase pair is similarly subtle, but not obscure:

Luke 3:

23 So Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years old. He was the son (**as was supposed**) of Joseph, the son of Heli,

Luke 4:

2 where for forty days **he endured temptations** from the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were completed, he was famished.

Popular opinion was convinced that Jesus was the son of Joseph. Christ never seems to have doubted his true origin (from the age of twelve, Luke tells us, he was acting on the conviction that God was his father, Luke 2:42, 49), but popular opinion would have had its effect nonetheless.

The effect it had, however, was not to cause Christ to **doubt** his origin, but to tempt him to **prove it openly** by public demonstration of his power.

This is the central issue of the wilderness temptation - **if you are** the son of God, then exercise your power and authority to your advantage both in a manner which publicly refutes popular opinion:

Luke 4:

3 The devil said to him "**If you are the Son of God**, command this stone to become bread."

9 Then the devil brought him to Jerusalem, had him stand on the highest point of the temple, and said to him, "**If you are the Son of God**, throw yourself down from here,

In both cases the issue of Christ's sonship is raised, and Christ proves that he is the son of God not simply by his resistance to the temptation, and not by justifying self-serving action with a technical appeal to his rights or privileges, but by overcoming the temptation out of love for his Father.

Israel In The Wilderness	Christ In The Wilderness
<p>Deuteronomy 8:</p> <p>3 He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.</p>	<p>Matthew 4:</p> <p>4 But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"</p>
<p>Deuteronomy 6:</p> <p>16 Do not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah.</p>	<p>Matthew 4:</p> <p>7 Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"</p>
<p>Deuteronomy 10:</p> <p>20 You shall fear the Lord your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast, and by his name you shall swear.</p>	<p>Matthew 4:</p> <p>10 Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"</p>

The Temptation	The Challenge
<p>Deuteronomy 8:</p> <p>2 Remember the long way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commandments.</p> <p>5 Know then in your heart that as a parent disciplines a child [literally 'son'] so the Lord your God disciplines you.</p>	
<p>Matthew 4:</p> <p>17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."</p>	<p>Psalm 2:</p> <p>7 I will tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my son; today I have begotten you.</p> <p>8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.</p>

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