

# SATAN IS A SPIRIT PERSON WITH SUPERNATURAL POWER

All scripture quotations are from the NKJV

## BELIEF IN SATAN AS EVIL HUMAN NATURE

From the time *the age of enlightenment* began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, much scepticism developed concerning the existence of Satan and the demons. Nowadays the subject is sometimes treated as simply medieval superstition and therefore the Bible's reference to such creatures must supposedly be imagery that refers to evil or to illness, particularly mental illness, rather than to actual personal entities with supernatural power. Also many ancient statements from some rabbis demonstrate that many in Judaism, **from the 2nd century C.E. onward**, rejected the idea of a real Satan and the demons. According to Jewish Rabbi R.S. Brookes:

Judaism has no place for the belief in the power of a Devil or Satan...Satan is rather the personification of evil—the evil inclination.

Naturally such 2<sup>nd</sup> century and current beliefs of part of Judaism do not carry much weight when examining what is taught in the Scriptures, especially in view of the fact that Judaism went through a number of radical shifts in its beliefs after the A.D. 70 destruction of the temple and the dispersion of the Jews throughout many lands.

### CHRISTIAN CHANGES IN BELIEF

In regard to Christianity, in all the writings of Justin Martyr and of Irenaeus and of Christian writers up to the 17<sup>th</sup> century there is no thought that Satan was not a real person. The reversal of this understanding occurred during *the age of enlightenment* and was promoted by the liberal theologians of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries who rejected the idea of a personal devil. At the same time they rejected anything in the Scriptures that smacked of the supernatural and they looked for entirely natural explanations of biblical miracles. Since the mid-1800s Christadelphians have been the main denomination which rejects the idea that there exists a leading spirit person with supernatural power. To fit this with the biblical data they have arrived at three different definitions that are non-personal and two that are personal as applying to specific humans or governments:

- **Internal human nature that is sinful** or
- **The evil inclination of humans** or more recently-
- **Human pride.**
- **Various human adversaries of God's people**
- **Human governmental systems**

It is the purpose of this Study to show that the first three definitions given above are arbitrary and do not have any substance biblically. It also the purpose of this study to show that #4 and #5 are false applications when the biblical text reads "the Satan" and "the Devil," but rather that they always refer to one particular spirit personality – an adversary of God's people - who has evil intentions and who has supernatural power and therefore has the ability to do great harm. Additionally, the humans mentioned in the Scriptures who are called "a satan" i.e. an adversary, or "a devil" i.e. an accuser or slanderer are only given that description because they exhibit the kind of evil qualities or thoughts that come from the real supernatural Satan.

## PRE-CHRISTIAN BELIEF IN SATAN AS AN EVIL PERSON

In the Jewish apocalyptic writings of the centuries prior to Jesus the words Satan and Mastema were taken as the names of an evil supernatural person who was the Prince of Demons. Other names or titles of the supernatural Devil with OT connections were Sammael, The Angel of Death, Azazel, and Beliar (Belial 2 Cor. 6:15). Also the name Beelzebul (an alteration of Baal-zebul - a Philistine *Baal*) meaning “Lord of the flies” was applied to Satan by the religious leaders during the time of Jesus’ ministry. Certainly, at that time, the highly educated Pharisees believed in both a personal Satan and demon possession (Matt. 12:26, 27).

## GOD’S SUPREMACY IS NOT COMPROMISED BY THE EXISTENCE OF A DEVIL WITH SUPERNATURAL POWER

It is claimed by those who do not believe in a supernatural Satan that such a person cannot exist as a god because this would destroy monotheism i.e. there would be more than one God, and so appeal has been made to the introduction into Israel’s religion of a supernatural Satan from the ancient Persian religion of Zoroastrianism. This taught that there are **equally matching forces** of good and evil—the good god being Ahura-Mazda and the evil god being Angra Mainyu. Some think that Israel was influenced in the formation of their concept of Satan by this Persian dualism during the time of their being under Persian control. However, **this idea of equally matching forces of “a good God” and “an evil God” is not at all what is taught in the Bible** but that Satan always was and continues to be limited in power. Furthermore, Von Rad has pointed out that the Angra Mainyu of Zoroastrianism never plays the role of an accuser as Satan does in the OT, intertestamental literature and NT (TDNT.II, 75).

### *THE BIBLE SHOWS THAT THERE ARE “MANY GODS” BUT ONLY ONE ALMIGHTY GOD*

The term ‘god’ means ‘a mighty one’ and so Jesus quoted Psalm 82:6 to show that the judges of Israel were ‘gods’:

❖ “Jesus answered them, “Isn’t it written in your law, I said, you are gods? If He called those whom the word of God came to ‘gods’—and the Scripture cannot be broken...”” (*John 10:34, 35*).

Paul later emphasized that there are many ‘gods’:

❖ “...as indeed there are many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords,’ yet to us there is one God...” (*1Cor. 8:5, 6*).

So when Satan is called “the god of this age” (2Cor. 4:4) it simply means that he is a mighty one, but because God is almighty, Satan and all his forces pose no threat to God as is the case with the gods of Persian dualism. Often the evil works of Satan are turned by God into good for his people even as the evil that Joseph’s brothers did to him was turned to good by God (Gen. 50:20). So it is God who is fully in control. The concept that if Satan were real then the monotheism of the Bible would be contradicted carries no weight.

### *DUALISM IN THE SCRIPTURES IS NOT ABOUT GOD OR SATAN*

Certainly the Scriptures present many contrasting abstractions but these do not imply that Satan has power equal to that of God. Examples are:

❖ “...to open their eyes, in order to turn them from **darkness to light** and from the power of Satan to God...” (*Acts 26:18*).

❖ “What fellowship has **righteousness with lawlessness**? What communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial” (*2 Cor. 6:14-16*).

*Even the orthodox view of Satan during the Dark Ages never presented him as having power that could in any way match that of the Almighty God - Satan’s power being only a tiny fraction of God’s. So the dualism approach is just one of the many red-herrings used in the non-devil argument.*

THE ANCIENTS WERE UNAWARE OF THE TRUE  
SOURCE OF ADVERSITY THAT COMES UPON THE RIGHTEOUS

It is also claimed by those who do not believe in a supernatural Satan that it is God who brings evil upon people. The example is given concerning Job's comforters where the KJV renders **Job 42:11** as: "...they...comforted him for all the **evils** Yahweh inflicted on him." However, modern translations show this as not **evil** that is perpetrated upon Job by God but either: *adversity* NKJV, or *misfortunes* REB, or *trials* NLT. Nevertheless, the record shows that Job and his relatives were unaware of the true source of all this adversity so they expressed it as coming from God:

- ❖ "Shall we accept good from God, and shall we not accept **adversity**" (*Job 2:10*).
- ❖ "the arrows of the Almighty are within me...the terrors of God are arrayed against me" (*Job 6:4*).

However, the early chapters of Job show that Satan is the real, behind the scenes, perpetrator of this adversity (*Job 1:12; 2:6*) even though God permitted it. So after the writing of the book of Job it became evident that Satan was a powerful accusing spirit who acts according to his own purposes and agenda; but more was yet to be revealed concerning Satan as being the prime cause of evil. Nevertheless, Elihu stated to Job and his comforters that it **is never God who perpetrates wickedness** (*Job 34:10*). Also in the cases revealed in *Judges 9:23; 1 Samuel 16:14-16, 18:10, 19:9, 10; and 1 Kings 22:23* it was God who is described as sending "*an evil or lying spirit.*" This is because God has the right to manoeuvre situations and to punish the wicked.

*GOD BRINGS CALAMITY ONLY ON THOSE DOING WICKEDNESS*

- ❖ "If a disaster occurs in a city, hasn't the LORD done it?" (*Amos 3:6*).
- However, the context is the "message that the LORD has spoken against you, Israelites" (vs.1) and "therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities" (vs. 2) and "Assemble on the mountains of Samaria and see...the acts of oppression within it" (vs 9) and "The people are incapable of doing right" (vs.10).*
- ❖ "Though the residents of Maroth anxiously wait for something good, calamity has come from the LORD to the gate of Jerusalem" (*Micah 1:12*).
- Again this calamity was brought on these people by themselves as a punishment for their badness.*

GOD IS NOT THE CAUSE OF EVIL NOR THE ONE  
TEMPTING OTHERS TO DO EVIL

*Elihu stated:*

- ❖ "Far be it from God to do wickedness, And from the Almighty to commit iniquity" (*Job 34:10*).

*Jesus stated:*

- ❖ "If you then, being evil (or *depraved*), know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask" (*Matt. 7:11*).

*James stated:*

- ❖ "...nor does He [*God*] tempt anyone...every good gift...is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights" (*Jas. 1:13, 17*).

*MISAPPLIED TEXT*

*Yet some use the statement in Exodus 4:11 in an attempt to show that God does perpetrate evil even on good and unsuspecting people. It says:*

- ❖ "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord?" (*Ex. 4:11*).

*However, this is not saying that God purposely makes people have such afflictions from birth (Job*

34:10), but rather, is in the context of Moses' protest that he has a speech impediment and cannot represent Yahweh in standing before the Egyptians. He is, in fact, reassuring Moses that He will enable him to communicate with the Egyptians. So the *Word Biblical Commentary* explains that:

Yahweh's answer to Moses' protest shows the protest to be not only invalid, but irrelevant. ...Yahweh has made the mouth of man, and Yahweh withholds or gives the ability to communicate."

### CHRIST REVEALS SATAN AS THE PRIME ENEMY OF MANKIND

In his presentation of how to pray, Jesus included the request to: "...deliver us from **the evil one**" (**Matt. 6:13**). *Most translations render this verse this way rather than simply 'deliver us from evil' as in the KJV. This is because the word for word of the text is "deliver us from the evil" and so implying "the evil one."* Later in his illustrative story of the sowing of the weeds Jesus pointed out that, "**The enemy** who sowed them is **the devil**" (**Luke 13:39**). Then in confrontation with those Jews who claimed God as their father (John 8:44) Jesus showed who their true father was when he said:

❖ "...you are from your father *the devil*...**He** was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth...for **he** is a liar and the father of it" (*John 8:44*).

The contrast here is between one real person as father, namely, God and another real person as father, namely, the devil. So there is no biblical reason to imagine that this is in any way a personification of sin. This is made even clearer by the use of personal pronouns in Jesus' statement. So in *The Gospel and Epistles of John* p. 201 F.F. Bruce says:

What is meant by the statement that he was 'a murderer, a man-slayer, from the beginning'? Probably that by his deceiving our first parents he 'brought death into the world' and all our woe.

### SATAN/DEVIL/SERPENT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT IS ALWAYS AN EXTERNAL PERSON

Christadelphians generally acknowledge the fact that "Satan," in the Hebrew Scriptures, is always an external person—never internal human nature. The instances are:

1. The serpent in Eden because he is later identified as "the Devil and Satan" (Rev. 12:9).
2. The person who brought trouble on Job (Job 1: 1-12; 2:1-7).
3. The person who tempted David to take a census of Israel (1 Chron. 121:1).
4. The person who accused High priest Joshua (Zech. 3:1, 2).
5. The angel of Yahweh standing as an adversary (satan) against Balaam (Num. 22:22).
6. The sons of Zeruah acting as an adversary (satan) to David (2 Sam. 19:22).
7. Rezon as an adversary (satan) raised up by God to test of Israel (1 King 11:23).
8. Haman as a "diabolos" in the Greek LXX (Esther 7:4). The NAB and NJB simply use the terms "enemy" and "persecutor."

So to say that "Satan" in the NT simply means internal human nature is to ignore the testimony of the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus' Bible was the Hebrew Scriptures which teach that Satan was an external person and not a personification of sin.

#### *THE EXTERNAL SATAN WAS THE SERPENT OF EDEN*

*Revelation 12:3 describes a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns. A few verses later we are shown what this symbolic dragon represents:*

❖ "...the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who **deceives** the whole world..." (*Rev. 12:9*).

So the dragon of 12:3 is a symbol of the one titled "that serpent" who was in Eden (Gen. 3) and who is

defined as “*the Devil and Satan.*” Paul states that—“*the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness*” (2 Cor. 11:3) and so requiring that the Serpent be a particular intelligent, crafty person capable of deceiving Eve, and not a literal talking snake.

#### THE “TEMPTER” OF JESUS WAS ALSO EXTERNAL

Because Eve was tempted by “the serpent” i.e. an outside source, “the serpent” could not be a personification of sin. Christadelphians generally would agree with this. Furthermore, because Satan is also called “**the tempter**” and “**the devil**” in Matthew 4:1-3 then this tempter must also have been external to Jesus. This means that “**the tempter**” could not be any so-called sin within him. The *serpent* is in fact identified with *the devil* (Rev. 12:9) and so the “tempter” of Eve was also “the devil.” This means that “the devil” is also external. Additionally temptation and sin are two different things.

#### IS IT ILLOGICAL TO BELIEVE IN A SUPERNATURAL EVIL PERSON?

It is further claimed by those who do not believe in a supernatural Satan that one cannot logically accept the existence of a supernatural evil person because it is God who “*disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives*” (Heb. 12:6). This is interpreted as meaning that God must lead us into trials for our own spiritual growth, therefore how can there be a devil who forces Christians to sin while at the same time bringing difficulties which lead to our spiritual growth.

The first problem with this thought concerns the fact that the passage in Hebrews 12:6-11 is not speaking about God as one who leads us into trialsome situations, but rather that He disciplines us when we sin so that we may learn from our poor motivations or poor judgement and enabling spiritual growth to take place. Such discipline occurs primarily when we meditate upon the Scriptures or when we are counselled from the Scriptures by someone.

Secondly, the Devil does not force Christians to sin even though he tempts them – he being called “the Tempter” (Matt. 4:3). This is a straw-man argument presented in some Christadelphian literature to the effect that other Christians understand the Bible to be teaching that the Devil forces or makes a person sin. This is not the case as shown above, but rather he entices one to sin, but the person must take full responsibility when he does actually sin – he has failed to turn away from the temptation.

NOTE. The imagined illogicalness of ‘delivering someone over to Satan’ as mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:20 and 1 Corinthians 5:5 is examined later in this study.

#### SIN SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH TEMPTATION

Those who believe that Satan is simply a personification of sin may be confusing sin with temptation. Sin is internal but temptation is primarily external through the senses, which then may trigger wrong desire. Even if temptation is through one’s imagination it is because of things originally sensed and is therefore originally external. Temptation involves alluring, enticing, provoking or seducing someone else into acting in a wrong or damaging way. Biblically temptation means “enticement to sin” and there may be numerous possible sources of temptation.

#### SATAN WORKS PRIMARILY THROUGH OTHERS TO ENTICE A PERSON TO SIN

❖ “Woe to **the world** for *temptations to sin!* For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to **the one by whom** the temptation comes!” (Matt. 18:7 *ESV*).

#### WRONG DESIRE AS THE TEMPTATION THAT MAY LEAD TO SIN

However, once temptation has been internalized so as to become a “wrong desire” then the “wrong desire” may or may not lead one to sin depending on whether or not one entertains the temptation. It only becomes sin once one acts upon the wrong desire. James describes the process:

- ❖ “Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one. But **each one is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires**. Then when desire conceives, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is full grown, it gives birth to death” (*James 1:14-15 NET*).

Here, wrong desire, rather than Satan, has been personified and is shown to be a later stage in the process; yet the Scriptures show the individual called Satan to be the ultimate source of temptation. This is seen in the wilderness situation when Jesus was tempted but did not succumb to the temptation and therefore did not sin. Christians also may resist many temptations. Referring to James 1:13-15 the *Word Biblical Commentary* states:

“**In time of trial** no one should remark, God is tempting me. For God cannot be tempted by evil—indeed he tempts no one.” They could not avoid being **caught in the midst of evil days**; they are reminded that how they handle their problems ought not deny God’s providence, since he did not engineer their misery nor does he abandon them in it...not moral evil or “evil” as a metaphysical idea, but **the evil conditions** that arose from 1:2 and were threatening to induce the readers to react negatively to what had overtaken them. At the heart of the solicitation to evil (which we may connect with a God denying stance when the person is set in the midst of trying circumstances) lies the personal **desire** that is **bent on self-interest and self-pleasing** and so is the catalyst that turns outward trials (1:2) into occasions for moral disaster as “desire” is allowed to have its sway and produce its nemesis...The point of emphasis here is to fasten moral responsibility on the individual...James’ main **purpose is to trace the genealogy of sin no further than to the person tempted** by ejpiqumiva...it is **the trial referred to in 1:2–4, 12** and alluded to four times in the verb peiravzein in vv 13–14 which is really the intended subject...The nub of the problem James addresses is that when his readers are caught in the throes of **evil conditions** it will not do to blame either God or others or to resign all hope in a fatalistic way. **Individual accountability is at the root of the matter** (vv 13–16); and God’s goodness and providence in both creation and the new creation (vv 17–18) are the two emphases our author insists on.

Evidently, this passage concerns only a time of great difficulty for the Christian and does not refer to all temptations. So it cannot be used to posit the idea that there can never be an outside source of temptation. The likely reason that Satan is not mentioned in James 1:13-15 as a source of temptation, as he is in **4:7**, could be because that would only have detracted from the sinner’s responsibility.

#### *DESIRE AND SIN, RATHER THAN TEMPTATION, COME FROM WITHIN*

- ❖ “...For from within, **out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts**, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. **All these evil things come from within** and defile a man” (*Mark 7:20-23*).

#### *ROMANS SEVEN AND SIN*

Romans chapter 7 discusses sin in great detail and yet the terms Satan, devil, the tempter or any metaphor for him are never mentioned. This is because, not only is the term not a personification of sin, but it is not even the devil who causes us to sin (James 1:13-15) even though he is a tempter.

#### SIN ONLY ENTERED THE WORLD **THROUGH** ADAM

- ❖ “Just as **through** one man **sin entered the world**, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men” (*Rom. 5:12-19*).

This does not mean that sin’s entry into the world was caused only by Adam. This is quite a small section of Scripture where Paul compares Adam’s disobedience with the obedience of Christ. This is not speaking of the direct originator of sin, namely Satan, but the one whom sin came **through**,

namely, Adam. However Paul does, in other places, show that Satan is the prime tempter toward sin e.g. “as the serpent deceived Eve by **his** craftiness...” (2 Cor. 11:3). Revelation 12:9 identifies the serpent as Satan.

#### SATAN IS THE ULTIMATE TEMPTER

- ❖ “Do not deprive one another [*of the marital due*] except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that **Satan** does not **tempt you** because of your lack of self-control” (1 Cor. 7:5).

Here Satan cannot be a personification of sin, but is the prime source of temptation triggering sexually immoral desire (verse 2) because one or both parties lack self-control. So the sin could eventually be that of sexual immorality.

#### NEITHER CHRIST NOT CHRISTIANS HAVE A PREDISPOSITION TO SIN

Although the world in general may have a predisposition to sin because it has no desire to please God, this is not the case with Christians. This does not, however, mean that they never sin, but rather that they are working against sinning as Jesus fully and successfully did. God has promised a way of escape in every situation:

- ❖ “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

#### ALIGNING ONESELF WITH THE DEVIL IF ONE PRACTICES SIN

- ❖ “Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for **the devil has been sinning** from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

Logically, just as the one practising sin is a person so, too, the one he belongs to must be a person, namely “the devil.” Furthermore, how can one substitute the word “devil” for “the human evil inclination” as sinning, rather than speaking of a person sinning as is the usual way the Scriptures speak about sin. Clearly Christians do not wish to align themselves with the Devil and so do not have a predisposition or inclination to sin. Even though they can fall, their inclination is away from sin.

#### ALTHOUGH SIN IS PERSONIFIED IT IS NOT SYNONYMOUS WITH “THE DEVIL”

It is argued that because “**sin when it is full grown brings forth death**” (James 1:15) and that the one who “**had** (Lit. having) **the power of death...is, the devil...**” (Heb. 2:14) that therefore “the devil” must refer to sin. Also, it is reasoned that only God has the power of death and that one thing holds it, namely, sin. The corollary to this reasoning is that because “**...sin reigned in death...**” (Rom. 5:21) and “**...the wages of sin is death...**” (Rom. 6:23) and “**...sin that dwells in me**” (Rom. 7:17, 18) as personifications of sin then that must mean that “sin” is a term for the devil. However, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* on Hebrews 2:14 Leon Morris comments that:

This raises a problem because it is God alone who controls the issues of life and death (Job 2:6; Luke 12:5). But it was through Adam’s sin, brought about by the temptation of the devil, that death entered the world (Gen 2:27; 3:19; Rom 5:12). From this it is logical to assume that the devil exercises his power in the realm of death. But the death of Christ is the means of destroying the power of the devil.

Vol. 12, pp. 28, 29.

So although it certainly is God who ultimately has the power of death he is not the one who introduced death into the world. The problem with the '*sin is synonymous with devil*' reasoning is that it does not take into account the fact that there can be a combined action of an external tempter and one who responds to that temptation, in this case, Adam. In fact because Satan led Adam to bring death to all mankind Satan can rightly be called "*a murderer*" (John 8:44). Furthermore, the fact that "*through death [Jesus] might **destroy him** who had the power of death, that is, the devil*" and that "*He has appeared to **put away sin** by the sacrifice of Himself*" (Heb. 9:26) does not mean that Jesus cannot do these two separate but related things. They do not have to mean that "the sinful nature" or "evil inclinations of humans" = "devil." For example: goodness comes from God, yet we cannot say that the term *God* is simply metaphorical for *goodness*.

#### THE TERMS *SATAN* AND *DEVIL* DO NOT REFER TO A PERSONIFICATION OF SINFUL HUMAN NATURE

The claim is made that *satan the devil*, is a personification of human sinful nature, that is, speaking of an abstract idea as if it were a person. Certainly personification is used to a certain extent throughout the Scriptures and most clearly in chapters 3 to 9 of Proverbs where "wisdom" is spoken of as if it were a woman. However, the connection with the abstraction of wisdom is very strongly made so that it is obvious that this is a case of personification. Whereas, with the scattered descriptions of Satan or devil there is no connection made with the abstraction 'human sinful nature.' In contrast, it is evident that a person is being spoken of when Paul said:

- ❖ "...we wanted to come to you...but Satan hindered us" (*1 Thess. 2:18*).

If Paul is saying that his sinful human nature (satan/adversary) hindered him from coming to them, then he was sounding very weak in character as though he could not really be bothered. However, we know from the NT record that Paul was a strongly motivated person and had God's spirit. There are, of course, metaphors (dragon, serpent) and similes (roaring lion) for Satan, but these are not personifications of sin or of human nature.

#### *MICHAEL AND THE DEVIL*

Again if the "dragon," in Revelation 12:7-9 as a figure of "that ancient Serpent, who is called the devil and Satan" was a personification of sinful human nature then the archangel Michael would be battling against sinful human nature – but whose sinful nature would this be? Do archangels have a sinful human nature? And what could possibly be meant by sinful human nature as having angels? Furthermore, was Michael, in Jude 1:9, having a dispute with *sinful human nature* about Moses' body or is the more natural reading that of his disputing with a real person, namely, the devil?

#### *SINFUL HUMAN NATURE WILL EXIST DURING THE MILLENIUM BUT THE DEVIL WON'T*

The terms "satan" and "devil" cannot be a reference to sinful human nature because, at his return, Jesus will rule the mortal sinful nations with "a rod of iron" during the Millennium and so indicating the high level of the power of sin during that time. And yet in the Revelation we learn that Satan will be locked away at that time and so having no influence over those mortal nations:

- ❖ "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is **the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years**; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, **so that he should deceive the nations no more** till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while" (*Rev. 20:1-3*).

Both situations cannot exist simultaneously. So this shows that Satan is excluded from being a personification of sinful human nature but is, in fact, a real person who is deceptive and is powerful enough so as to require an angel to lock him away.

## IS 'SATAN' A GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM AS A REFLECTION OF SINFUL HUMAN NATURE?

A further claim is made that *satan the devil*, as a personification of human sinful nature, is manifested through various systems such as the Roman Empire or the Jewish religious system. However, just because a system acts in opposition to Christianity, it does not mean that it is a personification of sin, but rather it is simply in opposition to Christianity because of acting as Satan's agent and viewing Christianity as dangerous to its own agenda.

All of these liberal and Christadelphian definitions and applications are simply arbitrary choices requiring the human invention of new and various definitions, which is intellectually dishonest. This means that one has fallen into the trap of the classic fault of *petitio principii*; that is, of begging the question and reading into the data what one wants to read out from it.

## HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

People don't usually attribute the good that they do to God, as if to say 'God made me do this good deed'. So, too, the fact that there is a real external tempter should not be taken to mean that humans can **blame Satan** each time they sin. Humans must take responsibility for their own actions (James 1:14-15).

IN THE O.T. "A SATAN" REFERS TO ADVERSARIES  
OTHER THAN THE DEVIL

There are a few cases where the Hebrew word *satan* is simply descriptive of an individual as an adversary and so is not a proper noun.

- ❖ "Then God's anger was aroused because he [*Balaam*] went, and **the Angel of the LORD** took his stand in the way as *an adversary* (Heb. *satan*) against him. And he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants *were* with him" (*Num. 22:22*).

This is the first occurrence of the word *satan* without the definite article (Heb. *ha*). There are 8 more occurrences before the first occurrence of **the Satan** in Job 1:6. For example:

- ❖ "Now the LORD raised up *an adversary* (Heb. *satan*) against Solomon, **Hadad** the Edomite; he *was* a descendant of the king in Edom" (*1 Kings 11:14*).

## IN THE N.T. "A DEVIL" REFERS TO EXTERNAL PERSONS

It is recognized that the term *devil* does not occur in the Hebrew Scriptures. This is because it is a Greek rather than a Hebrew term. It does, however, occur once in the Greek Septuagint translation of the book of Esther with reference to Haman i.e. an external person. The same fact is evident when we come to the NT:

- ❖ "Jesus answered them, 'Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you [*JUDAS*] is **a devil** (Gk. *diabolos*)?'" (*John 6:70*).

However, when *diabolos* expresses one's being a "slanderer" it is still a reference to an external person:

- ❖ "Likewise, their **wives** must be reverent, not **slanderers** (Gk. *diabolous*), temperate, faithful in all things" (*1 Tim. 3:11, Titus 2:3*).
- ❖ "...**men** will be ... unloving, unforgiving, **slanderers** (Gk. *diabolous*), without self-control, brutal, despisers of good" (*2 Tim. 3:1, 3*).

These texts do not have an article with the Greek word *diabolos* and so do not refer to "the devil" but to other individuals who are or should not be accusers/slanderers.

## IN THE O.T. “**THE SATAN**” MEANS THE SPECIFIC ‘ADVERSARY’

Christadelphians make much of the meaning of Satan as *adversary*. This word is then mentally substituted wherever the original is Satan. However, many proper names in the Scriptures have descriptive meanings e.g. “Hannah” means *favour*. But it would be incorrect to substitute the name for the meaning.

### THE GRAMMAR

*Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar* states:

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

The term *the Satan* occurs in the whole OT 17 times; in Job (14 times) and Zechariah (3 times) and refers to one particular person. Evidently in all these OT cases this term refers to an external person.

### WHO MADE DAVID TAKE THE CENSUS?

*The following texts are parallel accounts of the same event:*

- ❖ “Now **Satan** [*an adversary*] stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel”  
(1 Chron. 21:1).
- ❖ “Again the anger of **the LORD** was aroused against Israel, and **He** moved David against them to say, “Go, number Israel and Judah” (2 Sam. 24:1).

Although 1 Chronicles 21:1 is translated as “**a** *satan*” in the NAB with also a footnote saying *an accuser or adversary*, and Rotherham renders it as “*an accuser*” with a footnote saying *adversary*, yet Hebrew scholars state this word to be **a proper name**, namely Satan. So in combining the thoughts of the two verses we can understand that the LORD used or allowed Satan to incite David to take this census. The *Word Biblical Commentary* states:

(1) Satan “Adversary,” without the article, rather than God, is the instigator of David’s census. Such a figure does not appear elsewhere in Chronicles (or Ezra-Nehemiah); indeed, only in Job 1–2 and Zech 3:1 does a somewhat similar figure appear. In both of these cases, however, the definite article is attached (“*the adversary*”) so that the text of Chronicles probably represents the final stage in the OT’s development of a figure of Yahweh’s heavenly council who not only brings charges against his people but actually incites them to evil. Since such a figure does not appear elsewhere in Chronicles, it probably reflects the commonly held piety of the day, which hesitated to speak of God as the direct cause of evil. The part which Persian dualism had in influencing this development in Israel is widely disputed.

Such using of individuals as adversaries by God can be seen when He raised the man Rezon also as an adversary (*satan*) of Israel (1 King 11:23). So to use the issue over 1 Chronicles 21:1 and 2 Samuel 24:1 in an attempt to ignore “Satan” as a person is an unjustifiable treatment of Scripture.

### “**THE SATAN**” REFERS TO ONE PARTICULAR INDIVIDUAL

- ❖ “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and [*the*] **Satan** (Heb. *has satan*) also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan “From where do you come?” So Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.” Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that *there is* none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?” So Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Job fear God for nothing...”  
(Job 1:6-9).

Clearly this refers to a specific person who can come into God’s presence and can exist on the earth.

IN THE N.T. “**THE** DEVIL, THE SATAN, THE SERPENT,  
THE TEMPTER” IS A SPECIFIC PERSON

*THE GRAMMMAR*

In addition to the several occurrences of “a satan/a devil” there are more than 60 occurrences of “**the** Satan/**the** devil/**the** tempter” in the NT. although Matthew never speaks of **a** tempter or **an** accuser/slanderer.

Now because there is no indefinite article in Greek all references to the article are to the definite article i.e. “the,” and leading Greek scholar, Dr. A. T. Robertson informs us that: “The definite article is never meaningless in Greek.” So in *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* and in the section on the Article pp. 223-5, Daniel B. Wallace explains the different usages of the word “the”:

6) Monadic (“One of a Kind” or “Unique” Article)

a) Definition

The article is frequently used to identify monadic or one-of-a-kind nouns, such as “the devil,” “the Sun,” “the Christ.”

A further example is in John 1:29: “Behold **the** lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”

7) Well-known (“Celebrity” or “Familiar” Article)

a) Definition

The article points out an object as well-known, but for reasons other than the above categories (i.e., not anaphoric, deictic, *par excellence*, or monadic). Thus it refers to a well-known object that has not been mentioned in the preceding context (anaphoric), nor is considered to be the best in its class (*par excellence*), nor is one of a kind (monadic).

b) Illustrations

Matt 13:55 Is this not **the** carpenters son?

Gal 4:22 **the** bond woman...**the** free woman.

These women were not the best in their respective categories, but were well known because of the biblical account.

Jas 1:1 the twelve tribes that are in **the** dispersion.

2 John 1 **The** elder to the elect lady and her children.

Acts 2:42 **the** teaching...the fellowship, the breaking [of the bread].

These usages of the word “the” have exactly the same force in the Scriptures concerning Satan, so that he is the well-known Satan.

*THE WELL KNOWN SATAN*

- ❖ “Now when **the tempter** came to him he said...” (Matt. 4:3).
- ❖ “Then **the devil** (Gk *ho diabolos*) left him” (Matt. 4:11).
- ❖ “...your father **the devil** (John 8:44).
- ❖ “...lest **the Satan** should take advantage of us...” (2 Cor. 2:11).
- ❖ “...as **the serpent** deceived Eve by his craftiness” (2 Cor. 11:3).
- ❖ “...stand against the wiles of **the devil**” (Eph. 6:11).
- ❖ ““So **the great dragon** was cast out, **that serpent of old**, called **the devil** and **the Satan** (Gk *ho satanas*), who deceives the whole world” (Rev. 12:9).

*PAUL BELIEVED IN THE WELL-KNOWN SATAN*

According to the grammar Paul used it is evident that he believed in a real person called Satan as shown in the *Word Biblical Commentary – Pastoral Epistles*. With reference to “the judgment of **the**

devil” noted in **1 Timothy 3:6**, this commentary shows that this does not mean a human slanderer because:

Diablos occurs six times in the Pastoral Epistles. Three times it is anarthrous and plural (1 Tim 3:11; Titus 2:3; 2 Tim 3:3), and in each of these cases it means “slanderous.”...In the other three occurrences of diabolos in the PE, it is **preceded by the definite article** and is singular (1Tim 3:6, 7; 2Tim 2:26) as it is here. That it is used in the next verse (3:7) to mean devil as it also does in 2Tim 2:6 argues for the interpretation of “the devil” in 3:6. Also, with one exception, every other occurrence of the term diabolos in the NT (twenty-nine times) is articular, singular, and **always means the devil** (in the exception it is anarthrous but still means the devil [John 6:70]). The judgment into which the neophyte might fall then is Satan’s judgment ... There is no question that Paul believed in the existence of a personal devil who interferes in the lives of individuals. (p. 181-2, 184). Note: Neophyte means “new convert”

Furthermore, with reference to Paul’s writings Professor Emeritus James Dunn explains that:

The retention of **the definite article** (“the Satan”) probably reflects the continuing influence of the original concept - “the Satan” as the name given to **the spiritual force** which tests and tries the servants of God. Notable also is the way the concept of “evil” and of “the evil one” merge into one another, an existentially **real power** cohered in a single focus – experienced as malevolent and therefore conceived as **personal**.

#### SATAN IS A PERSON—AN ACCUSER, AN ADVERSARY THE DEVIL IS A PERSON—A SLANDERER

We must bear in mind that the term “the Satan” is not a proper name because proper names are never prefixed with the definite article. Rather it is a descriptive title i.e. “the adversary.” Just as *ho theos*—‘the God’ describes the one true God whose personal name is Yahweh, so, too, ‘the adversary’ describes the one primary adversary of God who would have to be an intelligent person to be an accuser, an adversary and a slanderer.

#### *SATAN HAS INTELLIGENCE TO COMMUNICATE, TO TEMPT, TO LIE AND TO DECEIVE*

- ❖ “Now *the serpent* was more **crafty** than any beast of the field” (*Gen. 3:1*) as in NASB, NKJ, Rotherham, NE, NIV and New Simplified (*not* ‘the most crafty of all the beasts’).
- ❖ “Now when *The tempter* came to him **he** said...” (*Matt. 4:3*).
- ❖ “...the father of **lies**” (*John 8:44*).
- ❖ “...as *the serpent* **deceived** Eve by his craftiness” (*2 Cor. 11:3*).
- ❖ “...stand against **the wiles** of *the devil*” (*Eph. 6:11*). or “**schemes**” NASB, ESV; “**tactics**” NAB, NJB.
- ❖ “...lest *the Satan* take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of **his devices**” (*2 Cor. 2:11*).
- ❖ “...*the great dragon* was thrown down, *the serpent* of old who is called *the devil* and *the Satan*, who **deceives** the whole world” (*Rev. 12:9*).

*The ability to lie and to scheme such crafty and deceptive devices could only come from an intelligent mind leading him to be classified as a murderer:*

- ❖ “...your father *the devil*...He was **a murderer** from the beginning and does not stand in the truth” (*John 8:44*). *Murder takes the planning of an intelligent mind.*

#### *SATAN HAS PHYSICAL SUPERNATURAL ABILITIES*

- ❖ “The coming of the lawless one is by **the activity of Satan** with all **power and false signs and wonders**, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing...” (*2 Thess. 2:9, 10*).

This “lawless one” is evidently an agent of Satan’s and gets his supernatural power from him. The terms “all power, signs, lying wonders” are all references to what is miraculous, albeit deceptive and causing delusion. If they are not miraculous “signs” then we must say that Jesus’ “signs” were not miraculous either, in spite of the text in John actually showing them to be miraculous. This all shows

that Satan has supernatural ability. Furthermore, Job's situation describes "the Satan" as one who has such supernatural abilities that are used against Job after:

❖ "...a day when *the sons of God* came to present themselves before Yahweh, and **the** Satan also came among them...from **roaming about** on the earth and **walking about on it**" (*Job 1:6-12*).

*Therefore, if the sons of God were real persons, then so was Satan and the reality of his personality is seen in his actions in Job's case:*

❖ "And the LORD said to Satan, 'all that he has is **in your power**...he is in your hand'" (*Job 1:12, 2:6*).

❖ *Satan sent* "**the fire of God** and burned up the sheep and servants" (*Job 1:16*).

❖ *Satan sent* "**a great wind** and struck...the house...and the young people died" (*Job 1:19*).

❖ "Then **the** Satan went out...and **smote Job with boils**" (*Job 2:7*).

These miraculous evils detailed in Job were purposely sent *at specific times*, therefore they were not naturally occurring disasters. So neither the sinful human nature nor human pride nor any human could produce such events unaided by a supernatural power.

#### WHO IS "THE SATAN" IN JOB?

- It is pure conjecture to say that the term Satan refers to *a brother of Job*. Such a person would not have the power to bring these specifically timed evils on Job.
- The reasons why "the Satan" cannot refer to *an obedient angel* willingly doing God's work are that:
  1. The dialogues between God and Satan in Job 1:9-11 and 2:3-6 show that this individual is God's adversary i.e. one who is acting **in opposition to** God.
  2. He is one who **slanders** God's "blameless and upright" servant (1:8, 11). He is therefore an ungodly entity who lies. One must bear in mind that God has His holy angels and Satan has his angels who sinned. So not all angels belong to God.
- The reasons why "the Satan" cannot refer to *human pride* (as proposed by John A. Pople) are that:
  1. No part of the account informs us that "the Satan" should be interpreted as a reference to human pride embodied in the 3 comforters.
  2. God does not dialogue with abstract qualities—human or otherwise. The idea that these conversations are a literary device is pure conjecture which, if true, would affect the meaning of all other conversations recorded in the Scriptures.
  3. Job's three comforters (*displaying human pride*) were completely unaware of the early dialogues between God and "the Satan" in Job 1:9-11 and 2:3-6.
  4. Human pride is not the pre-eminent one of all sins. Covetousness, in its various forms, takes pre-eminence in the 10 commandments and in Paul's argument in Romans 7:7, 8.
  5. This proposal fails to take into account the **principle of agency** whereby God uses individuals as His agents (including Christ). This principle equally applies to Satan:
    - ❖ "And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if **his servants**, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness" (*2 Cor. 11:14*).

*So during the circumstances of Job's trial Satan used the three comforters as agents in an attempt to bring Job down and so to win a moral victory over God.*

6. It is misleading to say that “the Satan” originated on earth because he was “going to and fro on the earth,” and so is always on the earth in the form of the human pride within the 3 comforters or others. This simply means that “the Satan” had access to the earth and was not confined to it. God asks Satan “where have you come from?” and so showing that “the Satan” has changed location.
7. Humans are not the only ones subject to prideful behaviour. Although denied by some, the king of Tyre described in Ezekiel 28:13-19 has the ‘blameless guardian cherub who was in the Garden of Eden and who became prideful (vs. 17), metaphorically laying behind him i.e. an angelic being who rebelled against God.

We can summarize from John A. Pople’s book *To Speak Well of God*:

Understandably these expositors either conclude, or simply by default imply, that Satan is a **supernaturally powerful creature**—the **fairest conclusion** given Satan’s apparently superhuman conduct. As long as the text stands alone, this is perhaps the **most reasonable interpretation**. p. 59 (*emphasis ours*).

#### WHO ARE “THE SONS OF GOD” IN JOB

It is also misleading to say that “*the sons of God*” are simply ‘covenanted believers’. The term “*sons of God*” first came into use as referring to humans when it was applied to the Israelites and therefore, long after the events of Job which were set in Patriarchal times. Prior to this the term referred only to angels or divine beings, this also meaning that Satan is **an angelic being**. (Please see Anchor Bible Dictionary: Job; Sons of God).

Satan’s supernatural abilities were also very evident *in the first century*:

- ❖ “***The*** devil took him up on an exceedingly high mountain and **showed him all the kingdoms** of the world and their glory” (*Matt. 4:8*).
  - ❖ “...the coming of the lawless one is according to **the working of Satan, with all power, signs (miracles), and lying wonders**” (*2 Thess. 2:9*).
- Could miracles be caused by sinful human nature- an abstraction? Evidently such miracles that have an evil intent could only originate with an evil supernatural power.*
- ❖ “...the devil **prows around** like a roaring lion seeking to devour someone” (*1 Pet. 5:8*).
  - ❖ “Satan disguises himself as an **angel of light**” (*2 Cor. 11:14*). *Therefore he is an **angel of darkness**.*

#### SATAN HAS POWER AND CONTROL AND A KINGDOM

- ❖ “...the **prince** of the power of the air” (*Eph. 2:2*).
- ❖ “...him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (*Heb. 2:14*).
- ❖ “Beelzebul, **the ruler of the demons**” (*Luke 11:15*).
- ❖ “He casts out demons by **the prince of demons**” (*Matt. 9:34*).

This displays a hierarchy which is not applicable to *an abstraction* such as *sinful human nature*, but can only demonstrate a supernatural personality and one who has a kingdom:

- ❖ “If Satan casts out Satan...how then will **his** (Satan’s) **kingdom** stand?”  
(*Matt. 12:26 and Luke 11:18-22*).

*This is a literal kingdom and therefore controlled by a literal person. This is also known as “the dominion of darkness” in Colossians 1:13 ESV. This kingdom domain evidently is inhabited by Satan’s own angels.*

## SATAN HAS HIS OWN ANGELS

- ❖ "...into the *everlasting fire* prepared for **the devil and his angels**" (*Matt. 25:41*).
- ❖ "And war broke out in heaven ... the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old called the Devil, and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and **his angels** were cast out with him" (*Rev. 12:7-9*).

*The argument that this cannot be literal because it would be impossible for such a war to take place in God's presence because He cannot look upon evil, does not take into account the fact that "heaven" has several meanings as regards location. Hence such a war does not have to take place directly in God's presence.*

## SATAN IS CONTRASTED WITH THE SUPERNATURAL CHRIST

- ❖ "And what accord has Christ with **Belial** (*meaning 'good-for-nothing'*)? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?" (*2 Cor.6:15*).

Although this term "Belial" can be used for anything that is useless, it is most commonly applied, in the Hebrew Scriptures, to men guilty of serious crimes. However, prior to and within NT times it was entirely applied to the person Satan. The Syriac Peshitta reading of 2 Corinthians 6:15 replaced "Belial" with "Satan." So, if Christ is here a supernatural person then so must **Belial** (Satan) also be a supernatural person.

## JESUS WAS TEMPTED BY THE PERSONAL SUPERNATURAL DEVIL

- ❖ "**The** tempter **came** to (lit. "came towards" or "approached") him and **said** ... **The** devil took him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he **said** to Him, 'All these things I will give you if you will fall down and worship me'" (*Matt. 4:3, 5, 8*).

Jesus was not tempted by an imagined predisposition to sin. The taking of Jesus to the mountain, even by vision, could not have been by the act of his own supposed human nature. Communication and action come only from a personality. The Devil's showing Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in an instant does not make this into a metaphor or personification of *sinful human nature*. This event was possibly by Satan's use of his supernatural abilities to place Jesus on the literal temple pinnacle and it was a real person that departed from Jesus afterward:

- ❖ "...then the devil **left** him; and **angels came** and began to minister to him" (*Matt. 4:11*).

This too cannot be sinful human nature *that left* Jesus but a real person just as the angels that came to him were real persons. If "the devil [which] **left** him" was his human nature how could it leave him? Human nature cannot come and go at will separate from the body! So to state that this is an example of metonymy is an abuse of that figure of speech because sin was not an attribute of Jesus. This must be read naturally, as a real person called Satan along with real beasts and angels:

- ❖ "And he was there in the wilderness forty days' tempted by Satan, and was with the **wild beasts**; and the **angels** ministered to him" (*Mark 1:13*).

One cannot mix the interpretation as partly literal and partly figurative. These were quite **literal wild beasts** (*not animal feelings inside Jesus*) and literal **angels** in this description and so indicating that Satan too is quite literal. Just as the angels and later the Pharisees came to him so did the personal devil. Why should the "coming to him" change to a figurative action? The language of personification is mainly found in poems, parables and allegory but not in historical narrative. This tempter is, therefore, not any *sinful human nature* within Jesus "*who committed no sin*" (1Peter 2:22). Although Jesus was capable of sinning he was *not tempted by something within himself*. His mind was godly not

sinful and did not have a natural inclination to sin although it was possible for him to succumb. Furthermore, did Jesus' human nature really quote the Scriptures to him? If so then why would he make such twisted applications of them?

#### *THE ARGUMENT THAT "DEVIL" REFERS TO THE HIGH PRIEST CAIAPHAS*

This argument is based on the fact that the NT term *diabolos* occasionally (e.g. 1 Timothy 3:11) refers to human accusers/slanderers. However, to arbitrarily apply this to Caiaphas is a totally conjectural approach. It is explained as a necessary method used because early Christians wanted to avoid "speaking evil of a ruler of your people" (Acts 23:5) so that unnecessary persecution would be avoided. Yet why should Matthew, Mark or Luke, who all wrote after the 50s A.D, be concerned about upsetting Caiaphas who was in office only up to 36 AD. Also why would the Gospel writers leave their readers to guess at who was meant? However, just as the Greek text of Matthew speaks of **the Jesus** so it also speaks of **the tempter** and **the devil** – one who was well-known in intertestamental and NT times. This is in contradistinction to each of the *satans* (without the definite article) in the OT. Also the claim that High Priest **Caiaphas** was the tempter cannot be upheld because he could not offer anyone "all the kingdoms of the world," neither could he do it "in an instant" as when **Luke 4:5, 6** informs us that Jesus was shown:

- ❖ "...all the kingdoms of the world **in a moment of time**... 'For this has been delivered to me [*Satan*], and I give it to whomever I wish.'"

This indicates that Satan possibly showed Jesus a vision—something that no ordinary human could do. Nevertheless, this historical narrative account is quite literal. Furthermore, Caiaphas had not had the Roman Empire delivered to him, and certainly not "*all the kingdoms of the world.*" Yet, at this stage before Jesus' ministry began it is virtually impossible that Caiaphas would have known who Jesus was, not to mention the fact that Jesus was the foretold Messiah. So this passage concerns, not a tempter, but **the tempter** who was **the devil** and who was bargaining for worship. So any supposed involvement of high priest Caiaphas, is totally conjectural and untenable.

#### GOD DID NOT CREATE AN EVIL PERSON

- ❖ "For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You" (*Ps. 5:4*) and "His work is perfect" (*Deut. 32:4*).

#### *SATAN WAS NOT ORIGINALLY PRIDEFUL*

- ❖ "He [*a Christian*] must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into **the condemnation of the devil.**" (*1 Tim. 3:6*).

*Because Satan is given as an example of how a person may become prideful, the implication is that Satan was not created as a creature with extreme pride but by exercise of his free-will he became such. This explains how he could be judged (John 16:11).*

#### *A PERFECT CREATURE BECOMES SATAN*

- ❖ "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his **own desires** and enticed. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death" (*Jas. 1:14*).

This shows the process toward iniquity and applies equally to spirit creatures as to humans because Peter speaks of "the angels [*not human messengers*] who sinned" (2 Pet. 2:4). Furthermore, Ezekiel 28 describes "the anointed cherub" who became unrighteous.

## THE COVERING CHERUB REFERS TO SATAN

❖ “You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty, you were in Eden the garden of God...you were the *anointed cherub* who covers ... you were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, **till iniquity was found in you**” (*Ezek. 28:12 ff*).

Although Ezekiel 31 describes the Kings of Egypt and Assyria as being **figuratively trees** in “the garden of God” along with “*all the trees of Eden*” yet Ezekiel 28:12ff includes numerous references to Satan. This is because the King of Tyre is being used as a front figure for the actual “anointed **cherub** who covers” showing that Satan is the real power that lies behind all these kings. Hence, Satan is a fallen cherub - **a fallen angel**. So *Hard Sayings of the Bible*’ comments that: “The description shifts back and forth from the king of Tyre to Satan himself.”

Also F. F. Bruce noted that: “This passage in Ezekiel has contributed some details to the picture of the fall of Satan.”

NOTE: The passage from verses 2-10 does not concern Satan but purely the “**man**” (verse 2) the *Prince of Tyre*. So the **Prince of Tyre** is a type of the individual ‘man of lawlessness’ (2 Thess. 2:4).

## OBJECTION BECAUSE ANGELS CANNOT DIE

Because Luke 20:36 shows that angels cannot die, it is objected that if Satan is an angel he, too, cannot die and therefore an evil supernatural person will trouble mankind forever. However, not all statements concerning angels refer to both good and bad angels simultaneously. There is a clear differentiation between bad angels “**who sinned**,” (2 Pet. 2:4) and *good angels*—“**the elect angels**” (1 Tim. 5:21). So the “**all ministering spirits**” of Hebrews 1:14 is only within the range of “the elect angels.” It may be to these only that Jesus’ words in Luke 20:36 apply so that only “the elect angels” cannot die. This means that Satan was not necessarily granted immortality. Also apart from the statement that there were angels “**who sinned**,” (2 Pet. 2:4) some angels must have fallen into error i.e. sin as noted earlier (Job 4:18, 19). However holy angels do not have a pre-disposition to sin. Yet to say that it was impossible for them to sin would be a denial of their God-given free-will.

NOTE: There is no biblical basis to interpret the angels “**who sinned**” and were “condemned...to the chains of *Tartarus*,” (2 Pet. 2:4) or the “angels who...**abandoned their proper abode**...kept in eternal bonds” (Jude 6, 7) as being humans, either as the 10 spies (Num. 13) or the 250 princes led into rebellion by Korah (Num. 16). Such use of the allegorical method is a reversal of the usual interpretive methods of Christadelphians. Furthermore, Tartarus is not to be a location for the punishment of humans, but rather for the detention of very long-living beings who are awaiting their judgement on the great day.

## THE SERPENT IN EDEN WAS A PERSON NOT A TALKING SNAKE

## THE CHRISTADELPHIAN EXPLANATION

- John Thomas, the founder of the Christadelphians taught that it was a literal snake which approached Eve in the Garden of Eden and that, unlike all other snakes this one was intelligent and, for its time in Eden, was given the power of speech by God. This interpretation was based on the description concerning the speaking by Balaam’s donkey (Num. 22:22-30).
- The words *satan* and *devil* do not appear in Genesis; and only God, Adam, Eve and the serpent are involved. However, the serpent did not blame a separate Satan the devil.
- The serpent is not described as an angel or cherub or any type of spirit creature.

Comment:

**Point 1** is *incorrect*. In the Scriptures there are numerous animal metaphors applied to the characteristics of particular humans or demons e.g. *That Fox, The Beast, wolves, sheep, goats, frogs, dogs, and eagles* and Jesus called the Pharisees *serpents* (Matt. 23:33). All of these give a basis to

believe that the name “serpent” describes the characteristics of an intelligent person who deceived Eve and not a lowly “beast of the field”:

- ❖ “Now the serpent was more crafty **than** any beast of the field” (*Gen. 3:1*). AS, NASB, KJ, NKJ, Roth, NIV, Young’s, Darby, WEB.

Notice that it does not say that he was a beast of the field. And so God says “to **the serpent**...Cursed are you more **than** all cattle” (*Gen. 3:14*). Also regarding Balaam’s donkey as being used to illustrate the Eden situation, one cannot simply use an aspect of one event to explain an aspect of another event. The Genesis account gives no indication that the situation in Eden had anything in common with that which involved Balaam’s donkey. Furthermore, it was “the angel of the LORD” (vs.22) who caused the donkey to speak (vs. 28). Yet there is no statement anywhere in the Scriptures to the effect that God gave a snake the ability to speak. It is hard to imagine that any creature had intelligence and powers of speech comparable to those of humans, angels or other spirit creatures. These are the only creatures described in Scripture as having such abilities. Therefore, the descriptive term *the Serpent* being given to a **corrupt angel** and that there was **no literal snake involved** makes most sense.

**Point 2** is **correct**. But the understanding is **incorrect** because Revelation 12:9 confirms that **the serpent = the devil = the Satan**. It connects the serpent to Satan: “**the serpent of old who is called the devil and the Satan, who deceives the whole world.**” So evidently the Serpent is Satan the devil, the same one who was revealed at a similar time in the book of Job. So Satan, devil and **serpent** are just different *descriptive titles* of the same evil person.

**Point 3** is **incorrect**. The term serpent is *nachash* in Hebrew, and is similar in meaning to *seraph* which is translated “fiery serpent” (Num. 21:8) as a reference to these angelic winged beings. This is very different from the concept of a literal snake. Seraphim appear as heavenly beings in Isaiah 6:2, 6. Therefore it is likely that Ezekiel 28:12ff refers to Satan. This describes the king of Tyre **figuratively** in Eden as “the anointed **cherub** who covers and who corrupted his wisdom.”

#### THE SERPENT HAS A LONG HISTORY

If the serpent were a literal snake then the first Messianic promise would not make sense:

- ❖ “I will put enmity between you (*a person*) and the woman, and between your seed (persons) and her seed (Christ). He shall **bruise** (*‘crush’ in Rotherham and NIV*) you on the head” (*Gen. 3:15*).

So Christ is not going to simply crush a snake’s head. If a literal personal Christ is “the seed” of a personal “woman,” then intelligent personal agents must be “the seed” of an intelligent personal *serpent*. Yet snakes do not have human-like intelligence but the bruising or crushing of the head of the evil person is future and it is foretold that:

- ❖ “...the God of peace will **crush Satan** under your feet shortly.” (*Rom. 16:20*).

The fact that Genesis 3:15 predicted that the “seed of the woman” would bruise or crush the serpent’s head indicates that this speaks, not of a short-lived literal snake, but of a very long-living individual whose head will be crushed by the Messiah and under the feet of Christians.

#### WERE THE LEGS OF SNAKES REMOVED?

- ❖ “On your belly you shall go. And you shall eat dust all the days of your life” (*Gen. 3:14*).

This is part of **the poetic description** of Genesis 3:14-16 and is couched in figurative terms, so that no legs were lost by snakes, but rather it refers to the abasement of the person entitled the Serpent who “deceived Eve by **his** craftiness” (2 Cor. 11:3). So the figuratively great dragon:

- ❖ “was thrown down, **the serpent of old who is called the devil and the Satan, who deceives the whole world**” (*Rev. 12:9*).

## THE SERPENT WAS MORALLY RESPONSIBLE

Contrary to the teaching of John Thomas, just as Adam and Eve were morally responsible for their actions and therefore judged by God (Gen.3:16-19), so too with the serpent (Gen. 3:14, 15) who was cursed by God. *Evidently the serpent was no innocent snake*: "...as **the serpent** deceived Eve by **his** craftiness" (2 Cor. 11:3). It was clearly a morally depraved person called "the serpent" who deceived Eve. There is no hint in the Genesis 3 account that Satan is simply a parable about sin or a metaphor to represent Eve's sinful human nature. She was, in fact, still without sin up to this point in time.

EXPLAINING AWAY BIBLICAL FACTS CONCERNING  
A PERSONAL SATAN THE DEVIL

**Jude 9:**

"Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with **the devil** when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'the Lord rebuke you!'"

The usual 'Personifications Interpretation' is that the terms "satan" and "devil" refer to sinful human nature. However, because the very idea of Michael the archangel having a dispute with sinful human nature is ridiculous it is proposed that the term devil refers to certain humans. Nevertheless there are several different ways that are used in an attempt to explain away the reference to "the devil" and "Michael the archangel" as being supernatural persons:

The 1842 book *The Devil, an exposition of the Truth concerning that old serpent, the devil and Satan* interprets Jude 9 as:

*Michael (a human messenger) = Joshua the high priest (Zech. 3:1-5).*

*The devil = Satan meaning:*

*Tattenai- leader of disgruntled Samaritans of Ezra 4.*

*The body of Moses = The Congregation of Israel*

The dispute is interpreted as being over the building of the temple and so under the Mosaic system.

E.A. Stallworthy interprets Jude 9 as:

*Michael = Moses*

*The devil = Korah, Dathan and Abiram*

*The body of Moses = The congregation of Israel.*

Michael Watkins interprets:

*Michael (a human messenger) = Michael*

*The devil = Tattenai*

*The body of Moses = Joshua (the high priest)*

**Comments:**

- If one believes that Michael the archangel was just a human messenger then one must believe this also about the archangel Gabriel. However, Gabriel was in existence in Daniel's time and also in Mary's time, and so living well beyond any human longevity and so cannot have been human.
- Michael is a supernatural being (1Thess. 4:16) with his own angels (Rev. 12:7). It is fantasy to imagine that an archangel is human. Jude 8,9 implies that Michael and the devil are "supernatural beings" (NLT), "celestial beings" (REB, Barclay, NIV), "angelic glories" (Moffatt), "angelic orders" (Weymouth) or "glorious ones" and who are defined as angels in the commentaries.
- One would have to question whether CDs really do believe in supernatural angels if they should turn angels into human messengers whenever it is inconvenient to have them as being supernatural persons.

- The real dispute is recorded in the Targum of Jonathan on Deuteronomy 34:6 and so is a long past event. Lange’s commentary explains from Jewish tradition:  
     ...that God had charged Michael the archangel with the burial of Moses; that Satan opposed him bringing an accusation against him relative to the murder of the Egyptian; in consequence of which he was unworthy of such an honourable burial.
- There is no biblical or logical reason to believe that the Zechariah 3 and Jude passages are even remotely connected.
- There is no biblical text or any indicator that “the body of Moses” = The congregation of Israel or Joshua the high priest. It clearly refers to Moses’ literal dead body.
- There is no biblical text or any indicator that the devil = Tattenai or the trio of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Again this is simply an arbitrary interpretation.
- Zechariah 3:2 uses the term “**the Satan**” and in being singular and definite cannot refer to *the group of persons—Korah, Dathan and Abiram*.

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**2 Corinthians 11:14:**

“...and no wonder! For **The Satan** (Gk. *ho Satanas*) himself transforms himself into **an angel of light**.”

Explained away as: *Satan (adversary) was the chief leader of rebel Jewish adversaries of Paul i.e. false apostles. So it is not strange if his servants are misguided supporters.*

Comment: Paul’s letters do not mention a single ring leader of the false apostles who he ever calls The Adversary. So the above explanation cannot possibly be proven and flies in the face of the general biblical testimony regarding “the Satan.”

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**1 Peter 5:8:**

“Be vigilant; because your *adversary* **the devil**, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

Explained away as: *The Roman magistracy that persecuted Christians under Nero and Diocletian.*

Comment: There is again a failure to see that this means that the devil is the one behind the persecutors of Christians. Yet if the devil were the Roman magistracy Christians would have to resist it because James 4:7 says “resist **the devil** and he will flee from you.” Yet Paul tells Christians to “*be in subjection to the governing authorities*” (Rom. 13) and Peter says “*submit yourselves...to every human institution*” (1 Pet. 2:13).

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**Revelation 2:10:** “...**the devil** is about to throw some of you into prison.”

Explained away as: *The actions of the wicked Roman government and so there is no real personal Satan.*

Comment: Just as God is credited with the actions of His agents that do His will, the devil is also credited with the actions of his agents doing his will (2 Cor. 11:14). Therefore, the Roman government acted as the devil’s agent but was not actually the devil.

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**Revelation 12:7-9:**

“And war broke out in heaven...the great dragon was cast out, that **serpent of old** called the **Devil**, and **Satan**, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and **his angels** were cast out with him.” (Also see Rev. 20:2).

Explained away as:

- *That there can never be **war in heaven** and so this verse is viewed as entirely figurative and not involving a literal Devil.*
- *It is also claimed that because this is in the book of Revelation that it must be entirely symbolic and therefore symbolic of sin or of the Roman government as reflecting sinful human nature.*

Comments:

1. This war does not have to take place at God’s location; but in the lower heavens—the ‘air’—where Satan is “*the prince of the power of the air.*” (Eph. 2:2).
2.
  - a. It is misunderstood from Revelation 1:1 that the word “*signified*” means that the book is entirely symbolic. However, the Greek word means *communicated* and is used elsewhere in the Scriptures with no thought of symbols e.g. John 12:32, 33; 18:32 and 21:19.
  - b. Certainly, the great red dragon is a symbol (12:3). But in 12:9 we are **told what the symbol represents**, namely: “*the serpent of old called the Devil and Satan.*” This is because all symbols represent something literal. One cannot have a symbol of a symbol. Yet if “Satan” were interpreted as a symbolic term for sinful human nature, then a symbol would have been used incorrectly. In any case, who would his angels (messengers) be if he were interpreted to represent *sinful human nature*?
  - c. As noted above if the “dragon,” in Revelation 12:7-9 as a figure of “that ancient Serpent, who is called the devil and Satan” was a personification of sinful human nature then the archangel Michael would be battling against sinful human nature – but whose sinful nature would this be? Do archangels have a sinful human nature? And what could possibly be meant by sinful human nature as having angels?
  - d. Furthermore, there is no basis for interpreting this verse as referring to the **Roman government** because Satan/devil/tempter is shown elsewhere to refer to a single external personality.

**John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11:**

“Now is the judgment of this world; now **the ruler of this world** will be cast out.”

Explained away as: “Sin” being “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2).

Comment: However, Ephesians 6:12 shows such rulers to be not of “flesh and blood” but “rulers, authorities...spiritual forces of evil.” Grammatically it cannot be sustained that “the prince of the power of the air” is identified with *sinful human nature*. The being “dead in sins” is because of following “*the course of the world and of the prince of the power of the air.*” Along with John 12:31 etc. **Ephesians 2:2** is a clear reference to Satan when it says:

- ❖ “And you were dead through your trespasses and sins in which you once lived in accordance with this world-age, in accordance with **the ruler of the realm of the air**, of the spirit that is now at work in those who are disobedient.”

The *Word Biblical Commentary* on this verse says:

“...in accordance with the ruler of the realm of the air.” Only now is the solidarity of evil, of which the recipients of the letter were once a part, given a personal connotation. Their lives were under the control of a ruler. **Supernatural powers** hostile to human welfare and to God’s redemptive purposes have already figured in 1:21 and will do so again in 3:10 and 6:11, 12. In Ephesians, however, not only do **such principalities and powers** appear, but equally prominent is **an ultimate personal power of evil** behind them, designated here as the ruler of the realm of the air, but in 4:27 and 6:11 as the devil, and in 6:16 as the evil one. For Paul too this age had its god (cf. 2 Cor 4:4), and there was a personal center to the power of evil. But in the undisputed Pauline letters the designations found in Ephesians do not appear, and the name Satan is preferred instead. *eixousia* is used in this verse for the realm or the sphere of the ruler’s authority rather than for that authority itself...What is the relationship of “the air” to “the heavenly realms”? It may be that the writer is using terminology from different cosmological schemes, but it is fairly certain. that he intends the two terms to indicate the same realm inhabited by malevolent agencies, who by asserting that the “power of the air” is not the locale of demons but the world atmosphere...

#### TEXTS WRONGLY USED TO DISPROVE THE IDEA OF A PERSONAL SATAN

##### 1 Timothy 1:20:

“Hymaeneus and Alexander whom I **delivered to Satan...**” *Also*: “**deliver** such one **to Satan** for the destruction of the flesh” (1 Cor. 5:5).

Explanation: That it would be a total cruelty to hand someone over to a wicked powerful person so as to be physically destroyed.

Comment: **Deliver to Satan** = disfellowshipped—transferred out of the kingdom of the Son (Col. 1:13) and **back into Satan’s kingdom i.e. the world.**

**Flesh** = (*sinful nature* NIV, NLT). It is **fleshly lusts** that must be destroyed, according to most commentaries. These two NT disfellowshippings were to act as a rebuke and not for the sinners annihilation by Satan.

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##### Acts 5:3, 4:

“Ananias, why has **Satan** *filled your heart to lie*? ... Why is it that **you** have *conceived this deed* in your heart.”

Explanation: The term *satan* represents the sin that filled Ananias’ heart.

Comment: *The “Satan” and the “You”* in this text do not refer to the same thing. Satan influenced and prepared Ananias’ heart for lying (“*filled your heart to lie*”), but Ananias himself conceived the specific lie.

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##### Luke 8: 5, 12:

“A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and **the birds** of the air devoured it ...<sup>12</sup> Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then **the devil** comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved”

Explanation: The “birds” represent internal human nature as does “the devil.”

Comment: The WBC notes: “That the birds should signify the Devil is not arbitrary allegory.” In other words “the birds” as such are not to be interpreted as “the devil” but in the illustration it is literal birds which sweep down to steal the seed. So there is no reason to read the parable as referring to anything other than literal birds and no reason to read the explanation as referring to anything other than the person who is titled “the devil.”

## THE TRANSLATION ISSUE OF MATTHEW 6:13

In his book *The Real Devil* Christadelphian Duncan Heaster appeals to Greek grammar when he states that:

The Lord's prayer "deliver us from evil" began to be quite arbitrarily translated by Tertullian as "deliver us from the evil one", as if referring to a personal Satan; p.38.

However, this was not "arbitrarily translated by Tertullian" as "the evil one." *The Expositors Bible Commentary* explains that:

The words *tou ponerou* ("the evil one") could be either neuter ("evil"; cf. Luke 6:45; Rom. 12:9; 1Thess 5:22) or masculine ("the evil one," referring to Satan: 13:19, 38; Eph 6:16; 1 John 2:13-14; 3:12; 5:19). In some cases the Greek does not distinguish the gender. However, **a reference to Satan is far more likely here for two reasons:** (1) "deliver us" can take either the preposition *ek* ("from") or *apo* ("from"), the former always introducing things from which to be delivered, the latter being used for predominantly of **persons**...; and (2) Matthew's first mention of temptation (4:1-11) is unambiguously connected with the Devil.

The Greek of this passage reads *alla rusai hemas apo tou ponerou* - "but deliver us **from the evil [one]**." So the fact that the preposition is *apo* indicates that one is being delivered from an evil person. Furthermore, leading Greek grammarian Daniel B. Wallace explains that: "Although, the KJV renders this "deliver us from evil" the presence of the article indicates not evil in general, but the evil one himself."

*Greek Grammar – Beyond the Basics*, p. 233.

For these reasons almost all translation versions render it as "the evil one" and not particularly for theological reasons. The unbiased nature of these translations of this verse is shown by the fact that they all give a footnote stating "Or *from evil*."

However, the argument from this issue is just another red-herring in the non-devil argument because there are many biblical statements and proofs to show that Satan is a real and supernatural person. If Christadelphians were truly honest with themselves they would accept that the rendering "the evil one" is far more likely, than the rendering "evil" and so clearly it refers to a person.

## WHY IS PETER CALLED 'SATAN'?

**Matthew 16:23:**

"Get behind me Satan! You are not mindful of the things of God, but **the things of men.**"

Explained away as: No personal Satan is spoken of here because Jesus does not say: *the things of a fallen angel*. Hence Satan is not a fallen angel.

Comment: It is exactly "*the things of men*" that Satan tempts people with. It was the self-seeking glorious things of men that Satan had tried to tempt Jesus with in the wilderness rather than "*the things of God.*" Jesus evidently means that **Peter's thinking had become like that of Satan on this one particular issue.**

## IS SATAN GOD'S AGENT OR HIS ENEMY?

As indicating that Satan cannot be God's agent many Scriptures show that God will do what one does not do to one's willing agent, namely, to punish Satan at His appointed time. For example:

- ❖ "The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (*Rev. 20:10*).

In the prophecy concerning the rebellious cherub in Eden i.e. the Serpent - Satan, the description given in Ezekiel 28:19 informs him that: “*you have come to a dreadful end and shall be no more forever.*”

However, there are a number of Scriptures which indicate that, on occasion, Satan must request and be granted God’s permission before he can act e.g. the persecution of Job (Job 1:12-2:7). Also Satan unwittingly acted as God’s agent e.g. in the inciting of David to sin regarding the taking of the census of Israel’s army (1 Chron. 21:1; 2 Sam. 24:1). Nevertheless, Satan is an enemy of God as one who sins against God (1 John 3:8) and, for the most part, acts completely independently of God, although not outside of the limitations God places on him. If this were not so then he, because he is also mankind’s enemy, would have long ago unleashed all his destructive power and brought the whole world to its knees.

## THE OCCASSIONS OF THE DEFEATING, BUT NOT THE DESTRUCTION, OF SATAN

From the time Jesus was in the wilderness he engaged Satan in a series of battles, each of which resulted in a defeat for Satan until, **at Jesus’ parousia**, his angel will physically incarcerate Satan in the abyss.

### 1. DURING THE WILDERNESS TEMPTATIONS

- ❖ “...no one that has got into the house of a strong man is able to plunder his movable goods unless first he [*Jesus*] **binds** the strong man [*Satan*], and then he will plunder his house” (*Mark 3:27*).

Jesus gave this illustration in answer to the accusation that “*he expels the demons by means of the ruler of the demons*” (verse 22). The plundering of Satan’s ill-gotten goods by Jesus occurs each time he expels a demon. So when was the ‘strong man’ **bound**? According to Beasley-Murray in *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, p. 110 this “victory over Satan took place in the ministry of Jesus—apparently at its commencement.” And the key event for this ‘binding’ of the strong man was when Jesus was **led into the wilderness** to: “contest the field with him who holds it, that by the defeat of the devil the way to the new world might be opened.”

### 2. DURING JESUS’ MINISTRY

- ❖ “And he said to them ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven’ (*Luke 10:18*).

### 3. AT JESUS’ DEATH AND RESURRECTION

- ❖ “...that through death he might **render powerless** him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (*Heb. 2:14b*).
- ❖ “For this purpose the Son of God was made manifest, namely, **to break up the works of the Devil**” (*1 John 3:8*).
- ❖ “He rescued us from the domain of darkness” (*Col. 1:13*).
- ❖ “All authority has been given me in heaven...” (*Matt. 28:18*).

*Although Satan is now defeated it will be only a matter of time before all of his power is removed from him at the end of the age* (*Rev. 20:1-3*).

### 4. JUST PRIOR TO THE START OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION

- ❖ “And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and **the dragon and his angels** fought,<sup>8</sup> but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.<sup>9</sup> So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and **his angels were cast out with him**. “And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,<sup>8</sup> but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.<sup>9</sup> So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (*Rev. 12:7-9*).

If we interpret this in Christadelphian terms we would have to imagine that 'sinful human nature' and 'mental or physical illnesses' had resided in heaven. Furthermore, if we were to take Satan and his angels as only symbols then we would have to eradicate Michael and his angels by turning them into symbols also. This would be in contradiction of the Daniel 10:13-14 and Jude 9 statements which show Michael to be a real person as an archangel.

#### 5. AT JESUS' PAROUSIA

From the time of Jesus' *parousia* forward for a thousand years the real Satan will no longer be "the ruler of this world" (*John 12:31*) or "the god of this age" (*2 Cor. 4:4*) because he will be locked away:

- ❖ "...an angel...with the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he seized the dragon... who is the devil and Satan, and **bound him** for a thousand years. And he hurled him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him..." (*Rev. 20:1-3*).

Because Christadelphians imagine the word *Satan* to be a metaphor for *sinful human nature* the world would be free of all sin during the 1000 years when it is locked away in an abyss. However, this contradicts the biblical teaching that during the 1000 year period mortal humans are shown to still sin (*Isa. 65:20*). So the term Satan cannot mean *sinful human nature*.

### SATAN'S DESTRUCTION

#### AFTER THE THOUSAND YEARS HAVE ENDED

- ❖ "And the devil was hurled into the **lake of fire** and sulphur" (*Rev. 20:10*).
  - ❖ "And the God of peace will **crush Satan** under your feet shortly." (*Rom. 16:20*).
- This is not a reference to the destruction of human sinful nature, but of Satan i.e. the serpent of Eden (*Gen. 3:1, 15; Rev.12:9; 20:2*).*

### SUMMARY OF THE CHRISTADELPHIAN INTERPRETATION OF SATAN THE DEVIL AND WHY IT FAILS

- The Serpent in Eden is a talking snake and is not connected with Satan the devil. Yet this is in contradiction of Revelation 12:9 and 20:2. A figurative understanding of these verses is incorrect.
- God is interpreted directly as Israel's adversary (*1 Chron. 21:1, 2 Sam. 24:1*). However, this fails to take into account that God is able to use even the wicked as His agents. In this case God has manipulated Satan into doing His will.
- Because *Satan* means **adversary**, and *Devil* means **slanderer**, these definitions are applied by CDs to a variety of individuals and to internal human nature. The prime failure here is to distinguish between an adversary/a devil and **the** adversary/**the** devil. Arbitrary choices have been made.

#### ARBITRARY CHOICES

All these CD applications are completely arbitrary and with no real connection between the parts of Scripture used to explain away each section concerning *the* Satan. So **the** Satan/**the** devil are explained variously as: an external human individual or organization, or internal human nature.

1. So **the human** Satan (adversary) interpretation is variously applied to:
  - **The Brother of Job**. Yet this fails to take into account the supernaturally caused disasters upon Job. Also it fails to note that it is not God who would bring disasters on a righteous person (*Job 34:10*). (The good angel interpretation fails because "the Satan" is God's opponent and is a liar).

- **The High priest Caiaphas** (Mark 1:13). Yet this fails to take into account the supernatural offer made to Jesus by Satan of all the kingdoms of the world as well as Caiaphas' lack of knowledge of Jesus at the time.
- **The Roman government** (Rev. 2:10). Yet this does not take into account the fact of Satan's use of agents so that it is Satan who will throw Christians into prison by means of human governing authorities. Also Christians were to obey the Roman government (Rom. 13), but to "*resist the devil*" (James 4:7), showing that they cannot be the same thing.
- **The Leader of Paul's Jewish adversaries** (2 Cor. 11:14 "angel of light"). Therefore this leader has to be a human "angel" in spite of the fact that the concept of "messenger" is missing. Why is it only the leader who is called Satan and not the other adversaries who are simply called his human "servants" (vss. 13, 15)?
- **Tattenai** (Ezra 5). This means that the archangel Michael must become the human high priest, in spite of the fact that an archangel is clearly shown to be a supernatural being (1Thess. 4:16) with his own angels (Rev. 12:7).

In the last two cases the interpretation is accomplished by interpreting the terms *angel* and *archangel* as human messengers. However, the Greek word *archaggelos* occurs in the NT only in Jude 9 and 1Thessalonians 4:16 where it is clearly speaking of a supernatural being. Also the Greek word *aggelos* always means a supernatural being except on a few occasions concerning John the Baptist (Matt. 11:10, Mark 1:2) and messengers sent by him (Mark 7:24) as well as James' reference to the "messengers" i.e. Israelites sent to Rahab (James 2:25). This is a really tiny proportion of cases where *aggelos* is not a reference to supernatural beings.

2. *The Satan* becomes **human nature (with a predisposition to sin)** within Jesus and any Christian:
  - **Jesus** (Mark 1:13). This is an alternative to the 'Caiaphas' interpretation and is a completely arbitrary application made by the 19<sup>th</sup> century unbelieving liberal theologians. But where in the Scriptures is Satan equated with sinful human nature? If Satan and the wild beasts are interpreted figuratively in this event so, too, the angels also must be turned into something figurative. Furthermore, a sinful nature must be attributed to Jesus contrary to the biblical statements that he never sinned even though temptation was put in his way.
  - **Christians**. In Acts 5:3, 4 it can easily be seen that an external Satan influenced and prepared Ananias "to lie" even though Ananias, through his sinful nature, thought up the particular lie himself.
3. Alternative to 'the Brother of Job' or 'good angel' interpretation, *the Satan* becomes **human pride** embodied in Job's three comforters. However, this proposal fails to take into account the **principle of agency** whereby Satan used the three comforters as agents in an attempt to bring Job down. "So it is no surprise if [Satan's] servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:14).

## KEY EVIDENCE FOR A SUPERNATURAL PERSONAL ADVERSARY

### 1. ALWAYS AN EXTERNAL PERSON IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- Jesus' Bible was the Hebrew Scriptures which teach that Satan was an external person and not a personification of sinful human nature. Neither Jesus nor his apostles would contradict this fact.
- The temptation of Jesus was by an external adversary/accuser/slanderer— "the Satan" because these are activities of a personality, but it was impossible that it was Caiaphas.

2. A PARTICULAR PERSON

- ❖ “The Satan”/“the Devil” is one particular adversary as contrasted with “a satan” /“a devil” as any adversary.

3. AN INTELLIGENT AND SUPERNATURAL POWER

- ❖ “...*the Satan* ... we are not ignorant of **his devices** (*schemes, designs*)” (2 Cor. 2:11).
- ❖ *Satan sent* “**the fire of God, a great wind** and he **smote Job with boils**” (Job 1:16, 19, 2:7).
- ❖ “The coming of the lawless one is by **the activity of Satan** with all **power** and **false signs and wonders**, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing...” (2 Thess. 2:9, 10).

4. A SYMBOL CANNOT INTERPRET A SYMBOL

**Revelation 12:9** interprets the symbolic “*red dragon*” of 12:3 as the literal person described as “*that serpent of old called the Devil and Satan.*” If “Satan” were a symbolic term for the sinful human nature then a symbol would have been used incorrectly.

CONCLUSION

To turn the term *Satan* into meaning *sinful human nature* is entirely theoretical and is based on a usage of language which, if applied to other persons in the Scriptures could turn them into anything one wishes. In this way one could even change God, for example, into simply ‘the good side of human nature.’ As Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible says of Satan:

Every quality, every action which can indicate personality, is attributed to him in language which cannot be explained away.

.....

APPENDIX

TEXT WRONGLY USED TO PROVE THE IDEA OF  
A PERSONAL SATAN

*Isaiah 14:4 ff:*

“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!”

*This refers to the King of Babylon and does not refer to Satan because verse 16 asks: “Is this the **man** who made the earth tremble?”*

*By Raymond C. Faircloth*

[www.biblicaltruthseekers.co.uk](http://www.biblicaltruthseekers.co.uk)

SUGGESTED READING

The script of the debate between the Christadelphian Duncan Heaster and Jeffrey Fletcher of The Church of God on the subject: “**The Devil and Satan: What Does the Bible Say?**”

These two papers can be found in Volume 8. Issue 1 (Fall 1998) of *The Journal of the Radical Reformation* via the [www.restorationfellowship.org](http://www.restorationfellowship.org) website.