

THE VERY DEVIL



by Harry Whittaker

First Impression 1991

Published by:
Biblia, 23 Thirlmere Avenue, Standish, Wigan WN6 0AT

Printed by:
North West Print Limited, Booth Road, Sale M33 1JS

Contents

Ch.		Page
1.	Satan	1
2.	Devil	5
3.	The Enemy Within	8
4.	Satan — A Human Adversary	13
5.	“That Old Serpent”	25
6.	The Origin of the Devil	29
7.	Angels of Evil	34
8.	Principalities and Powers	47
9.	Job’s Satan	53
10.	Demons (1)	56
11.	Demons (2)	62
12.	A Personal devil	68
13.	The Temptation of Jesus	70
14.	“Delivered unto Satan”	74
15.	Baalzebub	77
16.	The Devil and the Body of Moses	79
17.	“Him that had the power of death”	82
18.	“Deliver us from the Evil One”	84
19.	“The snare of the Devil”	85
20.	“The devil and his angels”	86
21.	“Doctrines of devils”	88
22.	“Unclean spirits” in the Apocalypse	89
23.	The “devil” who sowed tares	91
24.	“Satan at his right hand”	92
25.	“The Man of Sin”	93
	Quotations Index	95

Other books by Harry Whittaker

Available from Biblia, Mrs M Whittaker, 14 Laidon Avenue, CREWE, CW2 6RR.

The Time of the End

Jews, Arabs and Bible Prophecy

Studies in the Gospels

Studies in the Acts of the Apostles

Passover

Reformation

Samuel, Saul and David

Genesis 1-2-3-4

Revelation — A Biblical Approach Bible Studies — An Anthology Isaiah

Of Whom the World was not Worthy Letters to George and Jenny Seven Short Epistles Joel

Israel in the Wilderness

Through Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures Five Minutes to Twelve Exhorting and Testifying

Available from C.M.P.A., 404 Shaftmoor Lane, Birmingham B28.

Enjoying the Bible

Joseph the Saviour

Abraham — Father of the Faithful

Wrestling Jacob

Hezekiah the Great

Foreword

There can be no manner of doubt that the Christadelphian Faith is right, and other fundamentalist and evangelical churches are wrong, concerning Satan. Such are the strong convictions of the writer of this little book, which has been put together, more concisely than the subject really warrants, not primarily to convince those who believe in the existence of a superhuman Devil, but to reinforce the principles of those who know better, but who sometimes have lingering doubts as to the real solidity of this item of their Faith. In these pages I have tried to handle the Word of God with honesty. Will those readers who get a different impression please tell me so.

In an attempt to be fairly comprehensive, it has been difficult to avoid a certain amount of duplication. I hope that readers will not find the occasional repetition too tedious.

It is hoped that the effort to maintain a distinction between Satan/Devil and satan/devil will not prove too bewildering to my readers.

Harry Whittaker
July 1991

Acknowledgement

The circumstances attendant on the writing of this book were not exactly propitious. Consequently, the manuscript as originally put together was a bit dishevelled. To make it fit to see the light of day has called for much patient and painstaking attention from Winifred Taunton. I am happy to acknowledge here the splendid help she has given me.

To Elsie Bramhill also I again tender my warm thanks for the prompt help she has given me uncomplainingly.

1. Satan

1 Samuel 29:4	Numbers 22:22
2 Samuel 19:22	Exodus 12:23
1 Kings 5:4	1 Chronicles 21:1
1 Kings 11:14,23	2 Samuel 24:1
Psalms 71:13	Matthew 16:23
Psalms 109:4	Revelation 2:9:
Psalms 109:29	Revelation 2:13
Psalms 38:20	1 Thessalonians 2:18

The first thing that needs to be learned about Satan is that it is not a name that belongs to a particular person or being, in the way that the Biblical name Moses belongs to one particular man. Satan is a Hebrew word which means “adversary”, and an almost identical verb means “to be an adversary”.

There are *many* examples of this in the Bible. Here are a few to be going on with, all of them self-explanatory:

- a. The Philistines were afraid that David, living for a while in their midst, would prove to be an adversary, a Satan (Heb.) unto them in time of war (1 Sam. 29:4).
- b. When Abishai counselled David to take violent action against one of his bitter enemies, the king described him and his brother as adversaries(satans) for their eagerness to do such an unworthy act (2 Sam. 19:22).
- c. In the early part of his reign, Solomon was without adversaries (satans; 1 Kgs. 5:4).
- d. Later on Hadad...and Rezon...became his adversaries (1 Kgs. 11:14,23). It was *God* who raised up these satans.
- e. In the Psalms David's satans are often referred to, and always in a context which identifies them as *human* adversaries.

"Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul. Let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt" (71:13).
- f. "For my love they are my adversaries (satans): but I give myself unto prayer" (109:4).
- g. "Let mine adversaries (satans) be clothed with shame" (109:29).
- h. "They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries (satans)" (38:20).

The foregoing catalogue of passages is sufficient in itself to make a strong case for believing (1) that in general when the Bible uses Satan there is probably little justification for the capital S; (2) that the reference is normally to some human adversary.

But to this second point there are exceptions of a rather surprising character. For example:

"And God's anger was kindled because he (Balaam) went (with a willingness to lay a curse upon Israel) and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary (satan) against him" (Num. 22:22). Thus even the God of Israel and His controlling angel (Ex. 12:23) may, on occasion, be described as satan.

Another striking example of the same usage is this:

"And Satan (an adversary?) stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel" (1 Chr.

21:1).

But the parallel record of what is certainly the same incident says this:

“And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and *He* (the Lord) moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah” (2 Sam. 24:1).

Thus the satan in this remarkable testing of the king’s integrity was the angel of the Lord. (For full consideration of this episode, see “Samuel, Saul and David”, HAW, ch.50).

In the New Testament one satan passage after another is readily seen to *require* reference to human enemies. And in most of these instances an attempt to read into the words the concept of a superhuman Satan ends in blatant absurdity. Here are a few examples:

- a. With the best of intentions Peter was trying to dissuade his Lord from the contemplation of an inevitable death by violence in Jerusalem. Thus he presented to Jesus a serious temptation which could be very damaging. So Jesus rounded on him with the rebuke: “Get thee behind me, satan; thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of *men*” (Mt. 16:23). It is specially to be noted here that Jesus did not set over against the goodness of God the evil of the Devil but the specious wrong-headedness of *men*. Satan here was a human adversary, no less a person than Peter. And if he deserved to be so labelled, what is to be said about lesser mortals? This world is full of satans.
- b. The church at Smyrna was warned against “the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan” (Rev. 2:9). The terms “Jews...synagogue” explain themselves. In the early church there were no enemies of the Faith more rancorous than a certain section of the Jewish nation. “Studies in the Acts”, HAW, Appendix 3, develops this theme at some length. Without any doubt at all, the Jews in the first century were a bitterly hostile adversary- synagogue. Cp. also Rev. 3:9.
- c. The church at Pergamos had a hard time because of a different satan, for these believers dwelt “where satan’s seat (literally, throne) is.” They were “where satan dwelleth” (Rev. 2:13).

Enthusiasts for a superhuman Satan are in real difficulty here, for it is incumbent on them to explain why the Devil should choose to live in Pergamos in those days; why he should wish to set up his throne there: and what became of his throne when Pergamos decayed to a heap of ruins. Is his throne still there?

A remarkably simple explanation of this passage is available, helped out by the findings of historians and archaeologists. It was a time of persecution of the Faith by the Roman authority, which in that particular province had *its* governor’s headquarters in Pergamos. This was the Satan who had his “throne” in that city.

- d. In 1 Thessalonians 2:18 Paul writes: “Satan hindered us.” It will be shown in chapter 4 that this passage makes excellent sense when read with reference to human opposition. There are a few other satan passages not yet covered in this chapter; these will be dealt with in due course. But already sufficient evidence is available to make any reference to a superhuman satan highly unlikely.

2. Devil

Mark 4:15	1 Peter 5:8
Matthew 13:19,39	1 Corinthians 7:3-6
Luke 8:12	James 1:14
Jude 9	Ephesians 4:26,27
Revelation 12:9	

It is now time to give more detailed attention to the supposed alternative title of Satan — the Devil. On examination it turns out that most of the 'devil' passages, even when read superficially, are more of a hindrance than a help to those who, for some strange psychological reason, appear to be anxious to believe in the existence of such an invisible Power of evil.

But first let it be observed how hopelessly incompatible such a concept is with belief in one God who has all knowledge and all power. If God truly is monarch in His own universe, as many a Bible passage asserts, how is the existence of a superhuman Evil One to be reconciled with such a truth? For, as the twentieth century advances, any dispassionate observer could be excused for concluding that the real ruler of the universe is not God but the Devil. Drink, drugs, gambling and sexual perversions; greed and selfishness on a massive scale; every form of violence and terrorism; widespread brutality; corruption on a vast scale; a complete ignoring of the Ten Commandments and of the most elementary principles of godly living — all of these abound; most of them are deemed to be quite respectable.

They say that the Devil is behind all this. In that case the Devil is winning hands down. God doesn't stand a chance.

It is hoped that the last two paragraphs have been read as a *reductio ad absurdum* exposing belief in the Devil as a fatuous impossibility. Some other explanation of the rottenness of human society must be found — and will be, in chapter 3.

The previous chapter to this has probably provoked the question: What is the difference between Satan and the Devil?

Is there any? To this the short answer is: No. But it has to be faced that there are occasional subtle distinctions to be made between the two.

Taken very literally, devil (Greek: *diabolos*) means a false accuser. But to attempt to insist on this meaning wherever the term occurs in the New Testament is to invite obscurity and misleading conclusions.

Usually Satan and Devil can be regarded as roughly equivalent. For instance, in Mark's version of the parable of the Sower (4:15) one detail is this: "Satan cometh immediately and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts." But Matthew 13:19 has "the wicked one". And the parable of the tares (13:39) has "the children of the wicked one"; "The enemy that sowed them is the devil."

But what Satan? What devil?

Chapter 1 has prepared the way for an easy acceptance of Satan here being a portmanteau allusion to any adverse human influence. All evangelists and missionaries know only too well how easily much of their careful nurturing of converts can be brought to ruin by persuasive or malicious undermining of the good work that has been done. It is this that Jesus describes so forcefully. And well he might, for did he not see the same thing happen to Judas?

In chapter 16 the same kind of equivalence of "Satan" and "devil" will be demonstrated in connection with Jude 9.

The two familiar terms come together in the Book of Revelation's description of "that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan" (12:9). This highly-coloured passage (to be dealt with in greater detail in chapter 5) again makes clear that the two terms are to be read as equivalent to each other; and (as

has already been shown) they express in Bible idiom the idea of all that is anti-God in a world that is astray from its Creator. The devil is *human* sin in one of its diverse forms of expression. Sometimes it is Sin in general — human nature which “at its best state is altogether vanity.” But, much more often, in Bible text the devil refers to some evil person, some specific example of human sin in action.

It will be useful to illustrate both aspects of this important truth:

- a. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8).

This reads rather strangely after the detail just quoted about “that old serpent, the devil and Satan”! If there is a superhuman Devil, is he serpent or lion? And why should he be either?

When these words in 1 Peter are read against their background, all becomes clear. Peter was writing to strengthen his fellow-believers in a time of persecution by the Romans and especially by beastly Nero, the emperor. Read his chapter 4 for a long series of allusions to the current circumstances. It will then be immediately obvious why the enemy of the Faith is referred to as like “a roaring lion”, for at that very time “The Christians to the lions” was a cry frequently heard in the streets and arenas of Rome.

- b. In 1 Cor. 7:3-6 Paul writes of marital sex relations. Abstinence by mutual consent? Certainly! But (he counsels) only for a time, not permanently, “that Satan tempt you not because of your incontinency” (v.5). The Greek there means undisciplined lack of self-control. And thus the context defines the Satan Paul alludes to. Compare again: “Every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lusts” (Jas. 1:14).
- c. Another example of individual lack of self-government: “Be ye angry and sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath (i.e. do not nurse your indignation even to the next day). Neither give place to the devil” (Eph. 4:26,27). Here the last phrase surely means: Do not let your resentment so take charge of you that you develop a permanent hostility.

3. The Enemy Within

Isaiah 2:22	Isaiah 40:15-17
Jeremiah 17:9	Romans 7:14-24
Mark 7:21-23	Genesis 5:1-3
Matthew 7:11	James 1:13,14,15
Psalms 39:5	

This chapter must reckon as a corollary to those preceding it. There, a good deal of evidence was assembled to suggest that, with a few exceptions every Satan in the Bible text is some kind of human adversary. True, there are outstanding instances, such as the temptation of our Lord, and “that great serpent, the Devil and Satan” in Revelation, which have apparently been bypassed (to be accorded special attention later on). But the main thesis still calls for attention from a rather different point of view.

The Bible doctrine of Man suffers from serious neglect in this highly enlightened twentieth century. There is a drastic need for re-education in this field. The point is best made by giving attention to certain straightforward Bible passages:

- a. “Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?” (Is. 2:22). The phraseology is hardly twentieth century, but the gist of it is unmistakable.
- b. “The heart of man is desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9). Reading words as explicit as these, it is a great temptation to say to oneself: ‘True, absolutely true, of some deplorable specimens of the human race!’ But this is not what Jeremiah says. Here is his assessment of human nature. *All* men have this in their make-up.
- c. The teaching of Jesus on this theme is too blunt and uncompromising to allow of any watering

down:

“For from within, out of the heart of men proceed — **EVIL THOUGHTS**

adulteries,	covetousness,	an evil eye,
fornications,	wickedness,	blasphemy,
murders,	deceit,	pride,
thefts,	lasciviousness,	foolishness —

all these evil things *come from within*, and they defile the man” (Mk. 7:21-23).

Here is the Lord’s own definition of the devil and his twelve horrific disciples. These terrible evils, and a multitude of others related to them, have their origin in men’s hearts. No need to look for any other source.

- d. In another place, by means of three withering words, Jesus said the same thing again. What gives the words their tremendous power is the context in which they are set: “If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father...” (Mt. 7:11). In human nature there is no finer instinct than the unselfish care which a parent readily gives to his child. But “ye, being evil” faces (even in such a context) the stark fact of human depravity.
- e. David, with his own much-repentant lapses behind him, spoke almost as tersely as his Lord: “Verily, man at his best state is altogether vanity” (Ps. 39:5). It is a waste of time for a man to attempt his own vindication, a waste of time for him to aspire after being a new creature by dint of effort and high resolution. It isn’t in him. Apart from the grace of Christ he remains as he was — “altogether vanity”.
- f. No wonder, then, that Isaiah weighs the entire race in scales and finds them as “the small dust of the balance... All nations before him are as nothing, and are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity” (40:15-17). What a contrast here with modern humanism’s blithe assertion of “the infinite value of every human soul”.
- g. The apostle Paul crowns all this devastating testimony with a personal confession to which every honest man must add his own Amen:

“I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that I do... In me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do...I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am!...” (Rom. 7:14-24).

Here, then, is the Bible’s picture of human nature, as proclaimed about themselves by some of the world’s finest saints and by the only Man against whom no reproach can be made. And today, as the world’s cleverest generation rushes from one year of disgrace to a worse, the Bible’s thesis of the rottenness of human nature is proved to be inescapably true.

There is, then, no need for any power of evil outside man. He alone, without any goading or coaxing or alluring is constantly proving his capacity to make a thorough mess of things. He needs no assistance, no inspiration, no encouragement in his evil work. Without any outside aid he is fully competent. The Devil, the one men have gladly received into their theology for centuries, is declared, by Holy Scripture’s weightiest, emphasis and by the finest characters our race can produce, to be redundant, totally unnecessary.

Then how is it that this quite superfluous Devil has had such a good run for his money, so that in every century he has had his disciples and devotees?

The answer is easy. Right from the time of the Garden of Eden the human race has preferred to be self-excusing rather than honest in self-examination. It can be comforting and even reassuring to unload the blame on to the shoulders of the Devil: The Devil, too subtil for me, maneuvered my

downfall.'

But Jesus says: 'No! Out of the heart of *man* proceed...'

This chapter has shown, if indeed the demonstration were needed, that any doctrine of a superhuman Devil is utterly superfluous; and the doctrine of human devils is so obvious as not to need proof.

Put alongside that the copious demonstration already given, and with a good deal more to be added, that satanic evil is to be sought always in men and not in rebellious angels, and it begins to look as though this age-old error has received notice to quit.

This inner depravity of human nature is a fact not to be evaded. But how is it to be explained?

The evolutionist has a ready answer: Man has come from countless generations of animal ancestors, and the worst aspects of his human nature are simply a hangover from those crude origins. Given time — a few thousand generations more — and it can be expected that the more deplorable side of human nature will be refined out.

What a hope! Does the last five thousand years of recorded history show any sign of civilizing man's savagery? Does the story of the twentieth century offer any hope of the human race surviving for another hundred years?

And yet every man has a conscience, however twisted or flabby it might be. Where did this faculty of discriminating between right and wrong, between fair play and injustice, come from? Another legacy from animal ancestors?

Over against all this God-less foolishness is the Bible's simple reiterated witness to what believers call the Fall of Man.

The Bible story of beginnings, asserted to be plain truth and not an elaborate tapestry of unclear symbolism, says that the human race began "very good". Made "in the image and likeness of God"; and, required to observe a simple law of obedience, of his own freewill the first man chose to disobey. The story of that temptation and fall will be considered in chapter 5.

The result of that disobedience brought a curse on the earth, and on human nature. Now man was a sinner, a very different creature from the "very good" original:

"In the day that God created man, *in the likeness of God made he him*. Male and female created he them, and *he blessed them...* And Adam (after the disobedience) begat a son *in his own likeness, after his image*" (Gen. 5:1-3); that is, in the likeness of a sinful parent.

The human race has followed that pattern ever since. Is there any more winning picture of innocence than the sight of a baby asleep? Yet nothing is more certain than the fact that, assuming a normal life span, in a few years that delightful baby will be a naughty child; in a few years more a self-willed teenager; in a few years more a mature adult, most of the time egocentric. This programme is universal; it is characteristic of all human nature. It is a flair we all have, the inner satan which at our best we deplore and strive to discipline, but which more often we tolerate ("That's the way I'm made"), but to which now and then we give full rein and encouragement.

The apostle James has a remarkably vigorous passage about this:

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil (or, by evil men) neither tempteth He any man. But each man is (separately) tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust (desire), and enticed" (Jas. 1:13,14).

How remarkable that in considering the source and process of temptation this apostle of Christ momentarily considers God as the Author of temptation, only immediately to dismiss the idea as absurd; but then in unvarnished language he puts the blame fairly and squarely on a man's own mind and inclinations — "drawn away of his own lust, and enticed". How very odd that this writer, with such a keen insight into human nature and experience, should apparently overlook the most obvious

explanation: temptation by an unseen superhuman Evil One!!

The next verse rubs salt into the wound:

“Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished (i.e. mature), bringeth forth death” (v.15).

There is here a graphic figure of speech involving three generations, thus:

1. A man and his own lust
 beget
2. Sin
 and this child has a worse offspring
3. Death

It is strictly a family affair, of the very worst sort. The great Tempter of ancient theology doesn't get a look in.

4. Satan – a human adversary

Romans 8:3	John 13:27
Matthew 16:23	1 Timothy 5:15
John 6:70	1 Timothy 1:20
John 6:60,66	1 Corinthians 5:5
Revelation 2:9; 3:9	2 Corinthians 2:11
Revelation 2:13	2 Corinthians 11:14
Revelation 2:10	2 Thessalonians 2:9
Revelation 2:24	1 Thessalonians 2:18
Mark 4:15	Matthew 13:39
Acts 5:3,9	John 12:31
Luke 22:31	John 14:30
Luke 22:3	John 16:8-11
John 13:2	

Those who, along with the present writer, reject the old inherited ideas about a superhuman Devil, are often known to offer as an alternative the notion of sin-in-the-flesh. There is need for caution here.

- a. To talk about sin-in-the-flesh is to perpetrate a mis-reading of Romans 8:3, which means that by his life and death “in the flesh” (a Bible synonym for fallen human nature) our Lord condemned sin, and he did it in the flesh, i.e. in the fleshly nature which is sin's stronghold.
- b. There is no sin at all in flesh, the meat on one's bones.

It would be better therefore to describe Satan or the Devil as human sinfulness or the universal human propensity to sin.

I von this concise definition can be, in not a few places, inadequate or misleading or even plain wrong — as later studies will seek to show.

First, and through the rest of this present exercise, the aim will be to show that the definition is inadequate as long as it concentrates on an abstract idea. Hebrew is a language with relatively little emphasis on abstract thinking. Instead its outstanding characteristic is an emphasis on concrete ideas and vivid imagery.

Accordingly, it is more correct to think of Satan or the Devil as human sinfulness, as it is expressed in the personality or actions of a sinful individual. In other words, putting it concisely, in far more passages than is generally realised, Satan is not a rather vague sin-principle but a very real sinner.

1. Matthew 16:23. The reader has already been reminded that the great apostle, who had just been

so highly commended by his Lord for his noble declaration of faith, soon found himself being repudiated. Because (for whatever reason) he thought it right to reprove his Master for his “defeatist” talk about suffering and death in Jerusalem: “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me.” The unanswerable point is often made that Jesus was not addressing himself to some invisible superhuman Satan, but to Peter. *He* was the Satan — as Jesus proceeded to emphasize: “Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of *men*.” The antithesis to the goodness of God is not the wickedness of the Devil but the perversity of man.

2. John 6:70 is another classic passage. Because of the Lord’s rejection of kingship (6:15) and his “hard saying” in the synagogue at Capernaum (6:60,66), the loyalty of the Twelve was now in doubt. “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?” the Lord commented sadly. He did not suggest that Judas was in the power of the Devil, but that he himself was a devil. The point is obvious, powerful, and useful.

This “human satan” clue needs to be pressed further than it has been. The following sequence of passages is intended to develop this suggestion.

3. Revelation 2:9; 3:9. Two of the seven churches of Asia — Smyrna and Philadelphia — were plagued with the hostility of “a synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie.” It misses the point to apply these words to the perversions of Truth by a decadent Christianity in later centuries. Very often the New Testament picks out unbelieving Jewry as the great adversary of the Faith in the first century, and especially in the churches founded by Paul. There is no need to look further. “They say they are Jews, and are not.” These words are explicit — a synagogue of natural Israel, cut off from God through unbelief, and called Satan.
4. Revelation 2:13. In some churches there was another Satan. Pergamos dwelt “where Satan’s throne is.” And this Satan was another persecutor, for there is reference to “my faithful martyr.” As soon as it is realised that Pergamos was the centre of Roman administration for the province of Asia, and that Revelation was written in a time of Roman persecution (Nero, Domitian — the former, probably), obscurity evaporates.
5. Revelation 2:10 is also very evidently about Rome the persecutor: “The devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried.” Once this Rome explanation has been considered there is no need to look further.
6. Revelation 2:24 is not quite so straightforward. The faithful in Thyatira are warned against “the deep things of Satan, as they say.” That plural pronoun immediately steers attention away from an individual invisible Satan to a group who had to be reprobated, and these are identified in the context as “that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess” and her “children.” The Old Testament symbolism for a false teacher and her disciples is readily recognizable. These talked about the “deep things” of their perverted faith; but, says the Lord, they are the “deep things of Satan”, meaning: these people are adversaries to the Truth.
7. Mark 4:15. “When they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.” All who have experienced the situation described here in the parable of the Sower, know that such malign influence is exercised *by people*. No one has any experience of a superhuman Satan at work in this way. If it be replied that Satan works invisibly through human agents (and this is the *only* reply that J.W.s and the like have in all the Scriptures now being discussed), then it is pertinent to ask for clear Bible evidence for such an interpretation. Certainly more than a bald human assertion is called for, no matter how dogmatically and confidently it may be advanced. The next two passages about to be cited are the nearest approach to Bible evidence that can be offered, that an invisible Satan does work through human agents, who are usually bad enough not to need another Devil at their elbow urging them on. When the depravity of human nature is recognized as clearly as it needs to be and as clearly as the Bible describes it, a superhuman Devil becomes a piece of unnecessary furniture cluttering up God’s world.
8. Acts 5:3 might seem to provide reinforcement for the point of view just rejected: “Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?” But the immediate context puts this in a different light: “Why hast *thou* conceived this thing in thine heart?” (v.4). The blame is put fairly and squarely on the shoulders of Ananias, and not on the intangible shoulders of an invisible

Devil. But in that case, why should Peter employ “Satanic” language at all? Again, the context explains: “How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?” (v.9). Here is plain implication that Sapphira was no passive partner in this sordid transaction. There is no explicit declaration that she was the human Satan Peter referred to, but the phrases: “with Sapphira his wife...his wife also being privy to it,” together with the dramatic fate which overtook her also, strongly suggest that this interpretation is as near certain as can be.

Four separate passages, three of them about Judas, turn out to be not as useful to the supernatural-Devil worshippers as might at first be thought:

9. Luke 22:31: “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath obtained you by asking (RVm), that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” The conventional meaning read into these words runs into serious difficulties: (a) To whom did Satan prefer his request? Someone of superior power and authority to himself, surely. But who might this be? Would Almighty God defer to such an openly hostile Satan? (b) The past tense: “obtained you” clearly means the wish was already granted! Indeed? (c) The pronouns “you” are plural, and must refer to the whole group of disciples; yet apparently the Lord, aware of Satan’s request, had prayed only for Peter. Remarkable!

These difficulties evaporate when the Lord’s words are read as intimating that the high priest (for whom there could be no more appropriate name than satan) had demanded of the Sanhedrin a mandate to round up not just the Leader but the whole band of disciples. And already that mandate had been granted: “Satan hath obtained you by asking.” Now it was only a matter of time. Also, Jesus knew that none of them would be in greater danger than Peter, so it was for him that he prayed, especially too since, if Peter stood firm he had the strength of personality and spiritual gusto to carry the rest with him. This view of the situation is as natural as anything in the gospels. It is now easy to understand why Jesus, (arrested), made special intervention on behalf of the twelve: “Let these go their way...and they all forsook him and fled” (Jn. 18:8; Mk. 14:50).

10. Luke 22:3: “Then entered Satan into Judas...and he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them.” Almost all readers of these words — both pro and con — show a marked inclination to alter their meaning. On the one hand, some make “entered into Judas” mean no more than “Satan influenced him.” Others, shrugging off a superhuman Satan, paraphrase with the idea: “Judas was in a black mood.” But neither view gives any real weight to the verb: “entered into.”

Instead, then, it is suggested that this was a human satan, an emissary of the Lord’s enemies, who entered into some place where he knew Judas was to be found (the Greek of Acts 19:30; 20:29 is exactly the same). The outcome of this first approach was that Judas “went his way; and communed with the chief priests.” The sequence of ideas from verse 2 is then as natural as could possibly be expected: The priests confer on the best way of laying hands on Jesus; their gestapo has led them to believe that Judas may be disaffected. “Get his co- operation, and the problem is solved! Whom do we have who can make contact with him?”

11. John 13:2: “...the devil having now (Gk: already) put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him...”. That verb “put (cast, thrust)” positively requires reference to a personal devil. To write off this development as a further manifestation of “sin in the flesh” does despite to the language and chooses vagueness in place of precision. But neither is there need to hand over to a superhuman Devil. Instead: here is John’s equivalent of Luke’s “satan entered into him.” The messenger of the Lord’s enemies, sent to have dealings with Judas, did his fell work efficiently. At the Last Supper Judas’s mind was made up.
12. John 13:27: “And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.” Here the language is precisely the same as in Lk. 22:3 (par. 10), and the explanation is the same: ‘Judas, there’s a man at the street door wants to see you.’ Thus a satan emissary, with some simple pretext to cover his real errand, makes a final contact with the traitor, whilst hoodwinked disciples assume that there’s some needy soul to be helped or maybe something lacking from their Passover arrangements. Those who insist here on a superhuman Satan must surely be puzzled that on two separate occasions “Satan entered into Judas” (Lk. 22:3).

Thus, four separate passages (paragraphs 9-12) are all harmonized and explained by the same simple hypothesis which the first of them pointedly suggested.

13. 1 Timothy 5:15: "For some (of the young women mentioned in v.14) are already turned aside after Satan." If indeed this Satan is a superhuman rebel against God, those who choose to go after him, as the words clearly imply, surely need to have their heads examined. But if Satan here is a synonym for the human world of evil, then it is easy to see that Paul is flashing a red light, warning that the way of life he has just described (v.13) has already taken some away from the ecclesia and back into the world.
14. 1 Timothy 1:20 has exactly the same idiom: "Some...concerning faith have made shipwreck; of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." Here, evidently, is one of the technical terms of the early church, used to describe the excommunication of an unworthy member. Within the boundaries of the ecclesia there is Life in Christ. Thrust out from that, the offender is in the world, with all its human evil — he has been "committed unto satan."

On the other hand, if this passage means what evangelical churches say it means, then it declares a shouting absurdity; for this delivering to Satan is "that they may learn *not* to blaspheme." But would the orthodox Satan teach anyone not to blaspheme? Would not such a Prince of Evil delight in encouraging men to blaspheme the name of Christ, especially those who have already had experience of his saving grace?

15. 1 Corinthians 5:5 has the same terminology, but supplies an even stronger argument against the orthodox delusion. It is the case of immoral behaviour in the Corinthian church. Paul counsels that they hold a solemn assembly and "deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." The contrast here between flesh and spirit is important. If flesh means the actual meat on the bones of the offender, then Satan, the Prince of Darkness, would not be interested in destroying that, for is it not the spiritual ruin of souls that he is concerned with (or so it is said)? But if flesh here means the fleshly mind (as in Rom. 8:5-9; Jn. 8:15; Eph. 2:3, and a score of other places), then what sort of immortal Satan would want to help in destroying the fleshly mind of this convicted sinner? Would he not be the last individual in the universe to employ for such a purpose?
16. 2 Corinthians 2:11 is about the same case of ecclesial discipline. Evidently the man repented of his evil ways, so that Paul now felt moved to write: "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment which was inflicted by the many (the majority vote). So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such an one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow" (v.6,7). They are urged to restore this offender to fellowship, "lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." Clearly this language echoes Paul's phrasing in his earlier comment about this offender who had been "delivered unto Satan" (1 Cor. 5:5). Here, as there, Satan is the world outside the ecclesia. The world, says Paul, will tighten its hold on this erring brother unless, appropriate to his repentant spirit, the brethren "forgive him" and "confirm the Love Feast unto him." (Note: "*his* devices", because Greek treats "Satan" as a masculine noun.)
17. 2 Corinthians 11:14: "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." This is a singularly unfortunate passage to be cited by the believer in a personal Devil; for is it not believed that Satan was an angel of light who transformed himself into a prince of darkness?

But what did Paul mean? The context supplies abundant material for explanation. At this time some of the new Gentile ecclesias were in danger of being subverted by a well-organized team of Judaizers who found that they could make most progress by sustaining a campaign of denigration against the apostle; see, for example, 10:10,11; 11:3-6,13,22,23; 12:15-17 (a modern version may help here. See "The Jewish Plot", App.3 in "Acts", HAW; and "Bible Studies", ch. 13.07, HAW). These minions came amongst the Corinthians claiming equal authority with the apostles — had not they also seen the Lord? And were they not streets ahead of Peter and the rest in education and rabbinic lore? If these subverters appeared as "ministers of righteousness," then the chief organizer of the campaign (whom Paul calls "Satan"), the spider at the centre of the web, was

bound to be presented as “an angel of light.” He was a very human satan, Paul’s personal satan. It may well be (though this is not insisted on here) that the allusion in the same context (12:7) to Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” is to be interpreted on the same lines. If so, the thorn in the flesh was nothing physical, but the exasperation provoked by the activities of one of these false apostles, “the messenger of (the same) satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.” Assuredly there would be less risk of Paul developing a swelled head if people were going around making calculated disparaging remarks about him.

18. 2 Thessalonians 2:9: “Him whose presence is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.” Of course these words are commonly read as part of a prophecy about the papacy. However, in a separate study “The Man of Sin”, it has been shown that the primary reference was probably to the Judaistic campaign just referred to and to Paul’s malicious antagonist, the satan indicated in Par. 17. Certainly such an one did “sit in the temple of God” (the ecclesia) in a way in which no pope has ever done. And, claiming to be as good as any apostle, he would display “power and signs and wonders” (which Paul calls “the marks of an apostle; 2 Cor. 12:12) except that these were bogus — “lying wonders”. More on this in chapter 25.
19. 1 Thessalonians 2:18. The new ecclesia in Thessalonica was scarcely a going concern before trouble arose when hostile Jews made a riot. The rulers of the city took action, and as a result the brethren hustled Paul and Silas away from the city (Acts 17:10). A short while later Paul, writing from Athens or Corinth, complained of being “bereaved of you” and “endeavouring the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again.” The language seems to imply at least two efforts to get back to Thessalonica without delay — “but Satan hindered us.” One guess is that this satan was some illness which effectively immobilized the apostle. But “once and again” makes this somewhat unlikely. More probably, Paul had had to leave Thessalonica in great haste because the city rulers had banned him from further residence. It is conceivable that through Timothy (1 Thess. 3:2) or by correspondence Paul had made more than one effort to get this ban lifted, but without success — “satan hindered”. Perhaps Jewish adversaries were pulling strings, or maybe the authorities themselves were obdurate. A reconstruction on these lines fits the facts in 1 Thess, and in Acts 17:6,9 pretty well.
20. Matthew 13:39: “The enemy that sowed them (the tares) is the devil.” It is, of course, commonplace that in the parable of the tares our Lord was making a prophecy of the corruption of the purity of the early faith. What has not been so clearly recognized is the accuracy of that prophecy: “While men slept, his enemy came, and sowed tares among the wheat” — in other words, the decay of truth in the early church was brought about by the deliberate systematic propagation of false teaching, from the earliest days, by enemies who infiltrated into the ranks of the ecclesias, pretending to be sincere converts. The Judaist campaign (paragraphs 17,18) was only the more obvious aspect of a sustained drive against the Christian Faith, the tip of the iceberg. (On this, see “Acts” App. 3, by H.A.W.). Here is the explanation of the amazingly rapid decay of Truth in the early church. There was no need to wait till the time of Constantine. The letters of the apostles are sufficient evidence that long before those men of God had passed off the scene, the tares were flourishing in fine style. Comparison (or rather, contrast) with the writings of the earliest of the early “Fathers” proves the point up to the hilt. Thus, in the parable of the tares, a vague “sin-in-the-flesh” devil can confidently be replaced by a much more specific human adversary of exceptional efficiency. Mark 4:15 (Par.7) should perhaps be considered along with this.
21. “The prince of this world” (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Instead of a woolly and terribly unsatisfactory “sin-in-the-flesh” explanation which doesn’t fit the language, it is possible in these three places to read an allusion to a specific human adversary. First, the point needs to be made (it has been far too much neglected) that in John’s gospel (and not infrequently elsewhere), the word “world”, *kosmos*, is often used with restricted reference to the *Jewish* world: “If thou do these things, show thyself to the world,” jeered the Lord’s brothers when urging him to go to the Feast of Tabernacles (7:4), and Jesus replied: “the world cannot hate you; but me it hateth.” After the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the Lord’s adversaries worriedly commented: “Behold, the world is gone after him” (12:19). “Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” (14:22). Thus there is the possibility that by “the prince of this world” Jesus meant the high priest, for in every other place in John (3:1; 7:26,48; 12:42) this word means

a religious ruler in Israel. Now, to consider the three passages in turn.

- (a) “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out” (12:31). The context is “the death he (Jesus) should die.” His crucifixion would pass judgment on Israel, as unworthy of the Son of God whom they rejected. And that death would mean the end of the Mosaic order of which the high priest was the head and symbol.
- (b) “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (14:30). That word “cometh” (present tense: is now coming) stands firmly in the way of any sin-in-the-flesh explanation. But even as Jesus spoke those words the minions of the chief priests were on their way to arrest him: “the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me,” i.e. is defeated in his attempts to prove me worthy of condemnation. The ellipsis in the next verse should then be supplied thus. “But (he cometh) that the (Jewish) world may know that I love the Father.”
- (c) “When he (the Comforter) is come, he will reprove the (Jewish) world...of (its) sin, because they believe not on me...of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been (RV) judged” (16:8-11). If this means the end or even the reprobation of sin-in-the-flesh, much difficulty remains — for if the former, after two thousand years that enemy flourishes more than ever; and if the latter, then was the coming of the Comforter needed for what the Law of Moses had already very emphatically done for long centuries? But if Jesus was foretelling the supersession of Judaism by the ministry of the Spirit: “the prince of this world is judged” — and unconsciously the high priest demonstrated this at the trial of Jesus when he rent his robes of office (Mt. 26:65).

There are certainly other passages which might be included in this survey, to reinforce the thesis that by the Devil and Satan is normally meant not a vague amorphous principle of human sin but an explicit manifestation of the ungodly spirit in the words and actions in certain specific persons.

However, there still remain a few passages, which have not been considered as yet, where the present thesis does not seem to be quite such a help. It is hoped to come back to these. But first there is need to explore a much-neglected aspect of Bible teaching about the angels (see chapters 7-11).

5. “That old serpent”

Genesis 3	John 8:44
Romans 16:17-20	Matthew 23:33
Matthew 10:16	Revelation 12

The Bible facts about Adam and Eve are simple and clear. They were made “very good” and, unlike the rest of God’s creatures, they were endowed with freewill, a faculty of decision and choice, the exercise of which was entirely in their own power. As a test of their willingness to subject their freewill to the authority of their Maker, they were put on probation to obey a simple command:

“All in this Paradise is yours except for one thing: you are not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge”. The outcome of their disobedience of this simple law would be death, an experience which they already saw at work in the mortality of the lower creatures.

After a while — it is not possible to say precisely how soon — there came temptation via the seductions of the Serpent.

Here, immediately, problems arise. Was this Serpent just an ordinary snake, or was it (as is commonly believed) a superhuman Devil in disguise?

The text of Genesis 3 gives a plain and clear answer. The Serpent was just an animal:

- a. There is no mention of Devil or Satan in the Genesis record.
- b. “The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field” obviously means “than any other beast

of the field”.

c. The curse pronounced on the serpent was:

“Upon thy belly shalt thou go (this is literal enough), and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life” (this may be figurative, but it plainly implies mortality like other beasts.)

This seems definite. But various other questions arise, some of which seem to find their solution in the simple assumption that the serpent itself ate of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge.

The evidence is only inferential, but several details point to such a conclusion:

- a. “The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field” — then, whence this unique endowment of reasoning power? The suggested hypothesis — partaking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge answers the difficulty immediately.
- b. A serpent with the power of speech! This too is now explained. (The rather glib comparison of Balaam’s ass, is not at all a parallel case. It does not deserve to be quoted here; (“Israel in the Wilderness”, H.A.W., ch.36).
- c. “Yea, hath God said...?” He hasn’t said it to *me*. Then why should He say it to you? A plausible enough argument.
- d. “Ye shall not surely die”, meaning: You surely will not die; for, look at me — I’m eating the fruit, and it doesn’t harm me! But this ban was laid only on the human pair, not on any beast.
- e. “Ye shall be as *elohim*”. You can infer this from my experience: I am just a beast of the field, yet here am I talking on level terms with you, one of God’s highest creatures. Then if eating this fruit upgrades me thus, will it not do the same to you, so that you become equal to the angels?

It is not suggested here that these details *establish* that the serpent did eat of the forbidden fruit, but they certainly do offer a reasonable alternative to the quite unsupported assumption that the serpent was really the Devil at work.

Three outstanding New Testament passages call for consideration here, as being evident allusions to the temptation in Eden.

The first — Romans 16:17-20 — is a kind of running commentary on the Genesis details. Warning against false teachers and deceitful workers “moling” in the midst of the believers, the apostle uses the experience of Adam and Eve as a blunt warning:

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but *their own belly*; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple”. Here are the first of several phrases all referring to Genesis 3. That expression “their own belly” may hint at Paul’s understanding that the serpent, besides the blandishments of “good words and fair speeches”, also set a bad example by eating the fruit of the tree. He continues:

“For your *obedience* is come abroad unto all men. I am glad *therefore* on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise to that which is good and simple concerning evil”. Here is an echo of the words of Jesus himself: “be ye *wise* as *serpents*, and harmless as doves” (Mt. 10:16).

“And the God of peace shall *bruise Satan under your feet* shortly.” This, quite unmistakably, is Genesis 3:15. But, let it be noted, Paul is not writing here about a literal serpent; he is using the Genesis serpent as a pointed illustration and warning about evil *men*. Nor does the reference to Satan encourage modern ‘devil worshippers’, for it is accompanied by the word “shortly”. How, then, can it be claimed that today, two thousand years on, a superhuman Satan is still at large and more efficient than ever? Paul was writing with his mind on the strong Judaist onslaught on Christian faith, then in its most intense phase in the early church. And *God* did bruise this Satan with the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in AD70.

In vigorous controversy with his religious enemies in Jerusalem, Jesus compared their activities with the deceitfulness of the serpent in Eden: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning; and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar, and the father (i.e. teacher) of it" (John 8:44).

Here every phrase fits the serpent in Eden. Even the word "murderer (manslayer)" is readily seen to be an allusion to Genesis 3:15 and its prophecy about the conflict between the serpent and the Seed of the woman, Jesus himself. The "man slaying" took place at Golgotha. That phrase: "your father" plainly picked out these evil adversaries as the "seed of the serpent"; cp. the Lord's use of "generation of vipers" with reference to the same lot of men (Mt. 23:33). The use of the word "devil" can hardly be cited as supporting the idea of a superhuman adversary, for, as chapter 2 has already shown fairly copiously, normal Bible usage applies "devil" to any enemy of God in this world.

In the preceding passages it has been shown that the serpent in Genesis is alluded to both as Satan and as the Devil; and in all four places the serpent (a very real serpent in Gen. 3) is clearly picked out as a highly appropriate symbol of the power of sin in human life.

Revelation 12, another intensely figurative passage, describes "the great dragon...that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world."

What precisely this great dragon is intended to represent is not at all clear. Only Jehovah's Witnesses and others of that character feel that they can afford to be dogmatic about the interpretation of this Scripture. Identification with various political powers has been proposed, but always there are difficulties.

Certainly there is no difficulty in disposing of any interpretation which insists that this Scripture is about the conventional personal Devil. Attempts to insist on a literal war in heaven soon get bogged down in difficulties; for example:

- a. Those who believe in a heavenly rebellion led by the Devil are compelled to place it before the time of Adam and Eve. Then what is it doing here in a book which reveals "things which must shortly come to pass"?
- b. Since there is so much symbolism here (e.g. verses 1,2,5,6,15,16) why such confidence that there was a literal war in heaven?
- c. How does the Devil change appearance so dramatically? — from an angel of light to a roaring lion, to a dragon with seven heads and ten horns, to lightning, to sheer invisibility.
- d. When the dragon is cast out, there is a cry of triumph: "Now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God." But alas, that kingdom is not here yet! So here is another chronology problem.

Have Jehovah's Witnesses and such got a leg to stand on?

6. The Origin of the Devil

Isaiah 14:12-15	Revelation 4
Isaiah 37:36	Revelation 2:13
Luke 10:18,15	Exodus 28:17-21
Ezekiel 28:11ff	Genesis 3:24
Ezekiel 1	

If there really is a mighty Satanic spirit as powerful as God, or very nearly so (judging by the evidence of human history, and especially in the twentieth century), any earnest seeker after truth has a right to enquire: How and when did the Devil come into existence, and how did he achieve such widespread

invincible power and authority?

The usual concept is on these lines:

Lucifer was an archangel in heaven. He conceived the bold plan of subverting the loyalty of angelic hosts so that he could be the leader of a mighty rebellion against the power of the Almighty. This scheme nearly came off. But instead he and his fellow rebels were cast out of heaven, and ever since, beginning with the subversion of Adam and Eve, those powers of evil have sought to use every diabolical means appropriate to weak human nature to bring to nought God's control and ultimate purpose in this world.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that in every detail this synthesis is pure (impure!) romance; in all its parts it is an invention, with no support whatever in the Bible, and depending entirely for its detail on John Milton's poetic drama "Paradise Lost". Perhaps also there is a considerable admixture of mediaeval romance of the kind much encouraged by the church of the Dark Ages in its period of maximum Ignorance and corruption.

Again, it cannot be too strongly emphasized that the Bible, the only possible authority on this topic, has no word to say about the origin of any superhuman Satan.

Accordingly, out of a horrible suspicion that here is a house **of** cards built on no foundation more substantial than human Imagination, efforts have been made to trace the origin of the Devil somewhere in Holy Scripture.

Genesis 3 has already been exposed as quite inadequate to establish the desired conclusions. There remain for examination two (three?) other passages which have been much used to fill up this hiatus.

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!...for thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit..." (Isaiah 14:12-15).

To apply these words to any superhuman Devil is a most outrageous distortion, a shameful mishandling of the Bible text, as the following considerations will show:

- a. The context says quite explicitly that these words are about "the king of Babylon" (v.4).
- b. The ambition to "ascend into heaven", to be "above the stars of God" is difficult to harmonize with his already having the status of archangel; for as such would he not be already in heaven and higher than the stars?
- c. And why should this ambition also include sitting "upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of *the north*"? Why should the north be so specially desirable in the eyes of a rebel-angel?
- d. "Lucifer", so commonly assumed to be Satan's "Christian" name is actually a word meaning "morning star", that is, Venus, the brightest object in the night sky just before dawn. Symbolically applied to an ambitious king of Babylon, this is a very appropriate label. And when it is recognized that this monarch of Babylon-Assyria (v.25) actually did encamp his army on the north side of Jerusalem and did express an arrogant intention to smash all faith in the God of Israel, the force of this very symbolic passage becomes all the more intelligible. This boastful tyrant lost the flower of his army at Jerusalem, and lost also his reputation for fearsome invincibility (Isaiah 37:36; there is much more detail about this in "Hezekiah the Great", by the present writer).

Very similar language to the passage just considered was used by Jesus with reference to a unique situation in his ministry. His twelve disciples, sent in twos on auxiliary preaching missions, returned in high spirits, exhilarated by their splendid success. In warning, Jesus thereupon quoted them Isaiah's prophecy against the king of Babylon: "I beheld Satan as lightning (Lucifer!) fall from heaven" (Lk. 10:18). Evidently the Lord meant: Beware of over-weening pride in your success. Remember the judgment God pronounced against that proud conqueror!

That this was the Lord's intended meaning is confirmed by his additional quotation from Isaiah 14 in the same context:

"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shall be thrust down to hell" (Lk. 10:15; Is. 14:12,14,15). This city of Capernaum had seen more of the Lord's miracles and heard more of his teaching than any other. Yet because of its poor response to such high privilege there would come (and there did!) a well-deserved judgment.

Thus, careful attention to the context of the Lord's words steers the reader to a meaning very different from that of traditional Devil-ology. (For additional suggestions about this Gospel passage, see "Studies in the Gospels", p.435).

A similar but even more outrageous misinterpretation of Scripture has been very enthusiastically perpetrated by Jehovah's Witnesses in support of their too emphatic dogma that world governments are "the Devil's organisation". (Of course, that last statement is absolutely right if only there is an honest recognition that in the Bible the devil is human evil and not superhuman!).

Ezekiel 28:11ff has a vigorous denunciation of one who is (Inscribed as "full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering" — here follows a long catalogue of precious stones, and mention of "tabrets and pipes, in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth...thou wast upon the holy mountain of God...Thou wast perfect in thy ways till iniquity was found in thee...I will destroy thee, O covering cherub...", and so on.

It is agreed that, once the reader has accepted the traditional legend about the Devil as a rebel-angel, much in this Ezekiel paragraph can be read as providing eloquent support for the idea. But — and here it is a very big BUT — a more critical eye very quickly discerns difficulties which prove to be insuperable:

- a. The word of the Lord to Ezekiel says that this is "a lamentation upon *the king of Tyre*" (28:12). The preceding paragraph is about "the prince of Tyre;" and the ensuing paragraph is against Zidon. Then where is the justification for saying that Ezekiel's words are about the Devil, and not at all about "the king of Tyre"? This plain fact should be sufficient in itself to settle the issue. But there is more.
- b. For this false identification the common error has to be imported that here "Thou wast the anointed cherub that covereth" means an angel of glory. Yet there is no Bible evidence that cherubim are angels. They are always described as symbolic figures with diverse faces — man, eagle, lion, ox — and with wings and many eyes and wheels (Ez. 1; Rev. 4). They are specially associated with God's chariots of glory and with the chosen people, Israel. So, if Ezekiel 28 describes the Devil as a cherub, he neither is nor was an angel.
- c. This "king of Tyre" is described as being "upon the holy mountain of God", i.e. mount Zion. What evidence is there that the Devil ever inhabited the temple in Jerusalem? Does not Revelation 2:13 say that Satan's throne was in Pergamos? (See chapter 1 on this).

However, it is a fair question as to why such impressive language should be used by Ezekiel about "the king of Tyre." A complete answer to this problem is readily available.

First, the distinction has to be noted between "the prince of Tyre" (v.2) and "the king of Tyre" (v.12). The former phrase describes the autocrat who ruled in Tyre; the latter describes the *god* worshipped there. The name Melkart means "the king of the city". Ezekiel's supposedly "Devil" paragraph is really about the Phoenician god worshipped in Tyre. When Hiram, the ruler of Tyre in the time of Solomon, was helping his treaty- friend to build in Jerusalem a marvellous temple to Jehovah, he was also installing the worship of Jehovah in his own city under the name of Melkart. Initially this transplanted religion was a pure monotheism with basic ideas and ritual details similar to those in Zion. Ezekiel's details make this fact very clear. As there were cherubim in Jerusalem's temple, so also in Tyre's. And

as an impressive assembly of jewels honoured the God of Israel (Ex. 28:17-21), so also Melkart-Jehovah was honoured in the temple in Tyre. And such phrases as “thou wast in Eden, the garden of God” was true of the two related religions, for both looked back to the cherubim mentioned in the Genesis story of the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:24). It is known for certain that a good deal of corruption had crept into the worship of Jehovah in Jerusalem. It is also certain that considerably more corruption had been taken on board by Melkart.

To sum up, then, it is beyond argument that Ezekiel 28 makes no mention at all of a rebel-angel. It actually describes the deplorable decay which corrupted the originally pure worship of Melkart in Tyre. Phrase after phrase here harmonizes with such a concept, whilst lacking completely any reference to “Lucifer”.

The entire passage is a classic example of the unscrupulous handling of Bible text by those who come to the words with well-entrenched pro-Devil prejudices.

Whether the alternative explanations offered here be correct or not, is there *any* passage at all in the Bible which describes the origin of a Lucifer rebel-angel? Any at all?

7. Angels of Evil

Psalms 34:7; Matthew 18:10; Daniel 6:22	2 Samuel 24:16
Hebrews 1:14	Acts 1:1
Isaiah 45:7	Revelation 16; 9-11
Amos 3:6	Revelation 12:7ff
Psalms 103:21	Proverbs 15:11
Genesis 1:26	Genesis 32:24-30
Hebrews 2:5	Genesis 28:12
Psalms 104:4	Ephesians 6:12
Genesis 18:1,2; Joshua 5:13; Mark 16:5	John 12:31; 14:30;
Job 38:4-7	Daniel 10:13
Ecclesiastes 1:13	Job 1,2
Exodus 12:23	Matthew 4:1-11
Matthew 26:53; Luke 22:53	Genesis 3:5,22
1 Corinthians 10:10	Luke 19:38
Psalms 78:43-48,49	Proverbs 17:11
Acts 12:3,4,7,23	Genesis 19:22
Isaiah 37:36; 31:5,8	Ephesians 2:2
1 Kings 22:19ff	Colossians 1:13
1 Samuel 16:14	Colossians 1:20

There can surely be few Bible readers who do not know and treasure such passages as these:

“The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (Ps. 34:7).

“Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 18:10).

“My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths” (Dan. 6:22).

There are plenty more Scriptures like these. Yet a pathetically ignorant and corrupt Christian church has for long centuries encouraged belief in the existence of two kinds of angels — not only the beneficent beings spoken of in the Scriptures just cited, but also an army of wicked angels under the leadership of the arch-rebel who is the Devil, also called Satan. It has to be admitted that those such as “Jehovah’s Witnesses”, who can make no sense of the ways and purposes of God without putting great emphasis on this Devil concept, can bring together a nuisance catena of Bible passages enthusiastically misread or wrenched from context.

It is useful, then, to remember that the angels “are *all* ministering spirits sent forth to *minister* to them who shall be heirs of salvation”, (Heb. 1:14). This settles that there are no *hostile* angels. They are all on the side of God’s elect.

Then who are the false accusing adversaries who are not infrequently encountered in the pages of the Bible? Very often reference to *human* devils and satans (e.g. Acts 5:3,9; Rev. 2:9,13; 3:9; Matt. 16:23; Jn. 6:70) clears away some difficulties. This exercise has been already attempted in chapter 1. Yet it has to be admitted that even when that task is undertaken and carried through, the problem of evil in this world still poses awkward questions.

Certainly it is right and proper to make such Scriptures as Isaiah 45:7 and Amos 3:6 the foundation stones of a fuller understanding:

“I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.”

“Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?”

Here is a stark truth about this world, with its earthquakes, tornadoes, pestilences, and famines, which the people in it refuse to face up to — that this is God’s world and He is fully in control of what happens in it, the “bad” as well as the good. A well-balanced philosophy will accept this, and will see not only the rich blessings of life, but also its disasters and calamities, as happening not because the Almighty slumbers and sleeps now and then, but because He originates and controls all such things for the fulfilment of His purpose and for the ultimate good of the human race. The “evils” are only evil because that is how men with limited understanding see them. It needs revelation to set this perspective right, and it puts a constant strain on personal faith to believe that it *is* right, even though the pages of Holy Scripture are full of examples of “evil” wrought by the power and wisdom of God. Examples:

Jonah’s storm and Jonah’s gourd.

Egypt’s seven years of plenty and then of famine.

The wind at the crossing of the Red Sea.

The wind that brought quails.

Elijah’s drought and “great rain”.

Earthquake at Philippi.

Once this fact is accepted, it is useful to push the enquiry further with the question: How does God control all the “evils” which are so much a part of human experience?

The Bible’s first answer to this is to abolish the half-witted or atheistic concept of a superhuman Devil who was and continues to be an open rebel against the authority of God. This is *half-witted* because it only half allows God to be monarch in His own universe. *All* human experience declares that this Devil, if he really exists, is winning all along the line; he is more almighty than the Almighty — a conclusion which is also atheistic.

The Bible’s second answer is to insist that the over-all control of God in the “bad” as well as the good, is committed to the administration of angels, “ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure” (Ps. 103:21).

Note here:

Hebrews 2:5: “For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come.” This seems to imply that the present civilisation, with all the evils which it endures — pestilences, earthquakes, famines, wars, and a thousand other dire troubles — is under the control of angels.

Psalms 104:4: “The Lord maketh his angels winds (RVm); his ministers a flame of fire.” The parallelism justifies the RVm reading here. So also does the fact that God does not *make* his angels spirits

because they are already spirits. But in Scripture winds and fire are nearly always tokens of divine judgment. So here again are angels of evil — but they are *God's* angels.

Right from Creation this has been so.

“Let *us* make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26).

Certainly the most satisfying explanation of these words is that in the beginning, man was designed to be physically in the likeness of angels; hence the clear examples in the Bible of angels being mistaken for men (Gen. 18:1,2; Josh. 5:13; Mk. 16:5).

The association of angels with the work of Creation is also to be read in such places as Job 38:4-7. And it may be taken as certain that, in many another place where God's control of the natural world is mentioned, this is the work of the angels, His Elohim.

The modern scientist talks with assurance about how “Nature” does this or that. With blithe dogmatism he enunciates “Laws of Nature”. All of this is a smokescreen designed to keep GOD conveniently out of sight.

The Bible is all the time at the other extreme from this attitude. It speaks only of *God* at work.

There is, it is believed, only one exception to this Biblical usage. A powerful passage in Ecclesiastes about the mysterious regularity of so much in the world of Nature is rounded off with the scornful words:

“This sore travail hath God given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith” (1:13); that is, the marvels and mysteries of the natural world have been specially designed by the Almighty to occupy the enquiring scientific mind — so many intricate toys for clever men to play with, in the hope that it will keep them out of worse mischief; but alas, it hasn't.

The concept of good and “evil” in the world of Nature and human experience, as already emphasized here, leads logically and inevitably to the conclusion that the vast unseen array of God's ministers includes both angels of good and *angels of evil*. The main part of this study now concerns itself almost exclusively with the latter. A willingness to recognize God at work through His angels of evil has not been too evident hitherto; yet it is there in the pages of the Bible, both plainly and obscurely, and when recognized, quite a few of the obscurities become much more luminous. The following catalogue begins, of course, with those that are plain and clear almost at first reading.

1. Israel in Egypt were prepared for the last of the plagues with this explanation in advance:

“The Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians: and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door (the word means ‘hover over, in protection’; Is. 31:5 s.w.), and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.” (Ex. 12:23).

Here, in one verse, there is a protecting angel and a destroying angel, both working God's will. Thus that night there were twelve legions of angels guarding Israelite homes in Egypt, and at a later Passover the Son of God could have had all of those at his command, had he so chosen (Mt. 26:53). Instead, Jesus allowed himself to be taken, for (he said): “This is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Lk. 22:53).

This last phrase is indeed difficult if it is not to be referred to the angel who slew the Firstborn in the darkness of a Passover night — and, later, evidence will be brought supporting the use of the word “power” with reference to an angel.

2. This “destroyer” also went into action *against* Israel in the wilderness when they cancelled out God's protective Providence by their faithless grumbling:

“Neither murmur ye as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer”, (1 Cor. 10:10).

3. Psalm 78, one of the historical psalms, has this reminiscence of God at work in the plagues brought on Egypt. There is clear mention of water to blood, lice and flies, frogs, locusts, hail and the destruction of flocks and herds (v.43-48); and then this:

“He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger — wrath, and indignation and trouble — by sending evil angels among them”, (v.49).

Here RV reads “angels of evil”. It is not possible to read here the idea of wicked angels, for they were doing God’s work against the intransigence of Pharaoh.

4. Acts 12 provides another impressive example of the action of a protecting angel and a destroying angel both at work at Passover, (v.3,4). Peter, in prison, was freed by an angel (v.7ff), and then Herod the persecutor was struck down by an angel (v.23). As at the first Passover, so here the protecting angel and the destroyer acted in concert.
5. So also at another Passover, Jerusalem was protected, and the Assyrian army destroyed (Is. 37:36; 31:5,8).
6. In 1 Kgs. 22:19ff the downfall of Ahab is described as the result of angelic influence over the false prophets in whom the king trusted.
7. Similarly, “an evil spirit from the Lord” began the downfall of king Saul (1 Sam. 16:14).
8. The angelic destruction in Jerusalem in the time of David was stayed by the command of the Lord (2 Sam. 24:16).

The foregoing eight examples make a case against which there can be no argument. Yet it is possible to go further, but with rather less certainty.

In the field of Bible exposition, and also of science, a hypothesis of interpretation which seems to be fairly well-established, can be tested and further confirmed by the way it yields positive results in other unexpected directions.

Thus, Newton’s mathematical theory of gravitation, long after his day led to a fully satisfactory explanation of the perturbations of the orbits of the outer planets.

Similarly, the hypothesis made highly probable by Acts 1:1 that that book was written by Luke, gathers considerable dependability when tested against a whole series of other phenomena in Acts, so that the authorship conclusion may be regarded as virtually certain.

So also now, this concept of angels of evil directs a shaft of light on to quite a few other Bible passages.

9. The seven vials of the wrath of God poured out as described in Revelation 16, are to be seen as phenomena operated by angels in the affairs of men bringing judgment according to the will of God, rather than as symbolic forecasts of how human history will work out long after the first century. There is a subtle difference between these ideas. Very closely akin to this, only somewhat more specific, is the description of the mighty army in the Second Woe (Rev. 9:11) as being led and directed by an angel called Abaddon/Apollyon. These names are Hebrew and Greek for “The Destroyer”, the angel already encountered here in paragraphs 1 and 2. (Cp. also Job 28:22; Heb. cp. also Rev. 6:8). Proverbs 15:11: “Hell and destruction (Abaddon) are before the Lord: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?”
10. “And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought, and his angels”, (Rev. 12:7).

Is this a highly-symbolic picture of a brief intense struggle in the Roman Empire of the fourth century, one set of worldlings led by a power-drunk Constantine against another set of worldlings (nothing to choose between them!)? Or is this to be seen as a representation of the increasing

struggle between the powers of good and evil in the experience of God's people (v.7) from the ascension of Christ (v.5) right up to the establishing of his kingdom (v.9,10)? (Is it, by any stretch of imagination, possible to believe that Constantine was the man-child born to rule all nations with a rod of iron (Ps. 2:9)? or that the kingdom was established in the time of Constantine?).

11. Genesis 32:24-30. That amazing and mystifying episode of Jacob's wrestling with an angel begins to make sense when it is seen as God's way of teaching Jacob that, although he was convinced that the great problems and adversities of his life had all been created by human adversaries, in actual fact the circumstances of his life were entirely under the control of angels — it was against them that he had constantly wrestled, without knowing it. (For a fuller exposition see: "Wrestling Jacob" HAW ch.11). But at last the lesson was learned and Jacob carried a memento of it for the rest of his life. Is it not strange that this adversary angel should demand: "Let me go, for the day breaketh" (32:26)? Was he identifying himself as one of the "powers of darkness"? Even so, this was an angel of God. Hosea's interpretation is explicit: "By his strength he (Jacob) had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed" — but how? not by his wrestling, but because "he wept, and made supplication unto him" (Hos. 12:3,4).

Genesis 28:12. The previous paragraph now raises the possibility of a new interpretation of Jacob's dream at Bethel, that on the heavenly "ladder" were angels of *good* and of *evil*, all of them needed to bring about the fulfilment of the great promise given to Jacob there.

12. In chapter 8 it will be suggested, with supporting detail, that the "principalities and powers" passage in Ephesians 6:12 is best understood with reference to angels of evil. All the details in that verse support this conclusion.
13. Three times Jesus referred to "the prince of this world" (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Orthodoxy reads into this phrase the idea of a superhuman Devil. One hears some expositors murmur "sin in the flesh" and then pass on as though all is lucid and clear; nothing left to be explained! Would that it were so. But read these words with reference to the destroying angel in the (Jewish) world, as in paragraphs 1 and 2, and the Lord's words fit into the context as neatly as could be wished. In chapter 4 it was suggested that the "prince of this world" was the High Priest. Should room also be found for reference to God's angels of evil? It was Passover, and Jesus had his supporting angel in Gethsemane (Lk. 22:43), and could have had all twelve legions of Israel's protecting angels (Matt. 26:53). But no! For was he not the Passover Lamb? And was not "the power of darkness" with them, his enemies (Lk. 22:53)? Then do these repeated words of Jesus speak of victory over the angel of evil?
14. The use of "prince" to denote the Lord's angel of evil has its roots in the O.T. In Daniel 10, the archangels Gabriel and Michael ("chief princes") were held up in their efforts to bring an answer to the prophet's prayer (v. 13). The hinderer was "the prince of the kingdom of Persia". Is it conceivable that any human ruler in Persia (even an Ayatollah?) could withstand the combined efforts of two archangels of light? But if here "prince" means the angel of evil manipulating affairs in Persia, the thing assumes credibility. Compare also the description of "the captain of the host of the Lord" who appeared to Joshua, and bade him honour such holy ground by removing his sandals (Josh. 5:13-15).
15. All sorts of identifications of Job's Satan have been propounded, but all save one of them, fall down in the face of two special features in the narrative:
 - a. Any *human* identification is up against the weighty objection that nowhere else in Scripture are extraordinary and miraculous powers committed to a servant of God,

and he an unworthy one, to afflict one of his fellow- servants. The moral difficulty in such an interpretation is enormous.

- b. Over and over again the book of Job, in both narrative and speeches, attributes Job's sufferings to the stroke of *God* (3:23; 5:17; 6:4; 19:21; but especially 42:11).

In "Bible Studies", ch. 16.02, it has been argued in detail that this Satan was one of the Almighty's angels of evil. From this point of view, the narrative of ch. 1,2 reads quite smoothly; the difficulties evaporate. There is no hint of wickedness in this Satan, but only of doubt, the kind of thing which is readily attributable to an angel, as is expounded at length in "Bible Studies", ch. 16.01.

- 16. The temptation of Jesus can now be considered from a similar angle. It is usual, and thoroughly harmonious with the rest of Scripture, to read the sequence of temptations as being, in reality, subjective. A number of details in the two Gospel narratives appear to *require* this view. Indeed, universal human experience demands it. No temptation is really temptation until it appeals to a man's own inclinations. All this has been worked out in detail in "Gospels", ch.18.

Nevertheless, in a way that is not discordant with the foregoing, there is a fair amount of support for Dr. Thomas's view (Elpis Israel, p.78) that the tempter was one of God's angels of evil. For instance:

- a. The Holy Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness for the purpose of being tempted (Mt. 4:1).
 - b. "The tempter *came* to him" (v.3). Does not this suggest a *personal* approach?
 - c. Is it altogether appropriate that the inner thoughts of Jesus should be described as "Satan" and "the devil"?
 - d. The entire narrative in Mt. and Lk. reads as a sequence of collocations between two people.
 - e. The emphasis on angels (v.6) would be specially appropriate to the present hypothesis: "Cast yourself down. You will come to no harm. I'll see to that!"
 - f. "Sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them" (v.8). An angel could do this!
 - g. "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me" (v.9). These words, not without their difficulty if spoken by Jesus to Jesus, present much less of a problem if spoken by one of God's angels of evil, for does not all human history declare that the world's pomp and circumstance are wedded to ways of evil?
 - h. "Get thee behind me, Satan" (v.10) is a rebuttal easier to grasp if spoken by Jesus to another, a Job's Satan, rather than to himself.
 - i. "And behold, angels came and ministered unto him" (v.11). Here again the curtain is drawn aside to reveal the activity of angels of good as well as angels of evil operating in the same field of human experience; cp. Rev. 12:7; Dan. 10:13.
- 17. Various other smaller details, often by-passed, now take on a greater lucidity. Here are some examples:
 - a. The serpent asserted to Eve, "Ye shall be as Elohim, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5). That the basis of this assertion was no lie, is indicated by v.22, "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil". The existence of two kinds of angels with two separate functions, already proved, now makes these words much more intelligible.
 - b. The acclamation when Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, included a phrase so mysterious that some have been known to deny it a place in the text: "*Peace in heaven*, and glory in the highest," (Lk. 19:38). Apart from the idea expounded in this study of angels with different, and seemingly discordant, administrations, "peace in heaven" takes some

explaining.

- c. Proverbs 17:11: "An evil man seeketh only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger (angel) shall be sent against him." Read this with reference to an angel of evil, as in the experience of Egypt's Pharaoh, Sennacherib's army, and King Herod, and the meaning is straightforward.
 - d. Genesis 19:22. Two angels came to rescue Lot and his family from doomed Sodom. The urgent exhortation of one of them was, "Haste thee, escape thither (to Zoar): for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither." This language seems to imply that the destruction of the city was in the hands of this angel who was now concerned in the rescue of Lot. He was both an angel of salvation and of destruction; or were there two angels, of good and of evil, operating together? But assuredly, it was all the work of God.
18. There still remains a small group of rather bewildering phrases in Ephesians and Colossians which have come to be denominated "difficult passages" to be either left severely alone, or to be explained away by copious vague circumlocutions.
- a. "in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in (among) the children of disobedience." (Eph. 2:2). The word used here for "air" had also a contemporary usage as meaning "gloom, darkness"; cp: the twin passage in Col. 1:13. "delivered us from the power of darkness". That in both places an angel of evil is referred to, is an explanation that now copes quite adequately with the perversions of an orthodox devil-worshipper. That this reading is on right lines, can be seen from the use of this phrase; "power of darkness" by Jesus (see par. 13), and also from the accompanying expression, "the *spirit* that now worketh among the children of disobedience". It has already been shown that the control of evil is one of the main functions of God's angels of evil.
 - b. Colossians 1:13: "...who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear son." That phrase: "the power of darkness" is often taken as synonymous with "the ignorance of the world." But since in the vast majority of cases "power" is used with reference to the power of the Holy Spirit, there is encouragement to see here a contrast between being under the stewardship of angels of evil and the beneficence of the gospel.
 - c. Colossians 1:20 — "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." What are the "things in heaven" that need to be reconciled? Is there not here once again the apparent discordance between the work of angels of good and angels of evil? In the full outworking of redemption in Christ, evil will be abolished and then angels of evil will need to seek from the Almighty a fresh assignment. "Peace" will have been completely established in heaven as well as in earth.
19. Against the background of all the foregoing, the N.T. doctrine of demons, so badly mangled (or ignored) by those who attempt to paper over a maze of cracks with an acreage of vague talk and unproven assumptions about our Lord's "accommodation" to contemporary ignorance, it is now easy to recognize that the interpretation expounded in "Gospels" (HAW), ch.30, is much more sane and is altogether Biblical. That view, the only one that can stand up to critical examination, can be briefly summarised here in a few sentences:

The N.T.'s "demon" terminology is only another way of referring to angels of evil, a doctrine which had already been copiously enunciated in the O.T. The only "accommodation" that Jesus made was in the appropriation of the words in contemporary use. Once it is recognised that "demon" is a synonym for "angel of evil", there emerges the great truth behind those miracles of our Lord, that in him was vested greater authority than the powers exercised by angels. Therefore his status was higher than theirs. If they were "sons of God" (Job 38:7), he was the Son of God. Further, since the Genesis creation fashioned through angels became a failed creation, it requires that there be a New Creation fashioned by One greater than the angels, and this will not fail.

Again, the Mosaic system was ministered at Sinai through angels (Heb. 2:2; Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19). Therefore the new order brought in by One greater than angels, must sweep away that which was brought in by angels.

The foregoing sequence of passages includes not a few which have gone unexplained for a long time. There has been a marked tendency to pretend they are not there, or to sweep them under the carpet with an improvised broom made of cloudy verbiage. It is submitted that there is an adequate case for believing in the existence of a dichotomy in the stewardship of angels. But let it be emphasized: *all* angels do the will of God. There are *no* wicked spirits. There are angels entrusted with the operation of what often *appears* to *men* to be an evil work.

8. Principalities and Powers

A more detailed study of this somewhat complex topic has already been included in the author's "Bible Studies", ch.16.05 and in "Seven Short Epistles" (pages 11,28). A brief summary is included here, following appropriately on the preceding chapter.

The twelve occurrences of this expression — a combination of two abstract Greek terms — sort themselves out into two well-defined groups:

(a) Titus 3:1	(b) Colossians 2:14-17
Luke 12:11	Ephesians 3:8-11
Luke 20:20	Ephesians 6:12
	Romans 8:38,39
	1 Peter 3:22
	Ephesians 1:20,21
	Colossians 2:10
	Colossians 1:16
	1 Corinthians 15:24

In a few of these passages there are slight AV variants from the reading "principalities and powers", but in all except one the Greek is the same.

The three passages in column (a) plainly require reference to human rulers, civil authorities. In each place the context demands this.

Because of the obviousness of this conclusion it has often been somewhat precipitately assumed that the same meaning holds in all the passages of column (b). Two considerations militate against this conclusion:

1. The inadequacy and even futility of some of the passages when read with reference to earthly rulers.
2. There is evidence that contemporary rabbinic writing used these terms with reference to *angels*.

In the review which now follows it will be readily seen that whereas the "civil rulers" thesis time and again produces a meaning both banal and at odds with the context, the reference to angels (sometimes angels of evil; ch.7) illuminates passage after passage with added intelligibility. In other words, the proof of this pudding is in the eating.

Colossians 2:14-17

Here any attempt to read the words with reference to human rulers comes to grief immediately:

"And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them

in it (i.e. by his cross; v.14).” Concerning governments of this world, those past tenses are hopelessly inappropriate, and indeed untrue; for as yet there is no evident sign that the cross of Christ has triumphed over the power-drunk rulers and demagogues of this world. And when the triumph comes, it will not be by the cross but by divine glory.

On the other hand, the context positively shouts for reference to the Law of Moses and the entire religious system put out of date by the sacrifice of Christ.

It needs to be remembered that it was a familiar idea in all Jewish minds that the Law — “the handwriting of ordinances that was against us” (v.14) — was communicated to Moses through the ministry of angels (Acts 7:38; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2; Dt. 33:2). And here verses 16,17 confirm: “Let no man *therefore* judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day or of the new moon or of the sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ”.

To insert into such a context a reference to human kings and rulers comes near to insulting a decent intelligence.

Ephesians 3:8-11

An important correction to the translation here requires omission of the word “men” (supplied in italics by King James’s men) for it will be seen by and by that the reference here of “all” is to men and angels alike.

Paraphrased, Paul’s words have this impressive message: ‘The stewardship of the gospel was committed to me with the intent that not only should benighted Gentiles learn the gospel of Christ but that also the thrill of it all should communicate itself to the angels of heaven (principalities and powers in heavenly places)’.

Any inclination to read “heavenly places” in a vague metaphorical *political* sense must be resisted, for (as will be seen in other places) this is very evidently Paul’s idiomatic expression for “in heaven”. Ephesians 1:20 is decisive on this “...when he raised him (Christ) from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.”

It was, of course, appropriate that the angels who ministered the Law for the benefit of Israel should also rejoice and marvel at the extension of the grace of God to ignorant Gentiles. On the other hand, any attempt to refer these exalted words to human rulers gets the entire passage out of kilter. To think of the grandeur of Paul’s preaching commission as finding its climax in a witness to such worldlings as Felix and Festus and Agrippa is to make the words hardly worth writing.

Ephesians 6:12 There has been a marked inclination in some quarters to refer this pile up of powerful phrases to a Christian wrestling against the political powers of a godless world. The effort involves a quintessence of obfuscation and figurative tortuosity in a verse where a straight literal reading makes fine Biblical sense.

- (a) “We wrestle *not against flesh and blood*” should surely steer the reader immediately to an ‘angelic’ reference, for are not all other adversaries of the gospel flesh and blood? The phrase describes angels perfectly.
- (b) And the verb “wrestle” steers the reader to the same conclusion; for it occurs in only two other places in Holy Scripture, and one of them describes Jacob’s wrestling with an angel of darkness (Genesis 32:24; Hosea 12:4). See “Wrestling Jacob”, ch.11, on this.
- (c) David Smith, in his “Life and Epistles of Paul” cites examples of the use of “the rulers of the darkness of this world” in rabbinic writings with reference to angels of death, cp “darkness”.
- (d) “Spiritual wickedness” is a poor translation. More exactly: “the spiritual ones of wickedness”, that is, the angels (who are spirits: Ps. 104:4) who have responsibility for the administration and control of wickedness in this world. The AV reading is a decidedly tendentious translation, perhaps intended to mask the mystification in the minds of the translators.

- (e) "In high places" is equally tendentious and reprehensible, for it is the very expression already met with in Ephesians 1:20: "in heavenly places", appropriate not only to the exaltation of Christ but also to the domain of the angels. (f) With such an accumulation of directives, how is it possible to read "principalities and powers" with reference to any but angels?
- (f) Last point here. The apostle is *not* exhorting his readers to pit their puny powers in a wrestling match against angels. How could he, when he has just bidden them "put on the whole armour of God". Whenever did a man put on armour in order to wrestle? Yet the commonly received interpretation here has Paul indulging in a literary absurdity of that sort.

No! His point is: If you wrestle (as Jacob did) you will find yourself wrestling helplessly against angelic powers and the circumstances they control. Then, instead of that foolishness, don the spiritual armour which the gospel offers, and all will be well.

Romans 8:38,39

"...nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers...". The words come in a comprehensive catalogue of little-understood influences in life none of which need interfere with the believer's rejoicing in his salvation in Christ. But at least this may be said, that the immediate proximity of angels in this list suggests an angelic reference for the words that follow.

1 Peter 3:22

"(Jesus Christ)...on the right hand of God, angels and authorities (powers) and powers (a different Greek word here, but one which nearly always is associated with the Holy Spirit), being made subject unto him."

Here there is a variation from "principalities and powers", but both meaning and context are palpably the same, with a pointed emphasis on angels. It is also to be noted that here the Greek past tenses are utterly inappropriate to our Lord's yet future rule over all earthly kingdoms.

Ephesians 1:20,21

If this declaration about the glory of Christ stood entirely alone, it could be fairly regarded as nicely ambiguous: "(The Father) set him (Christ) at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power...not only in this world but in that which is to come." But this passage does not stand alone, for two of the phrases which come side by side here are also in juxtaposition in 6:12, where already there is a sufficient pile up of evidence to require reference to angels.

Colossians 2:10

A similar conclusion holds in this similar assertion of the glory of Christ — "which is the head of all principality and power." That little word "is" surely requires reference to the present exaltation of Christ, and not to his future glory on earth. Then who are the principalities and powers over whom he has dominion even now?

Colossians 1:15-17

"The firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist".

There is need for quite a bit of tidying up here. In an attempt to evade the thrust of some pre-existence enthusiasts, it is often proposed to read "created on account of him", instead of this AV "created by him". This is an unworthy device, for the Greek does not mean "on account of". It does mean "by him".

It is really the word "created" which has very effectively thrown both sets of disputants into confusion. Some careful work with a concordance will suffice to demonstrate (see "Seven Short Epistles", p.10f on this) that Paul uses the word, not in the sense of "making out of nothing", but rather with the idea of

“re-constituting, appointing for a new or different purpose”.

And when Jesus is described as “the firstborn of every creature (literally, of all creation)”, it is the New Creation in him that is to be understood. “The firstborn from the dead” (v.18) is a parallel and explanatory phrase. Thus it is literally true that “he is before all things” in point of time, as the preposition *pro* very strictly means.

With this understanding of “created” there is now no difficulty in seeing Jesus as the creator of “thrones, dominions, principalities and powers”, for all these expressions were in regular rabbinic use with reference to different grades of angels (a notion the rabbis were very fond of playing with). All these angels were “created” by Jesus in the sense that through his death and resurrection they were given a new status, a different responsibility. He who was made a little lower than the angels has now become their King.

1 Corinthians 15:24-26

The climax of the kingdom rule of Christ is described thus: “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power (literally: every principality and power, — a different word here; *dunamis*, with its very common reference to Holy Spirit activity)...all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death”.

By this time the reader, no matter what his ingrained prejudices, should not need to have his mind prised open to the possibility that here, as in so many other places, “principality and power” has an angelic reference. The inclusion of the word *dunamis* strongly supports such a reading.

But how, possibly, can it be said that the rule of Christ is to destroy angels? Is not this the height of absurdity? Again, as in several other passages in this study, King James’s men are convicted of botching their translation. Reference to any good lexicon and a little diligent work with a concordance will make evident that this Greek word *katargeo* does not mean “destroy”, but does mean “make useless or idle, put out of use or out of commission”. What a difference! And the context: “The last enemy that shall be put out of action is the angel of Death” (Rev. 6:8; 9:11), makes clear that the reference is specially to angels of evil. In this wonderful climax to the redeeming work of Christ, there will be no further work for angels of evil. They will all have been transformed into angels of good.

The meaning of “principality and power” suggested here makes the usual understanding of the words concerning human rulers seem tawdry and trivial.

9. Job’s Satan

Job 1,2	Job 1:9-11
Job 1:6	Job 2:5
Job 38:4-7	Job 42:11
Numbers 22:22	Job 2:10
Angels’ knowledge limited:	Matthew 4:1-11
13 passages cited.	Luke 4:1-13

So far the thesis has been (a) that in many Scriptures Satan is a human satan; (b) that some Scriptures leave room for, or maybe even positively require, belief in the existence of angels whose special dispensation, under God, is the control or administration of evil in this world.

Now, fusing these ideas, it is suggested that these Job passages are best explained on the assumption that in such instances the Satan referred to is one of God’s angels of evil. There may be some other explanation, but when the details are considered carefully this seems to provide the simplest and the most satisfactory interpretation.

The idea has been much received that the adversary in Job 1,2 was a fellow-worshipper animated by a certain spirit of envy. This is a positively preposterous notion, and ought never to have been given

house-room, for these reasons alone: (a) Its sheer immorality, that such an unworthy individual should be given such superhuman power, (b) The complete lack of any Biblical parallel, (c) The constant emphasis in Job that affliction and tribulation come from *God*. (d) The absence at the end of the book of any "correction" of the envious critic.

Instead there is clear indication that Job's Satan was an angel: (a) He comes into the presence of the Lord, and is in discourse with Him, among "the sons of God" (1:6), and elsewhere in Job the sons of God are unmistakably angels (a remote New Testament context such as 1 Jn. 3:2 cannot possibly be of weight against Job 38:4-7). (b) Consistently throughout the book of Job the patriarch's tribulation is attributed to the Lord (4:9; 5:17; 6:4; 7:20; 11:6; 19:21; and especially 42:11). Since all angelic activity is spoken of as being the work of God, this presents no difficulty at all. But the alternative mentioned earlier sets up a sharp contradiction inside the covers of the book.

Two superficial difficulties created by equating Job's Satan with an angel can be quickly disposed of: (a) Why the name "Satan" if an angel of the Lord? Answer Because this was his character in the present action — he was Job's adversary; cp. also Num. 22:22 where an angel of the Lord is a Satan to Balaam, (b) Is there not an evil mind behind what he says about Job (1:9-11; 2:5)? Answer: The words *can* be read that way, but they *need* not be.

It is important to note that in all that Satan says regarding Job there is no sign of wickedness. He declares his unwillingness to believe that Job's is anything but time-serving piety: 'All my experience of this human race teaches me to believe that when men serve God they do so only for selfish reasons'. And when consideration is given to the copious evidence in human experience of religious hypocrisy who shall say that this angel of God was misinformed, for all his much "running to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it"?

But could an angel actually be mistaken? The Bible's definite answer to that question is: Yes! There are copious examples of angels of the Lord being subject, at least on occasions, to limitations of knowledge or of physical powers: Mt. 24:36; 1 Pet. 1:12; Dan. 10:13; Gen. 32:24; 22:12; Job 15:15; Ex. 31:17; 33:5; Dan. 8:13; 12:6; Eph. 3:8-10; Lk. 21:26; Job 4:18 ("Bible Studies", ch. 16.01).

The story of how Job came to suffer such adversities introduces the reader to a Satan unwilling to believe that Job's godliness was anything but a cover for insincerity and an evil way of life. To interpret this with reference to a rebel-angel of God is to be guilty of careless thinking and even more careless reading of the text. For, consider —

- (a) Is not the rebellion of Satan supposed to have taken place in heaven before the creation of the world? Then why, at this point in historical time (certainly since Noah's Flood) should this Satan still come swaggering into the divine presence to argue coolly with the Almighty? Is he not supposed to have been cast out of heaven for his earlier rebellion? "God is of too pure eyes to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity." Then how does this Evil One succeed in repeatedly coming before God's throne and in this challenging fashion?
- (b) In at least half a dozen places the Book of Job explicitly declares that it was no Evil One, but God Himself, who brought Job's afflictions on him: His kinsfolk came and "comforted him overall the evil that *the Lord* had brought upon him" (Job 42:11; cp. also 2:10; Is. 45:7).

From every angle this interpretation of Job 1,2 now has more to recommend it than any alternative yet advanced. The Temptation of Jesus (Mt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-13) may possibly be read as a close parallel to that of Job and his Satan. On this see ch. 13.

10. Demons (1)

Matthew 12:27	Luke 13:11
Isaiah 45:5,14,21	John 10:20
Matthew 9:32	Matthew 8:16,17
Matthew 12:22	Luke 7:21
Mark 5:15	Mark 1:25
Matthew 17:15,18	Matthew 5:2,12,13,18
Luke 6:18	

This chapter now addresses itself to a problem of some magnitude, a problem which many avoid talking about, for it can be a positive embarrassment. What's the good of being satisfied that there is no personal Devil when every reading of any one of the gospels repeatedly insists on proclaiming the existence of lots of unclean spirits — the lesser devils, so to speak. Then how are we to exorcize them?

Modern evangelicals take the gospel records strictly at their face value: demons, that is to say, wicked immaterial spirits, do exist; they afflicted people with all kinds of ailments, but Jesus asserted a higher authority, healing the sufferers and banishing the demons from their lives.

Three considerable difficulties stand in the way of this interpretation. First, if these evil spirits exist, then so also does their Great Black Chief — we are thus committed to a firm belief in the existence of his Satanic Majesty. Second, how is it to be explained that a thousand pages of Old Testament have no mention of demons, whilst in the gospels they are prolific? Were there no demons at all during the thousands of years B.C.? Third, in one example after another the New Testament demon is matched by some well-recognized disease for which in modern times there is usually a well-recognized medical cure. The modern medico gets along very well without even acknowledging the existence of any of these unclean spirits.

Three real difficulties. Nor are these the only questions in search of an answer.

The modernist approach is either to say that the writers of the gospels shared the beliefs of their ignorant contemporaries and for this reason couldn't help but cast their accounts of the Lord's miracles in this particular form; or they have to assert that in this field of knowledge Jesus was a child of his own generation, himself thoroughly believing in the existence of demons and in his own ability to exorcize them. On this all that needs to be said is that a theory which assigns to the modern student of the gospels a higher authority and a superior judgement to that of Jesus or even of those who wrote about him condemns itself. But it is a characteristic of the age we live in.

Many who read these words have probably accepted what is commonly called the "accommodation" theory. According to this, Jesus fell in with the thinking of the common people of those days, and tacitly adopted demonic language without necessarily believing these ideas himself and without encouraging them. The sheet anchor of this interpretative approach is Matthew 12:27: "If I by Baalzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children (i.e. your disciples) cast them out?" Here, it is asserted, Jesus adopted his adversaries' standpoint regarding Baalzebub and his lesser devils. But this was for the purpose of exposing the hopeless illogicality of their thinking. Is not that a common enough device for exposing a false argument?

This is only partly true. Agreed, our Lord was exposing his adversaries' lack of logic. But it needs to be recognized that the Pharisees themselves did not believe in the existence of the Baalzebub they talked about. "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me" (Is. 45:5,14,21 etc.). This basic truth was one from which, then and now, Jews never budge. Then why did they talk as though they believed Baalzebub to be a very real and evil being?

Is there any alternative to the assumption that they used Baalzebub and unclean spirit language as an emphatic mode of speech without necessarily taking these ideas too seriously? Today a man says very emphatically: "Go to hell" without at all believing in the existence of such a place. Or he asks:

"Seen a ghost? you look scared;" yet he laughs at the idea of ghostly appearances. "The Tories are in league with the Devil", asserts a dedicated Commie who believes in the existence of neither God nor Devil.

Luke has an example of this kind of usage in Acts 16:16, in his account of "a certain damsel (at Philippi) having a spirit, a Python" (RVm) that is, understood to be guided by the inspiration of Pythias Apollo. Yet it is absolutely certain that Luke did not believe in the existence of this Greek god, nor that the girl was controlled by him.

Similarly, the gospels are careful to explain that the precise forms of demon-possession Jesus cured were deafness, blindness, epilepsy, lunacy and so on. "A dumb man possessed with a devil" (Mt. 9:32). "One possessed with a devil, blind, dumb: and he healed him" (12:22). The Gadarene demoniac was found "sitting, and clothed, and *in his right mind*" (Mk. 5:15). "Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is epileptic...and Jesus rebuked the devil..." (Mt. 17:15,18 RV). "And they that were vexed with unclean spirits...were *healed*" (Lk. 6:18). "A woman which had a spirit of infirmity...and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself" (Lk. 13:11). "He hath a devil, and *is mad*" (Jn. 10:20).

It should then be clearly understood that the maladies from which these unfortunates suffered were known, though only to a limited extent understood. This is clearly summed up in Matthew 8:16,17: "They brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses (RV diseases)." The correspondence here between miracle and prophecy requires the equation of "possessed with a devil" with "infirmity" and "disease".

It may be taken, then, as reasonably well-established that the people of those times were in the habit of referring to familiar sicknesses and afflictions as the work of demons and unclean spirits at work within them.

Indeed, it looks as though much of the language of demonology in use at the time was little more than conventional phraseology. It seems likely, in fact, that the language about demons was specially reserved for the more sensational or more mysterious afflictions: "In the same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight" (Lk. 7:21; cp. also 13:32; Mt. 10:1; Acts 5:16).

There are still the obstinate problems: why did Jesus (and Paul also, and all the gospel writers), appear to accept these erroneous views? Why did he actually *encourage* them by apparently addressing himself directly in tones of authority to these unclean spirits?

This is where the thesis, propounded earlier about angels of evil, comes to the rescue. Brainwashed by modern science, the pagan of today attributes his attack of 'flu to a germ. Theologically it is much more accurate to refer such an experience to the activity of one of God's angels of evil. Whenever the Bible deals with problems of this sort, this is where its emphasis goes. Storm, lightning, earthquake, plague, and a variety of other dire experiences are all spoken of as wrought by God, and it is through His angelic ministers that these things happen.

Once this unpalatable truth is grasped, it is fairly easy to see that Jesus used "demon" phraseology regarding the afflicted people who came to him because such language was remarkably close to strict Bible truth. As long as any idea of *wicked* spirits is kept out of the picture, the concept is accurate enough, and certainly a vast improvement on modern pagan theories which "explain" all human affliction and suffering as being the result of the operation of utterly impersonal "Laws of Nature". A view which sees God as constantly at work in the life of the individual nurtures faith, the most precious commodity in human life. A view which "explains" without making any reference to God at all is an atheism, a massive hindrance to a true spiritual outlook.

It is now possible to make a great deal of sense of what has hitherto been an enigma — why the Lord repeatedly addressed himself directly to the unclean spirit; e.g. "Hold thy peace, and come out of him" (Mk. 1:25). As Son of God he had authority over the angel of evil who was responsible (under God) for the distress and suffering of the afflicted creature before him. The command: "Come out of him,"

was an instruction addressed to the afflicting angel to let go the sufferer from the dominance and control which had been exercised over him hitherto.

The Lord's acquiescence in the conventional terminology of the people regarding the problem of suffering now presents much less difficulty. It is no longer a take-over of crude mistaken ideas, comparable to the Catholic Church's cynical appropriation of many an ancient pagan myth or custom. It is, rather, the re-statement of existing ideas in a new and better light for the nurturing of faith in those whom the Lord blessed with his healing power. Men were being taught to see in Jesus of Nazareth a divine authority greater than any in the universe save the Almighty Himself.

Seen in this light, the sharp contrast between the profusion of demonic details in the New Testament and their non-appearance in the Old Testament ceases to perplex. Angels of evil in the Old Testament and demons in the New Testament fulfil the same essential functions. They are two ways of saying the same thing.

There are two other important recommendations for this approach to the demon problem. The phraseology employed in the gospels is taken practically at its face value, instead of having to be explained away in a manner which still leaves the text dotted with plenty of difficulties. Also, there is now no problem about the frequent use of demon phraseology in the narrative text as put together by the gospel writers; e.g. "There met him a man with an unclean spirit...And they (the demons) besought him, saying, Send us into the swine...And the unclean spirits went out...And he that had been possessed with the demons besought him that he might be with him" (Mk. 5:2,12,13,18). Remarkable, truly, that an inspired evangelist should write as though being himself fully committed to a full-blooded demonology. There are many such examples. What sort of an "explanation" is it which requires to bring in an extension of the "accommodation" theory to cover the ignorance of the gospel writers as well as the common people and the learned Pharisees? This issue crops up repeatedly, and so far as is known has never been given really serious attention. With the approach now being suggested the difficulty ceases to exist. Indeed, if this aspect of the work of angels of evil is correct, it would be strange if both the Lord Jesus and those who wrote about him did not regularly use this kind of language which from any other angle is a major stumblingblock.

Even the name "demon" as a synonym for angels of evil is fairly appropriate, for long before the time of our Lord the Greek world had taught people everywhere to use this word *daimon* for "The souls of men of the golden age, who (they supposed) formed a link between gods and men" (Liddell and Scott); and *daimonion*, the commoner New Testament form for "a deity, a divine operation, an inferior divine being." In other words, "demon" was as appropriate a word for God's ministers of evil circumstance as could have been found.

There remain a handful of "demon" passages which, because of special features in the record, present their own particular difficulties, as indeed from whatever angle of approach they always have done. These will now be considered separately.

11. Demons (2)

Mark 1:21-27	Luke 11:24-26
Luke 4:33-36	1 Samuel 16:13,14
Mark 5:1-20	Acts 19:13-16
Matthew 8:28-34	Acts 10:38
Luke 8:26-39	
James 2:19	
Matthew 12:43-45	

There are a few demon passages with special features and calling for special attention.

1. The man in the Capernaum synagogue (Mk. 1:21-27; Lk. 4:33-36).

First, it seems fairly clear that he was mentally deranged. Mark's phrase is "with (Gk: in) an

unclean spirit”, which is presumably an abbreviation for “in the grip of an unclean spirit, under its control.”

Second, what the man shouted out raises a double problem:

- (a) He used plural pronouns: “we, us”. Who did he mean?
- (b) What he cried out seems to be self-contradictory — a thing not surprising in itself, coming from a man out of his mind. But if his cry was just so much rubbish, why should the gospel writers be so careful to report it?

The contradiction in the man’s wild shout seems to have escaped the attention of the commentators. As soon as it is considered that the bewildered man had probably been listening to vigorous discussion about Jesus, and now wildly shouted out what he had heard (but not comprehended), the incident begins to make sense.

One opinion he had heard and now cried out was: ‘This Jesus of Nazareth has come to destroy us;’ that is, ‘his activities will get us Galileans into trouble with the Romans, and to keep their grip on the country they will ruthlessly destroy us.’

Another opinion, totally different from the other, was: ‘He is the Holy One of God, the promised Messiah (cp. Ps. 89:18-20).’

False Messiah! True Messiah!

Here were contradictory current opinions (suggested also by the switch from plural to singular pronouns) both coming confusedly from the same lips. So of course Jesus had to take some action to quell this undesirable interruption.

“Hold thy peace! Come out of him!”

The Son of God was asserting his authority over one of God’s angels of evil. What better witness could the people have to the truth about him?

“What new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him?” There was no lack of charlatans who claimed healing powers such as these, but “the constant and essential element in all these exorcisms was the power wielded by the recitation of special names,” and particularly the (invented) names of *angels* (H.D.B.1.812a).

No wonder, then, that people were amazed, for here was Jesus casting out *angels* of evil by his *own* authority. A new doctrine, truly!

2. The Gadarene demoniac (Mk. 5:1-20; Mt. 8:28-34; Lk. 8:26-39).

Here only the details relating to the present thesis will be considered. For a fuller exposition, see “Studies in the Gospels”, HAW, number 84.

“Clothed, and in his right mind” tells plainly, if indeed it were necessary, that this demoniac was a violent lunatic.

Luke implies (8:29) that his was intermittent lunacy. All three gospels say that he recognized Jesus. So it is possible to infer that during some period of sanity he had seen the Lord and must have listened to his teaching — with comprehension, too, for he worshipped Jesus (say both Mark and Luke), addressing him as “Son of God most high.” Here, surely, sanity was fighting its way through.

If indeed he were possessed by a wicked spirit, it is difficult to understand why the man should be impelled to worship, and not execrate, Jesus. But if his pathetic disability was the work of one of

God's angels of evil, there is little or no difficulty.

Understanding of the work of Jesus might also be implied in his words: "Art thou come hither to torment us *before the time*?" That last phrase seems to suggest that he had grasped that there would be two phases to the work of Jesus, the second being in judgment.

"I beseech thee, torment me not" also presents a problem. Most probably he had been violently beaten, as a standard contemporary method of expelling the demon. And this may explain why he had learned, in his own crazy fashion, to torture himself, "cutting himself with stones" (Mk. 5:5).

The name Legion, now a fixation in his delusion, had most likely been dinned into him by those unable to make sense of his malady: 'You are not possessed with just one demon, but with a whole legion of them'.

What was the point of the Lord's concurrence with the suggestion: "Send us into the swine"? Could he not have healed the man without this bizarre accompaniment? Of course he could. So it may be safely assumed that there was purpose and value in this decidedly grotesque addition to the miracle. Already there have been indications in the narrative that the lunatic's malady was intermittent. This was a common enough phenomenon. Then, although restored to sanity, he would very soon be anxiously asking himself: 'How long before I am once again in the grip of this evil? Jesus has healed me — but how long will it last? Is this merely a temporary restoration such as I have known before, or is it a permanent cure?'

Here lies the wisdom in the Lord's ready assent to the mad request: "Send us into the swine." Whenever this man, healed of his terrible infirmity, found himself beset with doubts as to the permanence of his cure, there would always be the vivid memory of the great herd of swine stampeding uncontrollably into the sea. It was the lasting guarantee that the demon possession was gone for good. Never again would he experience the horror of a lapse into the world of maniac fury and ferocity which he had known time and again.

3. From this incident it is only a short step to James 2:19: "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well (note the irony!): the demons also believe, and tremble." That there is allusion here to the Gadarene episode is highly probable. But what is the point of it? The argument appears to be this: You remember how an angel of evil controlling a deranged man confessed Jesus to be the Son of God, *and* trembled, *and* obeyed him? Then if an angel serves him with such humble readiness, how much more should you?

On the other hand, from the point of view of orthodoxy, James's words make nonsense, for why should evil spirits which seek to overthrow the work of Christ believe in him and tremble before him?

Nor does the "accommodation" theory fare very well here: Of course neither James nor his readers believed in the actual existence of unclean spirits, but he wrote and they read as though this were truth. What a superb and utterly convincing non-argument! Were the early brethren so short on common-sense as that?

4. There are only two places where demons are spoken of as *evil* spirits. This presupposes a connection between them, and this hunch turns out to be correct.

In Matthew 12:43-45 (= Luke 11:24-26) Jesus told a grotesque parable about an unclean spirit being cast out and returning later with seven others, yet more evil, to take over the untenanted "house", so that "the last state of that man was worse than the first."

A clue to the meaning of the parable comes in the added words: "Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation."

John the Baptist's ringing call to repentance cast out the evil disposition of Israel. The people evinced a strong inclination to cleanse their lives; but the "house" stayed not only tidy but also

empty. When its rightful tenant, the Son of God, came on the scene, they would not have him.

So in his parable Jesus prophesied a phenomenal moral deterioration in the nation. And all careful readers of Josephus are aware how fully that expectation came to be fulfilled in the course of the next forty years.

Since the Lord's words are a parable there is no need to insist on a literal reading here. But even so, taking "evil spirit" to mean "an angel of evil", the picture presented makes good Biblical sense, without grasping at the straw of "accommodation" to the wildly-mistaken notions of that generation.

Indeed, there is fair similarity to the experience of king Saul. Whereas "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward...the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit *from the Lord* troubled him" (1 Sam. 16:13,14). The parallel with Jesus, son of David, and the contemporary rulers of Israel is pretty close.

5. Acts 19:13-16 describes a strange episode which all commentators seem glad to by-pass. Two of the seven sons of a Jewish chief priest sought to cast out the "evil spirit" from a man by invoking the names of Jesus and Paul (see par. 1). Instead, they suffered badly, being glad to escape battered and bruised from the house of this violent lunatic. It is implicit also in the story that by and by the man was completely healed by Paul (v.12).

Why does Luke include such a bizarre story? His record would hang together very well without it. Evidently he wanted his readers to see a link with the parable just discussed. The resemblances are perceptible enough. Here then is an acted parable and prophecy of how the vigorous forces of Judaism in the early church, seeking alliance with the gospel for their own purposes, are to be routed by the believing Gentile, so that they will be glad to flee from "the house", leaving a greater sanity brought by Paul's gospel. (The details have been worked out in "Acts of the Apostles", HAW).

6. In Acts 10:38 the Lord Jesus is described as "healing all that were oppressed of the devil." If this is a generalised reference to the devil as the power of sin, then the passage is distinctly difficult, for *all* the people Jesus encountered, sick and healthy alike were oppressed by this devil, yet he did not heal all that were so oppressed. But read this as an allusion to God's angel of evil bringing affliction into the lives of those who for this very reason came to Jesus, and the difficulty shrinks considerably, for out of sheer compassion the Lord went out of his way to succour such.

12. A Personal Devil

Ephesians 4:26,27	Deuteronomy 24:15
Mark 3:5	Psalms 3,5,6,7
Psalms 4:4,8	2 Samuel 19:22

Ephesians 4:26,27: "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil." Every part of this passage presents a problem of some sort.

It is agreed that it is possible to be violently angry without falling into sin. There were occasions when this was true of Jesus; e.g. Mk. 3:5. But those who know the danger to themselves when provoked to anger will find it difficult to believe that Paul would write such a positive recommendation as this. There is an alternative, fully consonant with the Greek phrasing; that is, to read this first sentence as a rhetorical question, with a negative answer plainly implied: "Be ye angry, and sin not?" — as who should say: It is hardly possible.

This reading of the words is made the more likely by the fact that Paul used a continuous imperative. Would he ever be likely to say: 'Go on being angry, but do not sin'?

The phrase is a quotation from Ps. 4:4, where the Hebrew means, literally: "Tremble, and do not sin," or possibly: "...and do ye not sin?" The word may mean trembling from rage or from fear. The background to the psalm (examined shortly) suggests the former.

It is clear that Paul was not quoting out of context, for this is an evening psalm: “I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety” (v.8).

Appropriately, then, Paul continues: “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath,” implying: ‘Evening is a time for prayer to God, and therefore for forgiveness — of yourself and by yourself!’

The apostle makes this point more effectively by an allusion to Deuteronomy: “At his day thou shalt give him (thine hired servant) his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it” (24:15). Thus Paul implies: ‘You are to have done with your wrath before you sleep.’ And thus he reinforces the warning behind: “Be ye angry, and sin not?”

In such a context, then, it is not difficult to see that “neither give place to the devil” might well be a reinforcement of the caution already given against giving rein to the evil of one’s own nature (than which there is no devil more insidious or powerful). But further study of the psalm suggests a more specific reference.

Psalm 4 (and the psalms that go with it — 3,5,6 and 7, probably), belongs to the time of Absalom’s rebellion and the king’s flight from Jerusalem (see v.1,2,6a). One outstanding adversary was Shimei who with profound satisfaction hurled curses at David. On the king’s return to the city Abishai pleaded for permission to let loose vengeance against this evil man, but was reproved: “What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be adversaries (Heb: a Satan) unto me?” (2 Sam. 19:22). David feared the encouragement to indulge his own resentment against his enemies: “Shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel?”

It would seem, then, that Paul had his eye not only on the psalm but also on its historical background when he wrote: “Neither give place to the devil.” By “the devil” he may have meant one’s own bitter feelings, or he may have been warning against any incitement by others to seek revenge: Do not allow violent counsel to change your spirit of forgiveness. Either way, the “devil” is a very personal devil (as in so many other Scriptures already examined), and not at all some invisible prince of evil.

13. The Temptation of Jesus

Matthew 4:1-11	Hebrews 4:15
Luke 4:1-13	James 1:14
Psalm 24:1	Mark 1:13
Daniel 4:17	

The records (in Mt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-13) of the temptation of Jesus are regarded by many who are wedded to the doctrine of a superhuman Devil as the most clear and decisive Scriptures supporting such a conviction.

Those who have reached such a conclusion have surely read the gospels in a somewhat superficial fashion — as the following list of details certainly suggests:

- a. “The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them (Lk: in a moment of time).” It is not unreasonable to ask: How is it possible to see all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time? And where is the high mountain from which this can be attempted? Is not even Everest a tiny pimple on the earth’s surface from which there is visibility for only a few hundred miles, at most? What about the countries on the other side of the globe?
- b. The tempter said: “All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” But none knew better than Jesus that “the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof” (Ps. 24:1); God “rules in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Dan. 4:17 etc.). These truths Jesus knew perfectly. What sort of a Devil was this, unable to mount a more effective temptation than this?

- c. If the Devil really appeared to Jesus in person and spoke these things to him in person, what force or power would there be in such an attempt at seduction? If the reader of these words were to find himself face to face with such a tempter and such a temptation, would he not find it relatively easy to respond: "But you are the Evil One seeking to lure me into doing your foul work. Then, away with you. You will get no fellowship with me in this!" And if an ordinary human being such as the writer or reader of this paragraph could so readily react, what of Jesus the Son of God, filled with the Holy Spirit? Everyone knows that the power of temptation is in its subtlety, not in its blatant obviousness. This Devil was surely a very poor psychologist!
- d. Jesus was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Could words be plainer than this. Let the reader ask himself: "Have I ever been face to face with the Devil, plainly recognizable as the King of Evil? Have I ever heard him speaking to me?" It is universal human experience that temptation arises through the attraction of some alluring person or circumstance; and even then temptation is of no power at all unless it chimes in with a marked personal inclination: "Every man is tempted (really tempted) when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed" (Jas. 1:14). And Jesus was tempted in this way (as will be shown by and by) — "like as we are, yet without sin."
- e. It needs only a superficial reading of Matthew and Luke to detect that in one of these the "batting order" appears to be wrong. If Matthew's sequence is ABC, then Luke's is ACB. Contradiction? Those who know the gospels really well know also that this is the last conclusion to come to. But at least it must be conceded that a *literal* interpretation of both records is now more difficult than ever.
- f. Mark's very brief record of the Lord's temptation has two specially significant details: "And he was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan" (1:13). On the face of it, here is flat contradiction with Matthew and Luke, for they make it plain that only the first temptation was in the wilderness. The other two were on a pinnacle of the temple, and in a high mountain. Another inconsistency? God forbid!
- g. Again, Mark's clear meaning is that Jesus was "forty days tempted of Satan." How could this be? Forty minutes, more likely. The reading of all three records can be done comfortably in four minutes. So here, once again, is a serious obstacle in the way of literality. Nor is this all —
- h. Luke ends his record with these words: "And when the devil had ended *every* temptation (Gk.), he departed from him *for a season*." That word "every" tells the reader that in fact the Lord's temptations were more than three in number. And the ominous phrase "for a season" plainly implies that the "devil" returned on some later occasion, or occasions, to re-assail the integrity of this Son of God. Yet in all four gospels there is no other hint of the Devil (as usually understood) working for the Lord's downfall.

The foregoing fairly considerable catalogue of details goes a very long way (is utterly conclusive, some would agree) to establish that these accounts of Christ's temptation by the devil are not to be taken with strict literality. Indeed, such a feat of mental gymnastics is impossible. Then what sort of confidence remains concerning the personal literality of the devil? When one is driven to a symbolic interpretation, as seems inevitable, how can room be found for the conventional rebel-angel?

But it may well be asked: What alternative understanding of the temptation narratives is possible?

Concerning this there is more than a small hint available in paragraph (d) above, and in chapter 3. A frank recognition of the truth about human nature makes seduction by a superhuman tempter totally unnecessary. Indeed no kind of temptation from without stands any chance of succeeding unless the unrighteous thought has some welcome in the mind. That achieved, the satan of human inclination needs no incitement from the Lucifer of mediaeval fable.

The important truth (so much glossed over in current church reading) needs to be recognized that Jesus, the Son of God, was born of a virgin and thus he shared human nature and its propensities to evil. Yet in no sense was he a sinner. Temptation constantly assailed him. Consider Gethsemane:

“Not my will, but Thy will be done.” That antithesis between “my will” and “Thy will” shows in stark and clear fashion just how human Jesus was — and therefore “tempted in all points like as we are.” (See “Bible Studies”, HAW, ch. 12.01).

Thus, endowed without measure from his baptism with Holy Spirit power, at the beginning of his ministry there was an inevitable tussle in his soul as to how this divine power should be used.

Use it for your own gratification: “Turn stones into bread, and satisfy your hunger”.

“Make a tremendously sensational start to your preaching work, and all the nation will be at your feet;” so “Cast yourself down from this high pinnacle, and alight unharmed.”

You would like to make the world a better place to live in? Then give yourself the satisfaction of achieving this. It is yours for the asking. Then why not become a better Caesar than Rome has ever known, and enjoy the exercise of power more than Tiberius does?

And of course every other subtle temptation that his human nature was capable of Jesus had to grapple with and strangle in its very beginnings. But this devilry “departed from him only for a season.” Further study of the gospels reveals how, time and again, the battle was renewed. Over and over again the Son of God had to vanquish himself (see “Gospels”, HAW, p.73).

14. “Delivered unto Satan”

2 Timothy 2:16,17,18	1 Corinthians 5:5
Titus 1:9-11	1 Timothy 5:14,15
1 Timothy 1:19,20	2 Corinthians 2:6-11
Acts 26:18	

In 2 Timothy 2, Paul wrote a very strong passage about “profane and vain babblings” which, he warned “will increase unto more ungodliness” (v.16). Then, contrary to his usual method, he mentioned by name two men of specially evil influence: “Their word will eat as doth a canker (cancer or gangrene), of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some” (v.17,18).

Paul took very seriously this matter of false teaching. His words in another place make this very clear (Titus 1:9-11): “Holding faith and a good conscience (understanding); which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. 1:19,20).

If the Satan here is indeed the unseen Evil One of orthodox theology (C.S. Lewis and J.W.s especially), there is something very extraordinary about this determined policy of Paul’s. Would not such a Satan *want* these reprobates to blaspheme? Would he not teach them most efficiently the art of blasphemy against Christian truth? No explanation of this difficulty has ever been forthcoming.

But the concept taught by other “Satan” usage in the Bible presents no difficulty at all. The circle of believers is frequently described as being “in Christ”. Outside that well-defined boundary is the world and its thinking — Satan! The two areas are mutually exclusive. The commission given to Paul by his Lord — “to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins” (Acts 26:18) is another easy example of the same idea.

Thus, Hymenaeus and his fellows, by their perversion of gospel truth, proved themselves to be no longer fit for fellowship “in Christ”, the more so since this teaching was so damaging to fellow-believers. So, accordingly, they were put away from the communion of the brethren — “delivered unto Satan”, as a disciplinary action intended to make them appreciate the terrible seriousness of their activities hitherto. This decision would also insulate from worse harm others who had already been shaken by false teaching.

It is desirable here to renew attention to the same idiom in the instance of immorality already touched on in chapter 4.

A most reprehensible instance of incest had arisen in Corinth. This was in itself a terrible evil, such as could have sprung only from a serious failure to appreciate true Christian standards regarding sex and marriage. It was a wickedness not to be ignored. So Paul went into action. Writing from Ephesus across the water, he set down plainly what needed to be done. A full meeting of the assembly of believers was to “deliver such an one unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:5).

Here, “the destruction of the flesh” clearly means “...of the fleshly mind”, by contrast with “the spirit”, the spiritual mind. Both of these usages are common in the New Testament. But would not Satan (as commonly, and mistakenly, understood) encourage “the mind of the flesh”? Is not “fleshly thinking” one of the devil’s greatest weapons?

On the other hand, read here (as in 1 Tim. 1) this delivering to Satan as an idiom for exclusion from fellowship, an act of discipline to make the offender see the terrible seriousness of his evil way of life, and no problem remains. In this way the sinner would be brought to his senses and “the spirit saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

That this “Satan” phrase is an early Christian expression for excommunication is readily seen from the parallel expressions in the same chapter “I wrote unto you in an epistle *not to company with fornicators*” (v.9) “But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore *put away from among you that wicked person*” (v.13).

It is particularly interesting to trace in 2 Cor. 2 the outcome of this rather drastic excommunication recommended by Paul: “Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many (i.e. by majority vote), So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm the Agape (the Love Feast) toward him...lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:6-11).

Thrust out from the fellowship of the believers he might be tempted to give way to the world (Satan) altogether, instead of repentance leading him back to the fold.

The same usage crops up also in 1 Tim. 5:14,15, where the apostle deplored the light-headed unspiritual behaviour of certain young women in the church. He lamented that “some are already turned aside after Satan”. In this context it is easy to see that Paul meant that they were letting go their loyalty to Christ and were drifting back into the world (Satan).

15. Baalzebub

Matthew 12:22f, 26 Mark 3:23 2 Kings 1:6

A man who, perhaps through brain damage, had lost both speech and sight, was impressively healed by Jesus (Mt. 12:22f). Because of the marvelling of the crowd the scribes very dexterously turned this occasion into what promised to be one of their most effective assaults on the reputation and character of this hated Nazarene.

Very blandly they agreed that he was working a series of remarkable wonders. But (they added in their knowing fashion) it is easy to see how he achieves such sensational results. He is in league with the powers of evil. He casts out devils by Baalzebub, the prince of the devils!

In answer, Jesus picked up their own argument and turned it back on themselves:

“Does Satan cast out Satan?” he asked. Does dog eat dog?

Consider the simple logic of the thing. What prosperity is there for a city in which one mob constantly fights another mob? And the same is true in a family. Do constant squabbles and mutual criticism make for peace and contentment?

All of this, Mark explains, “he spake to them *in parables*” (3:23). Neither house nor city, Satan nor Baalzebub, are anything but illustrations. Those who would cite this episode as proof of the existence of a devil-in-chief called Baalzebub are indeed grasping at a straw; for this is not the first mention of Baalzebub in the Bible. Amaziah, the king of Israel in the time of Elijah, sought healing from Baalzebub, the Philistine god with a temple in Ekron (2 Kings 1:6).

These Jewish adversaries of Jesus knew right well that this Beelzebub (a scornful Jewish perversion of Baalzebul, the Lord of the Dwelling) was just an invention of unscrupulous heathen priests. There was no sentiment the scribes subscribed to more enthusiastically than this: “An idol is *nothing* in the world.”

So even when they derided Jesus with their Baalzebub smear it was with tongue in cheek. What did they care so long as the jibe went home in the minds of an ignorant populace?

There is, then, no evidence whatever for reading Baalzebub as the Bible name for a supernatural Devil. It is true that in this context Jesus did counter with: “If Satan cast out Satan he is divided against himself” (Mt. 12:26); but, as has already been made very clear in chapter 10 this was only his scornful way of saying: ‘Does wickedness discipline wickedness?’ As a reason for adhesion to a doctrine of a personal Devil, this is flimsiness itself.

16. The Devil and the Body of Moses

Jude 9
Zechariah 3:2

“Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee”.

Those who would advance this Scripture in support of a conventional Devil doctrine need first to offer clarification of a number of difficulties which their use of these words necessarily involves — difficulties which it is just not permissible to take in one’s stride with a few tacit assumptions:

1. Where did Jude get his information from about an altercation between a good and a bad angel? There is no word about it in all the rest of the Bible.
2. And if it be answered that this was imparted to the writer by direct inspiration from heaven, where is the point in mentioning the episode, for it could have little or no force at all in the minds of Jude’s readers if they knew nothing about this except from this verse 9?
3. As though in anticipation of this difficulty, the dogmatic assertion is made that the words quoted are to be found in an early church writing called “The Assumption of Moses”. Agreed, there was such a book, known to modern scholars only in a handful of fragmentary passages quoted by other writers, and none of these including these words. However, before this chapter is concluded it will be made evident that the idea of a Michael versus Devil quarrel has actually evolved from a crude misunderstanding of the words of Jude 9. In other words, if there has been any borrowing done, this was from Jude and not by him. The available evidence will establish this.
4. Is it not incumbent on those who would misuse this passage to offer some plausible explanation why the Devil should be so concerned about having custody of the body of Moses? Isn’t the Devil

supposed to be enthusiastic about the destruction of the souls of good men, and not their bodies?

5. And is it not pertinent to enquire: Why should not Michael the archangel rebuke the Devil? Why must this responsibility be left to the Almighty?
6. If indeed there were a squabble between Angel and Devil about the body of Moses, ought not this strange episode be shown to have special relevance to the context in Jude and to the argument which the apostle is putting together there? Ought not this mysterious passage to be much better understood by those who lean on it, before they can be allowed any degree of dogmatism concerning it?

But of course it is only fair to require also the same degree of understanding regarding these words, from those who reject totally any reference to a superhuman Devil.

This better insight can now be briefly advanced here. For yet more detail, the reader is recommended to consult "Seven Short Epistles", pp. 266ff.

The key to this "mystery" lies in the words: "The Lord rebuke thee." This is a direct quotation from Zechariah 3:2. At that place there is described a court case involving a collision between the Angel of the Lord and Satan, with the Lord Himself presiding as Judge. The correspondences with Jude 9 are plain and clear:

1. The angel
2. Satan
3. Contention
4. "The Lord rebuke thee".

This parallel is not to be explained by invoking coincidence. But there is one highly important difference: Whereas Jude says "The body of Moses", Zechariah has "Joshua the high priest". The bridging of this apparently unbridgeable gap is actually a relatively simple matter — thus:

The Greek word for "body" (*soma*) is a double-meaning word of the kind which crops up in all languages. English and Hebrew both offer copious examples: consider "pen", "ruler", "bat", "ball", "dash" and so on; there are literally hundreds of them.

It needs to be recognized, then, that *soma* means not only "body" but also "slave or servant", as in Revelation 18:13; Romans 6:6. What more appropriate than to refer to the high priest as the "servant" of Moses. The phrase applied to him better than to any other man in Israel. Thus a fifth point of contact is established between Jude 9 and Zechariah 3:2.

It is now possible to go further and demonstrate that the background to Zechariah 3:2 presents a marvellous resemblance to the difficult situation Jude was faced with centuries later. This aspect of the parallel between the two is worked out in detail in "Seven Short Epistles", p. 266f.

One last point, to silence any carping criticism. Why should Jude say "Michael the archangel", whereas Zechariah 3 was "the angel of the Lord"?

Answer Jude's added detail is an easy inference from the fact that Zechariah 3 is concerned with the well-being of the people of Israel, and it is a fact readily established from the Old Testament (e.g. Dan. 12:1) that the angel specially responsible, under God, for the Chosen People was Michael, the archangel.

17. "Him that had the power of death"

Hebrews 2:14 Exodus 12:4,23

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he (Jesus) also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is,

the devil.”

It is easy to argue from these words that the devil spoken of here is not the conventional Evil Spirit commonly believed in, for, if the sacrifice of Christ destroyed that Devil, how is it to be explained that, by any standards of judgement, the world today, now two thousand years older, is much more full of evil than it was in A.D.30?

The words that follow underline the conclusion: If that devil has been destroyed, why is it that great multitudes who “through fear of death are (still) subject to bondage” do not know the deliverance which verse 15 plainly declares?

So much for the ideas of centuries old orthodoxy!

Then, who or what is the devil spoken of here, and what was the great work which this verse 14 says was accomplished in the death of Christ?

It is not sufficient to say, rather glibly, that in his sacrifice Jesus destroyed sin-in-the-flesh. This was doubtless true for Jesus himself; but this passage goes on to glory in the deliverance of those who *were* (i.e. formerly) subject to bondage — with the plain implication that now that bondage is ended. But is it, as long as this mortality continues?

There is another way of seeing this verse which throws a flood of light on its phraseology.

Briefly, the suggestion is that this passage is a sustained allusion to the Passover which brought deliverance to Israel in the time of Moses. The figure of “Christ our Passover” is being worked out in one detail after another:

- a. The Lord’s same “flesh and blood” is emphasized here to give prominence to the Passover meal — “flesh” — and the sprinkling of sacrificial blood on the sideposts and lintel of the door. The key phrase “through death” emphasizes the sacrifice of Christ as the true Passover Lamb.
- b. Why are redeemed people called “children” here, except it be to recall “the children of Israel”?
- c. The word “likewise” is not necessary here at all after the strong emphasis provided by “*he also himself...*” But the Greek word strongly suggests the idea of “a next door neighbour” (Ex. 12:4) clearly with reference to the Passover commandment.
- d. Verse 15 now shouts for a Passover reference, in *everyone* of its details: “And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” It is a picture of Israelite slaves saved from captivity and harsh treatment.

If the foregoing sequence makes a case, the inevitable question follows: Then who or what was the devil who had the power of death?

To this the easy Biblical answer is: the destroying angel who slew the firstborn in Egypt. Exodus 12:23 says: “The Lord (the protecting angel) will pass over (not, pass by, but hover over) the door, and will not suffer the *destroyer* to come in unto your houses to smite you.”

And now another detail in the text harmonizes delightfully with this conclusion: the word translated “destroy” means, literally: “make useless, bring to nought.” By all means consider 2 Tim. 1:10; Gal. 3:17; 5:4; 2 Cor. 3:11-14 (“done away... abolished...done away in Christ”).

Thus, properly understood, this Hebrews passage is to be seen as presenting a vivid fulfilment in the deliverance Christ brings after the pattern of God’s saving of Israel from Egypt. And the devil Christ has brought to nought is the destroying angel, the angel of death, one of God’s angels of evil, whose authority over saints in Christ is now ended.

18. “Deliver us from the Evil One”

Matthew 6:13	1 John 2:13
Matthew 5:39	1 Corinthians 5:13
John 17:15	Galatians 1:3-5

This familiar petition of the Lord's Prayer is translated in the above way in several modern versions. Two questions arise: (a) Is this reading correct? (b) If it is, does it necessarily imply reference to a superhuman Devil?

So far as the Greek goes, “evil” or “evil one” is equally correct. But New Testament usage, especially in the gospels, leans towards the first. Here are one or two examples:

1. In the preceding chapter, “But I say unto you...that ye resist not evil” (5:39). Clearly, here, Jesus forbade resistance to the *evil man*. It is inconceivable that he would urge no resistance to the great Spirit of Evil (if there be such). This consideration makes the modern translation highly unlikely.
2. Jesus prayed for his disciples: “Keep them from the evil” (Jn. 17:15). Reference to John 16:2-3 shews that Jesus had evil *men* in mind.
3. “I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one” (1 Jn. 2:13). This is a slanted translation, for the Greek is identical with the phrases just quoted: “...because ye have overcome evil (the world's wicked-ness).” If indeed there is reference here to the Devil, how could John write this about those beginning, and not ending, their lives of Christian dedication?
4. “...Put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (1 Cor. 5:13). Again the Greek is the same: “the evil man” (see the whole chapter).
5. Galatians 1:3-5 is the most decisive and explanatory of all, for these verses contain no less than five clear allusions to the Lord's Prayer; but here Paul's equivalent to “deliver us from evil” is “deliver us from this present evil world”. It is hardly conceivable that this inspired apostle had badly misconstrued his Lord's Prayer.

19. “The Snare of the Devil”

1 Timothy 3:6,7
2 Timothy 2:25,26

In three places in his letters to Timothy, Paul uses “the devil” consistently for the world and its thinking, by contrast with the mind of Christ.

1. A bishop, or elder, must not be “a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil,” that is, provoke the censure of those who though themselves outside the church are quick to notice and condemn any hypocritical inconsistency in the life of a believer, and particularly of one who is prominent in the church.
2. The point is made again in the next verse, with a slightly different emphasis: “Moreover, he (the elder) must have a good report of them which are without (i.e. worldly people who know him), lest he fall into (their) reproach and the snare of the devil (the trap which a worldly environment constantly presents).”
3. In 2 Tim. 2:25,26 a similar warning is addressed to all believers: “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves (the devil, once again, happy to criticize those in the Faith), if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they (these

critics) may (thus) recover themselves (NIV: come to their senses) from the snare of the devil (obsession with a worldly life) being (thus) taken captive by him (by Christ) unto his will."

20. "The devil and his angels"

Matthew 25:31-46	Luke 17:20ff
Revelation 12:7	Luke 10:14
Revelation 20:10	Matthew 7:22ff

In the vivid picture of the Last Judgment, as described by our Lord in Matthew 25:31-46, there are two verses which merit special attention in connection with this subject:

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal" (v.46). Naturally, the enthusiasts for the idea of an everlasting torment of fire for the unworthy read their favourite dogma into these words with a certain satisfaction. Yet the words mean no more than this — that the penalty described will be everlasting in its effects, an eternity of oblivion, not of torment. (Cp. Jude v.7).

But what of v.41?

"Then shall he say to them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Again, allowance must be made for the figurative character of the language here. The entire passage is shot through with it; e.g. "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink...etc;" nor is it possible to conceive of two vast congregations of people arranged strictly on the Lord's right hand and left hand.

Then, it may well be asked, what meaning is to be derived from this verse 41 if it does not mean precisely what it says?

Here two possible answers present themselves.

In the first instance, it can be well argued that since these words about "the devil and his angels" are addressed to those whom the Lord rejects, this must be because these — the unworthy — *are* the devil and his angels.

So far, so good. But does this explanation go far enough? Should there not be forthcoming some reason why such strange and indeed unexpected language is employed?

Yes, to be sure! So the next step is to observe the remarkable correspondence between these details and certain verses in the Apocalypse:

There is the vivid picture, already considered, of a "war in heaven" between "Michael and his angels and the dragon (the devil) and his angels" (12:7); and, subsequently (20:10): "The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone...and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

Here it is necessary to agree that these similarities between Mt. 25:41 and Rev. 12:7; 20:10 are not accidental. There must be a link of meaning as well as of phrasing. And since the greater detail is unquestionably in the Revelation verses this must be held to be the original. But how, for obvious reasons, can this be regarded as possible?

An important consideration comes in here. There is much in the teaching of Jesus that is every bit as apocalyptic as any passage in Revelation. If in the days of his flesh, in his Olivet prophecy and in such other passages as Lk. 17:20ff; 10:14; Mt. 7:22ff, he could portray beforehand such 'purple' pictures of judgments long centuries ahead, it is utterly reasonable to believe that through his

constant fellowship with his Father (see 'Gospels', p.143) he would have familiarity with the highly-coloured symbolism of Revelation, and would be able now and then to lift the corner of the curtain to hint at some of the cataclysmic transactions yet in store. Here, surely, is the obvious reason why Matthew 25:41 seems to anticipate some of the powerful symbolism of the Apocalypse.

This conclusion granted as seemly and reasonable, is it necessary to underline a reminder that in reading Revelation 12 and 20 literalism is not just unlikely but utterly impossible. In these two chapters how many verses can be taken with strict literality?

21. "Doctrines of devils"

1 Timothy 4:1

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils."

Other phrases here, besides the last, call for careful examination.

"The Spirit speaketh expressly" must mean either the Holy Spirit speaking through inspired Scriptures already written, or else communicated by an inspired prophet in the early church. The present tense: "speaketh", points fairly decisively to the second alternative.

By contrast with this, "seducing spirits" can only mean false teachers claiming to speak with the authority of the Holy Spirit (as happens among Pentecostals today), whilst leading innocent souls astray through their self-confident lying claims. Is there any other explanation of the words which can compare with this for simplicity and lucidity?

"Doctrines of devils" is now readily seen as a parallel expression to the foregoing: "(false) doctrines taught by devils, that is, by enemies of the Faith." See chapter 2 for similar instances.

22. "Unclean spirits" in the Apocalypse

Revelation 16:13-16	Revelation 13
Revelation 18:2	Joel 3:13,14
Revelation 12	Revelation 19,18

Two very sinister passages in Revelation (16:13,14; 18:2) employ this phraseology about end-time judgments against "Babylon".

"Three unclean spirits like frogs...out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet...the spirits of devils (demons) working miracles...to gather them (the kings of the Land and of the whole earth) to the battle of that great day of God Almighty... And they (not, *he*) gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (16:13-16).

Those interpreters who would seize on the words "spirits... devils" here, and dogmatically interpret them as meaning minions of the Devil proclaim their own disqualification; for in a book which declares its own symbolic character and in a chapter which is so obviously packed with symbols and figures of speech, there is almost no room at all for dogmatism as to the interpretation. The man who declares that he *knows* what the details of this chapter mean also declares his own incompetence in Bible scholarship. And to lift a couple of phrases out of such a context as this in order to give them a strictly literal meaning is a practice which no sane interpreter will take seriously.

Having said this much, for present purposes it would be possible to leave the matter there. However,

for the reader's interest a few tentative suggestions may be appended here, but without the fairly copious supporting evidence which might be submitted:

- a. Here are three evil movements in the Last Days originating from the enemies of Israel. The dragon, beast and false prophet come together (against Israel) in Revelation 12 and the two halves of 13. Note the reference to 'the Hebrew tongue' in 16:16, where the meaning is "a heap of sheaves in the valley of judgment": see Joel 3:13,14).
- b. In scores of passages, Old Testament and New Testament, the word "place" means a holy place, a temple, or altar. So perhaps 16:16 should steer attention to Jerusalem, the holy city of three false religions. Also "Babylon" (in ch.19, and ch.18 throughout) is the apocalyptic codeword not for the papacy but for a faithless Jerusalem (for copious evidence on this, see "Revelation", HAW, ch.34).
- c. Hence "Babylon the great...the habitation of demons etc." describes the triumphant but short-lived conquest of Jerusalem in the Last Days, but most probably Jerusalem when it has come once again under the heel of the Muslims. This third "overturning" (see "Five Minutes to Twelve", ch.8,9) already looms on the horizon. It will mean the fulfilment of an impressive array of Bible prophecies, most probably for 3½ years, during which time all this strong apocalyptic symbolism will find fulfilment on a frightening and bewildering scale.

The reader is reminded that these suggestions, although expressed here fairly positively, are *tentative*.

23. The "devil" who sowed tares

Matthew 13:19,39 Mark 4:15

In the parable of the tares, the enemy who sowed them among the wheat is called "the devil" (13:39). Similarly, in the parable of the sower, the birds of the air snatching away some of the seed are said to be "the wicked one" (13:19); and the parallel verse in Mark 4:15 has this: "Then Satan cometh immediately and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts."

Here are three equivalents: the devil, the wicked one, and Satan. But what Satan?

The parable of the tares is specially clear as a prophecy by Jesus of how the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom would be corrupted by the deliberate propagation of false teaching by intensely hostile Judaists who thought they were doing God service. This theme is worked out in detail in "Acts of the Apostles", HAW, App.3.

Those who would believe the Satan here to be the superhuman rebel against the Almighty have an awkward question to answer Why did this Satan take so many centuries to get to work among God's chosen people long before the preaching of the gospel by Jesus and his apostles? And if indeed there was such diabolic activity in more ancient days, why the conspiracy of silence about this in the Old Testament?

24. “Satan at his right hand”

Psalm 109:6

The normal idea of “Satan” meaning a *human* adversary (already copiously illustrated in chapter 4) is entirely sufficient to make sense of this verse.

The parallelism, such a common place feature of the psalms, points immediately to this meaning:

“Set thou a *wicked man* over him: and let *Satan* stand at his right hand.”

Also, careful attention to the shape of the psalm soon reveals that verse 5 requires to be ended with: “saying:” introducing v.6-19 as the imprecations of David’s enemies, spoken malevolently against him. The marked change of pronouns from “they” (v.5) to “him” (v.6), and then back again from “him” (v.19) to “them” (v.20), is a plain intimation that the psalm is to be read in this fashion. For other examples of the need to supply “saying” in various other psalms, see “Psalms” (Geo. Booker) on this; and Ps. 2:6; 9:12; 22:7; 30:8; 39:3; 41:5; 52:6; 116:4; 132:2,11.

This approach also settles once and for all the problem of why a psalm of David should include such a venomous catalogue of blistering curses.

25. “The Man of Sin”

2 Thessalonians 2:3-12

In “Five Minutes to Twelve” (ch.12), the details of this remarkable prophecy are reviewed. There it is suggested that Paul was warning against a sinister Judaist movement which was cleverly infiltrating into the early ecclesias. The Man of Sin himself was the astute leader and organizer of this deleterious campaign.

There is also the likelihood of manifestation of a similar movement in the Last Days.

Then, what did Paul mean by his description of this Man of Sin as being “after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders”? The language implies that he was an echo or imitation of some evil power already known to Paul’s readers. He sits in the temple of God (v.4), that is, in the ecclesia.

Several other expressions in this prophecy provide hints as to the direction of the apostle’s thought: “With all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that are perishing...they received not the love of the truth...God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie” (v.10,11).

These phrases, and the more specific words about “the working of Satan” steer the minds of readers to the tragedy of the Garden of Eden and the fell work of the serpent. The Adversary against whom Paul was warning his converts was similar in all essential respects to the serpent of Genesis 3 — the same lie, the same deceit, the same encouragement to aspiring after a higher status before God; and the same judgment.

It is perhaps useful to note that 2 Corinthians 11:3 uses similar language about the same satan and the same vexatious problem troubling Paul.

Quotations Index

Genesis	Page	1 Chronicles	Page
1:26	36	21:1	2
3	25		
3:5,22	43	Job	
3:24	33	1,2	42,53
18:1,2	37	1:6	53
19:22	43	38:4-7	37,53
28:12	40		
32:24-30	40	Psalms	
		4:48	68
Exodus		24:1	70
12:23	38,83	34:7	34
28:17-21	33	39:5	9
		78:43-49	38
Numbers		103:21	36
22:22	2,54	104:4	37
		109:6	92
Deuteronomy		Proverbs	
24:15	68	15:11	40
1 Samuel		Ecclesiastes	
16:13,14	66	1:13	37
16:14	39		
2 Samuel		Isaiah	
19:22	69	2:22	8
24:1	2	14:12-15	30
24:16	39	31:5,8	39
		37:36	30,39
1 Kings		40:15-17	9
22:19	39	45:5,21	57
		45:7	35
2 Kings		Jeremiah	
1:6	77	17:9	8

Ezekiel	Page		Page
28:11	3		
		Mark	
Daniel		1:13	71
4:17	70	1:21-27	62
6:22	34	1:25	59
10:13	41	3:23	77
		4:15	6,91
Joel		5:1-20	63
3:13,14	90	5:15	58
			8
		7:21-23	
Amos		Luke	
3:6	35	4:1-13	70
		4:33-36	62
Zechariah		6:18	58
4:2	80	7:21	59
		8:12	6
Matthew		8:26-39	63
4:1-11	42,70	10:14	87
5:12,18	59	10:15,18	30
7:11	8	11:24-26	65
7:22	87	12:11	47
8:16,17	58	13:11	58
8:28	63	17:20	87
9:32	58	19:38	43
10:16	27	20:20	47
12:22	58,77	22:3	16,18
12:27	57	22:31	17
12:43-45	65	22:53	38
13:39	6,22,91	John	
16:23	2,14	6:70	14
17:15,18	58	10:20	58
18:10	34	12:31	23,41
23:23	27	13:2	18
25:41-46	86	13:27	19
26:53	38	14:30	23,41
		16:8-11	24

Acts	Page	Colossians	Page
1:1	39	1:13,20	44
5:3,9	16	1:15-17	51
12	38	2:10	51
16:16	58	2:14-17	48
16:38	66		
19:13-16	66	1 Thessalonians	
26:18	74	2:18	3
Romans		2 Thessalonians	
7:14-24	9	2:3-12	93
8:3	14	2:9	21
8:38,39	50		
16:70-20	26	1 Timothy	
17:11	43	1:19,20	74
		1:20	19
1 Corinthians		2:25,26	85
5:5	19,75	3:6,7	85
5:13	84	4:1	88
7:3-6	7	5:14,15	76
10:10	38	5:15	19
15:24	52		
		2 Timothy	
2 Corinthians		2:16-18	74
2:6-11	76		
2:11	20	Titus	
		1:9-11	74
Galatians		3:1	47
1:35	84		
		Hebrews	
Ephesians		1:14	35
1:20,21	50	2:5	37
2:2	44	2:14	87
3:8-11	48	4:15	70
4:26,27	7,68		
6:12	41,49	James	
		1:13-15	12
		1:14	7,71

1 Peter	Page	Revelation	Page
	50	2:9	3
3:22	7	2:10	15
5:8		2:13	3
1 John		2:24	15
2:13	84	3:9	15
		12	28,89
Jude		12:7	40,87
	6,79	13	90
		16:9-11	39
		16:13-16	89
9:		18,19	90
		20:10	87

Notes: