



# The Devil in the General Epistles, Part 4:

## Jude

Thomas J. Farrar

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### Abstract

This paper provides an exegesis of Jude 9 and a critique of Christadelphian interpretations thereof. In order to establish the literary background to Jude 9, a discussion of the meaning of the *satan* in Zechariah 3:1-2 is first undertaken. Following a brief discussion of the literary relationship between Jude and 2 Peter, Christadelphian interpretations of Jude 9 are surveyed and discussed. It is shown that the phrase 'the body of Moses' can only plausibly refer to Moses' actual body, which indicates that Jude is citing an extra-biblical tradition and not referring directly to Zechariah 3. Scholarly hypotheses on Jude's source are presented and defended against Christadelphian criticism. It is argued in view of this literary background that *ho diabolos* in Jude's allusion can only refer to a supernatural personal being. Since Jude did not provide any clarification or qualification on this use of the term *ho diabolos*, the implication is that for him and his readers this was the usual meaning of the term. Conclusions are then drawn with respect to the whole four-part series on The Devil in the General Epistles.

## 1. Zechariah 3:1-2

### 1.1. Text

3 Then he showed me the high priest Joshua standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. 2 And the Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this man a brand plucked from the fire?” 3 Now Joshua was dressed with filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. 4 The angel said to those who were standing before him, “Take off his filthy clothes.” And to him he said, “See, I have taken your guilt away from you, and I will clothe you with festal apparel.” 5 And I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with the apparel; and the angel of the Lord was standing by. (Zechariah 3:1-5 NRSV)

Zechariah 3:1-2 is discussed here because of its relevance as background to Jude 9.

### 1.2. Christadelphian Exegesis

Abel & Allfree identify ‘the Satan’ in Zechariah 3 as “a group of disaffected priests debarred from priestly office.”<sup>1</sup> Roberts outlines this position in more detail:

“As to the case of Joshua, the high priest, the transaction in which ‘Satan’ appeared against him was so highly symbolical (as anyone may see by reading the first four chapters of Zechariah), that we cannot suppose Satan, the adversary, stood for an individual, but rather as the representative of the class of antagonists against whom Joshua had to contend.”<sup>2</sup>

And again:

“The individual adversary seen by Zechariah, side by side with Joshua, represented this class-opposition to the work in which Joshua was engaged. Those who insist upon the popular Satan having to do with the matter, have to prove the existence of such a being first, before the passage from Zechariah can help them; for ‘Satan’ only means adversary, and in itself lends no more countenance to their theory than the word ‘liar’ or ‘enemy.’”<sup>3</sup>

In the latter quotation, Roberts acknowledges that Zechariah saw an individual adversary in his vision, but claims that this individual was representative of a group of adversaries.

Watkins notes that the word *satan* is preceded by the definite article in Zechariah 3, as in Job 1-2:

“It is not *an* adversary, but *the* adversary. The word is a distinctive title given to a special adversary. Of course the translators could have shown the distinction by putting ‘*the* adversary’ instead of ‘*an* adversary’ and it might have avoided confusion if they had done

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<sup>1</sup> Abel & Allfree 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Roberts 1884: 111.

<sup>3</sup> Roberts 1884: 111.

so. But because the word is used as a title or name, we cannot say that they were wrong in leaving it untranslated.”<sup>4</sup>

Watkins goes on to state that Zechariah 3 (like Job 1-2) is a ‘bridge’ passage inasmuch as it is “designed to anticipate the way in which the word is always used in the New Testament.”<sup>5</sup>

For Watkins, the historical background to the Satan of Zechariah 3 is supplied by Ezra.<sup>6</sup> He infers that “Zechariah’s Satan would seem to represent those who unworthily opposed the people of God during the restoration.”<sup>7</sup> Thus,

“there were three main actors in Zechariah’s vision, and...each of them represented a multitude. Joshua represented the people of God; Satan, the Samaritan enemies; and Michael, the angelic host.”<sup>8</sup>

Watkins recognizes that “Precisely when the archangel would have said ‘The Lord rebuke thee’ to the men who attempted to frustrate the work of God’s people, remains a problem.”<sup>9</sup>

For Watkins, the use of the word *satan* (with definite article) in Job and Zechariah sets the stage for the use of the word in the New Testament since “Envious and antagonistic human beings (and their thoughts) are personified.”<sup>10</sup>

Cox concurs that “the opposition to Joshua’s work of rebuilding the temple as recorded in Ezra 4-6” form the historical context of the vision in Zechariah 3.<sup>11</sup> He further states, “It is likely that the ‘accuser’ (Hebrew, *satan*) in Zechariah 3:1 is to be identified with the ‘accusation’ (Hebrew, *sitnah*) in Ezra 4:6)” and that the *satan* of Zechariah 3 therefore refers to “Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, Rehum and Shimshai (Ezra 4:1-24).”<sup>12</sup>

Burke argues, “If one were to ask the Jews of Zechariah’s day who ‘the adversary’ was, they would undoubtedly reply ‘The people of the land’.”<sup>13</sup> Burke argues:

“A natural reading of the text suggests that the *satan* could represent collectively all of the men who brought a false accusation against the Jews and Nehemiah, which would include not only the false accusation of Sanballat and Geshem against Nehemiah (Nehemiah 6:5-8), but also the false accusation of the officials who wrote against the people of Israel (four of whom are mentioned by name in Ezra 4:6-16).”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Watkins 1971: 17-18.

<sup>5</sup> Watkins 1971: 19.

<sup>6</sup> Watkins 1971: 22.

<sup>7</sup> Watkins 1971: 23.

<sup>8</sup> Watkins 1971: 23.

<sup>9</sup> Watkins 1971: 23.

<sup>10</sup> Watkins 1971: 24.

<sup>11</sup> Cox 2001(2).

<sup>12</sup> Cox 2001(2).

<sup>13</sup> Burke 2007: 27.

<sup>14</sup> Burke 2007: 55.

He goes on to compare Zechariah 3:1 with Psalm 109:6, which he asserts Zechariah is directly quoting, though he does not give support for this assertion.<sup>15</sup> He makes much of the point that in Psalm 109:6, David refers to his enemies in the singular whereas in the preceding verses they are referred to in the plural. Hence he concludes:

“Both of these facts provide supporting evidence for the interpretation of the *satan* in Zechariah 3 as a collective representation of those who were opposing and falsely accusing the Jews in Zechariah’s day. The use of this device in Psalm 109:6 is especially significant, since this verse is quoted directly in Zechariah 3:1, and it is natural to read the quotation as occurring in the same context as it does in Psalm 109:6 (a reference to many enemies, not simply one).”<sup>16</sup>

Burke also refers to an earlier Christadelphian writer, Booth, who interpreted the *satan* of Zechariah 3:1-2 to be the governor Tatnai referred to in Ezra 5:3, 6; 6:6, 13.<sup>17</sup>

Heaster interprets the *satan* in Zechariah 3 as follows:

“Zechariah is making the point that the truth is that in the court of Heaven, Angels represent human beings and organizations and their positions and accusations against God’s people; and it is God who judges those accusations, and sends forth His Angels to implement His subsequent judgment of the cases upon earth.”<sup>18</sup>

In spite of this, when commenting later on the relationship between Zechariah 3 and Jude 9, Heaster states straightforwardly that “the inhabitants of the land” who acted as adversaries of Judah are “the Satan.”<sup>19</sup> Here there is no hint of the previous assertion that these adversaries are represented by an angel.

### **1.3. Evaluation of Christadelphian Exegesis**

Christadelphian exegetes are virtually unanimous in asserting that the *satan* of Zechariah 3 is human – either a corporate entity (the opponents of the people of Israel) or an individual (either an unnamed representative of these opponents, or specifically Tatnai the governor).

By contrast, Old Testament scholars are virtually unanimous in asserting that the *satan* of Zechariah 3 is an angelic being, a member of the heavenly court.<sup>20</sup> Christadelphians defy the overwhelming scholarly consensus concerning this passage, usually without even interacting with that scholarship.

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<sup>15</sup> Burke states concerning Psalm 109:6-7, “We have made use of this passage before, demonstrating that it is quoted directly by Zechariah 3:1” (2007: 55). However, nowhere else in the document does such a demonstration appear.

<sup>16</sup> Burke 2007: 57.

<sup>17</sup> Burke 2007: 55.

<sup>18</sup> Heaster 2012: 383.

<sup>19</sup> Heaster 2012: 475.

<sup>20</sup> Petersen 1984: 190; Day 1988; Tollington 1993: 115-118; Floyd 2000: 374; Sweeney 2000: 595; Merrill 2003: 119; Meyers & Meyers 2004: 183; Kelly 2006: 25-30; Klein 2008: 136; Laato 2013: 4; Brown is able to presuppose this in his survey of recent biblical studies research on Satan (Brown 2011: 206).

Watkins and Heaster stuck with the usual interpretation in spite of insights that might have led them to conclude otherwise. Watkins concluded that *ha'satan* functions as the title or name of a special adversary, which sets the stage for the use of the terms *ho satanas* and *ho diabolos* in the New Testament. In spite of this he inexplicably still concluded that the referent is 'the Samaritan enemies'. It is difficult to imagine how 'the Samaritan enemies' constitute a special adversary who could have earned 'the *satan*' as a title or name. Watkins suggests that personification is at work here but gives no evidence for this.

For Heaster's part, he was able to recognize that the setting of the vision in Zechariah 3 is the heavenly court, and apparently even that the *satan* is an angel (albeit one who represents human organizations and their accusations). However, further along he has abandoned any hint of an angelic *satan* and reverts to the view that the human opponents of Judah *are* the *satan*.

For the most part, support for the Christadelphian interpretation is not even taken from Zechariah itself but from the historical setting as described in Ezra and Nehemiah, as well as a similar passage in Psalm 109. Roberts appeals vaguely to the "symbolical" language in Zechariah, and to the lack of support for 'the popular Satan.'

Let us briefly consider the 'symbolical language' to which Roberts refers. Zechariah 3:1-10 is indeed the fourth of eight night visions recorded in Zechariah 1-6. While there are symbolic features in these visions, there are also personal characters such as God and angels. Furthermore, those elements of the visions that are symbolic are usually self-evident, such as horses (representing military strength) and horns (explicitly said to represent kingdoms). Even those who are referred to as 'men' in the visions are actually angels (Zechariah 1:10-11; 2:1-3). We do not have any parallel in these visions to the Christadelphian interpretation of the *satan* in Zechariah 3.

There is nothing in Ezra or Nehemiah which corresponds to the situation described in Zechariah 3, where the *satan* objected to Joshua's ordination as high priest. Certainly Tattenai does not qualify as the *satan*; he did not even make any accusations but merely requested confirmation from Darius as to whether Cyrus had ever authorized the rebuilding work (Ezra 5:7-17). Cox draws attention to the word *sitnah* ('accusation') used in Ezra 4:6, but this was a written accusation sent to Ahasuerus, not a court appearance before the angel of the Lord.

Furthermore, neither of the two passages cited by Burke can serve as precedents for Zechariah's vision. The allegations described in Ezra 4:12-16 were *political* in nature, and had nothing to do with the unworthiness of Joshua the high priest (or the Israelites he represented) to worship God. The accusation did not even mention the temple or religious worship. By contrast, the issue in Zechariah 3 is *spiritual*: the iniquity of Joshua (and, by extension, the people), represented by his filthy garments. Likewise, the allegations described in Nehemiah 6:6-8 were purely political in nature. Given that these charges targeted Nehemiah personally, it is even less likely that the accused would be symbolized by Joshua the high priest. Finally, in Zechariah 3, the case is heard in the presence of the angel of the LORD and/or the LORD, whereas in Ezra and Nehemiah the Jews' opponents sent their accusations in writing to the king of Persia. There is no credible way to reconcile this discrepancy through symbolism.

The second aspect of Burke's exegesis of Zechariah 3 depends heavily on his assertion that this passage quotes directly from Psalm 109:6. However, he offers no evidence for this assertion. Perhaps he takes it for granted given the similar language: "let an accuser (Hebrew: *satan*) stand at his right hand" (Psalm 109:6), and "Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him" (Zechariah 3:1). However, 'stand at his right hand' is a Hebrew idiom for bringing someone to trial.<sup>21</sup> Thus, both these passages have an 'adversary' (prosecutor) bringing someone to trial. That courtroom language is used in both passages hardly demonstrates that one is a direct quotation of the other. Tollington states:

"Whether these passages are directly connected or both depend on general legal usage of these words cannot be determined. Psalm 109 is frequently assigned to a postexilic date, though the evidence offered in support of this is inconclusive; thus it would be unwise to claim any dependence on it by Zechariah."<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, *satan* in Psalm 109:6 does not have the definite article, whereas in Zechariah 3 it does; and Tollington also states the important "distinction that Zechariah's vision is of a heavenly courtroom while Psalm 109 supposes an earthly setting."<sup>23</sup>

Thus, not only has Burke not offered positive evidence in support of Zechariah's dependence on Psalm 109, but it ignores important differences between the two passages and is specifically repudiated by biblical scholarship.

The lynchpin of Burke's argument is that, because the psalmist's numerous enemies (Psalm 109:1-5) are described in the singular in v. 6 as though they were one powerful foe, there is a scriptural precedent for taking the singular *satan* in Zechariah 3 as representing a collective adversary. Burke recognizes that the significance of this precedent depends on his claim that Zechariah 3 quotes from Psalm 109, which we have seen is a dubious claim.

Burke also fails to take into account the differences in genre between the psalms, where literary devices of this sort would be expected, and Zechariah 3, which recounts a prophetic vision in the form of narrative. A narrative would be expected to be more precise in its description. Of course, with a prophetic vision there is the possibility of symbolism, but a poetic device can hardly serve as a precedent for prophetic symbolism!

Moreover, the reason why this literary device is evident in texts such as Psalm 7 and Psalm 109 is precisely because the enemies are described both in the singular and in the plural. By contrast, *there is absolutely nothing in Zechariah 3 to suggest that the *satan* is plural or collective in any way.* The *satan* appears in the role of a prosecuting attorney in the heavenly court.

Burke, like Roberts before him, recognized that the *satan* of Zechariah 3 could be interpreted as a collective adversary only through symbolism or representation, since the *satan* in the vision is depicted as a single personal being. However, no convincing evidence has been provided for interpreting the *satan* as a symbol of a group of people. Furthermore, even if the *satan*

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<sup>21</sup> Tollington 1993: 117; so also Petersen 1984: 189.

<sup>22</sup> Tollington 1993: 118.

<sup>23</sup> Tollington 1993: 118.

symbolized or personified a group of people, there is still the matter of identifying the nature of the literal *satan* seen in the vision (a problem also faced by Watkins' view). Did Zechariah see a human being? If so, which human being, and how do we know this? How did this human being come to prosecute a case before the angel of the Lord? Did Zechariah, on the other hand, see an angelic being (as Heaster suggested)? If so, does this not demonstrate – symbolism aside – that the *satan* (and the *diabolos* of the LXX text) refers in the literal, immediate sense to an angelic being?

Other Christadelphian writers (such as Abel & Allfree and Cox) appear to have understood the *satan* to refer in a straightforward, literal sense to a group of people. This, however, can be ruled out on syntactical grounds. The phrase 'The Lord rebuke you, O Satan' is explicitly addressed to a single person: the Hebrew *b'k* has a masculine, second-person singular pronomial suffix.

In summary, the Christadelphian approach to Zechariah 3 has consisted of one of the following:

- 1) Positing that the *satan* is a group of people even though the syntax rules this out
- 2) Positing that the individual *satan* symbolizes a group of human adversaries known from Ezra or Nehemiah, without being able to identify a credible parallel to Zechariah 3 or any evidence in the text that the *satan* does in fact symbolize a group of people

Common to both interpretations is an utter disregard for the overwhelming consensus of biblical scholarship that the setting of the vision in Zechariah 3 is the heavenly court and that the *satan* is a heavenly being functioning as a prosecutor in this court.

#### 1.4. Proposed Exegesis

We have already mentioned the overwhelming scholarly consensus that the vision of Zechariah 3 is set in the heavenly court and that the *satan* is an angelic being functioning as a prosecutor. It remains to outline why scholars have reached this view, and also to touch on other exegetical issues relating to the *satan's* identity.

Most commentators emphasize that the devil of later Christian and Jewish theology should not be read back into this text.<sup>24</sup> This shows that the scholarly consensus is not the result of critical reading their theological presuppositions back into the text of Zechariah.

Some conservative scholars such as Merrill *would* read Zechariah 3 in light of subsequent revelation about the devil in the New Testament, though Merrill acknowledges that the doctrine had not fully developed by Zechariah's time.<sup>25</sup> Whatever one makes of Merrill's position, he is surely correct to note the parallel between this heavenly accuser and the heavenly accuser cast out of the heavenly court in Revelation 12:10.

With this caveat in mind, we can consider the evidence that the setting of Zechariah's vision is heavenly and that the *satan* is also a heavenly being. Firstly, we have one undeniable precedent for the word *satan* being used of a heavenly being, in Numbers 22:22, 32. Secondly, we have a close parallel in Job 1-2, the only other place in the Old Testament which refers to *the satan* with

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<sup>24</sup> Petersen 1984: 189; Floyd 2000: 374; Sweeney 2000: 595; Klein 2008: 134; Laato 2013: 4-5.

<sup>25</sup> Merrill 2003: 119-121.

definite article. Old Testament scholars have recognized the setting in Job as corresponding to the Ancient Near Eastern concept of a divine council. Hartley explains:

“The setting for this scene closely parallels ‘the assembly of the gods’ that is well attested in ancient Near Eastern literature. Several passages in the OT also seem to assume that God governs the world through a council of the heavenly host (e.g., Ps. 29:1; 82; 89:6-9 [Eng. 5-8]; 1 Kgs 22:19-23). But in the OT the complete dependence of these sons of God on God himself and their total submission to him is not questioned. In this way Israel altered the ancient Near Eastern understanding of the divine council to conform to monotheistic belief.”<sup>26</sup>

Newman further explains (concerning Nehemiah 9:6, not Job 1-2):

“The reference to heavenly creatures surrounding God has hoary ancient Near Eastern origins in the concept of a divine council. Ugaritic literature in particular contains descriptions of the divine retinue, whose job is a *judicial* one – to assist the chief god El in rendering judgements.”<sup>27</sup>

Again, Walton writes:

“The book of Job opens with a council scene as the ‘sons of God’ (an occasional label for the council members) have gathered and are being debriefed. The adversary (Heb. *satan*) comes, apparently as one of their number, and the plot begins to unfold... From the Old Testament itself, it would be clear that the Israelites thought in terms of a divine council (at least 1 Kings 22 is clear). The information from the ancient Near East has provided much more information concerning how the council was believed to operate in the ancient world, and based on that information we can understand the Israelite worldview more clearly.”<sup>28</sup>

The reader is invited to consult a good Bible dictionary for further explanation of the concept of a divine council or heavenly council.

This historical background makes it extremely likely that ‘the sons of God’ are heavenly beings who come together in the heavenly council before God. The same is implied by the only other use of the phrase *bene elohim* in the book (Job 38:7). That the *satan* comes among these heavenly beings implies that he too is a heavenly being. As was mentioned in the Introduction, many scholars understand the *satan*’s role in the heavenly council in Job to be that of a prosecutor. Thus, we can be reasonably certain – notwithstanding the myriad of speculative Christadelphian interpretations – that the *satan* of Job 1-2 is a celestial being.

What this means is that in the only other place in the Old Testament besides Zechariah 3 where the word *satan* occurs with the definite article, it refers to a celestial being, probably a kind of heavenly prosecutor. Given that the setting in Zechariah 3 is unmistakably judicial (as implied

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<sup>26</sup> Hartley 1988: 71 n. 6.

<sup>27</sup> Newman 1998: 116.

<sup>28</sup> Walton 2006: 95. He further explains that “The members of the council are sometimes referred to as ‘the sons of God,’ similar to the Ugaritic designation of the council as ‘the sons of El’” (Walton 2006: 95 n. 1).



by the ‘at his right hand’ idiom), and that it takes place before the angel of the LORD,<sup>29</sup> with a verdict being handed down by the LORD himself, it is evident that the *satan* in Zechariah 3 is also an angelic prosecutor. Hence the scholarly consensus.

The most challenging exegetical question from this passage is whether *ha’satan* is the name or title of a specific being, or only an appellative for a particular office in the heavenly court. Scholars are divided on this issue. Some hold that *satan* was a specific function or office in Job and Zechariah but had become a proper name by the time 1 Chronicles 21 was written.<sup>30</sup> Klein points out that it is rare in Hebrew for a proper noun to be accompanied by the definite article. Accordingly he concludes that in Zechariah and Job “the word serves as a common noun or a title, a description of the figure’s role in the biblical story.”<sup>31</sup> Tollington acknowledges that the presence of the definite article “could imply an understanding that this figure was a regular, identifiable member of the divine council,” but her own view is that the word “merely defines the role which the being plays in a particular situation.”<sup>32</sup> Most recently, Laato has pointed to the use of the word *adam* with definite article (‘the man’) and subsequently without the definite article (‘Adam’) in Genesis 2-5 as a possible precedent for understanding *satan* with the definite article as referring to the title of a particular being, who subsequently took on that title as a name in 1 Chronicles 21.<sup>33</sup>

A final exegetical question is whether *ha’satan* in this text is evil. Petersen observes that there is “a certain negative connotation to a *satan* and his duties.”<sup>34</sup> Klein also points out that the verb translated ‘rebuke’ in Zechariah 3:2 “communicates such strong divine cursing that the expression became a curse formula widely attested in the postexilic period”.<sup>35</sup> Tollington states that “There are no grounds for attributing malevolence to him, nor for claiming that he was being antagonistic towards Yahweh,” but concedes that Satan’s role “indicates a degree of conflict between him and God” and that “the reason for the rebuke remains a matter of conjecture.”<sup>36</sup> Certainly by the time the Septuagint translation was created, some degree of malevolence was attributed to the *satan* since the word was translated into Greek as *diabolos*, which carries a more negative connotation than *satan*.

Petersen offers a conservative definition of the *satan* in Zechariah 3 as “one who acts in a legal context, one whose action inspires a negative connotation, one of the divinities functioning in the divine council.”<sup>37</sup> The most important conclusion here is that the *satan* is not a human being, nor a group of people, but a celestial being. While it might be anachronistic to read the

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<sup>29</sup> In no other encounter with humans in the Old Testament is the angel of the Lord as static as he is here. He does not appear to Joshua or come to Joshua or stand in a certain place. Instead, it is Joshua who stands before *him*. This too suggests the heavenly council as a setting.

<sup>30</sup> So Merrill 2003: 120.

<sup>31</sup> Klein 2008: 135.

<sup>32</sup> Tollington 1993: 117 n. 5.

<sup>33</sup> Laato 2013: 4.

<sup>34</sup> Petersen 1984: 189.

<sup>35</sup> Klein 2008: 136.

<sup>36</sup> Tollington 1993: 115-116.

<sup>37</sup> Petersen 1984: 190. He has previously noted that there is “a certain negative connotation to a *satan* and his duties”; he is, “to use a contemporary idiom, ‘out to get someone’” (Petersen 1984: 189).

New Testament doctrine of Satan back into this text, it is not difficult to see the continuity between the *satan* in Zechariah 3 and Satan of later Judaism and Christianity.

With this valuable background in mind, we can turn our attention to Jude 9, a passage which appears to have some literary dependence on Zechariah 3.

## **2. Jude 9**

### **2.1. Text and Context**

8 Yet in the same way these dreamers also defile the flesh, reject authority, and slander the glorious ones. 9 But when the archangel Michael contended with the devil and disputed about the body of Moses, he did not dare to bring a condemnation of slander against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” 10 But these people slander whatever they do not understand, and they are destroyed by those things that, like irrational animals, they know by instinct. (Jude 8-10 NRSV)

### **2.2. The Relationship between 2 Peter and Jude**

There is an extensive amount of common ground between 2 Peter and Jude which points to some literary relationship between the two. The nature of this literary relationship is important when it comes to interpretation of individual texts. “The vast majority of contemporary commentators” hold the view that the author of 2 Peter borrowed material from Jude.<sup>38</sup>

Apparently only one commentator in the past century has argued that Jude has borrowed material from 2 Peter.<sup>39</sup> A few have argued that both Jude and 2 Peter drew upon a common source.<sup>40</sup>

Green offers the following evidence in support of Jude’s priority:

- (1) Jude shows a more careful structure than the corresponding parts of 2 Peter, which are by comparison more loosely structured
- (2) The parallels between the two letters are all concentrated in 2 Peter 2:1-3:3. If Jude were borrowing from 2 Peter why would he have excluded material from 2 Peter 1 and 3:4-18?
- (3) The tendency in the early church was towards enlargement rather than curtailment, and 2 Peter is a more elaborate and verbose tract than Jude.
- (4) There appears to be an attempt on the part of the author of 2 Peter to suppress Jude’s use of pseudepigraphic literature.

By contrast, Christadelphian writer Cox confidently asserts “that Jude quotes Peter, and not the other way round,”<sup>41</sup> to which Abel & Allfree concur.<sup>42</sup> These writers are apparently unaware or unconcerned that they are challenging a strong scholarly consensus and make no effort to interact with the arguments offered by Green above.

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<sup>38</sup> Green 2008: 159; cf. Schreiner 2003: 409.

<sup>39</sup> Green 2008: 159.

<sup>40</sup> Green 2008: 160.

<sup>41</sup> Cox 2000.

<sup>42</sup> Abel & Allfree 2011.

Cox's only "proof" for the priority of 2 Peter is that 2 Peter 2:1-2 describes false teachers as still coming, while Jude 3-4 speaks as though the false teachers are already on the scene. This argument has force only if we assume that these two epistles were written to the same audience, which is doubtful.<sup>43</sup> In light of the reference to a prior letter, presumably 1 Peter, in 2 Peter 3:1, as well as the reference to Paul's letters in 2 Peter 3:15, it is likely that 2 Peter was written to "predominantly Gentile churches" in the region which Paul evangelized and 1 Peter was written to, i.e. Asia Minor.<sup>44</sup> Jude, on the other hand, has been associated by many scholars with either Palestinian or Alexandrian Christianity, and there is no consensus on whether the recipients were predominantly Gentile or Jewish.<sup>45</sup>

In view of this, it is possible that Jude was written to a community where these false teachers were active, and 2 Peter was subsequently written to other communities to pre-empt the false teachers before their teachings could spread to those areas. 2 Peter describes the false teachers in great detail, and often uses the present or past tense (2 Peter 2:13-15; 2:22), implying that they are already active. Furthermore, 2 Peter assumes the readers' familiarity with Paul's epistles, which requires that these letters had been in circulation for some time, while Jude does not mention Paul's letters. In short, Cox's argument for Jude's dependence on 2 Peter is unconvincing.

### **2.3. Description and Evaluation of Christadelphian Exegesis**

#### **2.3.1. Cox's Theory**

Cox offers an innovative and complex interpretation of Jude 9. He argues that there are two very different meanings which are simultaneously present in the text. In the first case, he thinks Jude 9 can be explained as an allusion to Zechariah 3 in which Jude has modified the phraseology to suit the context of the early church's struggle with false teachers. For instance, 'Joshua the high priest' (the representative of Israel) has been replaced in Jude with 'the body of Moses' which refers to Jewish Christians.

Cox is aware that *diabolos* is not Jude's modification but simply the Greek translation of *satan*. We saw that in Zechariah 3, he understands the *satan* to be human opponents of the Jews' postexilic restoration who are mentioned in Ezra 4. In Jude 9, however, he identifies *ho diabolos* with the false teachers.

So far, Cox's interpretation is easy enough to follow. Here, however, is where it gets complicated. Cox believes that Jude was simultaneously using this allusion in a subtle, ironic manner to undermine the doctrines of the false teachers, which for him include acceptance of Enochic traditions and belief in a personal devil!

In order to undermine the false teachers' acceptance of Enochic traditions and belief in a personal devil, Jude does two things. Firstly, he modifies 'the angel of the Lord' in Zechariah 3 to be 'Michael the archangel.' The "gratuitous" addition of the name Michael in Jude, for Cox, is

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<sup>43</sup> Phillips 2004: 24; Green 2008: 23.

<sup>44</sup> So Reese 2007: 122.

<sup>45</sup> Green 2008: 9-16.

highly significant. It indicates that Jude is introducing elements of Enochic tradition into his allusion – not in order to endorse them, but in order to subtly undermine them.

The problem is that 1 Enoch contains no record of an encounter between Michael and the devil. For Cox, however, this is no problem. He engages in a “reconstruction based on educated guesswork,” according to which the false teachers had drawn a parallel between the opposition between Michael and Shemihazah (the leader of the fallen angels) in 1 Enoch and the opposition between the angel of the Lord and the *satan* in Zechariah. The only evidence Cox adduces for this reconstruction is a rabbinic tradition from the Babylonian Talmud in which Michael saved Joshua the high priest from death by fire.

Jude then *assumes for the sake of argument* that Zechariah 3 really does describe a dispute between Michael and Shemihazah, so that he can reduce it to absurdity.

How does he reduce it to absurdity? By showing that the conduct of ‘Michael’ in Zechariah 3 (where he does not engage in slanderous accusation, but says ‘the Lord rebuke you’) is inconsistent with the conduct of the Enochic Michael (who, according to Cox’s interpretation of 1 Enoch 9:1-10, does engage in slanderous accusation against fallen angels).

Cox knows that his hypothesis needs to account for why, when Jude changed ‘the angel of the Lord’ to ‘Michael’ to match 1 Enoch, he did not change the *satan/diabolos* to ‘Shemihazah.’ He explains that Jude refrained from this change in order to ‘respond’ to the false teachers’ wrested interpretation of Zechariah “using the language of the Greek Old Testament used in the ecclesia.”

### **2.3.2. The meaning of ‘the body of Moses’**

Abel & Allfree dismiss off-hand the most natural interpretation of the phrase “the body of Moses” in Jude 9, i.e. the physical body of Moses. They ask, “Why should the devil want custody of a corpse?”

This shows an apparent ignorance of the importance of honourable burial in ancient Israelite society. People of means were entombed, whereas the bodies of ‘stateless persons’ and condemned criminals were thrown into a common trench, buried superficially under a heap of stones, left unburied, or burned (Genesis 38:24; Leviticus 20:14; Leviticus 21:9; Joshua 8:23-29; 2 Kings 9:35-37; 2 Kings 23:6; Jeremiah 26:23; Amos 2:1).<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, it was considered normal and honourable to be buried in the tomb of one’s father (Judges 8:32; 16:31; 2 Samuel 2:32; 2 Samuel 17:23; 2 Samuel 19:38; 2 Samuel 21:12-14), and “to be excluded from the family tomb was a punishment from God (1 Kings 13:21-22).”<sup>47</sup> Eisenberg summarizes, “In ancient Israel and elsewhere in the Middle East (especially Egypt), receiving a decent burial was of great importance.”<sup>48</sup>

In view of the mysterious and supernatural circumstances of Moses’ death and burial as recorded in Deuteronomy 34, it is not at all surprising that later Judaism might have reflected

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<sup>46</sup> De Vaux 1997: 57-58; Matthews 2007: 82.

<sup>47</sup> De Vaux 1997: 57-58.

<sup>48</sup> Eisenberg 2010: 83.

further on this account. Angels are not mentioned in connection with Moses' burial in Deuteronomy, but if taken as a passive, the verb *qabar* would imply that God buried him.<sup>49</sup> Olson notes that

“Many translations avoid the straightforward implication of the divine burial by translating the verb simply as a passive: ‘He was buried’ (so NRSV). But the next clause in the sentence underscores the absence of any other humans: ‘No one knows his burial place to this day.’”<sup>50</sup>

Given that the text does not explicitly say that God buried Moses, along with the difficulty of the idea that God touched a dead body (cf. Numbers 19:11-13), it is not at all surprising that later Jewish interpreters attributed the act instead to angels.

Furthermore, given that Moses had given a hurried, dishonourable burial in the sand to the Egyptian whom he had murdered (Exodus 2:12), it is not difficult to imagine on an ‘eye for an eye’ principle that some later interpreters might imputed to Satan the argument that Moses himself was unworthy of honourable burial.

Thus, at a minimum we can say that the possibility of a later tradition in which an archangel quarreled with the devil over the body of Moses cannot be dismissed *a priori*.

Of the Christadelphian writings consulted for this study, only Heaster allows that ‘the body of Moses’ may refer to Moses’ literal body. He thinks that there “may have been” a dispute between an angel and a group of Jews over Moses’ body.<sup>51</sup> However, he hedges between this view and that of Abel & Allfree (see below).<sup>52</sup>

Abel & Allfree understand Jude to be referring directly to Zechariah 3, which in turn draws on events recorded in Ezra. They understand “the body of Moses” in Jude 9 to refer to Joshua the High Priest himself, on the grounds that

“The Greek word *soma* can be translated ‘slave’ as it is in Rev. 18:13...Joshua the High Priest was Moses’ servant (slave) in a figure, since he served the law which Moses gave.”<sup>53</sup>

This explanation of ‘the body of Moses’ is contrived. Even if *soma* (‘body’) could be taken idiomatically to mean ‘servant’, “the servant of Moses” is an extremely unlikely way to refer to *Joshua the high priest*. In any case, the BDAG lexicon mentions the idiomatic meaning ‘slaves’ only for the plural form *somata*, not for the singular form *soma* found in Jude 9.<sup>54</sup>

Watkins discusses Jude 9 in his exegesis of Zechariah 3. He argues that ‘the body of Moses’ refers to the Israelite nation, represented by the high priest Joshua.<sup>55</sup> His interpretation of this phrase is thus similar to Abel & Allfree’s but he arrives at it by a different line of reasoning.

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<sup>49</sup> Smith 2006: 533.

<sup>50</sup> Olson 2005: 129.

<sup>51</sup> Heaster 2012: 476 cp. Heaster 2012: 170.

<sup>52</sup> Heaster 2012: 475-476.

<sup>53</sup> Abel & Allfree 2011.

<sup>54</sup> Arndt et al 2000: 984.

<sup>55</sup> Watkins 1971: 22.

Noting Paul's analogy in 1 Corinthians 10:2 that the Israelites were 'baptized into Moses', he reasons that as those baptized into Christ formed the body of Christ, so the Israelites formed the body of Moses. Then, since a priest is a representative of the people, it "surely is valid" to equate Joshua the high priest with the body of Moses, the Israelite nation.<sup>56</sup>

This argument is no less obscure than Abel & Allfree's. First, 1 Corinthians 10 is not expressing a profound theological truth about Moses but is simply indicating how the Israelites' experience in the wilderness foreshadowed the church's experience of Christ. Furthermore, the use of the expression "the body of Christ" for the church in Paul's writings is rooted at least partly in the theological significance of Jesus' slain body as commemorated in the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:24-27; Ephesians 2:15-16; Colossians 1:18-22). As Macaskill writes:

"[T]he image of the church as the body of Christ is not a general metaphor for interconnection; rather, the church is identified very specifically with the actual body of Jesus and its history."<sup>57</sup>

'Body of Christ' imagery for the church does not occur in the New Testament outside the Pauline corpus. It is thus very unlikely that Jude would use 'body of Moses' imagery for Israel, especially when there is nothing about the actual body of Moses that warrants such imagery. Furthermore, body imagery – not to mention 'body of Moses' imagery – is never used of Israel in the Bible.

Finally, if Jude wanted his readers to understand that he was alluding to Zechariah 3, he would by no means have veiled the reference to Joshua the high priest in an obscure and unprecedented idiom.

Cox rejects Abel & Allfree's argument for identifying 'the body of Moses' with Joshua. However, he still states:

"The absence of any mention of 'Joshua' in Jude's version of the angelic dispute, shows that 'the body of Moses' is in some way a substitute for Joshua. Anyone who denies this has to explain why Jude deleted Joshua and introduced Moses' corpse into a dispute where the other two parties (the angel and the devil) remain the same in Zechariah 3:1."<sup>58</sup>

No explanation is required if we follow the scholarly consensus that Jude was not quoting from Zechariah 3 but from an apocryphal Jewish tradition about the burial of Moses. Presumably, the language of the quarrel between Michael and the devil in this traditional account was borrowed from the precedent for an angelic-satanic dispute in Zechariah 3, which explains the similarities between Jude and Zechariah.

Cox acknowledges that his own view has to explain "why Jude created a problem where none existed, by not simply writing 'Joshua.'"<sup>59</sup> His solution is that Jude

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<sup>56</sup> Watkins 1971: 22.

<sup>57</sup> Macaskill 2013: 152.

<sup>58</sup> Cox 2001(2).

<sup>59</sup> Cox 2001(2).

“is likely recasting the false teachers as Zechariah’s Satan. This fits the context perfectly, as both the previous verse (v. 8), and the one following (v. 10), are not about the devil but about the false teachers. The ‘body of Moses’ that Jude would be referring to would be Jewish Christians (I Pet.1:1), that were in danger of ‘returning like a dog to its vomit’ (II Pet. 2:22). This would explain why Jude does not simply write ‘Joshua,’ and also why it is ‘the body of Moses’ rather than ‘body of Christ.’”

Subsequently he writes:

By using the phrase “body of Moses,” Jude is acknowledging the existence of the myths, acknowledging the wresting of Zechariah, but directing his audience away from this back towards the accusers of Israel in Ezra.

Firstly, while Jude 9 is sandwiched between two statements about the false teachers, Cox misses the point that Jude 9 is an historical allusion designed to show how wrong the false teachers’ behaviour is. Secondly, Cox’s argument here depends on the identification of the false teachings Jude opposed as fundamentally *Jewish*. However, nothing about the phrase ‘body of Moses’ acknowledges the existence of Jewish myths, since the myths that Cox has in mind have nothing to do with Moses or the Law. It would be slightly more plausible for Cox to assert that the phrase ‘body of Moses’ identifies the false teachers as Judaizers. Cox does not explicitly suggest this, but to head off any such suggestion, we should note that according to most commentators, Jude’s opponents were not legalists but the very opposite: libertines who rejected the moral authority of the Law and thus were given to licentiousness.

“It probably is the case that they reviled angels because angels as mediators of the law upheld moral norms, the very norms that were shunned by the opponents.”<sup>60</sup>

Rather than replacing grace with law, the false teachers Jude opposed were perverting the grace of God into sensuality (Jude 4), and rather than compelling others to submit to the yoke of the law, these false teachers rejected authority (Jude 8). There is thus no basis for identifying the false teachers as Judaizers and consequently no reason for Jude to describe them with a label such as ‘the body of Moses’ which would imply their allegiance to the Law of Moses.

The only evidence Cox can muster about the Jewish nature of the false teachings is to cite 2 Peter 2:22 and 1 Peter 1:1. The citation of Proverbs 26:11 in 2 Peter 2:22 in no way suggests that the false teachers of 2 Peter were Judaizers or proponents of Jewish ‘fallen angels’ myths.<sup>61</sup> As v. 20 indicates, the writer is referring to backsliding into “the world” and not into Judaism. Furthermore, Cox’s citation of 1 Peter 1:1 has no bearing on the identification of the false teachings opposed in Jude.

In any case, as stated above there is no precedent for the use of the term ‘the body of Moses’ to refer to Israel, Judaism or Jewish Christians.

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<sup>60</sup> Schreiner 2003: 414.

<sup>61</sup> For a more detailed refutation of Cox’s claim that 2 Peter and Jude were written to oppose Enochic fallen angels myths, see Farrar 2013(3).

In summary, Christadelphian interpretations of ‘the body of Moses’ stretch sound hermeneutical principles beyond the breaking point. They ought to follow Cox’s advice here: “Sometimes the solutions to the most difficult problems are the simplest.”<sup>62</sup> The simplest and only plausible interpretation of the phrase ‘the body of Moses’ is that it refers to Moses’ actual body.

### **2.3.3. The Literary Dependence of Jude 9 on Zechariah 3:1-2**

The consequence of the identification of the phrase ‘the body of Moses’ with Moses’ actual body is that Zechariah 3 on its own cannot account for the allusion in Jude 9. Moses’ actual body had died and been buried at an unknown location centuries before Zechariah’s lifetime, and Moses is not mentioned in Zechariah. Moreover, Zechariah does not provide the information found in Jude that the angel of the Lord was in fact the archangel Michael.

Furthermore, nothing in the narratives about Moses in the Pentateuch – including the account of his death and burial in Deuteronomy 34 – can account for Jude’s allusion to a quarrel between Michael and the devil about the body of Moses. The clear implication is that Jude is alluding to an extra-biblical tradition.

Nevertheless, while Jude is not alluding to Zechariah 3 directly, there is obviously an indirect literary dependence between Jude and Zechariah. It cannot be mere coincidence that Jude describes a quarrel between the archangel Michael and the devil (*ho diabolos*) in which the devil is told, ‘The Lord rebuke you,’ while Zechariah describes an encounter between the angel of the Lord and the *satan* (*ho diabolos* in LXX) in which the *satan* is told, ‘The Lord rebuke you.’

This indirect literary dependence can be accounted for by supposing that Jude’s extra-biblical source borrowed from the language of Zechariah 3 in describing a quarrel between the archangel Michael and the devil over Moses’ body.

### **2.3.4. The meaning of *ho diabolos* in Jude 9**

The implication of this literary dependence for the interpretation of Jude 9 is that it assists us in identifying ‘the devil’ (*ho diabolos*). We have already seen in our analysis of Zechariah 3 that the *satan* is best understood to be a celestial being. The *satan* became *ho diabolos* in the Greek translation of Zechariah (the LXX). If Jude’s extra-biblical source borrowed the term *hassatan* (if the source was written in Hebrew) or *ho diabolos* (if the source was written in Greek) from Zechariah 3, it follows that this extra-biblical tradition also understood the *satan* or *diabolos* to be a celestial being. Indeed, if the *satan* who appeared opposite the angel of the Lord in Zechariah 3 was understood to have quarreled with Michael centuries earlier in Moses’ day, he cannot but have been a heavenly being in the extra-biblical tradition cited by Jude.

If Jude alludes to an extra-biblical tradition in which *hassatan* or *ho diabolos* was a heavenly being, it follows directly that Jude himself was referring to a heavenly being by the term *ho diabolos* in Jude 9. That Jude can allude to a heavenly being called *ho diabolos* in this traditional account in such a cursory fashion without further explanation implies that this was the usual meaning of the term *ho diabolos* for Jude and his readers. Jude 9 thus furnishes us

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<sup>62</sup> Cox 2001(2).



with a compelling argument for understanding the term *ho diabolos* in the New Testament to refer to a heavenly being.

Abel & Allfree argue that “the devil” must be plural in Jude 9 since the object of the “railing accusation” in the parallel passage in 2 Peter 2:11 is “them,” plural. The writers also state that Jude’s argument would be pointless if he were referring to “The Assumption of Moses”:

“How is the self-restraint of a mighty angel in refraining from rebuking a superhuman devil a reason why a ‘servant of Jesus Christ’ should ‘earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints’?”

The writers argue that Jude 8-9 is an amplification of 2 Peter 2:10-12, and that since Peter’s account is about humans, “the same must be true of the parallel account in Jude.”

Following their interpretation of Zechariah 3, Abel & Allfree take “the devil” in Jude 9 to refer to “the group of disaffected priests” who were excluded from the priesthood because they could not prove their Levitical descent (Ezra 2:62).

Watkins likewise takes the devil in Jude 9 to be identical to the *satan* of Zechariah 3, for him refers to the Samaritans who opposed the people of God during the postexilic restoration.<sup>63</sup> Heaster describes Jude 9 as an ‘incidental’ reference to the devil. In one of his interpretations, he takes Zechariah 3 as the sole background to Jude 9 and, following his exegesis of Zechariah 3, ‘the devil’ in Jude 9 is taken to be “the inhabitants of the land.”<sup>64</sup>

The identification of ‘the devil’ in Jude 9 as either a group of disaffected priests or the Samaritan opponents of the postexilic restoration is seriously flawed. Firstly, we have already shown that this is not a plausible interpretation of the *satan* in Zechariah 3. Secondly, the identification of ‘the devil’ as a group of people can be ruled out on syntactical grounds in Jude 9 just as in Zechariah 3. The devil is told, ‘The Lord rebuke you,’ with ‘you’ translating the second person singular dative pronoun *soi* (following Zechariah 3:2 LXX).

There is thus a contrast between the singular ‘you’ in Jude 9 and the plural ‘them’ in 2 Peter 2:11. This does not imply that the singular devil is actually a corporate, human entity; it merely implies that the writer of 2 Peter has modified the argument slightly.

The majority of modern interpreters reject the view that ‘them’ in 2 Peter 2:11 refers to humans, in view of “Puzzlement over the imagined behaviour of the angels, the context in Jude, and the unlikely use of ‘glories’ to refer to humans”.<sup>65</sup> Rather, modern scholars are divided between those who believe ‘them’ to refer to evil cosmic powers and those who believe ‘them’ to refer to holy angels. The first position is outlined by Witherington as follows:

“In view of the background in Jude, this likely means that they were deriding or dismissing the dangers of the devil or demons; ‘the glorious ones’ thus is a reference to fallen angels. This is a quite vague allusion to Jude’s citation of 1 Enoch, but presumably the audience

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<sup>63</sup> Watkins 1971: 23.

<sup>64</sup> Heaster 2012: 475-476.

<sup>65</sup> Donelson 2010: 250.

understands our author's drift. Second Peter 2:11 then follows Jude 9, suggesting in a more general way that even the good angels had a healthy respect for the powers of darkness, even though they had more power and might than these dark powers...These good angels do pronounce judgment on the bad, but do not use invective or insults in the process."<sup>66</sup>

The second position is explained by Knight thus:

"A variety of interpretations has been proposed to explain this phrase but the one which seems most likely is a view of the angels as guardians of the law and of the created order. This view of the angels was common in early Christianity, as we know from Gal. 3:19 and Heb. 2:2, and behaviour which went against the Torah might easily have been construed as slander of its guardians...On this interpretation the teachers' slander of the angels must have lain in their refusal to accept moral standards, undoubtedly those enshrined in the Jewish Law, which they contravened (and encouraged others to contravene) through their belief that licence was permissible."<sup>67</sup>

It is not easy to decide between the two prevailing interpretations of 2 Peter 2:11, but notably neither of them gives support to the idea of taking 'the devil' in Jude 9 as a reference to a group of human beings. Rather, an angelic reading of the parallel supports interpreting 'the devil' in Jude 9 as an angelic being.

It is interesting to note that Watkins' interpretation of the devil in Jude 9 is inconsistent with his broader hermeneutic for the New Testament devil (which, however, is more consistent than that of most Christadelphian writers). Watkins posits a development from the Old Testament to the New: whereas in the Old Testament Satan is the personification of "envious and antagonistic human beings (and their thoughts)<sup>68</sup>", in the New Testament "Satan is the personification of the unworthy desires of the heart."<sup>69</sup> Watkins further argues that the synonymous terms Satan and devil in the New Testament always refer to this "special adversary" (the unworthy desires of the heart) and that the subject of the devil is therefore "one elaborate, sustained New Testament parable."<sup>70</sup> He implicitly recognizes that there is a single entity referred to as 'the devil' in the New Testament (once one sets aside the exceptional cases which are plural or indefinite, i.e. 1 Timothy 3:11; 2 Timothy 3:3; Titus 2:3; John 6:70<sup>71</sup>). In spite of this, he breaks his own rule in Jude 9 by adopting a unique, mundane meaning of *ho diabolos* which is not the 'special adversary'.

Heaster's second interpretation of Jude 9 allows for the possibility that Jude is referring to an extra-biblical account of a dispute between an angel and a group of Jews over Moses' body. Oddly, he makes this suggestion shortly after stating that "Jude 9 must be a reference to a

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<sup>66</sup> Witherington 2008: 356.

<sup>67</sup> Knight 1995: 45.

<sup>68</sup> Watkins only claims the extension to "their thoughts" in Job and not in Zechariah.

<sup>69</sup> Watkins 1971: 24.

<sup>70</sup> Watkins 1971: 34.

<sup>71</sup> Note that I have argued in Farrar 2014: 21-22 that *diabolos* is definite in John 6:70.

historical incident recorded in Scripture.”<sup>72</sup> Heaster is unable to offer anything beyond bare conjecture for this alleged tradition.

Burke endorses Cox’s interpretation of Jude 9, quoting it at length in an appendix to his work and not offering any exegesis of his own.<sup>73</sup> His own comments on Jude 9 are mainly focused on the question of the source of Jude’s allusion (see below), but he also counters Buzzard’s argument that the devil of Jude 9 must be a supernatural being because he disputed with an archangel. Burke points out that humans disputed with angels in the Old Testament (Genesis 32:24-30; Numbers 22:22-32; Daniel 10:13).<sup>74</sup>

Burke’s citation of Daniel 10:13 in this regard is surprising, since

“Most commentaries view the prince of Persia in Daniel 10 as the symbol of an evil angel who works as a national genius or supervising spirit for Persia.”<sup>75</sup>

In view of Genesis 32 and Numbers 22, Burke has a valid point that one cannot infer that the devil is supernatural simply by virtue of his quarreling with an angel. However, it has already been established on other grounds that the *satan* in Job and Zechariah has access to the heavenly council in the role of a prosecutor; this is enough to prove that he is a supernatural being (or office), from which it follows that the devil in Jude 9 is also supernatural. Furthermore, in the only other biblical passage which describes a conflict between Michael and the devil, the text explicitly states that the combatants on both sides are angels (Revelation 12:7-9).

Cox’s interpretation of *ho diabolos* has three layers. In one sense it refers to the human opponents of Joshua who denote the *satan* in Zechariah 3. In a second sense, Zechariah’s vision has been re-contextualized so that *ho diabolos* refers to the human opponents of Jude’s day – the false teachers. In a third, ironic sense, *ho diabolos* refers to the devil of the false teachers’ Enochic myths. Needless to say, Cox is the first commentator on Jude in history to propose such an interpretation of this text – one which is so complex as to border on incoherent!

Remarkably, none of Cox’s three interpretations are justified. We have already seen that the ‘human opponents’ interpretation of the *satan* in Zechariah 3 is incorrect. Secondly, there is nothing in Jude 9 to indicate that ‘the devil’ refers to the false teachers. Instead it is an argument from historical precedent: even a powerful being like Michael did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment on the devil himself; how much more should the false teachers refrain from blaspheming ‘the glorious ones’?

Thirdly, there are several flaws in Cox’s view that Jude is introducing the false teachers’ own Enochic terminology into the text to confound them:

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<sup>72</sup> Heaster 2012: 474.

<sup>73</sup> Burke 2007: 148-150.

<sup>74</sup> Burke 2007: 73.

<sup>75</sup> Shea 2005: 236. cf. Lacocque 2002: 123 n. 33; Porteous 1965: 153-154; Collins 1984: 102; Carr 2005: 31; Bamberger 2010: 12; Russell 1981: 199-200; Guiley 2004: 88; Arnold 2009: 63.

- Nothing in Zechariah or 1 Enoch accounts for Jude’s use of the phrase ‘the body of Moses’ which, as we have already discussed, can only plausibly refer to Moses’ actual body
- Cox’s reconstruction under which the false teachers read the Enochic Watchers story into Zechariah 3 is completely without evidence
  - The devil is not mentioned in 1 Enoch and Cox assumes without proof that Shemihazah, the leader of the Watchers, is equivalent to the devil
  - The rabbinic tradition about Michael rescuing Joshua the high priest from the fire is hardly relevant, since it has no relationship to the Enochic Watchers story, which the rabbis rejected
- Cox’s explanation of Jude’s modifications of Zechariah 3 are self-contradictory:
  - On the one hand, he thinks ‘the angel of the Lord’ was changed to ‘Michael’ to make it clear that he is referring to the (hypothetical) Enochic version of Zechariah 3
  - On the other hand, he thinks ‘the devil’ was left unchanged and not changed to ‘Shemihazah’ in order to remain faithful to the LXX text known by his readers
  - It is inexplicable that Jude would deal with these two characters in Zechariah 3 in inconsistently according to two different motives. Either Jude would give the Enochic names of both beings to make it clear that he had the (hypothetical) Enochic version in mind, or Jude would stick with the LXX text to avoid confusing his readers
- The alleged discrepancy between Michael’s conduct in 1 Enoch toward Shemihazah and the angel of the Lord’s conduct in Zechariah toward the *satan* does not exist
  - When Cox quotes the speech of Michael and the other angels from 1 Enoch 9 in which they denounce the Watchers, he inexplicably cuts the quotation off before the end of their speech. The part he omits reads:

“And now, behold, the souls of those who have died are crying and making their suit to the gates of heaven, and their lamentations have ascended: and cannot cease because of the lawless deeds which are 11 wrought on the earth. And Thou knowest all things before they come to pass, and Thou seest these things and Thou dost suffer them, and **Thou dost not say to us what we are to do to them in regard to these.**” (1 Enoch 9:10-11, R.H. Charles translation, emphasis added)

The whole speech is an appeal to God to act against the Watchers because of their wickedness, and v. 11 in particular shows that Michael and the other angels are humbly deferring to God’s authority in this matter. They do not pronounce judgment upon the Watchers. If this speech constitutes a blasphemous accusation then so do quite a number of the Psalms! Furthermore, it is quite consistent (although much longer) than the statement made to the *satan*/devil in Zechariah 3 and Jude 9: ‘The Lord rebuke you!’ In both cases, the angel defers to God’s authority and does not presume to pronounce judgment.

Cox has not followed his own advice to seek the simplest solution. He has come up with a muddled, not to mention unprecedented, interpretation of ‘the devil’ in Jude 9 when it appears to be a straightforward allusion.

Most of the confusion surrounding Cox’s interpretation stems from one simple error. He asks:

“How do we explain Jude having added Michael into the Zechariah narrative?”

“Anyone who denies this has to explain why Jude deleted Joshua and introduced Moses’ corpse into a dispute where the other two parties (the angel and the devil) remain the same as in Zechariah 3:1.”

The simple answer to this question is that Jude is not alluding directly to the Zechariah narrative. Nor is he mixing the Zechariah narrative with traditions that he holds to be apostate for some subtle, ironic purpose. Nor is he re-contextualizing the Zechariah narrative for the early church. Rather, Jude is alluding to a traditional narrative of a dispute between Michael and the devil about the body of Moses. The only difficulty is in identifying Jude’s source.

### **2.3.5. The source of Jude’s allusion**

We have argued so far that Jude is alluding to an extra-biblical tradition about a dispute between Michael and the devil over the body of Moses. This should not surprise us in light of the fact that Jude alludes extensively to the extra-biblical traditions of 1 Enoch and even quotes 1 Enoch 1:9 in Jude 14-15.<sup>76</sup>

The difficulty that we face in reconstructing the source of Jude’s allusion is that no extant text contains a tradition consistent with Jude 9 that is likely to have existed in Jude’s day. However, the fact that there is no such extant text does not mean that such a text never existed. Many ancient texts have been lost to the ages. From the New Testament itself, for instance, we can infer that Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians prior to 1 Corinthians which is lost (1 Corinthians 5:9). Paul’s letter to the Laodiceans is also lost (Colossians 4:16). An important early Christian text called the Didache survives in only one 11<sup>th</sup>-century manuscript with a lost ending, and a few fragments.<sup>77</sup>

That there was a text about Moses’ death to which Jude referred is attested in early Christian literature. A fragment from Clement of Alexandria, writing at the end of the second century, comments on Jude 9, “This confirms The Assumption of Moses.” Early in the third century, Origen (also an Alexandrian) wrote:

“We have now to notice, agreeably to the statements of Scripture, how the opposing powers, or the devil himself, contends with the human; race, inciting and instigating men to sin. And in the first place, in the book of Genesis, the serpent is described as having seduced Eve; regarding whom, in the work entitled The Ascension of Moses (a little

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<sup>76</sup> Cox thinks that all of Jude’s allusions to 1 Enoch, and his quotation of 1 Enoch, are intended to undermine the Enochic tradition with the same subtle irony which he sees in Jude 9. This view, which has no scholarly support, has been refuted previously in two blog posts: Farrar 2013(1) and Farrar 2013(2).

<sup>77</sup> See Aldridge 1999; Milavec 2003.

treatise, of which the Apostle Jude makes mention in his Epistle), the archangel Michael, when disputing with the devil regarding the body of Moses, says that the serpent, being inspired by the devil, was the cause of Adam and Eve's transgression." (De Principiis 3.2, Roberts-Donaldson translation)

There is no surviving Jewish work called the Assumption/Ascension of Moses; however there is an incomplete work called the Testament of Moses, which some believe to be the same text. One hypothesis that has gained considerable scholarly support is Bauckham's,<sup>78</sup> which holds that Jude quoted from the now-lost ending of the Testament of Moses, which Clement of Alexandria and Origen confused with another text called the Assumption of Moses.

Much later Christian writers offer reconstructions of the story alluded to by Jude, of which there are three basic versions:

"First, the devil wants to return the body of Moses to the Israelites so that they can bury him in a prominent place and make a god of him. Michael fights with the devil and wins the body. Michael then removes the body to an unknown place. Second the devil denies Moses the rights to an honorable burial because Moses killed the Egyptian. This conflict is more legal than spiritual. Michael calls on the authority of the Lord in order to take possession of the body. Third, the devil does not accuse Moses but rather asserts his own authority as master of the material world. The devil insists that all bodies, including that of Moses, belong to him. Michael again calls on the authority of the Lord to claim the body."<sup>79</sup>

Bauckham assigns one of these stories to the Testament of Moses tradition and another to the Assumption of Moses tradition. However, it is by no means certain that any of these reconstructions correspond to the narrative cited by Jude. There would have been much speculation about the nature of the allusion among later readers of Jude who were unfamiliar with his source. There is no way to know for sure what the original story was.

The Testament of Moses referred to above is extant in one Latin manuscript, with a missing ending. This manuscript was initially identified as the Assumption of Moses referred to by the Patristic writers. However, "the dominant opinion of scholars is now that this text corresponds to the work known in antiquity as the Testament of Moses, not the Assumption."<sup>80</sup> The Testament of Moses is dated confidently to the early first century A.D. and would thus have been in circulation by Jude's time.<sup>81</sup>

Furthermore,

"Since the conclusion of the text is missing, it is possible that it originally contained an assumption of Moses too. We should expect that it at least referred to his death."<sup>82</sup>

Charlesworth writes:

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<sup>78</sup> Bauckham 2004.

<sup>79</sup> Donelson 2010: 185.

<sup>80</sup> Collins 1998: 128.

<sup>81</sup> Collins 1998: 129.

<sup>82</sup> Collins 1998: 128.

“We can assume that Jude 9 is quoting from a *lost* Jewish writing or oral story because of two factors: first, a quotation is put into the mouth of Michael. Second, a narrative structure is obvious; Michael is struggling with the devil over the corpse of Moses. The devil has already said something, probably a charge against Moses, which warrants Michael’s rebuke.”<sup>83</sup>

Charlesworth is unconvinced of Bauckham’s hypothesis that Jude quoted from the Testament of Moses, but he concludes that Jude probably quoted from a pseudepigraphical or apocryphal book.<sup>84</sup>

In the end, we cannot be sure about the content or source of the narrative to which Jude 9 alludes. However, in view of our analysis of Jude 9 we can be reasonably sure that there was *some* narrative. And it is at least possible that either the Testament of Moses or the Assumption of Moses was the source of the narrative, given the facts recounted above and the testimony of patristic writers.

### **2.3.6. Responding to Christadelphian criticism of the scholarly source hypothesis**

We have seen above that most Christadelphian writers think that the allusion in Jude 9 can be accounted for by Zechariah 3 alone, and have identified compelling reasons for rejecting this view.

Christadelphian writers also assail the scholarly view referred to above, namely that Jude was citing an extra-biblical narrative in which Michael and the devil disputed about the body of Moses. Christadelphians have a strong theological motive for rejecting this view, because it implies that Jude and his readers understood the term *ho diabolos* to refer to an angelic being.

It remains to consider Christadelphian objections to the scholarly view.

Burke responds to the claim of Buzzard, who had cited Targum Pseudo-Jonathan as a witness to a Jewish tradition in which Moses was buried by angels. He observes that this source post-dates Jude, and that Targum Pseudo-Jonathan makes no reference to a dispute involving Satan. In response, it can be mentioned that the traditions contained in the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan may pre-date Jude, as they existed orally for some time before being written down.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, while Targum Pseudo-Jonathan does not refer to a dispute involving Satan, this source does corroborate one feature of Jude’s allusion: namely, that angels were involved in the burial of Moses’ body.

There is other early attestation to a tradition in which Moses’ body was buried by angels. According to Philo’s *Life of Moses* 2:291, Moses “was buried with none present, surely by no

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<sup>83</sup> Charlesworth 1985: 75.

<sup>84</sup> Charlesworth 1985: 77.

<sup>85</sup> Metzger 1993: 40.

mortal hands but by immortal powers.” Harrington notes that “The ‘immortal powers’ in this context are presumably angels.”<sup>86</sup>

Furthermore, as Green observes, in the Dead Sea Scrolls there is a text which records a dispute between two supernatural powers over Amram, Moses’ father (4Q543-548 1.10-14).<sup>87</sup>

Again, other patriarchs are buried by Michael in texts of the period, such as the Life of Adam and Eve and the Testament of Abraham.

There are later rabbinical texts which attest to other traditions which bear certain similarities with Jude 9:

“In the late Midrash Petirat Moshe, Samael, the angel of death is too frightened of Moses to take his soul and he must ask Moses to yield it. Moses refuses, and in an ensuing struggle puts Samael to flight. In the end, God himself attends to the matter, and summons the soul of Moses to come out.”<sup>88</sup>

In Deuteronomy Rabbah (c. 900 AD)

“God first dispatches Gabriel and then Michael to fetch Moses’ soul. Both archangels object that they are not worthy. So God sends Sammael, the angel of death. However, Moses refuses to die and in the end God Himself must attend to his soul. After Moses’ death Michael, Gabriel, and Zagzagel bury his body.”<sup>89</sup>

There is, then, in these rabbinic texts, evidence of traditions which associated both good angels (including Michael) and ‘evil’ (or at least unsavoury) angels with the death and burial of Moses. There is even a fight with the ‘evil’ angel, although in this tradition the angel fights with Moses and not Michael. It should be noted that one rabbinic text (b. B. Bath. 16a) identifies the angel of death with Satan. While these texts are late and do not provide exact parallels to the situation described in Jude 9, they do have certain similarities and they are unlikely to be dependent on Jude.

Burke further claims that Origen does not describe the dispute “in the manner in which it is found in Jude.”<sup>90</sup> Origen does not say anything that contradicts Jude 9. Moreover, that his description contains elements not mentioned in Jude 9 may indicate his familiarity with the source text.

Burke further points out that there are several apocryphal works within the 1<sup>st</sup> century which contain legends about Moses, but none of them refer to Michael arguing with Satan over Moses’ body. He claims that this “demonstrates that this legend was not contemporary with Jude.”<sup>91</sup> Burke does not mention which works he is referring to, but this is a clear argument from silence.

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<sup>86</sup> Harrington 2003: 207.

<sup>87</sup> Green 2008: 81.

<sup>88</sup> Lierman 2004: 205.

<sup>89</sup> Hannah 1999: 102.

<sup>90</sup> Burke 2007: 71.

<sup>91</sup> Burke 2007: 71.



Burke makes an extensive refutation of the theory that the Testament of Moses is the source of Jude's allusion.

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

There are major problems with this theory, however.

The first is that the 'Testament of Moses' contains absolutely no mention of either Michael, satan, the body of Moses, or any dispute between Michael and satan. Most commentators who assert that Jude is quoting from this work are totally ignorant of this fact, merely repeating this theory assuming has been proved...

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

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

It is unlikely in the extreme that it could have been preserved and circulated as early as the pre-Christian era, and yet not be found, quoted, or even referred to in any Christian literature before the 3rd century AD, and be completely absent from all Jewish literature.”

Burke's first assertion is factually incorrect. The extant text of the Testament of Moses does mention Satan, as well as the chief angel (who, however, is not named):

“And then His kingdom shall appear throughout all His creation, And then **Satan shall be no more**, And sorrow shall depart with him. **Then the hands of the angel shall be filled Who has been appointed chief**, And he shall forthwith avenge them of their enemies.” (Testament of Moses 10, R.H. Charles translation)

The text also mentions Moses' body:

“And Joshua answered him and said: 'Why do you comfort me, (my) lord Moses And how shall I be comforted in regard to the bitter word which you hast spoken which has gone forth from thy mouth, which is full of tears and lamentation, in that you depart from this people (But now) what place shall receive you Or what shall be the sign that marks (your) sepulcher **Or who shall dare to move your body** from there as that of a mere man from place to place” (Testament of Moses 11, R.H. Charles translation)

Secondly, as Burke acknowledges, the ending of this text is lost. It is not “needlessly speculative” to think that the lost ending included an account of Moses' death, considering this is a

Testament in which largely consists of words spoken by Moses to Joshua as he prepared to die. Most other extant Jewish texts of the Testament genre contain an account of the testator's death (Testament of Abraham; Testament of Isaac; Testament of Jacob; Testament of Job; Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs). Indeed, in the Testament of Abraham, Abraham is buried by Michael the archangel. Hence it must be deemed probable that the Testament of Moses did contain an account of Moses' death. Knowing that the Testament mentioned Satan, the chief angel and Joshua's question about what would happen to Moses' body, it is not farfetched to hypothesize that this account may have contained the story alluded to by Jude (regardless of whether it corresponded to the version that Clement and Origen knew).

Clement of Alexandria is believed to have died between 211 and 215, but his writings are dated prior to 202 when he had to flee Alexandria due to persecution.<sup>92</sup> Thus, his fragment on Jude which mentions the Assumption of Moses probably dates from the late second century.

It is uncertain on what basis Burke believes earlier testimony concerning the end of the Testament of Moses is to be expected. As mentioned above, the Testament only survives in a single Latin manuscript today. Furthermore, the earliest quotation that comes from the extant text is from Gelasius Cyzicenus in the fifth century.<sup>93</sup> Gelasius quotes from the portion of the Testament of Moses which is extant, showing that he was familiar with this text, and he mentions that the same text contained a discussion between the archangel Michael and the devil.

Burke asserts confidently, "All available evidence leads to the conclusion that the 'Ascension of Moses' is an apocryphal Christian work known only to Christians after the 2nd century."<sup>94</sup> However, it must be said that Burke's analysis shows a lack of familiarity with the available evidence. Moreover, Burke has not provided any convincing reasons for rejecting the view that the lost ending of the Testament of Moses contained the narrative alluded to by Jude. He has hardly interacted with the relevant scholarship.

Cox's discussion of source hypotheses is no more compelling than Burke's.

He mentions a list of early Christian writers who mention The Assumption of Moses in connection with Jude 9. He states that they are all "unable to quote from it except by hearsay." He fails to acknowledge that, as noted above, Gelasius quotes a passage which is part of the extant text of the Testament of Moses.

He mentions later Christian sources which preserve stories that fit Jude 9. His main criterion for labeling all of them as "false attempts to explain Jude" is that they contain the phrase 'the Lord rebuke you' which is "obviously drawn from Jude." While it is obvious that the writers of these later sources knew Jude, it is circular to argue that they use this phrase only because Jude does. We would expect them to use this phrase whether their version of the story was authentic or not.

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<sup>92</sup> Osborn 2008: 1.

<sup>93</sup> Green 2008: 80.

<sup>94</sup> Burke 2007: 72.

Like Burke, Cox makes factually incorrect statements about the contents of the Testament of Moses, asserting that “It contains no reference to either the devil or angels.”<sup>95</sup>

Cox’s conclusion to this section is, “the Assumption of Moses can be consigned to the trash can.”<sup>96</sup> This is not the language of sober, responsible scholarship but is emotionally-charged, dogmatic rhetoric.

It is also apparent that Cox does not evaluate his own methods using the same standards with which he evaluates the scholarly view. He dismisses the secondary, patristic evidence concerning Jude’s source as “hearsay” while himself proposing the existence of a source which interpreted Zechariah 3 through the lens of 1 Enoch, for which there is no primary or secondary evidence whatsoever. He describes his own theory as “educated guesswork” which requires some “imagination.” How is this alternative explanation for Jude’s allusion more persuasive than that given by the patristic writers and followed by most modern scholars? In the end, Cox’s decision to throw away the scholarly consensus and assert his own theory confidently can only be attributed to his theological presuppositions as well as a deep-seated mistrust of church tradition.

### **3. Conclusion on Jude**

Even though some responsible uncertainty must be maintained regarding the source of Jude’s allusion and its content, we can confidently conclude that Jude was referring to an extra-biblical narrative about Moses’ death in which the archangel Michael quarreled with the devil over the body of Moses. It is at least plausible, if not probable, that this account was contained in the lost ending of the extant work known as the Testament of Moses. Some of the terminology in the account, particularly the saying, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’ was borrowed from Zechariah 3.

Whether or not the narrative alluded to by Jude was historically true is a question of biblical inspiration and inerrancy that is outside the scope of our subject. What is important for our purposes is that ‘the devil’ in Jude’s source can only have been a supernatural personal being. The literary dependence on Zechariah 3 implies that the author of the apocryphal account viewed the devil who disputed over the body of Moses as the same devil who antagonized Joshua the high priest. Furthermore, to dispute with a personal being (Michael), the devil must also be personal. There is plenty of evidence for a tradition of angelic involvement in Moses’ burial, and no evidence for a tradition of human involvement (which would seem to be excluded by Deuteronomy 34). This implies that the devil in Jude’s source was a supernatural, personal being.

Jude’s reference to the devil in this allusion is, to use Heaster’s term, incidental. This early Christian leader, writing to an early Christian community, uses the term *ho diabolos* to refer to a supernatural personal being in an incidental fashion and without clarification or qualification. This implies that, for both Jude and his readers, the sense of *ho diabolos* here was the ordinary sense of this term. Consequently, even though Jude 9 is incidental, it provides compelling evidence that the early church understood *ho diabolos* to be a supernatural personal being.

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<sup>95</sup> Cox 2001(1).

<sup>96</sup> Cox 2001(1).

This text, properly understood, also assists us in correctly interpreting the other New Testament text which pits Michael in conflict with the devil: Revelation 12:7-9.

#### 4. Series Conclusion

In this series of four articles we have looked at the five ‘general epistles’ in the New Testament which mention the devil. We have carefully studied each text which refers to the devil (Hebrews 2:14; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 2:13-14; 1 John 3:8-12; 1 John 4:4; 1 John 5:18-19), as well as a few other relevant texts (Hebrews 2:18; Hebrews 4:15; James 1:13-15). In each case we have surveyed and critiqued Christadelphian exegesis and argued that these texts are consistent with the interpretation that the devil is a supernatural personal being. Indeed, in some cases this is the only plausible meaning of the term.

In reflecting on the study as a whole, one observation that can be made is that the interpretation of the devil ought to be consistent throughout this body of writings. That the references to the devil are, for the most part, cursory and incidental, suggests that there was an established doctrine of ‘the devil’ in the early church to which the writers could refer, knowing their readers would understand their meaning. This is particularly clear in James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:8, which draw on a common traditional teaching concerning resistance to the devil.

By contrast, Christadelphian interpretations of the devil in these five epistles are not consistent. At least one Christadelphian writer, Watkins, seems to have appreciated the need for consistency. He maintains that the subject of the devil and Satan is one elaborate New Testament parable and that these synonymous terms always refer to a special adversary, i.e. the personification of ungodly human desires. Nevertheless, he himself departs from his own model in one of these texts (Jude 9), interpreting ‘the devil’ here to refer to a specific group of human beings. Moreover, other Christadelphian writers offer different interpretations of the devil in several of these texts. Heaster is responsible for much of the variety of interpretations, but even when his views are set aside, the majority of Christadelphian writers agree against Watkins that the devil in 1 Peter 5:8 is not the personification of ungodly human desires but rather a concrete entity: the Roman persecutors.

This is only one of the methodological flaws the study has uncovered in the Christadelphian approach to the devil in the New Testament. We have also observed a failure to take traditional-historical background into account. This is particularly evident in Christadelphians’ neglect of the apocalyptic Jewish setting of Johannine cosmic dualism. It is also apparent in Christadelphians’ tendency to read the ‘devil’ texts in James and 1 Peter on a purely anthropological or psychological level, even when other passages within these epistles show that demons and fallen angels formed part of the writers’ worldview.

The reasons which Christadelphian writers give for rejecting a personal interpretation of the devil in Hebrews 2:14 suggest that they have not correctly understood the traditional Christian doctrine of Satan. Finally, as we have seen in this paper, Christadelphian exegetes are dismissive of biblical scholarship regarding the identity of the *satan* in Zechariah 3 as well as the source of the allusion in Jude 9. In their haste to reject this scholarship, Christadelphian writers have made factually incorrect statements about the contents of the Testament of Moses and have failed to give their readers a fair representation of the evidence.

Hopefully this study will lead some Christadelphians to reopen their personal investigations of the biblical testimony concerning the devil and Satan. As was pointed out in the introduction to Part 1 of this series, the attention that the Lord Jesus Christ paid to this subject in his teaching suggests that it is important. Why does the subject matter? MacLeod comments on the value of the doctrine of a personal devil. It does not provide a convenient excuse for sin, as Christadelphians have been known to claim. Rather:

“This doctrine of a personal devil gives us insight into the moral history of the world—insight invariably ignored in secular analyses of contemporary violence and crime. (1) It explains why people not only depart from God but defy Him. (2) It explains why unbelievers do not merely forget God and let Him go, but utter His name from their lips in blasphemy—they mention Him more than those who love and serve Him. (3) It explains the active hatred of God that is obvious in the lives of some people. (4) It explains the delight that some people have in inflicting pain on others, their sheer inventiveness in devising wicked things to do. (5) It explains the love of crime and evil that some choose—their fierce joy in violating the law, the violation itself being the chief attraction. (6) And it explains the terrible occultic bondage that has enslaved so many in modern times.”<sup>97</sup>

N.T. Wright is uncomfortable with understanding the devil today in terms of the ‘supernatural,’ preferring to think in terms of ‘dark forces.’ He emphasizes, however, that this reality is not “reducible to terms of the ordinary material world.” He adds some insights which may help Christadelphians to see why their purely anthropological doctrine of the devil is problematic:

“Without the perspective that sees evil as a dark force that stands *behind* human reality, the issue of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ in our world is easy to decipher. It is fatally easy, and I mean fatally easy, to typecast ‘people like us’ as basically good and ‘people like them’ as basically evil...But when you take seriously the existence and malevolence of non-human forces that are capable of using ‘us’ as well as ‘them’ in the service of evil, the focus shifts...The line between good and evil is clear at the level of God, on the one hand, and the satan, on the other. It is much, much less clear as it passes through human beings, individually and collectively.”<sup>98</sup>

If the devil is something that is internal to the individual person and will, the implication is that the devil can be controlled by individual will power. If the devil is something that is external to the individual person and will, however, reliance on the power of God in Christ is paramount in overcoming it.

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<sup>97</sup> MacLeod 2001: 39-40.

<sup>98</sup> Wright 2011: 119-121.

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