



The Devil in the General Epistles, Part 2:

James and 1 Peter

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Abstract

This article first analyzes the Christadelphian argument against James' belief in a personal devil on the basis of his failure to mention the devil in his description of the temptation process in James 1:13-15. It is shown that this text allows for a personal devil and that ancient Judaism associated the devil with the evil inclination (*yetzer hara*) in human nature without confounding the two. Next, the two passages in James and 1 Peter which do mention the devil (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8) are studied in detail. Christadelphian exegesis of these two very similar texts is shown to be inconsistent and flawed. It is demonstrated that both texts are best understood to refer to the devil as a supernatural personal being whose existence was presupposed by both the writers and their intended readership.

1. James 1:12-15

1.1. Text

The Epistle of James opens with an exhortation to be joyful when they meet trials (Greek: *peirasmos*) since the testing of their faith would produce steadfastness (James 1:2-3). After again pronouncing a blessing on the one who remains steadfast under trial (James 1:12), he gives the following explanation concerning testing and/or temptation:

“12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.” (James 1:12-15 NASB)¹

1.2. Christadelphian Exegesis

Like Hebrews 4:15 (discussed in Part 1 of this series),² James 1:13-15 is seen as crucial in a correct biblical understanding of temptation and consequently of the Tempter.

Roberts comments that James 1:14-15 “defines the process of sin,” and consequently “the action of lust in the mind is the action of the New Testament Satan, or adversary.”³

Watkins acknowledges that the inference from this passage is “an argument from silence,” but he still thinks this text gives us “an excellent reason for not believing in a personal devil.” He summarizes James’ argument as follows:

“James is discussing the question of temptation. The suggestion that God causes men to sin is refuted. God does not play the role of an ‘outside’ tempter. If however there were another ‘outside’ tempter called the devil, this surely would be the place to say so. But instead of speaking about a great, wicked personality, ever ready to bring about the downfall of man, James says that temptation comes from man’s own wicked desires.”⁴

Burke takes up the same point in his work on Satan. He calls it “significant” that in passages which examine the process of temptation in detail, such as Romans 7:14-25; 8:5-8 and James 1:13-16, there is no suggestion of a supernatural evil tempter.⁵ He asks:

“Where are we told in Scripture that ‘The temptation which arises from the heart of man (James 1:14) and the evil thoughts which proceed “from within, out of the heart of man” (Mark 7:21) may be prompted by Satan?’”⁶

¹ I have deviated here from my default translation, the NRSV, because it takes a minority position in rendering *peirasmos* with ‘temptation’ in James 1:12.

² Farrar 2014(2).

³ Roberts 1884: 114.

⁴ Watkins 1971: 53.

⁵ Burke 2007: 32.

⁶ Burke 2007: 43.

He further notes that lust is personified in James 1:13-15 since it “conceives.”⁷ The implication is that we can similarly understand personal language about the devil elsewhere as a literary device.

Heaster uses the same arguments.⁸ He also draws an argument from the childbirth imagery used by James:

“James 1:13-15 uses a family analogy - a man and ‘his own lust’ beget a child, called sin; and sin, in due time, gives birth to death. Strange, surely, how James makes no mention of a personal Devil or demons as having any part at all to play in this process.”⁹

“If a woman conceives a child, it doesn’t exist outside of her; it begins inside her. James 1:14, 15 use the same figure in describing how our desires conceive and bring forth sin, which brings forth death.”¹⁰

Tennant also notes the argument from silence, asking why James fails to mention a personal devil in this passage if he is one of the major causes of sin.¹¹ Pearce too bases his understanding of temptation on James 1:13-15.¹²

1.3. Evaluation of Christadelphian Exegesis

One can agree with these Christadelphian writers that this passage describes temptation as an internal process, and that it makes no mention of any external sources of temptation (most notably, the devil). The key question here is whether we are justified in inferring that James did not believe in a personal devil, and that he understood ‘the devil’ to be the very internal lusts he described in this passage.

The first observation we can make is that the antithesis James makes here is not between an external devil and internal lust, but rather between *God and internal lust*. As v. 13 and vv. 16-17 make clear, the misconception James was correcting had to do with a misunderstanding of the role of God in temptation. Thus it is clear that James was not explicitly opposing belief in an external devil. However, has he implicitly done so by neglecting to mention the devil in this passage?

We ought to take care in placing much stock in any argument from silence, and by Christadelphians’ own admission, this is one. The fact that James does not mention the devil here does not mean he denies that the devil exists. Indeed, we know from James 4:7 (to be discussed below) that he does. In fact, the argument from silence cuts both ways. Christadelphians believe that the process described in James 1:14-15 is essentially a definition of the biblical devil. Thus, Christadelphians have as much reason as anyone to expect James to use the word ‘devil’ in this passage.

⁷ Burke 2007: 71.

⁸ Heaster 2012: 231, 400.

⁹ Heaster 2012: 117.

¹⁰ Heaster 2012: 162.

¹¹ Tennant 2004: 147.

¹² Pearce 1986.

James 1:13-15 is not an exhaustive treatment of the subject of temptation but serves to emphasize that we are to blame for our failings and not God. As Johnson writes:

“The statement locates responsibility for human sin in free choice and in concupiscence. By so doing, it relieves God of direct responsibility for sin.”¹³

While we might have expected James to mention the devil here, we cannot infer that because he does not, he sought to dissuade his readers from believing in such a being. As Moo writes:

“James’ omission of Satan as a source of temptation does not mean that he ignores the ultimate ‘tempter’ (cf. 4:7). His purpose here is to highlight individual responsibility for sin.”¹⁴

1.4. Proposed Interpretation

1.4.1. James’ worldview

In his study of the anthropology of this text, Wilson states that the worldview expressed in James presupposes “a conflict between God and the realm of existence at odds with God, which is represented by the devil and his minions.”¹⁵

The texts from which Wilson and others infer such a worldview are James 2:19, 3:15, and 4:7 (some would add 4:5, though this is a notoriously difficult text). We will discuss James 4:7 below as it is the text that explicitly mentions the devil. This leaves us with James 2:19 and 3:15, two texts which assume the existence of demons.

James 2:19 reads, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!” (NRSV) James refers to demons to refute the idea that real faith can exist without works. Demons form an excellent counterexample because they do ‘believe’ (readers familiar with the Gospel traditions would have known that demons trembled before Jesus and acknowledged him as the Son of God), but they obviously do not have good works to show for it. “Demons” here cannot refer to mental illnesses, nor can it refer to dumb idols. One cannot plausibly avoid the conclusion that James here expresses a belief in demons, an interpretation which has considerable scholarly support.¹⁶

In James 3:15, one of the three adjectives used for the wisdom that does not come down from above is “demonic” (*daimoniodes*). Moo notes that “This word occurs only here in the Greek Bible and may mean either that the wisdom is demonic in nature or, more probably, in origin.”¹⁷ Again, it is extremely difficult to account for James’ use of this word if he does not believe in the reality of demons.

¹³ Johnson 2004: 74.

¹⁴ Moo 1985: 73.

¹⁵ Wilson 2002: 158.

¹⁶ Moo 1985: 106; Guthrie 2006: 240; McCartney 2009: 160. McCartney considers the possibility of a reference to “the lesser gods of paganism” but rejects it on the grounds of “the reference to them ‘shuddering’ and the general usage in Judaism.”

¹⁷ Moo 1985: 134.

Notably, Johnson sees a structural parallel between *daimoniodes* in James 3:15 and the reference to *diabolos* in 4:7.¹⁸ This supports Wilson’s view that the author of James had a coherent worldview which pitted God against the devil and his minions (demons) in a cosmic conflict.

1.4.2. The meaning of *peirasmos*

One of the key exegetical issues in this passage is the meaning of the Greek noun *peirasmos* (and its cognate noun *peirazo*). This word has two distinct lexical meanings. One is “an attempt to learn the nature or character of something, *test, trial*” while the other is “an attempt to make one do something wrong, *temptation, enticement to sin*.”¹⁹ Dahms notes that the word originally was restricted to the first meaning (‘testing’) but by the New Testament period it could mean either ‘testing’ or ‘temptation’.²⁰

Translating forms of this word is thus dependent on interpreting whether the negative, hostile connotation of ‘enticement’ is present. Most modern translations render the noun *peirasmos* ‘trial’ or ‘testing’ in James 1:12 (NIV, ESV, NET, NASB), but render the verb *peirazo* ‘tempted’ throughout vv. 13-14 (NIV, ESV, NET, NASB, NRSV). This implies there is a subtle shift in the meaning of this word from verse 12 to 13. McCartney believes the shift occurs within v. 13, so he translates, “No one, when being **tested**, should say, ‘I am being **tempted** by God’...”²¹

In spite of this generally accepted shift in meaning, Dahms argues based on the context (the issue of testing being discussed in vv. 2-3, 12) that the original connotation of the word *peirazo* (to test) has not completely disappeared in vv. 13-14. He thinks James is consistent with the “comprehensive doctrine of the source of *peirasmos*” which can be gleaned from ancient Jewish sources, even though James does not state the full doctrine.²²

1.4.3. The respective roles of God, Satan and the evil inclination in *peirasmos*

A comprehensive picture of temptation acknowledges God’s role in it. Dahms argues that James 1:13 does not convey that God has no responsibility for temptation.²³ McCartney agrees, pointing out the significance of the emphatic word ‘himself’ (*autos*) in v. 13 (‘He Himself does not tempt anyone’):

“James’ inclusion of the word ‘himself’ here is a way of acknowledging that although God is sovereign over the acts of his creatures, and although God may permit temptation and even use it in the believer’s life, God himself is not the one who tempts to evil (which would make God the author of the sin). God tests by allowing and even ordaining external pressure, but he himself does not try to lure people into sinning.”²⁴

¹⁸ Johnson 1983: 334.

¹⁹ Arndt et al 2000: 793.

²⁰ Dahms 1974: 223-224.

²¹ McCartney 2009: 103, emphasis added.

²² Dahms 1974: 228.

²³ Dahms 1974: 223.

²⁴ McCartney 2009: 105.

This paradox can also be seen in the intertestamental Jewish work Sirach, which Guthrie notes as a parallel to James 1:13.²⁵ In Sirach 15:11-15, 20 the writer rebukes those who would say, “It is through the Lord that I fell away,” because the Lord “hath commanded no man to do wickedly, neither hath he given any man a license to sin.” However, as Dahms points out, v. 14 says that God “created man from the beginning... and gave him into the hand of his inclination (*yetzer*).”²⁶ It is nonetheless up to each man whether to keep the commandments (v. 15). This *yetzer* is what James refers to in v. 14 with the Greek word *epithumia* (lust).²⁷

Thus, a comprehensive doctrine of *peirasmos* has God allowing for temptation, which he intends for a positive purpose – namely, testing which results in steadfastness. That God carries out *peirasmos* in the sense of testing can be seen from passages such as Genesis 22:1 LXX, which says that God “tested” (*epeirase*) Abraham.

Dahms notes that the Prologue of Job introduces a more complex view of the source of *peirasmos*, although the term itself does not occur. God is viewed as ultimately responsible for Job’s trial (Job 2:3; 42:11) but the Satan is the immediate cause. In some Second Temple Jewish literature, Satan is also implicated as the instigator of the testing of Abraham (Jubilees 17:16-17).

The concept of the *yetzer hara*, the evil inclination, became prominent in Judaism during the Second Temple period. This was seldom seen as being at odds with Satan’s role in temptation;²⁸ indeed, Dahms argues that in some texts, “the evil *yetzer* is said to be controlled by Satan, so that both Satan and the evil *yetzer* are responsible for enticement to evil.”²⁹ In this respect he cites Testament of Benjamin 6:1, Testament of Asher 1:8-9 and Apocalypse of Moses 16:1-5. He further notes two rabbinic texts (b. Sanh. 107a and Ex. R. xix.2) which seem to imply

“that temptation is by the permission of God, that the evil *yetzer* is its internal possibility and that Satan is the external power responsible for its onset.”³⁰

A link between Satan and the *yetzer hara* is famously posited in the rabbinic text b. B. Bathra 16a, which attributes to Resh Lakish the saying, “Satan, the evil prompter (*yetzer hara*), and the Angel of Death are all one.” This statement is not literally confounding Satan with the *yetzer hara*. Reeg explains that

“While in the Palestinian sources Satan is almost all the time described as prosecutor, in the Babylonian Talmud and in the Tanhuma, a homiletic midrash reflecting Palestinian and Babylonian influence, the feature of a tempter of seducer, known from the Bible, is very common.”³¹

²⁵ Guthrie 2006: 221.

²⁶ Dahms 1974: 227.

²⁷ So Moo 1985: 73; Davids 2011.

²⁸ A possible exception is Sirach 21:27. I have discussed this text elsewhere (Farrar 2014(1): 10-11). While most scholars seem to take this as a polemic against Satan’s very existence, it may simply be a polemic against viewing Satan as a scapegoat for one’s sins.

²⁹ Dahms 1974: 227.

³⁰ Dahms 1974: 228.

³¹ Reeg 2013: 78.

He notes that in texts which highlight the seducing function, Satan is often depicted as masquerading (for instance, as a beautiful woman). As such,

“He visualizes carnal desire and can therefore be equated with the evil inclination. One difference, however, cannot be ignored: **Satan is an independent figure, while the evil inclination is part of a human being.**”³²

Reeg notes that in texts in which Satan masquerades, he “resembles a demon.”³³ If Rabbinic Judaism was able to identify Satan with the evil inclination while at the same time maintaining his independence as a personal being (and his other functions such as accusation), it should not surprise us if early Jewish Christians were able to do the same.

So Davids writes:

“James sees another side to the problem of suffering than that of the evil impulse. In rabbinic Judaism and in the Dead Sea Scrolls, it was not unusual to speak of one breath of evil impulse or spirit within the individual and in the next, of Satan without, who leads the individual astray...[James 3:15] leads one to suspect that the author would, if pressed, trace the origin of sin to something other than the evil impulse within the individual.”³⁴

New Testament texts which link Satan with internal temptation, and thus implicitly with the *yetzer hara*, include Luke 8:12, Acts 5:3-4, and 1 Corinthians 7:5. Other biblical texts attribute activities to Satan which are clearly external, making it clear that while Satan may be associated with the *yetzer hara*, the two are not to be confounded (Job 1-2; Zechariah 3:1-2; Acts 10:38; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 2:10).³⁵

The threefold picture of *peirasmos* can also be seen in the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness. God’s involvement is explicit, since Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit (Matthew 4:1). The devil’s (external) involvement is explicit. The internal component of the temptation is implicit in the narrative (other than the mention of Jesus’ hunger), but stated explicitly in Hebrews, as discussed in Part 1. Hence MacLeod writes, “Because our God is sovereign, i.e., in ultimate control, the same event may be a testing of God and a temptation of the devil.”³⁶

Thus, one can conclude that in the Judaism (and Christianity) of James’ day, Satan and the *yetzer hara* were not viewed as two competing explanations for sin, nor as two synonymous terms. Rather, the two were included in a comprehensive model of *peirasmos* which incorporated “the will of God, the activity of Satan, and the nature of man.”³⁷

³² Reeg 2013: 79, emphasis added.

³³ Reeg 2013: 82.

³⁴ Davids 2011.

³⁵ Nor is it a plausible solution to explain these New Testament passages by positing multiple Satans. *Ho satanas* and *ho diabolos* always carry a referential meaning in the New Testament: the terms allude to a particular, well-known concept.

³⁶ MacLeod 2001: 11.

³⁷ Dahms 1974: 229.

James 1:12-15 does not state or imply a comprehensive theory of *peirasmos*, but it is consistent with the theory that can be deduced from other Jewish sources. James' failure to mention Satan in this text can be explained by his intention to draw attention to human responsibility for sin, which seems to have been the particular area of deficiency in his readers' understanding:

“James does not speak directly of Satan doing the baiting, because his focus here is on the responsibility of the individual, though later (4:7; and probably 3:6) he does indicate satanic involvement in the provoking or evoking of evil behaviour.”³⁸

Wilson does see hints of satanic involvement in James 1:

“James refutes the notion that *peirasmoi* originate with God, vaguely implicating instead the *kaka* of verse 13, which is, apparently, an allusion to the supernatural forces of evil.”³⁹

Wilson sums up the whole issue, and the relationship of this passage with James 4:7, which will be examined next:

“The logic of Jas 1:14-15 and 4:5-7 approximates that of such formulations **inasmuch as the internal conflict with desire can be seen to correlate with an external conflict against the devil and his ‘evils.’** Failure to resist the internal, desiring impulse leaves one vulnerable to the temptations to sin that supernatural evil contrives.”⁴⁰

2. James 4:7

2.1. Text

“6 But he gives all the more grace; therefore it says, ‘God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” (James 4:6-8 NRSV)

In this passage, in the context of evil passions (vv. 1, 3), the wickedness of ‘the world’ (v. 4), and the need for pure hearts and single-mindedness (v. 8), comes a brief reference to *ho diabolos*. He is depicted as God’s antithesis, who must be resisted just as God must be obeyed; and who will flee just as God draws near.

2.2. Christadelphian Exegesis

Surprisingly few Christadelphian works on the devil mention James 4:7. Watkins however makes much of this text. He observes that this reference to the devil is situated in the context of references to lusts, the enmity between the world and God, and the need for believers to purify their hearts. His interpretation of ‘the devil’ follows:

³⁸ McCartney 2009: 107.

³⁹ Wilson 2002: 159-160.

⁴⁰ Wilson 2002: 163, emphasis added.

“Obviously the devil represents human lusts. The context demands this. The intrusion of a supernatural monster at this point would be an irrelevancy and a distraction, even if such a being existed.”⁴¹

He has such confidence in this interpretation that he can say:

“Hitherto, in our quest for a definition of the devil, we have proceeded tentatively. James has now brought us to the point where we can be more dogmatic. The devil of the Bible represents those human desires that conflict with the law of God.”⁴²

The logic is the same kind of ‘argument from parallels’ found in Christadelphian exegesis of Hebrews 2:14. Watkins produces a chart where he notes that both sin and the devil are hostile to God and need to be resisted.⁴³ It is a kind of argument from correlation: the devil and sin are related; therefore the devil is sin.

Heaster discusses James 4:7 in the portion of his book devoted to explaining specific Bible passages. He groups James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:8 together in a single section, which shows his awareness of the similarities between these two texts.

Earlier in the book, Heaster briefly discusses James 4:7, refuting what he perceives to be the orthodox interpretation and then offering his own interpretation:

“When we are told: “Resist the Devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7), we hardly imagine us wrestling with a literal beast who runs away just because we put up a fight. Putting meaning into those words, seeking to understand what they really mean for us in daily life, it’s surely apparent that James speaks of the need to resist sin in our minds, and that very process of resistance will lead to the temptation receding.”⁴⁴

In his explanation of this passage he also draws attention to other New Testament passages which he thinks urge Christians to resist either “the Jewish devil” (Jewish opposition to the faith) or “the Roman devil” (Roman opposition to the faith).⁴⁵ He summarizes his point:

“Thus the Devil as defined in James 4:7 is the same as that referred to in 1 Peter 5:8, i.e. our evil desires and also the Roman and Jewish systems.”⁴⁶

Thus it appears that for Heaster, the single word ‘devil’ refers simultaneously to three distinct entities in James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:8! Even if we assume for sake of argument that the biblical word ‘devil’ can take on these three distinct meanings, in Heaster’s exegesis of individual devil texts he seems to consistently commit the semantic fallacy known as ‘illegitimate totality

⁴¹ Watkins 1971: 54.

⁴² Watkins 1971: 54.

⁴³ Watkins 1971: 64.

⁴⁴ Heaster 2012: 192.

⁴⁵ Heaster 2012: 465-466.

⁴⁶ Heaster 2012: 467.

transfer.’ He needs to be reminded of “the simple fact that that any one instance of a word will not bear all the meanings possible for that word.”⁴⁷

In summary, most Christadelphian writers have not devoted much attention to James 4:7 in their studies of the devil. Of those who have, Watkins understands it to refer to evil desires. Heaster agrees but thinks that it simultaneously refers to the Roman and Jewish systems as well.

2.3. Evaluation of Christadelphian Exegesis

Watkins’ statements about James 4:7 are, in his own words, dogmatic, but they have little substance to them. He calls it “obvious” that the devil here refers to human lusts, on the grounds that human lusts are referred to in the context. However, it is not at all obvious that because the devil and lust are related topics, therefore they are the same thing.

The context discusses sin and its antidote from a number of angles: lusts are mentioned but also the world. We could as easily take ‘the devil’ to refer to ‘the world’ as to lusts; after all, it is ‘the world’ that is antithetical to God in v. 4, as ‘the devil’ is in vv. 7-8. Indeed, Heaster suggests that ‘the devil’ here may refer to the Roman and/or Jewish systems. So it is not at all obvious, even to fellow Christadelphians, that ‘the devil’ in v. 7 is human lusts.

The context dictates that ‘the devil’ is something or someone related to the topic of disobedience and antithetical to obedience. We cannot say *a priori* that ‘the devil’ is not a supernatural being, and Watkins’ assertion that this would be a “distraction” shows a lack of familiarity with the worldview of apocalyptic Judaism and early Christianity.

Heaster finds it difficult to imagine an actual personal being fleeing when we resist him, but this difficulty seems more a function of Heaster’s presuppositions than the biblical text. Presumably Heaster has no difficulty imagining God as an actual personal being “drawing near” (v. 8) to people, without imposing a crude literalism in which God physically approaches such people.

Heaster’s threefold interpretation of ‘the devil’ in this passage is muddled and suggests that he is unsure what to make of the passage. When one does not appreciate that the term *ho diabolos* in the New Testament carries primarily a referential meaning, one’s interpretations of individual references to this term become almost arbitrary.

2.4. Proposed Interpretation

James does not give his readers any explanation of what he means by the term *ho diabolos*, which suggests he expected his readers to know what he meant without further explanation. How, then, would a first century Jewish Christian audience have understood the exhortation, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”?

⁴⁷ Silva 1994: 25.

2.4.1. Intertextuality with 1 Peter 5:8

As will be discussed in more detail in the exegesis of 1 Peter 5:8 below, there are striking similarities in context between James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:8. This suggests that James and Peter were drawing on a shared tradition, or even that one of these writers used the other's epistle as a source. One must allow for each writer's prerogative to use the common material for his own purposes, and it is clear that James and Peter do so: James' focus is more on greed and quarrels, while Peter's focus is perseverance under persecution. Nevertheless, if they are drawing on common material it stands to reason that the term *diabolos* has the same referential meaning for both of them. **The implication is that we ought to interpret 'the devil' in James 4:7 the same way that we interpret 'the devil' in 1 Peter 5:8.** It is acknowledged by most Christadelphian exegetes that in 1 Peter 5:8 'the devil' refers to an external foe and is not merely a personification of evil desires. Consistency thus dictates that we should also interpret 'the devil' in James 4:7 as an external foe, and not a personification of internal desires.⁴⁸

2.4.2. Intertextuality with *Shepherd of Hermas* and *Testaments of Twelve Patriarchs*

It is not easy to read James through the 'glasses' of its ancient audience. We are far removed from them in time and culture. Nevertheless, by looking at other Jewish and Christian texts of the period, we can get a better idea of how this kind of language was used and understood.

Commentators have drawn attention to two ancient texts that bear striking similarities to James in language and content. These are *The Shepherd of Hermas* and *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Johnson writes thus concerning the similarities between *The Shepherd of Hermas* and *The Epistle of James*:

"The pattern of repentance fits within a cosmological framework virtually identical in substance and expression to that of James. Humans are intimately related to the cosmic forces, represented by God and the Devil."⁴⁹

There is an exact parallel to James 4:5 in *Mandates* 3:1. *Mandates* 9:9 attributes double-mindedness to the devil. And *Mandates* 12:4-5 contains close parallels to James 4:7:

"Return, ye who walk in the commandments of the devil, in hard, and bitter, and wild licentiousness, and fear not the devil; for there is no power in him against you, for I will be with you, the angel of repentance, who am lord over him. The devil has fear only, but his fear has no strength. Fear him not, then, and he will flee from you."

"...So also the devil goes to all the servants of God to try them. As many, then, as are full in the faith, resist him strongly, and he withdraws from them, having no way by which he might enter them. He goes, then, to the empty, and finding a way of entrance, into them, he produces in them whatever he wishes, and they become his servants."

⁴⁸ The other place in the New Testament where a writer exhorts Christians to "resist" (*anthistemi*) the devil is in Ephesians 6:11-16, where Paul states explicitly that the opponent is not flesh and blood but spirit.

⁴⁹ Johnson 2004: 57.

In The Shepherd of Hermas, the devil is a personal being, as the above passages and others make clear. He is closely related to evil desire, but the two are not confounded. Specifically, evil desire is called “the daughter of the devil” (Mandates 12:2).

Similarly, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs have been said to possess a “special affinity” to James in language.⁵⁰ The devil features prominently in this work and here too we find parallels to James 4:7:

“If ye work that which is good, my children, both men and angels will bless you; and God will be glorified through you among the Gentiles, and the devil will flee from you, and the wild beasts will fear you, and the angels will cleave to you.” (Testament of Naphtali 8)

The Shepherd of Hermas is traditionally dated to the mid second century, though some scholars date it as early as the late first century.⁵¹ If there is literary dependence between it and James, the Shepherd is almost certainly echoing James and not the other way around. The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, however, is much more difficult to date. There was probably an original Jewish version from the first century B.C. which underwent extensive redaction by Christians in subsequent centuries.⁵² It is possible that this work is dependent on James, but it is also possible that James is dependent on it. In any case, what is clear is that these two works, both written within a century of James, use language very close to that of James 4:7 to refer to a personal being.

2.4.3. Parallel with Jesus’ temptations

Another possible parallel to James 4:7 is in the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness. Both Matthew 4:11 and Luke 4:13 report at the end of the narrative that the devil left Jesus; Matthew adds that angels came and ministered to him. Now, Christadelphians might dispute this, but there is very good reason to interpret the temptation narrative as an actual dialogue between two personal beings, and not as a parable or an elaborate figure of speech. The devil “came to” Jesus just as many other persons in the Gospel narratives “came to” Jesus. The devil claimed the right to deliver the kingdoms of the world “to whom I will” (Luke 4:6), which is very odd if this whole episode were within Jesus’ mind. The devil demanded that Jesus “fall down and worship” him (Matthew 4:9) or “worship before” him (Luke 4:7), which requires a person before whom Jesus would physically worship.⁵³

If the devil that tempted Jesus was a personal being, as the temptation narrative makes clear, and if this personal being “left him” after he resisted, then James 4:7 is also likely referring to a personal being “fleeing” when we resist him.

⁵⁰ Johnson 2004: 195.

⁵¹ Maier 2002: 58.

⁵² Schams 1998: 84.

⁵³ See Farrar 2013 for a detailed treatment of the temptation narratives which interacts with Christadelphian interpretations.

2.4.4. The demonic in James

As already discussed, the writer of James assumes the existence of demonic beings (James 2:19; 3:15), which strengthens the contextual case for understanding ‘the devil’ to be a personal spirit being.

2.4.5. Grammar and Syntax

When we look closely at the grammar of James 4:7-8, there are two features which support understanding *ho diabolos* to be an external, personal being. The first is that *to diabolos* is opposite to *to theo*, which clearly refers to a person, God. The parallel suggests that the devil, too, is a person.

One might object that ‘the world’ is opposite to God in James 4:4 whereas ‘the world’ is not a person. This is true, but ‘the world’ is at least a corporate entity composed of persons, and is not merely an abstraction like ‘lust’. Furthermore, in 4:4 the parallel is weaker as ‘the world’ and ‘God’ are the objects of friendship or enmity. By contrast, in 4:7-8 ‘the devil’ and ‘God’ are the objects of actions **but also take actions themselves**. The parallel implies that the devil is resisted and flees in a way analogous to how God is submitted to and draws near. The analogy is much more natural if ‘the devil’ is also a personal spirit being.

Secondly, while it is obscured in English, both the verb ‘resist’ (*anthistemi*) and the pronoun ‘you’ (*hemon*) are plural in Greek. Thus the picture is of a group of people resisting the devil and the devil fleeing from the group. This could be meant individually or collectively; the command to “purify your hearts” in the following verse suggests that the action occurs at the individual level. Nevertheless, that the devil is singular while the group is plural suggests that the devil is not merely a personal characteristic; the devil is bigger than the individual.

3. 1 Peter 5:8

3.1. Text

“Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering.”
(1 Peter 5:8-9 NRSV)

3.2. Christadelphian Exegesis

Christadelphian writers interpret most instances of the word ‘devil’ in the New Testament as a figure of speech. In this sense 1 Peter 5:8 is an anomaly, because in this particular text most Christadelphian writers offer a different interpretation of the word ‘devil.’ For Hyndman, 1 Peter 5:8 is one of only three passages in the New Testament where ‘devil’ refers, not to a symbol of the human tendency to sin, but rather to a particular person or group of people.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Hyndman 2003: 116. The other two passages in which he understands ‘devil’ to refer to a person or group of people are John 6:70 and Revelation 2:10.

More specifically, the group of people that most Christadelphian writers understand to be ‘the devil’ in 1 Peter 5:8 are the Roman authorities who persecuted Christians. Hence, for Burke, the devil is “the rulers of the day, who persecuted the followers of Christ.”⁵⁵ For Pearce, the devil here is “the Roman pagan government.”⁵⁶ For Abel & Allfree, the devil here is “the Roman magistracy;”⁵⁷ and to Hayward, it is “obvious” that Peter was talking about “the cruel rulers of the Roman Empire.”⁵⁸

In support of this interpretation of the passage, these writers have pointed to the wider context of 1 Peter, in which persecution is a prominent theme and to historical accounts of persecution of Christians by the Romans under Nero in the 60s A.D. (when 1 Peter is traditionally thought to have been written). Burke also draws attention to Proverbs 28:15, which likens a wicked ruler to a roaring lion, and says that it is “indisputable” that 1 Peter is quoting directly from this passage. Hence, the devil can be identified with the wicked ruler(s) of Peter’s day, namely the Romans.

Not all Christadelphians have followed this line of interpretation, however. Watkins resisted the suggestion of other Christadelphians that ‘Satan’ in the New Testament can mean ‘adversary’ generically. Instead, he argued that “Satan in the New Testament is always a special adversary – the great adversary”⁵⁹ and that “The subject of Satan and demons – or the devil and his angels – must be thought of as one elaborate, sustained New Testament parable.”⁶⁰ Grasping the need to interpret the words ‘devil’ and ‘Satan’ consistently throughout the New Testament, Watkins wrote that 1 Peter 5:8 refers to temptation by the flesh.⁶¹

Typical of his hermeneutic, Heaster does not commit himself to one view or the other but suggests a multifaceted approach:

“Thus again it is possible to interpret the Devil, and in this case also the lion, on two levels:

- our evil desires, and
- those evil desires manifested in the Roman and Jewish systems.”⁶²

Heaster is one of the few Christadelphians who takes note of the similarities in context between James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:8. He rightly insists that the devil of James 4:7 “is the same as that referred to in 1 Peter 5:8.”⁶³

Going on the offensive, Burke alleges with reference to 1 Peter 5:8 that “‘orthodox’ Christians cannot explain” what it means to resist the devil as this passage exhorts the readers to do. Both Burke and Hayward take the lion imagery to be a difficulty for the ‘personal devil’ view, since the

⁵⁵ Burke 2007: 111.

⁵⁶ Pearce 1986.

⁵⁷ Abel & Allfree 2011.

⁵⁸ Hayward n.d.

⁵⁹ Watkins 1971: 18.

⁶⁰ Watkins 1971: 34.

⁶¹ Watkins 1971: 61.

⁶² Heaster 2012: 464-465.

⁶³ Heaster 2012: 467.

supposed supernatural devil is silent and invisible, whereas the lion imagery suggests the devil is audible and visible.⁶⁴

3.3. Evaluation of Christadelphian Exegesis

To some extent, the two Christadelphian interpretations of the devil in 1 Peter 5:8 can be countered by pitting them against each other. Watkins favours the usual internal devil view because he realizes that to introduce a novel referent of the word here would be inconsistent with the broader New Testament usage. However, most other Christadelphians have realized they must change their interpretation of the word ‘devil’ here because the discussion of suffering (e.g. v. 9) in the context and the reference to “looking for someone to devour” makes it clear that the foe in view is external rather than internal.

Heaster has attempted to reconcile these two interpretations by positing that the writer has both in view, at two different levels: evil desires, and the persecuting authorities who embody these desires. This is again the semantic fallacy of ‘illegitimate totality transfer’ alluded to earlier. Such a layered interpretation is too complex for Peter’s brief allusion, and there is no other evidence in 1 Peter identifying the persecuting authorities with evil desires.

To address Burke’s first criticism of the orthodox view, if the devil is a supernatural personal being who brings suffering in order to induce believers to renounce their faith in God, then resisting the devil means remaining steadfast under trial as Job did. This is exactly how 1 Peter 5:9 modifies the imperative to resist: “steadfast in your faith”. To address the other criticism of Burke and Hayward, it is woodenly literalistic to insist that the devil’s comparison with a roaring lion implies that he must be audible and visible. The significance of the lion imagery will be discussed further below.

3.4. Proposed Interpretation

3.4.1. Grammar and Syntax

The believers’ opponent is denoted in Greek by *ho antidikos humon diabolos*. Thus, while the noun *antidikos* has the definite article, *diabolos* does not. This is one of only four New Testament instances of the singular *diabolos* which occurs without the definite article, the others being John 6:70, Acts 13:10 and Revelation 20:2. At least one Christadelphian writer has noted this fact but has not attached any exegetical significance to it.⁶⁵ In John 6:70 *diabolos* may be indefinite (although, following grammarian Daniel B. Wallace and other scholars, I have argued elsewhere that it is definite).⁶⁶ In Revelation 20:2 it is certainly definite, since the synonymous noun *satanas* carries the definite article both in this verse and in v. 7. Virtually all translations take *diabolos* to be definite in Acts 13:10 as well: ‘son of the devil’ and not merely ‘son of a devil.’⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Burke 2007: 111; Hayward n.d.

⁶⁵ Tennant 2004: 143.

⁶⁶ See Farrar 2014(1): 21-22.

⁶⁷ NRSV, NIV, NET, ESV, NASB, etc. Compare Luke 1:35 where the same writer uses *huios theou*, which surely means ‘Son of God’ and not ‘Son of a god.’

Is *diabolos* definite in 1 Peter 5:8, referring to “the devil”? Elliott notes that it is grammatically possible to take *diabolos* here as an adjective modifying *antidikos*, i.e. “your slanderous adversary.” However, he concludes that “it more likely functions here, as generally elsewhere in the Bible, as a substantive (‘Devil’) standing in apposition to ‘adversary.’”⁶⁸

Indeed, the verse does not follow the usual syntax for an attributive adjective (which modifies another noun). If *diabolos* were an attribute adjective modifying *antidikos* we would expect the syntax *ho diabolos antidikos* (first attributive position) or *ho antidikos ho diabolos* (second attributive position).⁶⁹ In other words, given the word order in 1 Peter 5:8 we would expect the article to be present before *diabolos*, not absent!

The syntax does allow for *diabolos* to function as a predicate adjective, in which the verb *eimi* (to be) is implied. This would mean the clause reads something like, “Your adversary is slanderous. Like a roaring lion he prowls around...” This is unlikely because, as Elliott highlights, *diabolos* always functions as a noun elsewhere in the New Testament (with the possible exception of the three plural occurrences in the Pastoral Epistles: 1 Timothy 3:11; 2 Timothy 3:3; Titus 2:3, where it may function adjectivally⁷⁰). Furthermore, *diabolos* functions as a noun in James 4:7 which, as will be discussed below, closely parallels 1 Peter 5:8.

Why then has the writer of 1 Peter omitted the article with *diabolos* here? According to Elliott, the lack of an article suggests that the word is used “virtually as a proper name.”⁷¹ This is probably the function of the article’s omission in Revelation 20:2. If so, it creates a serious difficulty for the most widely held Christadelphian interpretation, because *diabolos* could hardly function as a proper name if it refers to the Roman authorities.

In any case, the whole phrase *ho antidikos humon diabolos* is definite, so it refers to ‘the adversary’ of believers *par excellence*, and not merely ‘an adversary’.

3.4.2. *Antidikos*

Thuren notes that the word *antidikos* is an exact Greek translation of the Hebrew word *satan*,⁷² although the LXX translators usually rendered *satan* with *diabolos*. It may convey the legal connotation of *satan* as an adversary or accuser in court (present in Zechariah 3:1-2⁷³ and probably Job 1-2) and thus echo ‘the *satan*’ of these Old Testament texts; alternatively it may mean ‘adversary’ or ‘enemy’ in a general sense.⁷⁴ A further parallel with Job is found in the description of the devil as “prowling around” (literally ‘walking’, *peripateo*), the same root verb used in Job 1:7 and 2:2 LXX when *ho diabolos* describes his activities to the Lord.

⁶⁸ Elliott 2000: 853; cf. Witherington 2008: 238.

⁶⁹ Mounce 2003: 66.

⁷⁰ So Wallace 1996: 224.

⁷¹ Elliott 2000: 854.

⁷² Thuren 2013: 146.

⁷³ This text will be discussed at length in the forthcoming Part 4 of this series because of its importance for establishing the context of Jude 9.

⁷⁴ Davids 1990: 190; Arndt et al 2000: 88.

This is the only biblical passage where the word *antidikos* is used of the devil, but several commentators have observed that the idea here closely parallels that of Revelation 12:10, which refers to the accuser (*kategoros*) of the brethren.⁷⁵

3.4.3. The Lion Imagery

The most striking feature of this text is the comparison of the devil with a lion. This is not a metaphor but a simile, as is evident from the word *hos*.⁷⁶ While most Christadelphian writers take it for granted that the lion imagery refers to the Roman authorities, the significance of this imagery is debated amongst scholars. At least four proposals exist concerning the stimulus for the writer's use of lion imagery here (though the different proposals are not all mutually exclusive).

One view is that the language alludes to the lion image which was used to symbolize the Phrygian goddess Cybele. This view has not attracted much scholarly support since being proposed early in the 20th century.

A second view holds that the imagery is drawn from the Old Testament. The text which has particularly influenced 1 Peter 5:8, in the opinion of Elliott, is Psalm 21[22]:14.⁷⁷ Other important texts include Psalm 10:9, 17:12 and Amos 3:12.⁷⁸ The three Psalms all use similes, and Amos' references to a lion occur in the context of sheep-shepherd imagery, which is also present in 1 Peter 5:2-4. While Burke claims that 1 Peter 5:8 is "indisputably" quoting from Proverbs 28:15, scholars do not generally cite this text as an influence on 1 Peter, perhaps because of its absence from the LXX, the version usually followed by 1 Peter in its use of the Old Testament.⁷⁹ Hence Carson writes concerning the lion imagery, "if Peter is self-consciously alluding to any one passage, it must be [Psalm 21:14 LXX]."⁸⁰

In this psalm (quoted by Jesus on the cross), the psalmist laments the suffering he faces at the hands of his enemies. He likens his adversaries to "a ravening and a roaring lion." While the enemies in this psalm are humans, this in no way restricts 1 Peter from using the imagery for a superhuman enemy, especially one whose schemes are effected through human agents. Thus, in 1 Peter 5:8 the writer "merely picks up a colourful metaphor from the OT and applies it to the devil. It is not obvious that Peter is attempting any other associative transfer."⁸¹ Even if Proverbs 28:15 were the main influence on 1 Peter 5:8, as Burke argues, the implication would be no different. Proverbs 28:15 likens a wicked ruler to a roaring lion; the New Testament depicts the devil as a wicked ruler (John 12:31; Ephesians 2:2).

⁷⁵ Elliott 2000: 853-854; Witherington 2008: 238; Schreiner 2003: 242; Charles 2006: 355. Charles mentions a number of other NT passages in which he thinks the devil manifests the character of an accuser or provoker.

⁷⁶ Thuren 2013: 144.

⁷⁷ Elliott 2000: 857.

⁷⁸ Elliott 2000: 857; Witherington 2008: 238.

⁷⁹ Carson 2007: 1021.

⁸⁰ Carson 2007: 1044.

⁸¹ Carson 2007: 1044.

A third view, espoused by Thuren, holds that 1 Peter draws directly on the zoological features of a lion, appealing to his audience's knowledge concerning lions.⁸²

A fourth view, proposed by Paschke, is that the imagery alludes to the Roman *ad bestias* execution involving arena lions.⁸³

Notably, all four of the above views are consistent with the view of most commentators that the lion imagery refers to “the Christian believer's human enemies or ungodly world systems under the Devil's power.”⁸⁴ Paschke's own view is similar:

“Because through the comparative particle *hos* the Devil is compared to such a lion, he then would be seen as responsible for what was going on in the arena at the *ad bestias* executions of Christians.”⁸⁵

Again, for Elliott, these texts support the likelihood that the writer of 1 Peter “associated the threatening lion with human agents under the Devil's power.”⁸⁶

Thus, like Christadelphian writers, scholarly exegetes acknowledge that the persecution described in 1 Peter is inflicted, in the immediate sense, by human agents. Unlike Christadelphian writers, however, scholarly exegetes do not confound the devil with his human agents.

The idea that *ho diabolos* may be behind suffering inflicted in the immediate sense by human beings is explicit in Job 1:12-15 LXX, and implicit in Revelation 2:10. Shortly after the New Testament period, one finds the same idea in descriptions of persecution in Ignatius of Antioch's *Epistle to the Romans* 5:3 and in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 2:4.

As to the identity of the human agents of persecution, while the Christadelphian view that it is the Roman authorities finds support from Paschke, it has been opposed by other writers such as Elliott and Thuren. Thuren observes that 1 Peter elsewhere requires “deference toward all in authority” and “does not attack any antagonists”; thus “the accuser's direct identification with any visible character would be incorrect.”⁸⁷ Elliott further notes that 1 Peter “expresses no anxiety over or hatred for the power of Rome and in fact encourages a respect for the authority of Roman rulers (2:13-14).”⁸⁸ He instead views non-believing Gentiles at the local level as the instigators of the suffering (though behind their abuse lies “the aggression of the cosmic ‘slanderer’ and adversary of God's people.”)⁸⁹

⁸² Thuren 2013: 144.

⁸³ Paschke 2006: 498.

⁸⁴ Paschke 2006: 489.

⁸⁵ Paschke 2006: 498.

⁸⁶ Elliott 2000: 857; cf. Davids 1990: 189.

⁸⁷ Thuren 2013: 147-155.

⁸⁸ Elliott 2000: 858.

⁸⁹ Elliott 2000: 858.

3.4.4. Parallel with James 4:7

In both James 4 and 1 Peter 5 we find an exhortation to resist the devil (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8) in the immediate context of a quotation from Proverbs 3:34 (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5) and an exhortation to humility (James 4:7, 10; 1 Peter 5:5-6). These parallels have led commentators to conclude that James and Peter are both drawing on common material:

“James and Peter seem to use independently a traditional teaching that connected Proverbs 3:34 with the need for humility and resistance of the devil.”⁹⁰

Witherington even notes the possibility that Peter may have used James’ epistle as a source.⁹¹ This idea of literary dependence has recently been defended by Horrell, who points out:

“It is notable not only that these are the only two quotations of Prov. 3:34 (LXX) in the New Testament (though note the allusion in Lk. 1:51), but also that both James and 1 Peter quote Prov. 3:34 with exactly the same variation from the LXX text.”⁹²

Horrell notes however that the literary relationship hypothesis is a minority view, with the majority of scholars opting for shared dependence on an established Christian teaching.

As the Christadelphian writer Heaster acknowledges, this parallel requires us to interpret *diabolos* in 1 Peter 5:8 consistently with *diabolos* in James 4:7. Yet this requires a devil who precipitates internal temptation (as the context in James 4 indicates) and external trials (as the context in 1 Peter 5 indicates). Neither ‘evil desires’ nor human persecutors meet both criteria, but a supernatural devil does.

3.4.5. Thuren’s Exegesis

Thuren’s recent monograph on 1 Peter 5:8 deserves some attention since her interpretation has some affinity with that of Christadelphians. Ironically, in one of the few passages where most Christadelphians take the word *diabolos* literally rather than as a personification, Thuren understands 1 Peter here to be using the rhetorical device of *prosopopoiia*, “the personification of abstract ideas.”⁹³ In this case it is “the addressees’ difficulties” that are being personified.⁹⁴ She does acknowledge however that the devil here is a “mythological figure.”⁹⁵

She further notes that the threat perceived by the addressees is being interpreted in the epistle as “an earthly counterpart of a heavenly drama”⁹⁶ and that “associations with Jewish beliefs about the person of evil can hardly be avoided,” but cautions against “undue mythologization of this judicial image.”⁹⁷ It is unclear to what extent Thuren understands the writer of 1 Peter to have demythologized the devil here. She insists that *antidikos* and *diabolos* “here denote **more**

⁹⁰ Moo 1985: 147.

⁹¹ Witherington 2008: 244.

⁹² Horrell 2013: 24.

⁹³ Thuren 2013: 152.

⁹⁴ Thuren 2013: 155.

⁹⁵ Thuren 2013: 155.

⁹⁶ Thuren 2013: 144.

⁹⁷ Thuren 2013: 144.

than a sinister traditional character.”⁹⁸ The word ‘more’ suggests that she does acknowledge that the devil refers to such a character but thinks the writer’s literary use of this character is sophisticated.

Thuren’s greatest contribution is her in-depth discussion of the hunting habits of lions and how these zoological features figure in 1 Peter’s imagery. Where her analysis is lacking is in intertextuality: she discusses parallels for the lion imagery but says almost nothing about the background to the term *diabolos* beyond the vague acknowledgment of “associations with Jewish beliefs” quoted above. (This is in contrast to commentators such as Elliott and Witherington, who give detailed surveys of the development of the devil concept from the Old Testament through the intertestamental period and in the early church.)

Thuren argues, “It can be assumed that [the author’s] knowledge of [his audience’s] situation and familiarity with Jewish traditions was limited.”⁹⁹ This assumption may be unwarranted. In the first place, the rest of the New Testament suggests that the traditions concerning the devil or Satan were pervasive in the early church, including in predominantly Gentile congregations (e.g. Corinth¹⁰⁰).

Furthermore, Thuren fails to take account of the place of 1 Peter 3:19 in forming the cosmological setting of the epistle. This has been a highly controversial text throughout church history, but since the late 19th century an increasing number of scholars have adopted the view that 1 Peter 3:19 alludes to the Watchers traditions recorded in 1 Enoch and other Second Temple Jewish apocalyptic and pseudepigraphic texts.¹⁰¹ Witherington notes that while the exact connections are still vigorously debated, “Commentators have long known that there is some connection between 1 Enoch and what is said in 1 Peter 3:18-22.”¹⁰² Witherington notes that Nickelsburg’s commentary on 1 Enoch identifies numerous parallels between the closing section of 1 Enoch and the entire epistle of 1 Peter. He further states that Dalton’s definitive study, *Christ’s Proclamation to the Spirits*, “makes so very clear the connections between 1 Pet 3:18-22 and various materials in 1 Enoch that it is hard to understand why some scholars are so insistent on denying these parallels.”¹⁰³

Elliott writes:

“The terminological and thematic affinities of 1 Pet 3:19-20 with this tradition are clear and make it virtually certain that the content of vv 19-20 represents early Christian allusion to and variation on this tradition.”¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ Thuren 2013: 144, emphasis added.

⁹⁹ Thuren 2013: 143.

¹⁰⁰ Williams points out that the references to ‘Satan’ in the Corinthian epistles suggest that Paul had made “a deliberate effort to import Satan into his Gentile churches” (Williams 2009: 102). There is no reason why whoever evangelized the Asian churches to whom Peter wrote might not have done the same. Indeed, this appears quite likely if *diabolos* in 1 Peter 5:8 is a proper name, as Elliott suggests.

¹⁰¹ A full discussion of this issue can be found in Elliott 2000: 649-657 and Witherington 2008: 186-189.

¹⁰² Witherington 2008: 186.

¹⁰³ Witherington 2008: 188.

¹⁰⁴ Elliott 2000: 655.

Specifically, the term “spirits” without qualification is repeatedly used in 1 Enoch (and in the New Testament) to denote supernatural beings, whereas when it is used of human beings (in Hebrews 12:23 and in 1 Enoch) it is always qualified by an accompanying phrase to make it clear that human beings are in view. Moreover, 1 Enoch explicitly describes these spirits as being confined in “prison” (1 Enoch 10:6; 21:10), and of course this tradition (an amplification of Genesis 6) is closely associated with the Flood both in 1 Enoch and in 1 Peter. Hence Elliott concludes:

“The extensive interest in these disobedient angel-spirits and their imprisonment in this Flood tradition coupled with the explicit reference to the Flood and Noah in 1 Pet 3:20 argue decisively for regarding the *pneumata* of v 19 as a reference to these defiant angel-spirits.”¹⁰⁵

The relevance of this background for understanding 1 Peter 5:8 is that it shows the writer could and did assume his audience’s familiarity with Jewish fallen angel traditions. Since the Watchers tradition is far less prominent in the New Testament than the devil or Satan, if the writer could assume his readers knew of the former, he could surely assume they knew of the latter. Thus there is no basis for positing a demythologization of the devil in this text.

As is well attested in recent scholarship, then, the soundest explanation of 1 Peter 5:8 is that the writer alludes to the heavenly adversary, the devil, as being responsible for the persecution faced by Christians at the hands of unbelieving humans.

4. Conclusion

Christadelphian writers’ attempts to rule out James’ belief in a personal devil on the basis of his anthropological model of temptation described in James 1:13-15 depend on an oversimplification of ancient Jewish thinking about the temptation process. Specifically, the Jews did not see the *yetzer hara* and the devil as two mutually exclusive models of temptation, nor did they confound the devil with the *yetzer hara*. Both were incorporated into a comprehensive doctrine of temptation.

Most Christadelphian interpretations of the references to the devil in James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:8 are inconsistent, failing to take into account that these texts are probably drawing on a common traditional teaching. Furthermore, Christadelphian writers’ efforts to identify ‘the devil’ as either evil desires or human persecutors does not stand up under a close study of these texts in their grammatical-historical context.

¹⁰⁵ Elliott 2000: 657.

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