

# History of the Devil

*Gerald Messadie*

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**Gerald Messadie : History of the Devil** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised History of the Devil:

18 of 19 people found the following review helpful. Blame it on Zoroaster!By Dave SchwinghammerGerald Messadie traces the devil to Persian Zoroastrianism in the first millennium B.C. In founding the first true monotheism, Zoroaster was motivated by a hatred of the aristocracy and in particular bloody sacrifices. He seems to have borrowed his theology from Mazdaism, which originally taught that there were two spirits, Ahura Mazda, the "Wise God" and Ahriman, the spirit of evil, who would become our devil. We see the Christian devil developing when the Jews return from the Babylonian Captivity, where they were influenced by Zoroastrianism. Prior to this Judaism had no hell nor a real devil. Messadie examines the Old Testament and determines that the snake in the Garden of Eden was "just a snake" and that Job's tormenter was Yahweh's collaborator. Only with the coming of the Essenes, who revolted against Hellenism, did our conception of the devil appear. We also learn that Jesus was at one time an Essene, as was John the Baptist, since the Jews did not perform baptism. Some of this is awfully familiar. For instance, Zoroaster foretold a great war at the end of time when Heaven would send down a Savior, Mithra, who would destroy the forces of evil by fire and sword. Zoroastrianism also includes a Last Judgment, which will condemn the bad to hell, while the good will live in Paradise for all eternity.Zoroastrianism also had a great deal to do with consolidation of the power of the clergy. The religion was based on a transcendent definition of Good and Evil whose human adjudicator would be the clergy. Zoroastrianism also tried to lay down not only religious law but also civil law. Any breach in religious law would be punished by secular authorities. Thus, it was politics that gave birth to the Devil and "the Devil is indeed a political

invention." We would see this again with the Divine Right of kings. Messadie works hard at proving that some cultures managed to get along fine without a devil. Native Americans, The Celts, pre-Christian and Arabic Africans, and Greeks and Romans managed without a devil. In Greece religion reflected its democratic culture; the individual had direct contact with his Gods. Greeks knew where Hercules lived. The Romans had utilitarian gods. Messadie says, "From the very beginning, the Roman gods were consuls, prefects and functionaries--in a word, state employees." In Rome "superstitio" was a crime. The Africans and the Native Americans' religions were animistic. Every one of God's creatures contained "a portion of his breath." One of the last chapters deals with Islam. According to Messadie, Islam is very much misunderstood in the West. Messadie was raised in Egypt, so he's a little easier on Islam than other scholars might be, but he doesn't mention the angel Gabriel dictating the Koran to Muhammad. Instead he emphasizes the political nature of Islam's inception. According to Messadie, Muhammad was a student of power most influenced by the Byzantines. He studied the structure of their empire and determined that religion and the state must work hand in hand. He also studied the Bible. The Koran and the Bible are not much different, except for Muhammad's rejection of the trinity and Jesus as a corporal God. He emphasizes that the cause of Evil is individuality. "Whoever does not abdicate his individuality to Allah is 'arrogant' and thus Satan's tool." I could go on indefinitely. Let it suffice to say that this is one of the most enlightening books I have read in ages. Messadie's summation is irate if nothing else. He blames the Holocaust, not on the devil, but on human stupidity. He ends by saying, "My conviction is that it is profoundly Satanic to believe in the Devil. We live under the sign of a nonexistent deity cobbled together twenty-six centuries ago by power-hungry Iranian priests." 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Ricardo Jose Martinez Amazing and informative book! A must if you really want to know what is that concept called "The Devil". 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Fantastic By Richard L. Nordstrom "A History of the Devil" deserves more than the allotted five stars. It is more than I thought it would be. I've read the Bible, cover to cover, and several other research books covering history and contents of ancient writings. I do feel that it was helpful to have read these others first. I wouldn't have anyway of knowing if it would really be necessary. I enjoy history and these pages are packed with information. Well written.

Exploring the personification of evil, through the ages and across cultures, a French historian and critic shows that our image of Satan - the antithesis of God and good - was a concept unknown to the Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Hindus and Chinese. The Devil as we know him was probably invented in Persia six centuries before Christ, by Zoroastrian high priests eager to demonize their adversaries and aid their own political machinations. The image of evil has been a useful tool of political power ever since, from the proponents of the Spanish Inquisition to the Cold Warriors, fundamentalists and proponents of "ethnic cleansing" of our own time. Gerald Messadie's historical references and broad cultural analysis aim to show that it is precisely a belief in the Devil that lies at the root of contemporary religious fanaticism.

From Publishers Weekly Now that God's biography has been written, by Jack Miles, it's time to give the Devil his due. Messadie's book is the finest of the legion of recent books released about the archfiend and his cohorts. Using a comparative and phenomenological approach, the author traces the idea of the Devil from ancient Greece and India to contemporary Western culture. What emerges from Messadie's explorations is that the Devil is a very recent concept, arising primarily out of Zoroastrianism in Persia in the sixth century B.C. In that religion, a personified evil being is coexistent and coeval with a personification of the good, and Messadie examines how that dualism has slipped into Christianity, in particular. Thus the author concludes, on the basis of careful historical study, that the Devil does not exist in societies where the need for a force opposing the good is absent. Finally, Messadie aptly demonstrates how people in contemporary culture, in the absence of the personification of evil, use the Devil to vilify their enemies and to promote hatred. Copyright 1996 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Given the great success of books about angels, is it any surprise that the Fallen Angel himself, the devil, wants to horn in on the territory? Actually, Messadie's book is a comparative historical study of the development of the concept of the devil in different cultures, from ancient Oceania to 20th-century Europe and America. While the idea of the devil as evil personified is often absent from Eastern cultures, such an idea is common to many Western cultures. Yet Messadie's conclusions call into question the existence in the late 20th century of a personified evil figure whose presence often becomes the pretext for human abdication of moral responsibility. Messadie's highly engaging and provocative cultural history is essential for most libraries. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. Language Notes Text: English (translation) Original Language: French