



The Birth of Satan: Tracing the Devil's Biblical Roots

By T. J. Wray, Gregory Mobley



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Of all the demons, monsters, fiends, and ogres to preoccupy the western imagination in literature, art, and film, no figure has been more feared?or misunderstood--than Satan. But how accurate are the popular images of Satan? How--and why--did this rather minor biblical character morph into the very embodiment of evil? T.J. Wray and Gregory Mobley guide readers on a journey to retrace Satan's biblical roots. Engaging and informative, *The Birth of Satan* is a must read for anyone who has ever wondered about the origins of the Devil.



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- Sales Rank: #1111957 in Books
- Published on: 2005-10-01
- Released on: 2005-09-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.38" h x .77" w x 6.00" l, .91 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 240 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Where the devil did the devil come from? Wray, a Roman Catholic who teaches religious studies at Salve Regina University, and Mobley, a Protestant professor of Old Testament at Andover Newton Theological School, suggest that the early Hebrews struggled with the puzzle of a God who is the source of both good and evil. As Israel continued to evolve toward a clearer monotheism, it was considered prudent to cast off the negative characteristics of the one true God—which the authors call "repellant aspects of Yhwh"—and embody them in a personality who would become the biblical "Satan." Beginning with Genesis, the authors trace the development of "the devil" until he appears fully formed in the New Testament, where his role is "to serve as the cosmic scapegoat, saving God from blame for evil." Wray and Mobley pay particular attention to the beliefs of many of Israel's neighbors and their influence on her emerging faith in a cosmic evil being. Ultimately, they reject the concept of a personal Satan, but acknowledge its usefulness in dealing with the idea of evil. Written at a popular level, this book offers an interesting and challenging alternative to traditional beliefs. (*Oct. 5*)

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From [Booklist](#)

A recent Gallup poll revealed that a majority of Americans believe in Satan, aka, most commonly, Lucifer and Mephistopheles, but whatever the moniker, the devil, evil incarnate. Wray and Mobley find this ultimate villain's origins in a biblical character and in early Jewish and Christian writings outside of the scriptures. They try to understand why we as a species strive to feel fearful, why being frightened--vicariously, at least--is so appealing. Satan appears fewer than a dozen times in the Hebrew Bible, truly rising to prominence in the New Testament, especially in the Revelation, in which Satan manifests as Jesus' archrival. Wray and Mobley explain how that characterization came about, examine how Satan's image developed over the centuries, partly under the influence of such writings as Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* and investigate the centuries-long witch-hunt craze before advancing to contemporary times to inspect how religious doctrine and popular culture have affected images of the modern Satan. A thoughtful, informative examination. *June Sawyers*

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Review

"An informative study of the biblical origins of Satan...With resourceful though never excessive citation, Mobley and Wray make a good job of pinning down the roots of a notoriously protean character." *The Times Literary Supplement*

"Let's admit it. Even in a secular age we are all still fascinated by Old Harry. Even though the devil appears only rarely in the Bible, he is a recurrent presence in the religious and literary imagination. Why? The authors skillfully and humorously trace the origin and history of Satan and explain why we would miss him if he were gone." *Harvey Cox, author of When Jesus Came to Harvard*

"Making sense out of evil is part of humanity's endless quest to discover the meaning of life. This book illuminates that quest by tracing the history of Satan through the lens of the Judeo/Christian faith story. In an engaging manner, it forces us to realize that either by making Satan a literal being or by dismissing the devil as pre-modern mythology we are still shaped by its ever present shadow." *John Shelby Spong, author of The*

Sins of Scripture

“As intriguing, complicated, and pervasive as the devil himself, this volume tells it all. Essentially a biblical tale, it locates the biblical stories in the tribal cultures from which they arose, intersecting them with classics of Western literature. It's a must read for those who are interested in, or troubled by, Satan.” ?*Raymond F. Collins, Warren-Blanding Professor of Religion, Professor of New Testament, The Catholic University of America*

“What a delightful recipe for an interesting and informative reading experience: an inherently interesting topic, sound scholarship, and an utterly engaging style sprinkled with humor! The end result is an engrossing journey through the diverse origins and complex development of the notion of Satan as arch-fiend, concluding with a thoughtful essay on the function and significance of devil-language in human experience. I heartily recommend this book to anyone who is curious about the topic, about which both religious and non-religious folk tend to be oh, so knowledgeable, yet oh, so ignorant.” ?*Russell Pregeant, Professor of Religion and Philosophy, Emeritus, Curry College, Visiting Professor in New Testament, Andover Newton Theological School*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Todd Crain:

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Kurt Gomez:

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Elizabeth Sherer:

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