

The history of satan essay sample



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Satan or the concept of a being whose existence is entirely dedicated to the rejection of God has been a recurring element in the doctrines of prevalent religious systems across the world. In a traditional sense, the concept of a personification of evil came from the Abrahamic Religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). Much of this is attributed to the non-Abrahamic beliefs that evil and immoralities are brought about by the presence of unearthly spirits which are held to be morally ambivalent. [1]

However, numerous factors contribute to how Satan's concept is being understood today, much of this lack of legitimacy regarding the appearance, character, and nature of Satan can be attributed to the varying, and sometimes conflicting, religious beliefs and church teachings. Even the origins of Satan and hell do not have a solid canon due to the vast array of preaching prevalent among religions. In this regard, the aforementioned inconsistencies then tend to cause confusion and conflict to adherents of religions even within the confines of a single doctrine.

The Biblical perspective of Satan's Origin

The idea of evil has already been contextualized in the Bible long before the inception of its perceived procurator. The book of Genesis for instance bequeaths the serpent as a representation of the anti-God and the corruption of humanity, however, the book makes no mention of the serpent's true identity. Likewise, the serpent in Genesis was never actually addressed as Satan himself, neither was the term Satan given any justification as the supreme procurator of evil.

The scriptural accounts of the concept of Satan suggest that early adherents of Judaism have little or no concrete idea of what is the anti-thesis of God. The series of events in the first five books of the Bible's Old Testament (a part of the Scriptures that Judaism shares with Christianity) suggests that its chronology took place within 400 B. C. In hand with the aforementioned Biblical series of events come a time lapse of 139 years which consequently gave the Satanic tenets of Zoroastrianism an opportunity to penetrate the purity of Judaism's religious stream of thought.[2]

A span of 570 years firmly entails that Jews have gradually come to accept the concept of a personified evil in an indirect manner. The varieties of traditions such as those derived from Exodus and patriarchal tradition originating from Genesis as well as the diasporic nature of the Jewish people, have given ease for Satan's concept to entrench upon the Jews. The term Satan and devil have then become constant elements in religious lexicon upon the advent and spread of Jesus' ministry. In a modern context, despite the unwelcome advancements of the satanic concept, it has managed to create tremors still felt up to the present day. [3]

Satan in the Tanakh and the Old Testament

The modern canonical scripture of the Old Testament surprisingly does not contain substantial books and chapters that refer to Satan as the principal author of all evil. Similarly, there are also no direct references found in the books of Deuteronomy I Chronicles, Zechariah, Psalms, and Job are the only notable books to have given context for the nature of Satan, and the aforementioned books only mention descriptions about Satan in a single

chapter. In addition, the relevant chapters giving mention to Satan do not pertain to a single being, but of several beings [4] and connote him not as the author of evil but simply a judge acting as a prosecutor. [5]

Deuteronomy is postulated as the first book to give an allusion to the contemporary views of Satan. The verse notes: They offered sacrificed to demons, to no-gods, To gods they had not known before, To newcomers just arrived, of whom their fathers had never stood in awe.[6] The authenticity of this reference primarily appears questionable given the conflict between the time of Zoroastrianism's emergence in the Jewish tradition and Deuteronomy's date of authorship. However, most of the Bible's early books were written and completed several centuries after the actual events happened.

In the case of Deuteronomy, the verse itself initially implies paying homage to demons which is an obvious element of Zoroastrianism and at the time was a foreign concept for the Jews.[7] Therefore the Zoroastrian teaching on the purity of God made it easier for Jews, particularly the more spiritually inclined, to maintain a canonical acceptance of a personified evil.[8] This is largely in part due to the deficiency of textual evidence to guide early Jews and the six hundred year length in which Deuteronomy was completed, also gave Zoroaster and his preaching of Satan and devil ample time to gradually work its way into Jewish beliefs and practices.[9]

The book of first Chronicles poses a different argument on the Old Testament's canon regarding Satan: A Satan rose up against Israel, and he enticed David into taking a census of Israel.[10] The actual verse entails a

harsher concept as this Satan is implied to be an individual acting outside the will of God; such implication is furthered by showing capacity to influence David in to taking a census of Israel. [11]

The Chronicles' duration of completion is also regarded as another contributor to the development of the concept of Satan. The focal point is similar to Deuteronomy in such a way that as the independent agent in I Chronicles 21: 1, Zoroastrianism's perception of Satan being the embodiment of evil shows that the book of Chronicles is the first to officially integrate the extra-terrestrial concept of Satan in the Jewish and Christian doctrine. [12]

The account of Satan in the book of Zechariah meanwhile appears to be a recounting of a particular event as the narrator states:

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, while Satan stood at his right hand to accuse him. And the angel of the Lord said to Satan; May the Lord rebuke you, Satan; may the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this man a brand snatched from the fire? (Zechariah 3: 1-2, The New American Bible)

In this particular book and chapter; Satan is placed in a context of an accuser, in which he is to pass judgment to Joshua, the high priest.

Zechariah's intent on the verse was to falsify Satan's accusations while looking forward to the possibility that God would place the high priest as co-leader of Israel. [13] However, one of the more vital positions upheld by this verse is that Zoroaster's Satan is given a prophetic certification through the words of Zechariah. In this regard, a Jewish prophet officially testifies to the <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-of-satan-essay-sample/>

premise that the Persian doctrines of Zoroastrianism have already manifested its influence on Judaism.[14]

It is inevitable to tackle the context of Satan without giving attention to the concept of demons. This is because the term demon has become integrated with the perceived root of evil. Chapter 106: 37 in the book of Psalms in this holds another reference to Satan through the concept of demons wherein the Israelites are being told to have sacrificed to the gods their own sons and daughters. [15] Though the particular chapter does not mention any Satan or devil, it is believed that the demons in the chapter pertain to the gods being spoken of. [16] The metaphor in the verse suggests that the author of Psalms manifests influences from the Zoroastrian dogma of Satan, devil and demons.

The book of Job formulates a more sophisticated concept as it gives out a keen explanation of Satan and his origin. In verses six (6) and seven (7), God asked Satan who happened to be walking among the Sons of God “ Whence do you come?” then Satan answered the Lord and said “ From roaming the earth and patrolling it.” The verses blatantly assume that the reader would have any knowledge about Satan. Therefore, it is plausible to take into account that the book of Job does not comply with the Bible’s historical chronology. [17] And as Satan’s reply imparts, he is not from the region and is thereby a foreign concept for Jews at the time. [18]

Alternatively, the book of Job contains a more substantial context of Satan as he is presented (similar to modern archetypal Satan) as the chief instigator of discord. The book of Job departs from the conventional tenets of Judaism

as Satan is portrayed as an omnipotent entity able to bring Job misfortunes and losses at will. [19]

Satan in the New Testament

Christian Theology in the Bible's New Testament upholds various concepts on Satan. The Gospel of Matthew primarily shares Jesus' personal encounters with Satan. The fourth chapter of Matthew's Gospel highlights Jesus' temptation by Satan. In verse three (8), to ten (10), Satan is shown to have omnipotent powers as he "takes Jesus to a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world." [20] Verse six (6) on the other hand clearly indicates Satan having knowledge of the early scriptures and Messianic prophecies by saying it is written: He will command His angels concerning you' and 'with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your head before a stone.'" [21]

Other terms incorporated with Satan's eminence as the procurator of all malevolence are given figurative contexts. Revelations 12: 9 for instance refers Satan as "the dragon and ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceived the whole world, was thrown down to earth, and its angels were thrown down with it." [22] It is obviously notable that the serpent being spoken of is the serpent that tempted Eve in the book of Genesis. It may appear to be conflicting with the previous claim that Genesis does not address the serpent as the Satan or the Devil, however the previously unintended inception of Satan to Judaism and Christianity has already shackled the idea that every manifestation or representation of evil, be it literal or figurative, is already attributed to Satan.

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[1] Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts* (California: William Library, 1996), 266.

[2] Carel Bakkes, *Satan, Fact or Fiction* (Longwood, Fl: xulon Press, 2004), 124-136.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Kersey Graves & Paul Tice, *The Biography of Satan* (San Diego, CA: Book Tree, 1999), 24-25.

[5] The New American Bible, The New Catholic Translation, Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1969.

[6] Deuteronomy 32: 17. In the New American Bible The New Catholic Translation, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1969.

[7] Carel Bakkes, Satan, Fact or Fiction (Longwood, Fl: xulon Press, 2004), 126.

8 Kersey Graves & Paul Tice, The Biography of Satan (San Diego, CA: Book Tree, 1999), 24-25.

[9] Carel Bakkes, Satan, Fact or Fiction (Longwood, Fl: Xulon Press, 2004), 127.

[10] I Chronicles 21: 1, In the New American Bible The New Catholic Translation, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1969.

[11] I Chronicles 21: 1, In the New American Bible The New Catholic Translation, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1969.

[12] Carel Bakkes, Satan, Fact or Fiction (Longwood, Fl: Xulon Press, 2004), 129-31

[13] Ibid. 132.

[14] Ibid. 132.

[15] Psalm 106: 37, In the New American Bible The New Catholic Translation, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1969.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Job 1: 6-7, In the New American Bible The New Catholic Translation, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1969.

[18] Carel Bakkes, *Satan, Fact or Fiction* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2004), 134-35.

[19] *The Book of Job*, In the New American Bible The New Catholic Translation, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1969.

[20] *Matthew 4: 8-10*, In the New American Bible The New Catholic Translation, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1969.

[21] *Ibid.* 4: 6.

[22] *Revelation 12: 9*, In the New American Bible The New Catholic Translation, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1969.