The Origin Of The Presence Of Satan Essay, Research Paper

The Origin of the Presence of Satan

The United Press International stated that on October 11, 1978, a

father “kept his

daughter, Tina Ann, 10, imprisoned in a 3 foot by 4 foot closet in [his

small, white frame house]

while he slowly beat her to death. He buried her under a dilapidated

shed at the rear of the house

and the family left town several months later.” In another horrid

scenario, the UPI reported that

on January 1, 1980, “Thai pirates held 121 Vietnamese women and children

captive on a deserted

jungle island for seven days, raping them and hunting them down like

animals . . . One eight-year-

old little girl was raped by 100 different men . . . The pirates took as

much pleasure in the hunt as

in the capture (Russell, Tradition 15-16).” Acts of pure evil exist and

cannot be explained except

to say that an unearthly presence tempts and consumes the lives of

people to encourage them to

perform such wickedness. Satan’s presence has been known about since

the beginning of

mankind and lures one away from God.

First, a few assumptions must be clarified. One must assume that God

is omnipotent, all-

knowing, and all-good. God allows evil to occur in the world because

suffering tests the soul and

instructs one in time of hardship; this allows one to mature. Sin is

punishable by suffering and

evil is the direct result of sin; sin occurs because of the Lord’s gift

of free will (Russell, Tradition

17). Evil is produced because humans turn away from everlasting good in

favor of temporary and

“passing pleasures” of the flesh (Russell, Tradition 206). This

imperfection is vigorously tested by

Satan.

Job 2:1-3 says, “One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves

before the Lord,

and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord. The

Lord said to Satan,

‘Where have you come from?’ Satan answered the Lord, ‘From going to and

fro on the earth,

and from walking up and down on it (Metzger 627).’” This establishes

Satan’s entrapment and

banishment to the earth as commanded by God (Russell, Prince 37).

The Devil is created by God and is without question inferior to him

(Russell, Tradition

67). Revelation 12:7-9 says, “And a war broke out in heaven; Michael

and his angels fought

against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but they

were defeated, and there was

no longer any place for them in heaven. The great dragon was thrown

down, that ancient serpent,

who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world – he

was thrown down to the

earth, and his angels were thrown down with him (Metzger 376).” Satan

was the highest of all

the angels, but he was cast down because he envied the Lord. The Devil

was “the first cause of

evil, . . . the cause of every individual sin as well, encouraging

individuals to despair and nations

to warfare.” Satan, in turn, exacted revenged upon Adam and Eve by

causing them to sin. Satan

was given power over the earthly world by God; this allows for such

occurrences such as natural

disasters and mental depression. The Devil exists and thrives on those

who sin because they

become servants of Satan (Russell, World 40).

However, even though “The Devil’s power remains ‘as big as the world,

as wide as the

world, and he extends from heaven down to hell,’” his power cannot

ascend any further than the

Lord allows. An old hymn, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” establishes

this idea:

“A mighty fortress is our God,

A good weapon and defense;

He helps us in every need

That befalls us.

The old, evil enemy

Is determined to get us;

He makes his cruel plans

With great might and cruel cunning;

Nothing on earth is like him. . . .

But if the wild world were full of devils

Eager to swallow us,

We would not fear.

For we should still be saved.

The prince of this world,

No matter how fierce he claims to be,

Can do us no harm;

His power is under judgment

One little word can fell him (Russell, World 43).”

Matthew 16: 23 says, “. . . Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling

block to me; for you are

setting your mind not on divine things but on human things (Metzger

25).” One’s timeless

defense against Satan is the power of Jesus Christ.

Another revival of the presence of Satan came during the “witch craze”

of the sixteenth

and seventeenth centuries. The Protestant Reformation produced a

knowledge and fear of the

Devil. Ideas of magic and science were on the rise while many Christian

morals were put on the

back burner (Russell, World 30). This is because many people were

looking so hard for the

presence of evil that they were soon consumed by the same evil they were

trying to decimate.

Due to times such as these, Satan became ever-present, and his

opportunities to possess lives

increased dramatically.

Satan’s power and knowledge are given by God and also limited by

him. The theory of

evil is personified through the Devil. He is a conglomeration of evil,

not just an inferior demon.

He is the manipulator of evil itself (Russell, Tradition 23). The

Devil introduces himself

personally: as there is a “God experience” there is also a “Devil

experience (Russell, Tradition

24).” In the Christian religion, the Devil plays the counterpart of

Jesus Christ. “The prince of

evil tries to lure us out of the army of light into that of darkness and

so lose us to the kingdom of

God (Russell, Tradition 39).” He has incredible power, but this power

is always regulated by the

Lord (Russell, Tradition 32). “. . . The Devil, or Satan, is an

‘obstructor’ of the will of the good

Lord.” Satan’s primary function is to produce the feeling of “My will,

not yours, be done

(Russell, Tradition 25).”

Satan’s most powerful weapon is temptation, as first documented by the

Bible. He will

continually agitate people to try to get them to sin. Luke 8:12 says,

“The ones on the path are

those who have heard; then the Devil comes and takes away the word from

their hearts, so that

they may not believe and be saved (Metzger 92).” 1 Corinthians 7:5

states, “Do not deprive one

another except perhaps by agreement for a set time, to devote yourselves

to prayer, and then

come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your

lack of self-control

(Metzger 235).” Satan went so far as to tempt his prime adversary,

Jesus Christ (Russell,

Tradition 27). Luke 4:2 says, ” . . . for forty days he [Jesus] was

tempted by the Devil (Metzger

83).” Although Satan was unsuccessful in his attempt of tempting Jesus

Christ, this shows the

Devil’s extreme reliance and confidence in the power of temptation.

Through the choice of free will, sin and evil occurs. Satan is

ever-present to exploit the

imperfect human. As long as sin exists, then Satan exists. To

eliminate sin is to eliminate the

Devil. Let it be known: “The devil is not a principle; the Devil does

not limit God’s power; the

Devil is a creature; the Devil is permitted by God to function; the

Devil has some purpose in the

cosmos that we cannot grasp; the Devil is God’s enemy and our enemy and

must be resisted with

all our strength (Russell, Tradition 230).”

Criticism on the authors and books

Professor Elaine Pagels

The Origin of Satan

“The Origin of Satan is indeed groundbreaking.

Professor Pagels has the remarkable talent of taking

primary scholarship . . . and making it accessible to

intelligent nonspecialists. Many times in the course of

reading her explications I found myself saying, ‘Of

course, why hasn’t someone said this before?’. . . But

the book is much more than an articulation of ancient

controversies. By showing how the sectarian

demonization of the ‘intimate enemies’ – Jews and

heretics – shaped early Christianity, the book helps us to

understand the power of irrational forces that still need

to be confronted in contemporary society.”

-S. David Sperling

Professor of Bible, Hebrew Union College

Professor Jeffrey Russell

Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World

Satan: The Early Christian Tradition

The Prince of Darkness: Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History

Frank Hensley wrote,

“It gives me great pleasure to announce the recipient of this year’s Erick Nilson Award: Dr. Jeffrey Russell, History Professor from the University of California, Santa Barbara.”

Jim Cook wrote,

“I praise God for His leading and I’m excited to see how God uses this in Dr. Russell’s life. The $1,000 grant, we pray, will add to the possibilities for the faculty ministry at Santa Barbara.”

Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy

The New Oxford Annotated Bible

Bruce Metzger and Roland Murphy were the hardest to find anything on until I looked under my nose and the it was the New Oxford Annotated Bible. In the bible I found criticism and