

Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages (Cornell Paperbacks)

By Jeffrey Burton Russell

Evil is an intrinsically fascinating topic. In *Lucifer*, Jeffrey Burton Russell continues his compelling study of the personification of evil in the figure of the Devil. The previous two volumes in this remarkable trilogy, *The Devil* and *Satan*, trace the history of the concept of the devil comparatively as it emerged in diverse cultures and followed its development in Western thought from the ancient Hebrew religion through the first five centuries of the Christian era.

The present volume charts the evolution of the concept of the devil from the fifth century through the fifteenth. Drawing on an impressive array of sources from popular religion, art, literature, and drama, as well as from scholastic philosophy, mystical theology, homiletics, and hagiography, Russell provides a detailed treatment of Christian diabolology in the Middle Ages. Although he focuses primarily on Western Christian thought, Russell also includes, for the sake of comparison, material on the concept of the devil in Greek Orthodoxy during the Byzantine period as well as in Muslim thought.

Russell recounts how the Middle Ages saw a refinement in detail rather than a radical alteration of diabolological theory. He shows that the medieval concept of the devil, fundamentally unchanged over the course of the centuries, eventually gave rise to the unyielding beliefs that resulted in the horrifying cruelties of the witch-hunting craze in the 1500s and 1600s. This major contribution to the history of the Middle Ages and to the history of religion will enlighten scholars and students alike and will appeal to anyone concerned with the problem of evil in our world.

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Summary Details

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Review

"An attractively written survey of the way the devil appears in art, literature and treatise, during the medieval period, with many signs of an engaging sense of personal commitment to the subject, and an attempt to show its contemporary relevance."?John O. Ward, *Journal of Religious History*

"If, as Chesterton claimed, the devil's greatest triumph was convincing the modern world that he doesn't exist, Jeffrey Burton Russell means to rob him of his victory. *Lucifer* is both a scholarly assessment of the development of diabolology in the Middle Ages and an impassioned plea to the 20th century to recognize and acknowledge the existence of real, objective evil. The third in a series of works tracing the history of the devil . . . it represents a formidable undertaking: the devil's history is integrally related to the problem of evil, which is in turn at the heart of Western religious thought. Each of the volumes comprises, in essence, a judicious and able tour of Christian theology from the villain's point of view. . . . In *Lucifer*, Russell provides a wealth of documentatlon on the extent to which the devil is simply the projection onto a living being of our fears and hostilities about the universe, our neighbors, and ourselves. . . . A pleasure to read ."?John Boswell, *The New Republic*

"Russell shows an admirable mastery of a vast and varied array of sources, and an equally admirable skill in summarizing them."?Norman Cohn, *New York Times Book Review*

About the Author

Jeffrey Burton Russell is Professor of History Emeritus at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

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