

THE DEVIL IN CHRISTIANITY

Dr. Kersey Antia, Mar 1, 2020

Peter Brown not only sees an all-pervasive role of the devil in Christianity but he also explains the reasons for it:

“If the demons were the 'stars' of the religious drama of Late Antiquity, they needed an impresario. They found this in the Christian Church. Outside Christianity, the demons had remained ambivalent (rather like ghosts). They were invoked to explain sudden and incongruous misfortunes, deviations from normative behaviour such as riots, plagues and inappropriate love-affairs. They were as widely invoked, and caused as little anxiety, as microbes do today. Christianity, however, made the demons central to its view of the world. The Christian Church had inherited, through late Judaism, that most fateful legacy of Zoroastrian Persia to the western world – a belief in the absolute division of the spiritual world between good and evil powers, between angels and demons.” (*The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150-750*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1989, p. 54). While the legacy of Zoroastrian dualism is being increasingly recognized these days, it is not as absolute a dualism as it is still generally assumed but as my thesis on this subject shows the devil even in Zoroastrian dualism “was given vast but strictly – mapped out favors” exactly as Brown assigns to the devil in Christianity and no more and both more or less meet the same fate in the end.