

Where did Satan come from?

The ancient Hebrew concept of a relatively benign spiritual being, acting as accuser or adversary in the court of God, was fictitious. Later, this being developed into a satanic, evil personage as a result of the influence of highly dualistic Zoroastrianism, the religion of the Babylonians. It's all pure fiction, and the intent was to explain the existence of evil in a world created by a good God. Yes, Jesus accommodated this belief. He also accommodated a belief in fiery judgment in the afterlife. It could be argued that Jesus used these concepts in the metaphorical sense. It could also be argued that Jesus was not omniscient and shared some of the mistaken beliefs of his culture. Jesus, did, however, elevate our concept of God. He portrayed God as a loving Father who loves and forgives even His enemies, and has the power to redeem mankind, and is not in any way limited by the forces of evil, as personified by Satan, demons and the like.

I believe it is perfectly OK for us to be mistaken in many of our beliefs. It all serves God's ultimate purpose of creating an environment containing both good and evil in which we might grow spiritually and learn to love as God loves. Our notions about the nature of God, good and evil, and such, continue to grow and expand in our current day and age.

It is important that we recognize the Bible for what it is, a record of man's continually changing (and improving) views about God. In order to do this more effectively in this day and age, we need to discard and learn from the superstitions, misconceptions, and learning experiences of ancient cultures as represented in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. We must learn from the past, and then use this as a springboard to shape our futures.

If we hang onto the past and refuse to learn from it, we are destined to repeat it. That is exactly what is happening with modern day religious fundamentalists of all types, who continue to treat with animosity, disrespect, and even physical violence, those who disagree with them. The warlike tribalism of the ancient Hebrews was not much different from that of the surrounding cultures from which they emerged. Over time, their theology changed, culminating with the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. In our modern day and age, there are many who continue to resist the idea that God loves everyone, without exception, and has loving and good intentions for their future, including their future in the afterlife.