

The Devil's Way

Lamees A.

First Edition Design Publishing (May 6, 2015)

Softcover \$16.95 (178pp)

978-1-62287-850-5

This engrossing novel debates the question, is mankind innately good or bad?

Lamees A.'s thought-provoking book, *The Devil's Way*, provides empathy for Satan while examining the nature of good and evil, querying the existence of God, and exploring the true motivations of the United States throughout history.

Malcolm, a recent Harvard Law School graduate, is walking the streets of Florence when a priest falls into step beside him. After some friendly conversation, the young man learns that his companion is in fact the Devil. Malcolm and Satan engage in a spirited debate: If Satan can prove to Malcolm that human nature is inherently sinful, the father of lies will win Malcolm's soul upon his death. If, on the other hand, Malcolm can successfully argue that mankind is innately good, the Devil will leave Malcolm alone.

Already one can see the author's ingenuity and humor in making the Devil a priest, and she continues her trenchant critique of issues both spiritual and worldly right up until the novel's shocking conclusion. Using examples from art, literature, and history, Satan and Malcolm draw on the oeuvre of man's actions to justify their respective viewpoints.

In another brilliant coup, the book has no true antagonist. Malcolm comes across as an intelligent young man, capable of synthesizing evidence from multiple sources to render his arguments sound. The audience roots for him because he is smart enough to initially be wary of the Devil's wager and thus appears careful and thoughtful. Malcolm is rendered likable because of the curiosity and vulnerability he evinces when he agrees to a wager with a cunning supernatural being. The Devil's yearning for love, his penchant for humor, and the way he readily accommodates the rules Malcolm sets forth for the contest make him seem like a misunderstood guy with a myopic view of humanity stemming from a traumatic incident in his past, instead of a cunning demon who lures souls to their doom.

Although the novel will interest Christians, the secular will also enjoy this book. It is not merely the nature of Americans that the Devil and Malcolm are debating, but the nature of humanity as a whole. In the course of their argument, the Devil brings up examples from British colonial India to famine-wracked Africa, to current America to underscore that man behaves sinfully.

Every time someone has a sinful thought, Satan writes their name in a book to remember to harvest their souls upon their deaths. This brings up another point of contention for Malcolm: Can one fault a person for a sinful thought if one does not know whether the person will act on the thought? And indeed having philosophical questions such as this makes *The Devil's Way* truly engrossing.

JILL ALLEN (August 3, 2015)

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