



Father of Lies

Brian Evenson

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At the urging of his wife, Provost Fochs reluctantly agrees to see a therapist, Dr. Feshtig. Through the therapist's detailed notes, correspondence from the church, and the provost himself, the provost's sickness emerges and the reader is drawn into the disturbing inner workings of a violent pedophile. The provost relays his crimes in excruciating detail. 'God told me that where evil made its mark, good must follow, burning evil out and purifying the body.' Fochs describes a dream in which he sodomizes two boys from the parish in an effort to exorcise their sins. Soon thereafter, two boys come forward accusing Fochs of that very deed. In another dream he strangles and dismembers a young girl in the woods near his house, where a child from his parish is later found.

As the provost's dreams are discovered to be reality and accusations against him are made public, the church is forced to respond. In an effort to protect one of its own, and, in turn, to protect itself, the Committee for the Strengthening of the church demands that Dr. Feshtig turn over his notes about Provost Fochs. This marks the beginning of the church's all-out effort to cover up for the provost -- and launches the race to the novel's final revelation of whether good, in the form of the law, or evil, in the hands of the provost (and by association the church), will prevail.

Brian Evenson holds the reader to the page until the novel's fateful end. En route, he questions whether obedience to God justifies taking every possible liberty, right or wrong. And he brings to light how an institution supposed to be under divine guidance can be as eager as its worldly counterpart to soil its hands in the furthering of the cause of supposed righteousness.

Father of Lies Details

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From Reader Review Father of Lies for online ebook

Autumn Christian says

I discovered Brian Evenson earlier this year and he has become one of my new favorites. He is a writer that hooks into my consciousness, so thoroughly and so well, that I find myself recommending his books to strange people in my dreams. Father of Lies is an unrelenting horror story, about a depraved man and the institution that protects him.

Jordan Davidson says

What a creepy, disturbing, and nasty little book. Honestly though, I don't necessarily mean that in a bad way; in fact, it could very well be a compliment.

I've never been one to rate a book negatively based on the unpalatability of its content (if I were, I wouldn't have read a book like this in the first place) but I definitely need some time to mull this one over before I rate and review fully.

At the off, though, I will say this: This book is dark, compelling, and excellently written. It's also one of the most harrowing things I've ever read in my life. I feel like I need to take a shower after finishing this. Whether that's a good thing or not is more likely up to the reader's discretion.

Amber says

This novel is dark. It is disturbing. It is uncomfortable. And all of it is completely necessary.

Though written nearly two decades ago, it still speaks truthfully and unreservedly about religion, about cult-like followings, about perversions of the mind. It is difficult to read in many passages, but truly sheds light on using religion and blind faith as excuses to harm others (in this case through pedophilic sexual assault, murder, and incest), and as excuses to trust and protect the unworthy against your better judgment.

Evenson does not hold back. Though less graphic than it probably could have been, there is enough here to make your skin crawl—and it should. This is the point of the novel.

More here: [Problem with Priests](#)

Col says

A competent enough novel running up against the limits of imagined subjectivity. There are people like Fochs in the world, and they truly are evil, worthy of every legend of vampires and werewolves we have. But there is nothing that we, who are not psychopathic pedophiles, can understand about their behaviour. We can more easily imagine what it is to be an animal than one of them. Fochs is a thin man, with nothing in him other than his horrifying cravings, and thus his perspective is too thin to be worth reading. His segments are saved only by the device of the devilish Bloody-Head aiding him and the angelic investigators trying to stop

him, which lend some disturbing whimsy. Feshtig's notes are much more compelling, with their attempts to make sense of the unthinkable. This story might have been better, if instead of Foch's perspective, we had followed his superior Bates. Bates is of the type of evil that we find easier to understand, that wants to look away, deny and do nothing. It's a short novel, and it's shortcomings are not due to any obvious shortcoming of the author.

Robert says

There are so few books that take place within the Mormon Church that that alone almost makes FATHER OF LIES a must-read, despite some stumbles.

It's a compulsively readable thriller, but I thought Evenson lost the thread a bit (as writers usually do) in the final third of the book. He could have gone deeper into the psychology of the character, or raised the stakes, but he ended up searching for an ending. And, of course, he found one.

This is the first book of Evenson's I've read (it's his first novel) and I'm interested in reading more.

Joe Kramer says

I gave it five stars but it's very disturbing. Really admire this guy as a writer, but wouldn't say this is something everyone should read. (If you generally appreciate trigger warnings, consider yourself warned and look elsewhere.)

Amy says

Father of Lies opens with a letter from a psychoanalyst, Dr. Feshtig, to the Director of the Zion Foundation Institute of Psychoanalysis, Ballard Kennedy. Feshtig works for this Foundation and is a part of its religion, but he argues for client-patient confidentiality and reminds the Director that he was promised his work would "operate independently of the sponsoring religion". He refuses to share the requested information about his patient and calls into question the fact that the Director is asking for it at the request of an apostolic elder.

We learn that Feshtig's patient is a church leader, Provost Eldon Fochs. Fochs comes to Feshtig for analysis at the behest of his wife who is disturbed by his increasingly violent dreams. At first pass, Feshtig attributes the disturbing dreams to Fochs' ambivalence toward his recent appointment as church leader and a general, low self-worth since childhood. After Fochs stops attending his appointments, Feshtig begins to believe that Fochs' recountings of dream events may not have been dreams at all. And that Fochs had been deceptive and even manipulative during the sessions.

Fochs dreams of pederasty. He dreams of violently raping boys under his leadership and of killing a young girl and violating her body. A Bloody Headed Man appears to him and is, at times, a part of him. The Bloody Headed Man tells him that nothing he does is wrong because he, and therefore all his actions, are sanctioned by God.

When the mother of two boys come forward with charges against Fochs, the elders use the circular logic that Fochs is a church elder, therefore inspired by God, and so can't have committed the atrocities of which

they've accused him. When the mothers don't back down, they are brought before a panel for excommunication and the ultimate vote is left to Fochs himself.

This book is a disturbing and well thought out psychological horror. It's all the more frightening because of the well-written glimpses into the insulated and isolated atmosphere of this religious sect.

Jack Wolfe says

Shocktober begins in style! (It's about time.)

Brian Evenson has yet to fail me. He writes books that are unrelentingly bleak and nasty but that somehow never feel gratuitous/played for simple shocks. He gets compared to Poe a lot, but his artistry and his interest in religion remind me of Flannery O'Connor, too, and the sociopathic molester murderer provost at the heart of "Father of Lies" reminded me of some of Vladimir Nabokov's more deluded, perverted anti-heroes.

Is Evenson a normal human? Can a normal human know evil so deeply and not also be an evil person? Does enjoying Evenson's work speak to a certain evilness in the reader?

This one hit me especially hard this year. Not sure if you've read the papers lately, but between the thousands of victims accusing the Catholic church of a massive and sophisticated abuse-and-cover-up operation, and the spectacle of a sexual assaulter being defended by a major political party and confirmed to a lifelong position on the Supreme Court simply because "he's a good guy who might have made a mistake here and there," the patriarchal model of a male authority figure expecting constant obedience from women and children hasn't looked so hot in the last couple of months. "Father of Lies" might have SEEMED over the top when it was first published twenty years ago, but that's just because back then the abuse was under wraps. Men have always been vile, religion and conservative political parties have always abetted vile behavior, and victims seeking recourse from the system have only ever been mocked / turned away / denied justice. This is a ridiculously disturbing novel because it is true as fuck.

Cesare Teutonico says

Cold as ice, sharp as a knife. It seems an easy read, but there are many sub-levels to discover, each one very uncomfortable and disquieting. A free ride into the mind of a psychopatic who can easily take advantage from the blindness of society. Another great book from Brian Everson, one of the best and more personal writers around.

Alan says

It's hard not to speed read Evensen. It draws you in, sticking you with this mass that crushes all joy. But yet, something is found from reading truth in horror, even if the subject matter is incredibly difficult and raw.

Andrew Vachss says

If you think "fiction" can't tell the truth, think again. Hard.

Transvision Zack says

If H.P. Lovecraft had written about corruption within organized religion instead of tentacled gods from space, it might read something like this. Brian Evenson's account of pedophilia and the resulting cover-up as revealed by inter-church memos and psych evaluations is dark, absorbing stuff. Anyone who has seen the dubious inner-workings of a church hierarchy will have to respond to this material with some level of recognition. If anything, "Father of Lies" reconfirmed my notion of steering clear of organized religion altogether.

Where Evenson falters is the frequent and intrusive first-person accounts from Provost Fochs himself. To put it simply, Fochs is about as deep as the "slice" of white paper he tells his therapist he wishes to become. After works like "Lolita" and "American Psycho" have given us three-dimensional portrayals of socially irredeemable characters, it's hard to go back to this. Fochs is completely two-dimensional: "I hugged my wife close, while secretly I fantasized about murdering that teenage girl in the woods," et. al., repeated ad nauseam.

The novel also frequently dips into territory that fits the "spiritual warfare" genre. Angels and demons almost literally appear on Foch's shoulders, vying for the fate of his soul. Although the angels aren't exactly your stereotypical "long blonde hair with wings," and are actually as menacing as the demonic Bloody-Head, I have to say that these passages aren't a far cry from the kind of stuff "heaven vs. hell" pop Christian books I read in 6th grade, like Frank E. Peretti's "This Present Darkness."

I was surprised and pleased that my typically Conservative local library would carry a work as unrepentantly dark and anti-church as "Father of Lies," but it didn't quite live up to my expectations. Regardless, I look forward to exploring the rest of Evenson's work. This was only his first novel, after all, and it does seethe with a certain juvenile rage, no doubt due to his then-recent expulsion from a teaching position at a Mormon colleg

Elizabeth Frankie Rollins says

This, too, feels prophetic, true, existing

Taylor Wingo says

5 Stars

Haunting, uncomfortable, creepy, thought provoking, and we'll written.

Loved this book, it made me feel a lot of things. Any book that can do that has succeeded in some way but Evenson did everything right with this one. I will certainly be reading more of his work.

brianna says

At under 200 pages there's a lot of violence, molestation, and incest packed into this book, as it is a critique of religion's tendency to essentially allow criminals and sexual predators to continue operating within the organization so as to not "bring disrepute" onto the church by doing wacky things like actually investigating claims, or cooperating with police. I would have liked more of Foch's younger years expanded on, though it's left more or less alluded to so one can fill in the blanks of the acts he committed prior to the events of the novel.

Evenson, as usual, delivers in the horror genre - although given the subject matter I wouldn't call this book "enjoyable" and certainly not for everyone.
