

Satanism and Witchcraft: The Occult and the West—Part 6

By Dr. John Ankerberg and Dr. John Weldon

Varieties of Satanism

What is Satanism? Satanism is the belief in and/or invocation and worship of Satan as a supernatural being. Some Satanists view Satan as an impersonal force or energy, or even a religious symbol representing the material world and carnal nature of mankind.¹

Properly, Satanism must be distinguished from witchcraft and other forms of the occult. Witches and other occultists are not typically Satanists (a few are) and usually resent the association. Of course, all categories of occultists engage in biblically forbidden practices and, scripturally, the devil is associated with these, but such persons neither worship nor necessarily believe in Satan, nor do they necessarily deliberately pervert Christianity ritually and morally in the manner of Satanism.

Satanism is not a monolithic entity, hence a given sect cannot by definition be lumped with all other groups. Groups are eclectic and draw upon various occult, magical, and pagan sources. Other groups are autonomous and garner their activities and beliefs from different Satanist traditions or tributaries. As a whole, Satanism is not uniform in its organizational structure, practices, or beliefs.

Thus, there are different types of satanic groups, from traditional to nontraditional, and many different types of practitioners, from zealot to dabbler. Both groups and individuals may vary in their degree of secrecy, degree of hostility to Christianity, eclecticism, religious worldview (e.g., philosophy of magic, view of God and Satan, the afterlife, etc.), and their degree of deviancy and criminality

But whatever we may note of the differences among Satanists, strong commonalities remain: 1) every individual Satanist has chosen to identify himself with a being, practice, or symbol that virtually all society correctly views as malevolent, deviant, and evil; 2) every Satanist sooner or later personally engages in evil—and often unimaginable perversion; and 3) every Satanist rejects the Christian God and courts the devil whether or not he or she accepts these categories as biblically defined.

Whatever Satanism's sociological or religious classification then, Satanism per se is *inherently* evil. This must never be forgotten. Hawkins observes of one grouping of Satanists:

... their seething hatred and utter contempt for God and Christians.... They feel it would be better to fully indulge themselves in this life, and if nothing else, be alive and burning with hatred for all eternity than to merely exist in heaven. In short, they feel it is more satisfying to live ungodly and follow the most ungodly of all—Satan—than to live with and for God.²

Hawkins also observes some of the inherently religious, pagan motivations behind human sacrifice:

Besides these there are two other possible reasons for sacrifices. The first is connected with the notions of the supernormal latent psychic abilities and forces or laws of nature. The sacrifice is slaughtered at the height of the ritual to augment the Satanist's own psychic energy (a psychological charge), thus increasing the Satanist's chances for success in obtaining the purpose of the ritual. The idea is that the energy or life-force of the sacrifice when killed is released into the surrounding atmosphere and can be harnessed by the Satanist.... Second, pertaining to the supernatural (demonic) view, the slaughtering of the victim is literally a sacrifice to the demons, who in return will grant or cause to be brought about whatever is desired. The greater the request, the "greater" the sacrifice must be.... The younger and healthier the animal, and more so with humans, the worthier the sacrifice. Also, since this type of Satanist operates on the principle of completely perverting and reversing Christianity, he believes that he will increase his power by performing more and more heinous acts.

The most precious and innocent thing for a Christian is a little child; Conversely, the sacrificing of a child would be the most efficacious (supreme sacrifice) for a Satanist. It is plainly one of the greatest perversions of Christian principles possible, and for this reason it is considered the more magically potent.³

In "Satanism and the Devolution of the 'New Religions,'" Dr. Carl Raschke mentions a taped interview with a seminary student involved in occultism who describes a secret society he claims is responsible for the kidnapping and sacrifice of children, and he also notes the fact that there are U.S. military personnel who are members of secretive Satanist groups. (Incidentally, the military is required by law to recognize Satanism and witchcraft as legitimate religions. A U.S. government handbook for Satanist chaplains in the armed forces is available.)⁴ Raschke also ties together some of the interrelationships between Satanism, the new religions, and modern decadent American culture.⁵ (Lest we think "decadent" too strong a term, we should be mindful of the statistics on abortion, pornography, crime, homosexuality, suicide, drug abuse, alcoholism, sexually transmitted disease, and related issues.)

Raschke points out that the decadence and criminality which may be found in some of the new religions, in Satanism, and in American culture itself have certain social and spiritual ties that bind them together and reveal they are part of a similar spiritual genus.

He observes that the "upsurge of Satanist practices... must be interpreted not as some kind of odd wrinkle in the present day texture of religious change, but as a culminating phase of the "New Age" movement, for which the so-called new religions of the past two decades have provided a fertile environment in which to flourish.⁶ He also points out the satanic elements found in some heavy metal rock groups (aspects of which these authors have personally confirmed), and secular culture in general may help to spread an underground Satanism among the youth. Thus:

The Satanist mindset is not "religion" in the regular sense of the word, but a mystification of the most corrupt secular passions and values.... When the invidious amorality of secular culture traps certain individuals in its own unreality, which is ritually reinforced by the electronic media, it is very likely that a similarly bizarre and demonic kind of religious theater will come into play. Satanism is but the spiritual Frankenstein created by a social order that has attempted to sustain itself without God.⁷

Of course, drug use also plays a key role in Satanism, and tens of millions of Americans use illegal drugs. In fact, the drug and cult culture of the 1960s helped pave the way for modern

Satanism. Significantly, drug use is not only common in Satanism, witchcraft, and pagan religion; drug trafficking is also found among certain of the new religions.

Drug use was religiously “romanticized” in the popular culture through various books such as Carlos Castaneda’s *Don Juan* series and observed in many anthropological investigations of tribal life as one key means to contact the spirit world.

Drug use is thus evident in all three categories: Satanism, decadent culture, and the new religions. Concerning the latter, Raschke observes that the “overwhelming majority of cult inductees in the early seventies had been substance abusers” and goes on to refer to several former cult members’ testimonies as to their sect’s involvement in heavy drug trafficking.⁸ Our own research into scores of the new religions confirm this, as do reports in the popular press. Drugs, of course, provide not only “instant transcendence” and openness to the spirit world through altered states, but they also make members more compliant and dependent on the cult (not to mention providing a sizable cash flow to undergird cult operations).

Thus, the various connections between the original counterculture of the sixties with its widespread drug abuse and the new religious movements which are typically occultic indicate the linkage to Satanism. Raschke observes:

The most alarming aspect of the alliance between cultism and the world of drugs has to do with the now widely reported cocaine epidemic. Cocaine has been the preferred drug for ceremonial purposes in black witchcraft circles since Aleister Crowley first commended it (Grinspoon & Bakalar, 1976). Its manic and ego-bolstering properties increase the feeling of “power,” which is so critical for magical rituals. Additionally, in the Satanist perspective the historical association of cocaine use with the priestly religions of pre-Columbian civilizations lends the drug an archaic mystique. There are numerous stories circulating about the revival of “authentic” human sacrifices among contemporary Satanists, which perhaps indicates another link with the pre-Columbians who did likewise. These practices, together with the tales about them, may very well be an integral element of the sadism and terrorism furthered within Satanist networks.... If cocaine trafficking is as clearly bound up with Nazi/Satanist occultism as the evidence is beginning to show, then the widespread occurrence of the former must of logical necessity indicate the influence of the latter (Geyer, 1985).⁹

Again, that such evil should be perpetuated by Satanists is not surprising; killing others is part of their reason for living. Also not surprising is the deviant nature of many individual Satanists or their connection to deviant culture. For example, Professor E. J. Moody of the Queen’s University of Belfast, Ireland, was a member of the “First Church of the Trapezoid, the Church of Satan” in San Francisco for two-and-a-half years as a “participant observer.” In his article “Magical Therapy: An Anthropological Investigation of Contemporary Satanism,” he noted the connection:¹⁰

A single factor seemed to typify all of them; all were deviant or abnormal in some aspect of their social behavior.... The roots of abnormality among the pre-Satanists interviewed reported childhoods marred by strife: they spoke of broken homes, drunken parents, aggressive and hostile siblings, and so on.¹¹

Raschke also points out the following:

In one of the few genuine “anthropological” investigations of Satanism, written over a decade ago, Arthur Lyons noted that the typical recruit for that form of demented religiosity was the sociopath or hardened criminal (1970). Thus, from a purely analytical

standpoint, Satanism represents a kind of hallowing of the deviant, a glorification of what is noxious and felonious. Indeed as Stephen Kaplan, a national radio celebrity who specializes in the investigation of “blood cults,” told me during a telephone interview several years ago, the peculiar “ethic” of Satanism is to harm, injure, kill—to do evil deliberately. In the Satanist mentality the method for achieving special distinction is an ever flagrant transgression, not only of social conventions, but of time-honored codes of morality and justice. That is the royal road to power. “Do whatst thou wilt,” thereby freeing the conscience from all constraints, was the imperative pronounced earlier this century of Aleister Crowley, the tutelary genius and inspiration for so many of today’s dabblers in black magic.¹²

Certainly then, there have been preexisting social tendencies for the emergence of Satanism, and by its very nature the practice tends to reinforce socially and religiously deviant personalities. So who should be surprised that Satanists commit crimes?

One three-month investigation, involving personal interviews and eyewitness testimony, claims that in 1984-85 in Los Angeles alone there were 27 neighborhoods with reported satanic activity, including at least six murders with Satanic ties.¹³ It also claims the Satanists have deliberately organized foster homes and day-care centers to help further their purposes.¹⁴

The Satanists’ strategy against children is also noted, quoting Lawrence Pazder, M.D.:

One of the primary aims is to destroy the belief system within a child, to make a child turn against what they believe in, in terms of who they are, of who God is, and to desecrate all manner of flesh, all manner of church institution, all manner of sign and symbol that a child could in any way be attached to. Many of the children who have been ritually abused won’t go near a church or have anything to do with the clergy because their abusers have molested them in churches while dressed as priests or other clergy members. Other perpetrators have dressed as policemen.¹⁵

One psychologist stated:

The children have been abused in a way that is meant to make them sadistic. It is meant to make them murderers. It is meant to make them pedophiles. It is meant to make them sadistic, hateful, hurtful individuals.¹⁶

But we should not forget that, in spite of their activities, many Satanists are indistinguishable from our next-door neighbors. They are successful professionals who appear (at least outwardly) to be emotionally well-adjusted. Unfortunately, because Satanism and Satanist practices are by definition abnormal and deviant, any person who becomes a Satanist will sooner or later become corrupted far beyond what the normal course of his life would have produced.

What does all this mean? Perhaps it means our nation is in trouble. It means that parents, without overreacting, need to be vigilant over the activities of their children. It means all of us need to pray more, for Satanism is not the real problem. It is only the tip of the iceberg—one more symptom of spreading spiritual death in our culture.

Notes:

¹ Craig Hawkins, *Forward* magazine, Fall, 1986, p. 17.

² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 21-22.

⁴ See, e.g., Department of the Army, *Religious Requirements and Practices: A Handbook for Chaplains*, Washington DC, Apr. 1978 (No. 164-13) which alleges that the Church of Satan is compatible with military directives and practices (p. vii-19).

⁵ Carl A. Raschke, “Satanism and the Devolution of the ‘New Religions,’” *SCP Newsletter*, Fall 1985)

⁶ Ibid., p. 24.

⁷ Ibid., p. 24.

⁸ Ibid., p. 27.

⁹ Ibid., p. 28; cf. Carl A. Raschke, *The Interruption of Eternity: Modern Gnosticism and the Origins of the New Religious Consciousness* (Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall, 1980).

¹⁰ Given the vast influence of modern astrology, it is relevant that Prof. Moody also observed a frequent need to counter a perceived personal impotence through control of one's fate. Thus, "Those who eventually become Satanists usually have begun with astrology, but have come into contact with other types of magic in the magical subculture of the urban center" (i.e., occult bookstores and supply shops—pp. 362-363 in Zaretsky and Leone, eds., *Religious Movements in Contemporary America*).

¹¹ E. J. Moody, "Magical Therapy: An Anthropological Investigation of Contemporary Satanism," in Zaretsky and Leone, eds., *Religious Movements in Contemporary America*, pp. 358-360.

¹² Raschke, "Satanism and the Devolution," pp. 24-25.

¹³ E.g., John Frattarola, *Passport Magazine* Special Report, 1986, pp. 2, 11.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁶ Ibid.