

ANALYSIS

Satanic cults prey on vulnerable kids

By MARK KEMP

Satan has been around for millennia but it seems that in the last twenty years he's been getting a lot of press.

The continuous flood of movies and novels on the subject is a symptom of the evil side of our inherently religious nature.

But few people are aware of the prevalence of occult religions, especially Satanic groups, due to their complex hierarchical structures and codes of secrecy.

Far from the Tarot cards or a curious reading of Anton LaVey's books, are the cases—and they are becoming too numerous to be ignored any longer—of ritual child abuse in Satanic practices. Over a dozen such cases of child abuse have been uncovered in Ontario over the past three years, usually by child-welfare workers investigating reports of assault on children. The age group of children involved is most frequently between four and seven.

But detecting these cases is difficult, and prosecuting the victimizers—usually adults related to the child (and often parents) or trusted child-care personnel (at day care centres for example)—is even more complicated. A well-publicized case in Hamilton, involving sexual and violent abuse of children, graveyard rituals and cannibalism, and reports of human sacrifice, was dismissed after

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almost three years of investigation and hearings costing millions of dollars. The charges against the parents, whom presiding Assistant Crown Attorney Fred Camping described as "depraved," were withdrawn when the three children were declared by psychiatrists and social workers to be too traumatized to continue.

During the four years before the children were placed in the care of the Hamilton-Wentworth Children's Aid Society, they were alleged to have been subjected to numerous

forms of brutal sexual abuse so bad, said the Society's regional director Sylvio Mainville, that four years later there is still evidence of physical damage.

The case may be re-opened when or if one of the children is determined fit to testify in future, but in the meantime the parents go free. The bitter irony is that the worse such cases of brutality are, the less likely the perpetrators can be convicted. Mainville points out, in a *Globe and Mail* article of December 18, that this is because "The younger the child is and the more severe the abuse, the more traumatic the court process will be. Then the child will be less likely to participate in the process and the chances are better of the perpetrators getting away."

The principal stumbling-block in such legal procedures is the credibility of the child, compounded by the public's subjective reaction to things so far removed from their own experience and from their complacent world-view. "None of us want to believe [that satanic ritual child abuse] can go on in our society," says George Caldwell, director of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, in a *Globe and Mail* article dated Dec. 22, 1987. "I find many people I talk to hesitate to get involved. They say: 'Let it go. It is too slimy a stuff to get involved in.'" People would rather attribute the stories to over-active imaginations,

to rented horror videos or violence on television, or to heavy-metal lyrics.

Even many psychologists who deal with these cases try to avoid discussing a phenomenon not covered by their Diagnostic and Statistical Manuals (DSM's). Referring to a major trial that took place two years ago in Bakersfield, California, involving scores of children in more than half a dozen communities, one child psychiatrist is quoted in the *Chicago Tribune* as saying, "I wanted

to believe in the worst way that this was explainable on some other basis, but I have a hard time looking at it logically and coming up with any other conclusion." "People just aren't ready for this," said another.

According to the director of the Toronto-based Council On Mind Abuse (COMA), Robert C. Tucker, cases of ritual child abuse in the past did not manifest themselves often

guising themselves as cartoon characters, such as "Fred Flintstone," in order to make the story attributable to the child's vivid imagination and the influence of television.

Certain extreme rituals, such as human sacrifice followed by the burial of the bodies in a place the child would definitely remember but which would, on subsequent investigation, be found to harbour no such



until adolescence or later. Then they would be diagnosed as schizophrenia, and the patient medicated and institutionalized. Only in recent years are psychologists recognizing the symptoms as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders induced by ritualized sexual abuse at a younger age.

The believability of the young child recounting incidents of Satanic rituals is especially weakened by the nature of the abuse: a highly sophisticated process of mind-control which breaks the child psychologically and then indoctrinates him or her with the cult's ideas about the world. Many techniques are used to make the child's story, if it should be revealed, confusing and dubious. In a fact sheet compiled by a clinical psychologist aiding police in the California case, one symptom of satanic abuse is reports of adults dis-

bodies, might also be used to create disbelief. In the same *Chicago Tribune* article that reported the Bakersfield trial, a similar case in Toledo, Ohio is mentioned in which police failed to find any of the 75 bodies that were supposedly buried by a local Satanic cult.

Recap, the journal of the (US) National Child Assault Prevention Project, lists the characteristics of ritualistic abuse. They include: child pornography, use of drugs (victims often mention pink pills, or "stuff that made them fall asleep"), sexual abuse of all kinds, mutilation and killing of animals, manipulation or consuming of feces, urine and blood, bondage, "religious" rites, and sacrifice of other children. This last act has been the cause of the greatest skepticism, since no actual bodies have been found in any of the cases.

But every year, statistics indicate that thousands of children in Canada do disappear without a trace, says Caldwell. While there is no positive evidence to link these disappearances to Satanic cults, it is highly unlikely that all of them are mere runaways or parental abductions.

One of the most prominent Satanic groups is the Church of Satan, the largest legal satanic cult, formed by Anton LaVey, author of *The Satanic Bible*, and CASH (The Continental Association of Satan's Hope) plus other secret groups with unknown names and memberships. It is these last, very powerful, elusive groups which are the most likely perpetrators of the heinous crimes to children.

Satanic societies have their own calendars and ritual practices meant to enhance the presence of Satan on earth. Many of the rituals are inverted Christian sacraments, symbols and practices, such as the upside-down cross, the use of excrement as a sacramental substance, or orgies and rapes which are enacted to strengthen both the resolve of the members and their connection with their god.

Tucker explains that power is thought to be derived from the corruption of purity (i.e., the systematic psychological and physical assault of children) and the destruction of life (mutilation and sacrifice of animals and humans). The breaking down of personality is also intended to make indoctrinated satanists of the children, thereby perpetuating the cult.

Motivation for joining satanic cults are numerous: physical and mental (the obtaining of power and gratification of flesh and ego), social and political (historically such cults subverted Church and social oppressors), or spiritual (especially because of the sense of futility and ineffectiveness often experienced with conventional religions).

Adolescents are probably most easily fascinated with the occult, and although it is ridiculous to say that any direct connection exists between playing *Dungeons and Dragons* and becoming a serious practitioner of satanism, the impressionable dabbler might be led toward a more and more obsessive involvement.

The important thing is for the public to be aware that this issue is a very real concern and not mere courtroom sensationalism—and, as the name of an Ohio-based organization suggests, Believe the Children.

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