

# Sympathy for the Devil



*A closer look at Satanism*

BY BESS LOVEJOY

BURNABY, BC — I have known two Satanists.

One was a friend's ex-con boyfriend, a biker who seemed to revel in Satanism's dark imagery but couldn't say much more about it.

The other was a wannabe goth kid who liked to sit in corners a lot of the time. When I found out he was a Satanist, I asked him about his beliefs. He wasn't too fond of my ideas, and our conversation ended when he told me that I didn't have a clue what Satanism was. Of course, he wasn't willing to explain it to me.

So, this is an attempt to answer my initial question: just what is Satanism? A bunch of silly kids still playing dress-up and make believe? A group of enlightened and thoroughly rational adults? Crazy psycho killers?

The largest and most

accepting membership dues.

Since the Church of Satan's founding, many splinter groups have appeared, some of whom — such as the First Church of Satan — no longer venerate LaVey as a leader.

One outspoken group appears to be the Temple of Set, founded in 1975. Although they call themselves "the only legalized 'satanic' institution in the world", and claim allegiance to certain Satanic principles, their focus is on the Egyptian God Set as "the oldest known form of the Prince of Darkness, the archetype of isolated self-consciousness."

Such schools of thought were admired in certain societies, such as ancient Egypt and Greece, but generally their exclusive elitism and 'supernatural' philosophies made them objects of resentment and persecution.

Their organization is structured somewhat like the Freemasons (and other secret societies of the 19th century) in that initiates pass through degrees. And, in a sort of alignment with ancient Egyptian mythology,

without interference from apologists for incompetence. No one should be protected from the effects of his own stupidity."

This tenet reverberates throughout Satanist philosophy. In effect, it seems that what they worship is themselves, and their veneration of the 'Dark Lord' is simply as a mirror of the dark forces within them.

Yet there is more to their beliefs. The "Five-Point Program" is what the Church of Satan authorizes as their central tenets,

most Satanists seem to consider their current religion merely a modern manifestation of an age-old archetype.

For example, the Satanism Frequently Asked Questions file states that "since dark and/or forbidden gods exist in many cultures other than European-descended Christianity, forms of Satanism other than those familiar to English-speakers do exist and in some cases flourish . . . There are a few historical Christian heresies which would fall into this

all above ground, they all have to do with social organization, rites of passage, relationships of different kinds, philosophy of the universe." Said Grayston. "They operate as open social organizations. So there has to be another agenda when an organization stays underground."

The Church of Satan has something like a code, although it might better be termed "Advice for the Modern Satanic Citizen", since it is written almost like the quaint books of mannerly advice popular earlier in this century.

This advice is called "The Eleven Satanic Rules of the Earth." They are: one, do not give opinions or advice unless you are asked. Two, do not tell your troubles to others unless you are sure they want to hear them. Three, when in another's lair, show him respect or else do not go there. Four, if a guest in your lair annoys you, treat him cruelly and without mercy. Five, do not make sexual advances unless you are given the mating signal. Six, do not take that which does not belong to you unless it is a burden to the other person and he cries out to be relieved. Seven, acknowledge the power of magic if you have employed it successfully to obtain your desires. If you deny the power of magic after having called upon it with success, you will lose all you have obtained. Eight, do not complain about anything to which you need not subject yourself. Nine, do not harm little children. Ten, do not kill non-human animals unless you are attacked or for your food. Eleven, when walking in open territory, bother no one. If someone bothers you, ask him to stop. If he does not stop, destroy him.

Whether they are cults is open to question, but as with other religions, bizarre and brutal acts

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an outline of what they do.

Especially unique is point number four, "Development and Production of Artificial Human Companions," which refers to polite, sophisticated, technologically feasible slavery with artificial life.

*Bladerunner* comes to life. Indeed, it seems that much of Satanist dogma focuses on creating a world straight out of notable movies. Despite their proclaimed links to "ancient" ideas and belief systems, one wonders if Satanism in its current form could have come about without sci-fi and gory, adolescent boy movies.

Of course, their argument would be that these art forms simply speak to the same ancient need and force of darkness as do their beliefs.

LaVey seemed especially fond of turning out quick, numbered summaries of his beliefs. In addition to the Five-Point Program, there are the Nine Satanic Statements. The first of these is that "Satan represents indulgence instead of abstinence."

Other notables include number five, "Satan represents vengeance instead of turning the other cheek", and number eight, "Satan represents all of the so-called sins, as they all lead to physical, mental, or emotional gratification."

Interestingly, some have noted that these statements owe a debt to the ideas in Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*.

There are also the Nine Satanic Sins. The first sin is stupidity, the cardinal sin of Satanism.

Others of note are pretentiousness, solipsism, and lack of aesthetics.

As with the Church of Set,

category. Kali worshippers could also be categorized here as a cross-cultural example of a 'Satanism.'

However, it is important to note that simply because there are dark deities in other religions — such as the Hindu goddess Kali — does not mean that their worshippers view them the same way as Westerners view Satan.

Their reaction is culturally specific — for instance, Kali is not a pariah, an example of darkness as opposed to light. Rather her violence is the vengeance of righteousness, banishing evil rather than celebrating it.

Modern Satanists thus invariably view other religions within the dualistic Christian mind-set, failing to question the meaning of evil within that

pantheon or belief system.

Interestingly, even in Judaism Satan is not representative of a dualist "darkness." Rather, the Talmud states that Satan is an angel to whom God gave the duty of carrying out those things which mortals perceive as "evil", but which are all part of God's plan.

It would be impossible for Satan to oppose God, since God is supposed to be and contain everything, even evil. And according to Grayston, there are key differences between Satanism and other religions, even ancient ones.

"It's a form of alienated religion. Traditional religions are

committed in the name of Satanism should not necessarily be seen to represent the whole.

The power of Satanism resides largely in the individual. But as a structured and viable — indeed, glamorous — alternative to mainstream belief systems, their power is undoubtedly growing. However, Grayston says he's never heard of any Satanic activity at Simon Fraser University. "One of my theories about Satanism is that if you have a life, you don't need Satanism," he said.



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influential Satanic group seems to be the Church of Satan, founded in 1966 by Anton LaVey.

According to The Church of Satan, written by his long-time companion Blanche Barton, LaVey dropped out of high school at the age of 16 to become second oboist for the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra. Later, he ran away with the Clyde Beatty Circus, where his responsibilities included taming eight Nubian Lions and four Bengal tigers and playing the calliope.

According to Barton, "He was in his element among the loners, drifters and marginal types who have always been attracted to the cynical carnival atmosphere. It was here LaVey learned how much people will pay to be fooled — how desperately they want to escape their own dull lives."

In 1997, he died of rheumatic heart disease, was given a satanic funeral, and cremated. Since then, the church has supposedly gone into "conversion", meaning they have no more public activities, but they are still

certain posts within the organization are seen to be chosen by Set himself.

What do members of the Church of Satan believe? The answer is really quite intriguing, and likely not what you'd expect. A blend of Nietzsche philosophy and Libertarian politics, Satanists take pride in being quite divergent from mainstream or "politically-correct" views.

This touches upon one of the central tenets of Satanism — individualism. Intense individualism, according to Humanities Professor Donald Grayston, who teaches Intro to Religious Studies at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia.

In fact, the first point of their "Five-Point Program" is what they call "stratification."

They believe this tenet is "the point on which all the others ultimately rest. There can be no more myth of 'equality' for all — it only translates to 'mediocrity' and supports the weak at the expense of the strong. Water must be allowed to seek its own level