

***THE DEVIL RIDES IN:  
CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANS AND THE  
DEPICTION OF A SATANIC MENACE IN  
CONTEMPORARY GREAT BRITAIN***

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In the last decade, there has been great concern in Great Britain over criminal activities allegedly committed by Satanic groups, often directed against children. The origins of such charges can be traced to the activities and publications of emerging charismatic and fundamentalist Christian religious movements, whose practices of “spiritual warfare” and exorcism encourage acceptance of the reality of a Satanic danger. In addition, the identification of an actual Satanic conspiracy has become for the new Christian movements an effective ideological tool in the contest with theological liberalism. Postulating a Satanic danger serves an essentially Durkheimian function, in encouraging unity among such Christian groups against the supposed external enemy.

**Ritual Abuse**

During the late 1980s, Britain experienced several scandals involving the alleged activities of ritual or satanic rings that committed acts of abuse against children (Jenkins 1992). There were major incidents at Rochdale, Nottingham, Manchester, Liverpool and the Orkney Islands, in addition to many smaller cases. All ended in disaster for the advocates of a ritual abuse problem, and resulted in severe criticism of both police and social workers. There remain a hard core of believers (see for example

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Sinason 1994), but the consensus is that ritual abuse was a panic wholly lacking substance.

The notion of ritual abuse had surfaced in the United States in the aftermath of the McMartin school case of 1983, and which recurred in a number of other celebrated cases over the next two years, as in Jordan, Minnesota and Bakersfield, California. In essence, it was charged that organized groups of Satanists held ceremonies in which children played a major role. Children were raped and sodomized by large numbers of participants, both male and female, and some infants were mutilated or sacrificed (Jenkins and Maier-Katkin 1992; Hicks 1991). Sacrificial rituals might involve the drinking of a victim's blood or the eating of his flesh. Other rites involved the consumption of urine or faeces. The emphasis on defiling children was said to reflect the view that the most innocent victim was the most satisfying sacrifice to the Lord of Evil. One variant of the story held that women belonging to the cults acted as "breeders" or (the British term), "brood mares", who bred children specifically to be murdered (Jenkins and Maier-Katkin 1991).

Even at the height of the American panic, there had been many sceptics, and the allegations had enjoyed a distinctly checkered career (Hicks 1991; Richardson et al 1991). The McMartin case was suggestive here, in that charges were originally made about a vast conspiracy involving seven teachers at the school, as well as unnamed others. Soon, allegations were dropped against all except one male teacher and his elderly grandmother. Following a series of lengthy and inordinately expensive trials, all charges were either dismissed or ended in mistrials. As in other cases, the "ritual" allegations fell by the wayside at a relatively early stage, leaving only charges of "normal" non-ritual abuse to be heard by the jury. It is worth recording that allegations of organized ritual abuse have never been accepted by any court of law in any Western country during modern times.

On the other hand, the allegations led many to assert that society faced a real menace from Satanists and occultists. In 1988, *The American Focus on Satanic Crime* (a work especially targeted at law enforcement professionals) suggests that satanists are connected with

the murders of unbaptized infants, child sexual abuse in daycare, rape, ritual abuse of children, drug trafficking, arson, pornography, kidnapping, vandalism, church desecration, corpse theft, sexual trafficking of children and the heinous mutilation, dismemberment and sacrifices of humans and animals. [they are] responsible for the deaths of more than 60,000 Americans each year, including missing and runaway youth. (Peterson 1988: foreword)

In 1988, nearly twenty million Americans watched a network television program in which Geraldo Rivera publicized the most sensational charges.

Religious fundamentalists were among the most enthusiastic in disseminating the various rumors; but "Satanic" theories also established a foothold in the psychiatric profession, where it was alleged that ritual abuse was a prime cause of multiple personality disorder (Richardson *et al* 1991; Jenkins and Maier-Katkin 1992). From the mid-1980s, many of the most extreme charges about ritual crime would be presented through national and regional "Conferences on Multiple Personality and Dissociative States".

### **Religion**

Accounts of the American panic over ritual abuse generally attribute the claims to fundamentalist and evangelical groups anxious among other things to prove the reality of a satanic menace — in order to substantiate pre-millennialist claims about the rising tide of evil that precedes the second coming of Christ. It is therefore surprising to find such a campaign succeeding in Britain, which is traditionally a far more secular society than the United States, and religious groups have played a far less significant role in debates over public morality, at least in modern

times. However, matters have changed substantially in the last ten or fifteen years. In order to understand this, it is helpful to appreciate the quite rapid changes which have permitted the growth of militantly fundamentalist groups. These include a general secularization, and a consequent decay in the structure of mainstream churches.

The Church of England is an established state church which for centuries was supposed by law to comprise all citizens of England and Wales (a quite distinct Presbyterian Church is established by law in Scotland). In practice, this had long been recognized as a fiction, and Anglicans have for centuries had to compete with rival religious groups, either Roman Catholic or Protestant Nonconformist. During the twentieth century, the established Church had declined steadily in membership. This dilution of strength also affected other mainstream religious bodies, especially those which, like the Anglicans, had adopted more liberal theological views. (see appendix).

Anglicans are not even the largest religious group, while the most dramatic growth has occurred outside Christianity altogether, among the British Muslim population. This scarcely existed in 1950, but now exceeds a million. However, the weakness of the established church is less remarkable than the pronounced secularism of British society. Between 1975 and 1990, the total adult membership in Trinitarian churches fell by 17 percent, while the membership of such churches represented a mere 14 percent of the overall population. Even by European standards, this was a low figure, compared with a west European norm of between 20 and 30 percent. Between 1971 and 1988, the proportion of British marriages conducted according to civil ceremonies rose from 40 to 48 percent of the whole. In the mid-1980s, opinion polls found only 8 percent of British respondents characterizing themselves as "very religious", compared to 34 percent who were "not religious".

In this hostile environment, religious groups have attempted a number of different responses to change. Sections of the established Church itself have sought to adapt to the modern world

by abandoning a great deal of what appears old-fashioned in theology (Welsby 1984). To many observers, this has seemed a wholesale rejection of what is basic and essential to Christianity. Since the 1970s, there have been a number of highly publicized controversies about issues such as the Virgin Birth, bodily Resurrection, and divinity of Jesus Christ, with sceptics like Bishop Jenkins of Durham and Dr Don Cupitt of Cambridge University as frequently quoted authorities.

There was a furor in 1977 when a group of theologians, mainly Anglican clergy, published a book entitled *The Myth of God Incarnate*, which argued against the divinity of Christ, and consequently sought to demolish the whole Trinitarian structure. The authors affected to be surprised at the shock caused by their use of the word "myth", but the resulting controversy was far-reaching, and rallied evangelicals both within the established church and outside. Other controversies have concerned the ordination of women and practising homosexuals, and the degree of overt liberal politicization in the Church. The ordination of the first women priests in 1994 has been widely seen as the culmination of a trend towards radicalization.

These controversies have weakened the church, but there have been areas of growth which are relevant to our present subject. The Church of England has for over a century been divided between evangelical and anglo-catholic wings, disrespectfully known as "low and lazy" as opposed to "high and crazy". The "low" wing has flourished in recent decades, and formed many alliances with evangelical and charismatic groups in other denominations. Despite its nominally hierarchical nature, the Church of England allows considerable *de facto* independence to the individual clergyman; and the main charismatic organization, the "Fountain Trust" had been founded by Anglican clergy (Welsby 1984: 241-5). In 1991, a cleric sympathetic to the new evangelical trend became head of the Church of England, when George Carey became Archbishop of Canterbury. Religious life in Britain has become polarized between the liberal and evangelical movements, and the latter have flourished.

Fundamentalist and Charismatic or Pentecostalist churches on the familiar American model have sprung up alongside the declining mainstream groups. Churches following the new piety emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit in everyday life, and the central importance of a personal "born-again" conversion experience (Hastings 1987). They practise speaking in tongues and prayer healing, in addition to espousing a strict theology which encompasses traditional ideas like the Virgin Birth, Resurrection and Trinity, as well as Hell and a literal Devil. By 1979, the charismatic "House Church Movement" had some fifty thousand members drawn from various denominations, including Catholics (Welsby 1984: 245). Between 1979 and 1989, membership of independent fundamentalist churches grew from 44,000 to 128,000 in England and Wales, and this does not count the growth in parishes of the established church.

Evangelical groups have been active in the political arena, where local churches and groupings have cooperated to fight pornography, "gay rights", and abortion. Such movements drew Catholic activists in large numbers, despite the traditional pro-Labour loyalties of Britain's large Irish population (analogies with the American Democratic party will be apparent). The power of the evangelicals became apparent in the year 1977. There was another failed abortion Bill that year, while evangelical sentiment was deeply stirred over the issue of blasphemy. The newspaper *Gay News* had published a poem by James Kirkup, which implied promiscuous homosexual relationships between Jesus and the apostles. Moral campaigner Mary Whitehouse undertook a private prosecution on the grounds of blasphemous libel, an offense which most thought extinct. It is difficult to say whether gay activists or religious groups were more galvanized by the newspaper's conviction, in July, but the decision had lasting consequences. Later that year, Mary Whitehouse and her triumphant allies began a successful movement to prohibit child pornography. The two weeks of the *Gay News* trial coincided exactly with the height of the controversy over *The Myth of God Incarnate*, which was depicted as an equally gross blasphemy; and evangelicals often linked the two phenomena.

The success of the various decency and pro-life coalitions has sporadically encouraged hopes of a British equivalent to the American "Moral Majority". One recent attempt at a permanent coalition involved a national "Movement for Christian Democracy", under MPs David Alton (a pro-life veteran) and Kenneth Hargreaves. Also important here is the International Congress for the Family, which coordinates anti-abortion and anti-feminist groups. It held its first meeting on British soil in Brighton, in 1990.

For fundamentalists, the most important national group remains the Evangelical Alliance, an umbrella which includes congregations both within and outside the established church. There are also organizations like CARE, Christian Action Research and Education, with some eighty thousand members. Other informal means of national organization include a network of bookstores and radio shows, of publishers like Kingsway, Monarch and Word; and occasional meetings and revivals that owe much to the American "tent meeting" tradition.

These religious or political movements were influenced in their formation by American models, and they have drawn heavily on transatlantic resources. They owe their origins to the Billy Graham crusades of the 1960s and afterwards, while British "Christian bookstores" offer literally hundreds of American book titles and albums. Publishers like Word and Kingsway reprint the titles of American counterparts like Huntington House, sometimes with a new introduction by a British religious figure like Kevin Logan (Miller 1990). Popular American authors like Josh McDowell and Frank Peretti find a substantial market in these British fundamentalist circles, and Christian radio stations carry the syndicated shows of James Dobson and Mike Warnke. American speakers, activists and preachers are naturally sought after and well received for conferences and revival meetings.

### **The Satanism Issue**

These groups should be seen as the vehicles for the new concern over ritual abuse, a fear that was entirely novel in Britain. The earlier lack of concern deserves emphasis, as there is an authentic occult movement in Britain that is probably far more substantial than that found in the United States. Britain is in a sense the home of most of the occultism that would be seen as so menacing by American theorists of the 1980s. It was the land of occultists like Aleister Crowley, of societies like the Golden Dawn, and of the modern witchcraft movement revived (or invented) by entrepreneur Gerald Gardner. Even the "Church of the Process", so often attacked by American critics of Satanic cults, was founded by British expatriates. Post-1960s interest in the New Age and occult led to a boom of practising groups and a network of occult publishers, and stores selling books and supplies. By 1984, *New Society* could speak of a "Great British Witch Boom", with pagan adherents possibly in the tens of thousands.

There are also Satanists. Genuine British ritual magicians do undoubtedly exist, and a few accept the term "Satanist". There was in the 1980s an "Anglian Satanic Church", which published the magazine *Dark Lily* as an "above ground" recruiting tool for those not yet fully initiated. However, most groups were local, self-taught and decentralized, and it is these who were presumably responsible for most of the notorious activities of recent years. These included well-authenticated satanic desecrations of churches and cemeteries, which became quite common during the 1960s and 1970s.

Modern satanism was the consequence of a revival engineered by English enthusiasts like Crowley and Gardner, though neither would themselves deserve or accept the "Satanic" label. Perhaps the most important figure was the popular British author Dennis Wheatley (1897-1977), who was in fact the first to synthesize ideas like the witches' sabbat and the Black Mass, together with the theme of a cannibalistic ritual threat to children. The idea can be traced very precisely to his novel *The Devil Rides Out*, which appeared in 1934.



Occult movements exist as a quite genuine tradition in England, but public concern or panic has traditionally been lacking. In a more secular society, Satanism and church desecration were traditionally viewed as a distressing form of vandalism without serious religious overtones. The doings of the occult groups rarely came before the courts, and were virtually never discussed in the serious press, or in Parliament: they were routinely dismissed as the work of "Dennis Wheatley types". Even the tabloid press virtually never made accusations of serious criminal activity. The most sinister charges made against the occultists involved the rumored sacrifice of animals, while accounts of witch-groups like that headed by Alex Sanders served chiefly as an excuse to publish photographs of nude ceremonies. The fundamental image was one of harmless sybarites. Serious allegations about harmful "cults" tended to report on American groups like the Manson Family; and especially Christian fundamentalist and Charismatic sects like the Children of God.

When the occult featured in a more serious context, it was usually treated with mild anthropological interest. In 1988, for example, there was a special "Walpurgis Night" edition of the television talk show *After Dark*, which featured representatives of several pagan, occult and Satanist groups. The general tone of the questioning was inquiring and non-judgmental, and the only hostility was expressed by the "token" Christian spokeswoman, ex-witch Audrey Harper. Before the mid-1980s, it would have appeared ludicrous to discuss British Satanists as a serious phenomenon, still less a social problem.

### **New Ideas of the Devil**

During the 1980s, Satanism in Britain was transformed from a joke to a menace. Two major forces can be discerned in the identification and dissemination of the new problem. A group of American theorists and experts were instrumental in bringing the notion to Britain, but the growing perception of a serious problem was made possible by the network of evangelical and fundamentalist religious groups within Britain itself. Once the

ideas were "domesticated", they were increasingly adopted by social work and child protection groups anxious to assert the serious and pervasive nature of child abuse. These overseas experts included "cult cops" like Sandi Gallant and Robert Simandl of Chicago, while American therapists like Pamela Hudson and Catherine Gould were influential in suggesting the reality of ritual abuse.

However, such stories could not have attained the power they did unless there was already in existence a domestic audience willing and eager to hear them; and this was found among the swelling ranks of fundamentalist and Charismatic Christians within Britain itself. The concept of "spiritual warfare" and the ministries of exorcism, spiritual healing and "deliverance" had existed among British evangelicals for many years, increasingly associated with glossolalia, or speaking in tongues (White 1990; Lawrence 1990; Harper 1976). From the mid-1960s, both exorcism and glossolalia became a source of recurrent controversy within the established Church (Welsby 1984: 246-8). These ideas were practiced by inter-denominational "Christian Fellowship Groups" operating under a variety of names. Such "base communities" rapidly spread throughout the country during the 1970s, and would provide the building blocks for the revivalist movement in the following decade.

In 1975, there had been a notorious case in Barnsley (South Yorkshire) where problems had developed in such a fellowship group; and this provides insight into the beliefs and assumptions of the movement. A Methodist minister and an Anglican cleric had performed an all-night exorcism on a member named Michael Taylor, who had supposedly fallen under the influence of Satanists. Some hours later, Taylor had responded by killing and mutilating his wife, and he was diagnosed as criminally insane. The ensuing trial was extensively reported in the "qualities" no less than the tabloid press.

For most readers, it was one of the first glimpses into what appeared at the time to be a curious religious fringe, with an

unfashionable belief in the reality of demons and possession. In view of later developments, it is interesting that the media casually dismissed the charge of Satanic involvement, and concentrated entirely on the dangers to mental health of practices like exorcism and glossolalia. Exorcism was characterized as "macabre", and most papers cited approvingly the remark by defense counsel that the crime resulted from "grotesque and wicked malpractices posing in the name of religion". The Anglican hierarchy attempted to place stringent restrictions on the future use of exorcism; but even this was denounced by many liberal clergy, who felt it dangerous to grant any degree of recognition to the phenomenon (Welsby 1984: 246-48).

But groups like that in Barnsley flourished and proliferated, as did ideas of demons, exorcism and "spiritual warfare", which provided an essential background for the new emphasis on the Satanic danger (Lawrence 1990: 130-157). An inter-denominational "Christian Exorcism Study Circle" was founded in 1972, and in 1985, a leader claimed that each year the group was counseling some two hundred defectors from satanic and occult groups (Luhrman 1989: 82). The group's secretary warned "that some Satanic groups will sacrifice a human being if they possibly can: often these victims are unwanted babies or tramps taken from the streets at night... Satanists can be found at the highest levels in our society, in political life and on the boards of multinational companies" (Newton 1987: 153-4). Satanists were said to operate behind "front" organizations of a theosophical or New Age nature.

The intellectual outlook of the anti-cult groups can be illustrated by the work of the Rev. Russ Parker, who had worked with the Manchester "Deliverance Advisory Group" before being appointed to the care of two Leicestershire parishes within the established Church. In his 1990 book, *Battling the Occult* (1990), Parker asserts a belief in possession by evil spirits, and discusses exorcism; and he stresses that the battle against Satanism was an urgent necessity for contemporary Christianity. The book recites all the familiar arguments familiar from American anti-Satanism, with the same identification between the apparently harmless

"New Age" and pernicious occult criminality. Satanism is here placed in a spectrum of activities that includes ouija boards, astrology, palmistry, meditation, Dungeons and Dragons, and "occult" films like *The Omen* and *The Exorcist*.

He even follows the American precedents in expressing concern about the practice of Halloween, a custom largely introduced into Great Britain in the last decade. In 1982, there had been a controversy in Cambridgeshire when the schools began to celebrate Halloween, to the objections of fundamentalist parents who attempted to withdraw their children (Luhrmann 1989: 82-83). This hostility to occult influences among the young was echoed by the Association of Christian Teachers, which denounced toleration of Halloween: this "does in fact encourage an interest and fascination in the occult and this invariably leads to more serious involvement and damage to the individuals concerned" (Parker 1990: 36). The group also struggled against Satanic or "witch" imagery in school books. There is some evidence that they were successful in this, and by 1990, publishers were expressing growing sensitivity about anything which could be interpreted as "occult". This represented a sudden and astonishing reversal in attitudes, as such pressures had never been felt before the 1980s.

But there was also a more immediate Satanic threat, orchestrated through powerful devil-worshipping groups or cells with direct access to demonic powers. Russ Parker notes that when he had been in Manchester in the early 1980s, "we went through a phase of ministry in which a number of people were trying hard to break free of the black magic groups to which they had belonged". These people were often characterized by "uncontrolled outbursts of verbal abuse, lying, cursing and blasphemy", which showed that they had been in the grasp of literal demonic powers (Parker 1990: 80). These were manifested in the form of sexual perversions and various forms of addiction.

Another influential anti-cult activist was Kevin Logan, Anglican vicar of the Lancashire parish of St Johns, Great Harwood, near Blackburn (Logan 1988). He is the author of several books published by the Eastbourne-based firms "Kingsway"

or "Monarch", which also present the work of Audrey Harper, Peter Lawrence, and most of the "spiritual warfare" school (see for example Harper and Pugh 1990; White 1990; Lawrence 1990; Ellis 1989; and Logan's introduction to Miller 1990). Logan's works include *Close Encounters with the New Age*, and *Paganism and the Occult*, both British parallels to the numerous exposés currently appearing in American fundamentalist circles.

Like Parker, Logan similarly describes exorcising those who had become involved with Satanic cults; and constantly sees New Age activities like yoga, astrology and meditation as part of a common spectrum which also includes Satanism, occultism and Paganism. Naturally expecting to encounter scepticism, Logan repeatedly attempts to show the real secular harm done by the cults, and their connection with serious and violent crime. For example, he draws a connection between "cult" activities and multiple homicide. American examples like Charles Manson and the "Son of Sam" are naturally included, with citations of the work of Maury Terry's sensationalistic *The Ultimate Evil*; but Logan also provides a British linkage when he traces the Hungerford mass murder rampage of Michael Ryan to the influence of a fantasy role-playing game (Logan 1988: 21-23).

From this perspective, cults and demonic phenomena might also be linked to incest and child abuse. Logan describes the abuse of one fourteen year old girl by the "high priest" of a coven (Logan 1988: 89-90). One widely read book by Anglican cleric Peter Lawrence records an attempt to exorcise a "Christian lady":

When I asked the Spirit to come, horrific demons manifested, growling and snarling and throwing her to the floor. Like so many Christians we find with resident demons, she had been an incest victim. Not everyone we see who has suffered abuse as a child is demonized, but when demons manifest in mature Christians, we are not surprised to find a history of abuse, sexual or otherwise. With many such people we also find ancestral demons which have been in the family for generations due to black mass rites and passed on to the child at conception or birth. (Lawrence 1990: 147)

In this context, it is scarcely surprising to find parliamentary activism on the issue by Geoffrey Dickens, who in 1988 sponsored an adjournment debate in the House of Commons on the topics of child abuse and witchcraft. He announced his intention to present a dossier of confidential information to the Home Office, and declared that he would attempt to introduce legislation prohibiting the exercise of the Satanic religion - a point at which even Kevin Logan balked (Logan 1988; see also Dickens' highly laudatory dedication to Harper and Pugh 1990).

### **Elite Satanism**

Religious concerns are evident in the wave of rumors that sinister rings or cults were well-ensconced among the high-born and politically influential; a charge of the sort popularized by some of the exposés of paedophile rings. Kevin Logan offered several case-studies, for example of "a London occult group whose members are made up of high ranking civil servants, top industrialists and prominent City figures... each city and major town has its own small exclusive coven made up mostly of people in the professions" (Logan 1988: 59).

Belief in elite Satanism was suggested by the 1986 trial of Derry Knight, a flamboyant con-man who claimed to be breaking away from a Satanic cult led by the deputy Prime Minister, William Whitelaw. With other highly-placed politicians, Whitelaw was said to lead the "Sons of Lucifer", the secret overlords of British diabolism. In reality, Whitelaw is one of the most inoffensive and generally popular characters in national politics, who is quite untainted by scandal of any kind; but the charges found powerful believers. Knight gained entrée into a circle of determined anti-Satanists who gave him several hundred thousand pounds to fund his campaign to bring others into the light.

Contributors included the enormously rich family which owns Britain's Sainsbury's supermarket chain, and other wealthy supporters of the Charismatic movement. One of the most prominent was the wife of Timothy Sainsbury, the Conservative MP and anti-pornography campaigner. She claimed to have experienced the gifts of prophecy and glossolalia "at a Bible meeting for parliamentary wives at the House of Commons". This affair suggests an entirely new degree of suspicion and hostility about cults among the social elite. As a mainstream Anglican bishop now warned, the Charismatic movement has "led in places to individuals and groups becoming obsessed by the thought of evil and believing that the Lord speaks to them and gives them direct

injunctions how to deal with it. This is extremely dangerous and needs to be checked".

Tales about elite occultism sometimes focussed on freemasonry, which is very popular among the British upper and middle class, with a strong following among law enforcement, the legal profession, and the Church of England. The movement has also been patronized by the royal family for over a century. However, there are critics: masonic oaths appear to include threats of "death and ghastly mutilation", while Catholics and many evangelical Protestants regard the sect's rituals as heretical or pagan. Some of the wholly fictitious rumors in circulation in the 1980s reported that high initiates were required to defecate upon a crucifix; while "Prince Charles had been secretly initiated into a north London lodge that practised Black Magic" (Knight 1984: 5-6). Kevin Logan notes that "Mason Grand Masters were also responsible for the founding and structure of one of Europe's largest occult societies, the {Crowleyan} *Ordo Templi Orientis* (OTO) in 1902... the OTO, founded by freemasons, has much to answer for in the last eighty years" (Logan 1988:148-50).

Freemasonry provided an essential context for the Derry Knight affair, and many of the initial charges concerned alleged (and spurious) connections between masons and diabolists. This may explain the choice of prominent mason William Whitelaw as a prime target of the "Satanic" slanders (Knight 1984: 207). A new hostility to cults in general was suggested by the anti-masonic sentiments expressed by a number of Protestant churches during these years (Short 1989: 44-66, 88-107; Logan 1988: 146-153).

There is also evidence of local rumors and panics, for instance in Sussex, where a series of unusual deaths in the Clapham Woods area stimulated tales of a "Black Magic conspiracy". A group named the "Friends of Hekate" was said to be thousands strong, with two hundred in the inner circle alone, and they carried out human sacrifices at ancient ritual sites (Newton 1987). The rumors came to involve UFO sitings, and perhaps extremist political conspiracies.



### **Survivors and Brood-Mares**

Concern about Satanism was especially strong among the Evangelical Alliance, the umbrella federation which claims to represent up to one million adherents. In 1988, the Alliance appointed a committee to investigate the charges, several members of which would be active in disseminating claims of the prevalence of ritual crime. Members of this committee were especially important in shifting the emphasis of British interest towards the figure of the occult "survivor" or defector, a controversial figure from the American literature on Satanism (Richardson *et al* 1991).

British theorists now made extensive use of American accounts purporting to recount the memoirs of such "survivors", women who had been abused by Satanic cults in childhood, but who had escaped with their lives. The pioneering text here was the 1980 *Michelle Remembers*, but there were a host of imitators, such as *Suffer the Child*, or Lauren Stratford's 1988 *Satan's Underground*. It was the last of these which popularized the theme of the "breeder", producing children for sacrifice. The Evangelical Association committee included two "survivors" in the form of self-described former witches, Doreen Irvine and Audrey Harper (Irvine 1973; Harper and Pugh 1990).

Another member was Kevin Logan, whose Lancashire house had become as a refuge for those escaping from the clutches of the occult, and one case in particular would attract national attention. When one Catherine Marchant, "Hannah", committed suicide in Logan's house, she left an occult memoir that draws largely on the American exposés, and claimed that she had been inducted into a Satanic sect at the age of thirteen. And like Lauren Stratford, Hannah had been a "breeder". Her story was reported as factual in some popular newspapers, and in March 1990 the *Sunday Mirror* offered the headline, "I sacrificed my babies to Satan: from sex orgy to death at the hands of the devil's disciples". The tale remains part of "the growing mythology of anti-Satanism", recounted especially among fundamentalist religious groups;

though an important journalistic investigation has discredited every aspect of her tale.

The two remaining committee members were both active in offering facilities to cult members who wished to free themselves from bondage to the devil. Diane Core was the organizer of Childwatch on Humberside; while Maureen Davies ran the national organization Reachout, which had also been in contact with "Hannah". Davies had founded Reachout in 1983, and claimed to have found her first ritual abuse case in Britain in 1985. (Reachout's "anti-cult" message also extended to Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other relatively accepted groups).

With Logan, Davies and Core promoted startling claims about the menace of the occult. Diane Core stated that "I am convinced that Satanic abuse not only exists but is a real danger to modern family life. About four thousand babies a year are born into covens to be used for sacrifices and cannibalism. This is only the tip of the iceberg". She expanded on this in a 1988 interview with the American *New Federalist*, in which she provided a broad theological context for ritual abuse:

We're in the middle of the most massive spiritual warfare. The whole satanic movement has decided to initiate as many young people as it can. We are at war. At this moment, in this country, Satan is winning, he's in the lead. Awareness has been raised. We're doing everything we can, causing reactions, receiving information, letters. If we can present a united front, and if the police support us more, I think we'd win. But often the police deny it is really going on.

The economic crisis creates fertile ground for recruiting kids to cults based upon despair and hedonism...

Maureen Davies had other concerns:

In the temples or covens they have young girls or older women called brood mares. These girls are there to be made pregnant purely for

the sacrifices. When they are five and a half months pregnant the birth is induced. At this stage, the foetus is alive and can be sacrificed. The blood of the infant is then drunk, then the body is eaten. What is not eaten is stored for the next ritual .

Logan claimed to know of no less than eight cases where girls had been impregnated so that their foetuses could be used in this way. Audrey Harper recalled several similar cases, such as that of "Rose" who "was taken into a coven by her parents, and made pregnant four times by a warlock so that the babies could be sacrificed to Satan" (Harper and Pugh 1990: 214).

By the end of the decade, there was a network of organizations committed to the idea of a real occult danger that threatened the lives of thousands, and this network acted as a conduit for allegations from American conspiracy theorists. In such a setting, it was perhaps inevitable that a growing number of individuals were prepared to declare themselves "survivors" or defectors from cults, though often with as little veracity as "Hannah". These supposed "survivors" helped promote and spread further tales and rumors. One activist in the cause was Sue Hutchinson, of the "SAFE" helpline; who claimed to know of fifty unrelated cases of satanic abuse in the United Kingdom, often featuring cannibalism. Audrey Harper estimated that there were 200,000 witches in Great Britain (Harper and Pugh 1990: 215).

We can discern the early stages of a process which permits the almost unlimited "manufacture" of survivors and their grisly tales, on the model that occurred in the United States in the late 1980s (Jenkins and Maier-Katkin 1991). Initially, ideological and theoretical changes within religious and therapeutic communities tend to increase the numbers of self-described occult survivors. These individuals are likely to find themselves interviewed and promoted by exponents of the "Satanic threat", including occult experts from religious groups and law enforcement. In turn, these accounts gain publicity in the mass media. As these stories appear ever more frequently in television and published accounts, so survivors and "ritual crimes" increasingly permeate the public

consciousness, providing a vocabulary for disturbed individuals to recount in therapy or in religious "confessions". The process thus becomes a self-sustaining cycle.

But the "survivors" also gave the religious activists an entirely new ground on which to seek official action in support of their cause. If Satanism was an excuse for grotesque orgies by consenting adults (as it customarily appeared), police action against it was unlikely to win public sympathy. Taking "Dennis Wheatley types" seriously was to invite ridicule. On the other hand, the new formulation of "Satanists" was founded on their supposed threat to children, from newborn babies to teenagers, who appeared to be the potential victims of violence and murder. If Satanic groups were reconstructed in the public mind as uniquely vicious paedophile rings, then decisive action against them became acceptable and necessary.

### **Social Workers**

But ideas can exist on the religious or political fringe for many years without having a serious impact on policy. What is remarkable about the British panic is the speed with which the ideas were first noted, accepted and naturalized, and then became the motive force for far-reaching actions by police and social service agencies. The whole cycle occurred in at most three or four years. Ideas of ritual crime came to permeate the thinking of various bureaucratic agencies.

Between April and September 1989, ritual abuse was a major theme at three conferences, at Reading, Dundee and Harrogate; with sponsors including the Association of Christian Psychiatrists. The most important of these gatherings was held at Reading University in September (Waterhouse 1990a-c). Among the speakers were the American experts Simandl and Klein, as well as Maureen Davies, Diane Core, and Marietta Higgs. Others noted as having made a considerable impression were Nottingham social workers Christine Johnston and Judith Dawson, who recorded their "ritual" interpretation of the recent abuse case. Johnston now

became active in RAINS, a "Ritual Abuse Information Network Society". Over the next three years, these individuals — Core, Dawson, Johnston, Klein and Davies — would be central to all the ritual abuse scandals until the final disaster in the Orkney case of 1991.

### **Conclusion**

The ritual abuse panic should be seen as the result of an interplay of several interest groups and agencies, of which the evangelical groups were only one. However, they were critical in providing mass support for the charges, and for establishing their credibility with official agencies. For the religious groups, the scale and immediacy of the diabolical threat offered ideological confirmation of the limitations of liberal theology. Since the 1960s, the dominant factions in British churches had emphasized social and political activism with a left/liberal slant, with racism and apartheid often seen as the world's most pressing evils. For evangelicals and charismatics, this was a lethal distraction from the crucial issues of personal holiness and spiritual warfare. During the 1980s, the point was reasserted by the new focus on black magic cults, ancestral demons and ritual abusers. Countering perceived threats provided a focus for the efforts of activists and community groups. In addition, the element of child abuse provided the evangelical groups with a potent analogy when attacking other forms of "child sacrifice", such as abortion

Social scientific accounts of cults and fringe religious groups often emphasize the social functions which they perform for their members, though there might be controversy about how positive these might be in promoting social integration. The British experience however suggests that one of their greatest social functions is promoting the health and solidarity of other hostile religious movements, which view themselves as relatively mainstream. "Orthodox" Christian groups thus define themselves against the supposed practices and beliefs of the cults, who provide invaluable and multi-faceted ideological ammunition. Moreover, the most valuable cults are those which have little or no substance

in reality, which removes the possibility that critics might challenge the ideological claims by testing them against objective conditions. The British case raises once more the question so often apparent in "cult" investigations, which is that the most dangerous cult groups of all might be the anti-cult organizations themselves.

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### Appendix - Religious practice in Great Britain

	Adult members (millions)		Change (percent)
	1975	1990	
<b>Trinitarian churches</b>			
Anglican	2.27	1.82	-20
Presbyterian	1.65	1.29	-22
Methodist	0.61	0.61	unchanged
Baptist	0.27	0.24	-11
Other Protestant	0.53	0.65	+23
Roman Catholic	2.53	1.95	-23
Orthodox	0.2	0.23	+15
total	8.06	6.7	-17
<b>Non-Trinitarian churches</b>			
Mormons	0.1	0.15	+50
Jehovah's Witnesses	0.08	0.11	+38
Spiritualist	0.06	0.05	-17
Other non-Trinitarian	0.09	0.13	+44

total	0.33	0.44	+33
<b>Other religions</b>			
Muslim	0.4	1.0	+150
Sikh	0.12	0.22	+83
Hindu	0.1	0.17	+70
Jews	0.11	0.11	unchanged
Other	0.08	0.24	+200
total	0.81	1.74	+115

## SOMMAIRE

### ***C'EST LE DIABLE! LES CHRÉTIENS CHARISMATIQUES ET LA PEUR DU SATANISME EN GRANDE-BRETAGNE***

On s'est beaucoup préoccupé, en Grande-Bretagne, au cours de la dernière décennie, des supposées activités criminelles commises par des groupes sataniques, activités souvent dirigées contre des enfants. Plusieurs incidents majeurs concernant de supposés «abus rituels» sont survenus entre 1989 et 1991 à Rochdale, Nottingham, Manchester, Liverpool et aux Îles Orkney, en plus de plusieurs affaires moins importantes. Tout cela s'est terminé en désastre pour ceux qui croyaient à l'existence d'un problème satanique, et a entraîné de sévères critiques à la fois de la police et des travailleurs sociaux. Il reste encore un noyau dur de partisans de cette thèse mais le consensus actuel voit dans cette question d'abus rituels une panique sans fondement et totalement dénuée de substance.

L'idée de l'existence d'abus rituels est née aux États-Unis. Elle provenait de plusieurs directions dont des thérapeutes et des professionnels concernés par la question des abus sexuels chez les enfants, mais aussi de groupes religieux. Dans les comptes rendus qui ont été faits aux États-Unis de la panique relative aux abus rituels, on en attribue généralement la source à des déclarations de groupes fondamentalistes et évangélistes soucieux de prouver la réalité d'une menace satanique. Ce souci aurait visé à justifier leur affirmation de l'existence d'une marée montante du mal à l'approche du millénaire précédant la seconde venue du Christ. Il est étonnant de constater le succès d'une campagne similaire en Grande-Bretagne, pays où la société est de loin plus sécularisée qu'aux États-Unis et où les groupes religieux ont joué un rôle beaucoup moins important dans les débats concernant la moralité publique, tout au moins à l'époque moderne.

Les choses ont toutefois considérablement changé depuis la fin des années soixante-dix. Des groupes fondamentalistes militants ont surgi dans le but de contrer les progrès de la sécularisation dans la société britannique ainsi que l'effondrement prochain des Églises dominantes. Ces groupes s'opposent particulièrement à la diffusion d'idées sceptiques au sein de l'Église établie d'Angleterre, ainsi qu'au grand nombre de membres du clergé qui mettent en doute des doctrines chrétiennes fondamentales telles que la Trinité, la naissance virginale et la Résurrection. Les mouvements charismatique et pentecôtiste ont été parmi les sectes les plus actives, opérant souvent comme des «Groupes de Fraternité Chrétienne» (*Christian Fellowship Groups*) inter-confessionnels. Ils embrassent une orthodoxie trinitaire et christologique traditionnelle et rigide, et ils font leurs les doctrines pré-millénaristes américaines. Ils pratiquent également des exorcismes de «guerre spirituelle» ainsi que des «ministères de délivrance», notions qui encouragent la croyance en la réalité d'un péril satanique ou diabolique.

Les groupes charismatiques et fondamentalistes ont fourni un auditoire déjà tout préparé à accepter ces nouvelles idées de menace satanique. Ils ont en outre contribué à répandre ces théories parmi les professionnels de l'enseignement et de l'assistance sociale. Les *Fellowship Groups* ont développé et fait circuler une foule de mythes à propos de cette nouvelle menace. Ils ont rendu publiques les déclarations fictives d'un grand nombre de prétendus « survivants » affirmant avoir échappé à des groupes sataniques, souvent après avoir mis au monde des enfants destinés à des sacrifices. L'opinion que je défends dans cet exposé est que pratiquement toutes les histoires qui ont circulé au cours de ces dernières années étaient fausses et que l'on peut clairement les identifier comme des oeuvres de fiction écrites par des auteurs demeurant cachés, par dessus tout l'auteur de livres populaires de suspense Dennis Wheatly.

L'identification d'une conspiration satanique réelle est devenue, pour les nouveaux mouvements chrétiens, un instrument efficace de lutte contre la théologie libérale. Les théoriciens d'une

menace diabolique ont largement fait appel à la méfiance traditionnelle concernant la franc-maçonnerie, décrite désormais comme une forme à peine voilée de satanisme. Les liens qu'ont établis les groupes charismatiques entre la franc-maçonnerie et le satanisme ont permis à ces groupes d'utiliser une rhétorique de type populiste à l'encontre des soi-disant malheureuses attaches religieuses des élites dominantes au pouvoir. La crise a également étendu leur influence en ce qui regarde la politique séculière en suscitant l'intérêt du public envers les courants pouvant être associés au satanisme ou à l'occultisme, les idées religieuses du «Nouvel Âge» ou même la coutume de l'Halloween. Les dirigeants charismatiques et fondamentalistes ont réussi de façon remarquable à obtenir l'estime de la police et des travailleurs sociaux envers leur prétendue expertise en matière de menace occulte.

Le fait de postuler une menace satanique remplit essentiellement une fonction durkheimienne: soit celle de favoriser l'unité de ces groupes chrétiens en face d'un prétendu ennemi extérieur. D'un point de vue charismatique, le débat a démontré la nécessité urgente pour les Églises de renoncer à leur activisme social de gauche ou libéral et de se recentrer sur les questions religieuses traditionnelles fondamentales, soit de sauver les âmes des pièges et des conspirations du Diable. Toute cette controverse met en lumière la recrudescence massive des mouvements religieux évangélistes et charismatiques dans la Grande-Bretagne d'aujourd'hui. Nous pouvons relier cette recrudescence à l'expansion spectaculaire de certaines croyances et pratiques populaires d'origine américaine. La panique relative aux abus rituels nous offre des leçons sur la nature des campagnes anti-cultes.