

Chapter 4

SATANISM

Myth and Reality in a Contemporary Moral Panic

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PROOFS OF A CONSPIRACY

In the 1960s, Richard Hofstadter identified the "paranoid style" as a dominant theme in American history. For two centuries, successive political and social movements have been galvanized by fears of dangerous "outsiders" and their conspiratorial assaults on the American polity. The alleged culprits have included a kaleidoscopic array of social, religious, and ethnic groups, from the Illuminati in the 1790s through Catholics, Freemasons, and slaveholders in the nineteenth century, to Communists in more recent times.¹ Studying this conspiracy tradition has produced some powerful and rewarding scholarship, such as David Brion Davis's classic account of the Slave Power Conspiracy in the antebellum years.² Often, such a movement should be understood not as a response to a genuine problem but as a symbolic campaign reflecting the interests of particular movements and pressure groups, regardless of the objective basis of the alleged danger.³ Frequently, the issue provides a vehicle that permits these groups to impose their views on law or social policy.

Since the 1970s, sociologists have often applied the term "moral

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panic" to such generalized fears, and there have been several impressive case studies.⁴ Apart from the intrinsic interest of such an account, it also illuminates the values, fears, and conflicts of the age that apparently needs to imagine such an external threat.⁵ Observing the construction of such "conspiracies" and problems therefore provides a powerful tool for social analysis. If in fact a society can be understood in terms of its fears, then America in the last decade offers a rich mine for social scientists. There have been wildly exaggerated claims about threats as diverse as child abuse and abduction, serial murder, drug abuse, and even satanism or devil worship. We wish to use the last of these to understand some of the forces that are producing such far-reaching claims about current threats and conspiracies.⁶

In the late 1980s, it was increasingly alleged that the United States was facing a serious crime wave associated with the occult or satanism. Charges of devil worship have occurred sporadically throughout American history, but the origin of the current concern can be dated to 1983-1984, and the "cult" allegations associated with the McMartin preschool case in southern California. Dozens of similar cases of "ritual abuse" followed, the most celebrated perhaps being that in the small Minnesota community of Jordan. This was also the time at which memoirs purported to tell of recalling ritual abuse suffered during childhood or adolescence, and serious attention was paid to accounts of human sacrifice and cannibalism.⁷

From mid-1985, the various allegations were publicized on network television programs, especially ABC's *20/20*. Journalistic and popular studies naturally followed, and there was an explosion of books on the subject from 1988 onward.⁸ By no means were all the accounts uncritical, but most agreed that there was a serious problem.⁹ Satanic or occult crime (the terms were used with little distinction) was apparently associated with numerous acts of vandalism and juvenile delinquency but also with heinous offenses like serial murder and mass child abuse. The victims might run into many thousands each year, with children especially likely to be mutilated and sacrificed. Kenneth Wooden writes of "a flood of child molestation, ritual torture and murder."¹⁰ The corollary was that urgent action needed to be taken to deal with the problem, and that police and prosecutorial agencies would have to play the leading role in the proposed reforms.

By contrast, the present paper contends that "occult crime" and satanism are fringe activities that the vast majority of agencies will never encounter. The alleged problem is a classic moral panic, with political roots

that can be easily traced to the fundamentalist religious Right. The whole issue was devised and defined in such a way that reflected the concerns and ambitions of Christian fundamentalists at a time when this movement was undergoing rapid expansion, especially in the early 1980s.¹¹ The sensationalistic charges were explored enthusiastically by mass media then experiencing economic challenges and rivalries that encouraged a "tabloid" presentation of events. This uncritical acceptance of the problem by the media led to widespread dissemination of the charges, without recognition of the wider social and political connotations.

THE SCALE OF OCCULT CRIME

Recent accounts have suggested that the threat of occult crime is all the more serious because it is linked to many other contemporary dangers. Some of the more extreme charges derive from *American Focus on Satanic Crime*, a compilation from the works of several leading claims makers. Satanists are said to be connected with "the murders of unbaptized infants, child sexual abuse in day care, 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."¹²

The following remarks are from Ted Gunderson, formerly a senior member of the Los Angeles office of the FBI, and a contributor to *American Focus*: "I can say that there is a network of these people across the country who are very active, they have their own rest and relaxation farm, they are in contact with each other, it ties in loosely to the drug operation, it ties into motorcycle gangs and it goes on and on. They have their own people who specialize in surveillances and photography, and in assassinations."¹³

Gunderson continued: "I have been told it is a common occurrence for these groups to kidnap their victims (usually infants and young children) from hospitals, orphanages, shopping centers and off the streets. I have been informed that satanists have been successful in their attempts to influence the Boy Scouts and, in recent years, have concentrated their efforts in recruiting Little League baseball players by infiltrating the coaching staffs and establishing pre-schools throughout the US.

"A Boise, Idaho, police officer believes that fifty thousand to sixty

thousand Americans disappear each year and are victims of human sacrifices of satanic cults. . . . Most of the victims are cremated, thus there is no body and no evidence. I know of an occult supply store in Los Angeles, California, that sells portable crematories."¹⁴

The practice of satanism could draw literally millions into deviant and hazardous practices, with the young especially at risk. Geraldo Rivera claimed that "It is teenagers who are most likely to fall under the spell of this jungle of dark violent emotions called satanism, and in some cases to be driven to committing terrible deeds. . . . There is no doubt that teenage satanic activity in this country is increasing dramatically."¹⁵

The commonplace view is that occult "dabbling" will lead to serious cult involvement: young people will become "self-styled satanists" or even "religious satanists" and "cult satanists."¹⁶ This last category—which is seen as the most dangerous and most inclined to criminality—is seen as part of a sinister clandestine network, possibly of national proportions. Journalist Maury Terry has suggested "There is compelling evidence of the existence of a nationwide network of satanic cults, some branched into child pornography and violent sadomasochistic crime, including murder."¹⁷ (Terry, incidentally, has worked closely with Gunderson.) This national cult is linked not only to major incidents of child sexual abuse but to celebrated serial murder cases, including the Manson "family" murders and the Son of Sam affair in New York City.

All the accounts of occult crime draw a connection with serial murder, generally focusing on the same four or five celebrated cases. Undoubtedly, some of these offenders were strongly influenced by occult ideas, most dramatically in the cases of Leonard Lake and Charles Manson.¹⁸ On the other hand, Berkowitz, Lucas, Ramirez, and Manson are the all-stars in the halls of infamy, but the vast majority of these ritual murders are not the work of the celebrated psychopaths—there are literally hundreds of cases most of us have never heard of.¹⁹

In the face of this danger, police agencies and prosecutors are "uninformed" or naive and fail to follow leads that would lead them to the conspiratorial networks behind certain outrageous crimes.²⁰ In the words of Geraldo Rivera, "Many satanic crimes are not recognized as such. . . . These ritualistic crimes are everywhere, and yet in most communities they are either overlooked or underreported."

Police skepticism in these matters is natural, but other writers have suggested that satanic cults may have infiltrated police agencies and local government authorities: "Satanists often hold key or prominent positions in the community, positions which sometimes have access to power,

information and evidence. As a result of this infiltration into the system, it appears as if they have developed a complex national and international network."²¹

In particular, their role as coroners may explain why so many satanic murders remained undetected.

These charges may appear to be outrageous hyperbole, but it is worth stressing how commonplace they are in the contemporary media. The most controversial account was probably a Geraldo Rivera special at Halloween 1988, titled "Devil Worship: Exposing Satan's Underground," which might be disregarded as mere sensationalism or "trash television."²² But Geraldo and Oprah Winfrey were by no means isolated in promoting this hysteria. Satanism was exposed in equally lurid terms on network programs like *20/20* (for example, "The Devil Worshipers," May 16, 1985) and NBC's *1986* (as on August 19, 1986). Such views also earned the respectful attention of more sober news programs, even National Public Radio's *Morning Edition*. In March 1988, this program presented a lengthy and sympathetic account of an Indiana detective and his unsuccessful efforts to make his superiors appreciate the real dangers of local satanic cults, who supposedly undertook sacrifice and grave robbery.

Many police officers took the danger seriously. Charges concerning "occult crime" were publicized in a number of celebrated trials, and there were cases where murders did appear to be connected with the practice of satanism. The apparent wave of occult crime was discussed in the specialized press directed at the law enforcement community, in journals like *Police*, *Police Chief*, and *Law Enforcement News*.²³ The topic was covered in numerous training seminars directed at police officers and supervisors. "Satanic" and cult crime has become a specialization of a number of police experts ("occult cops"), who are widely quoted in the media as urging public recognition of the new threat. Even more remarkable, the danger of satanism was cited by a growing number of therapists, who accepted the reality of ritual abuse and who cited this type of crime as a causal factor in multiple personality disorder.

It is likely that official awareness of this perceived problem will increase sharply in coming years, in part because of the continuing media enthusiasm, but also because the "ritual" element will be part of the VICAP form submitted to the FBI's analysts in cases of unsolved homicide. The specific question asks about "symbolic artifacts" suggesting that "any unusual ritual/act/thing had been performed with or near the victim (such as an orderly formation of rocks, burnt candles, dead animals, defecation, etc.)." Once responses to such a questionnaire are collated, an

increased incidence of "ritual criminality" might well be discerned nationwide, and there could be growing pressure for an official response.

THE CLAIMS MAKERS

As with any social problem, it is essential to identify the "claims makers" who introduce the themes and define the shape of the ensuing controversy and to observe the means by which they present their particular issue to a wider public.²⁴ In the case of a sensational panic like satanism, it is especially interesting to see the rhetorical devices used to dispel incredulity about these remarkable charges. A writer will commonly introduce a theme and suggest that the occult might play "some" role in this particular problem. An example might then be given to support this idea. Other quotes then gradually build up the scale of the occult role until the reader is convinced that the whole problem is in fact little more than a facet of the immense satanic menace.

These quotes are judiciously chosen and few can be described as untrue in specifics. Larson, for example, quite rightly notes that "Some cult watchers and police agree that a large number of missing children are victims of human sacrifice cults."²⁵ Of course, these "experts" may be utterly wrong in their belief, but his actual sentence is quite true: they do indeed agree on this. He then develops his argument as if the initial opinion is established as factual. "According to the few survivors, children are abducted and subjected to the terrible intimidation of drugs and brainwashing before being sacrificed." (We might note here that brainwashing a person one intends to kill anyway seems a massive waste of time and energy.) "Innocent children and guiltless babies are perfect victims." As a clincher, he then produces the remark of a police officer in Beaumont, California, to the effect that "95 percent of all missing children are victims of occult-related abductions." The unwary reader may well leave the page with the impression that this is the opinion of a well-known or widely respected police authority, instead of one individual in a specific department.

These "law enforcement sources" are repeatedly used, and a small number of "experts" are quoted time and again, as are a handful of therapists and medical writers. Obviously, the initial writers are not to blame for the ways in which their legitimately expressed opinions are later used or quoted, but the limited number of sources is worthy of note. Even when other sources are cited, it often turns out that these are in fact

basing their statements on one of the major claims makers. One of the most influential of the group is the FBI's Ted Gunderson. Another is Lieutenant Larry Jones of Boise, Idaho, who runs the *Cult Crime Impact Newsletter* to track the progress of occult-related offenses. Jones believes firmly in the reality and seriousness of the danger, and deserves praise for his attempts to quantify the scale of the problem. However, he remains one isolated claims maker, a "moral entrepreneur," who appears to work from a perspective that is strongly Christian and evangelical.

Equally widely quoted is Kenneth Wooden, who investigated "cult crimes" for the Rivera special on devil worship and who appears in the video documentary *America's Best Kept Secret*. Wooden was a real pioneer in forming the contemporary view of "devil cults." In the aftermath of the Jonestown massacre in Guyana, Wooden's investigations placed particular emphasis on the link between the Jim Jones movement and formalized or "ritualized" child abuse, a striking and influential innovation at this time (c.1980-81). Without mentioning satanic groups, Wooden argued that cults engaged in deviant sexual practices to undermine family links and cement group loyalty. Moreover, "Babies, born into cults, their births unregistered, are reported to have died of unnatural causes and to have been buried in secrecy, like pets."²⁶ The groups themselves deliberately undertook gross and excessive acts in order to reduce the credibility of anyone who attempted to expose them. There was an urgent need for intensive investigation of cults, here identified as movements like the "Moonies," the Children of God, and Scientologists. All these charges would shortly recur in the context of satanism.

Wooden was well-placed to ensure that his concerns were presented to a wider audience. As an investigator for *20/20*, he was involved in 1983-1984 in producing a number of reports on topics like the disappearance and murder of children. These reports had titles like "The Lures of Death" and "They Are Murdering Our Kids."²⁷ Wooden is the founder of the National Coalition for Children's Justice and he testified to a congressional subcommittee in 1984 on the alleged problems of mass child disappearances and the serial murders of young people.²⁸ From about 1984, his deeply felt concerns came to focus on the menace of satanic cults, which appeared to unify the previous threats, and the shift in interest can be discerned in the content of *20/20*. It was Wooden who encouraged the controversial occult "survivor" Lauren Stratford to publish her influential memoirs of satanic abuse.²⁹ Like the Rivera program, Stratford's account also incorporates in its title the ominous phrase *Satan's Underground*.

Other major activists include the Cult Awareness Network, based in Chicago, and groups concerned with child abuse issues, like Believe the Children or ACT-Affirming Children's Truth. Accounts of satanic and occult crime thus rely on a handful of sources, often with a strong political agenda in a particular locality. Believe the Children is based in Manhattan Beach, California, where it originated in direct response to the McMartin farrago.

Tracking sources is essential if we are to understand some of the most remarkable aspects of the current panic, especially the view that the number of sacrificial victims might run to fifty thousand or so each year in the United States alone. This statement appears grotesque, especially when we recall that the total number of homicide victims annually is around twenty thousand. On the other hand, the figure fifty thousand was also widely quoted in the equally disreputable claims made about missing children in the mid-eighties, so it was in the public consciousness. It is uncertain who first applied the number to sacrificial victims. Gunderson cites Jones as his source, but others attribute the figure to Al Carlisle, a consulting psychologist at the Utah state prison.³⁰ Whatever the source, the statistic had entered the literature by 1986 at the latest, and the story began a life of its own.

THE NATURE OF SATANISM

This paper will not directly address the reality of human sacrifice charges, as these have been thoroughly rebutted in many other sources.³¹ "Ritual abuse" remains equally unsubstantiated and wholly improbable.³² But if such events did occur, then who are the cultists who would be responsible? Most of the believers in occult crime stress the role of a network of satanic groups, possibly many thousands strong. However, a curious distinction is drawn between "public" or religious satanists and the more sinister "cult" satanists who actually undertake the crimes.

Among the religious satanists, we find well-established national groups like the Church of Satan, the Temple of Set, and the Church of the Process, as well as a dozen or so local churches and sects.³³ The theorists rarely accuse these groups of criminal acts, for a number of reasons that include fear of libel: in the 1970s, the Process successfully rebutted charges that it had been linked to the Manson family murders.³⁴ It has also been pointed out that satanist leaders like Anton LaVey and Michael Aquino are too much in the public eye to undertake any serious crime,

even if they wished to. In other words, there is a paradox that virtually any publicly admitted or active satanist must be regarded as a "religious" believer and hence not active in the serious actions such as ritual abuse and child sacrifice.

Who then are these "cult satanists"? As so often, the evidence for such a clandestine network in any particular community is thin to the point of nonexistence. Whenever a particular offender is arrested in a "satanic" crime, then he is almost invariably a self-taught teenage dab- bler like Pete Roland, Ricky Kasso, or Sean Sellers, whose notion of the occult derived from horror films or the game Dungeons and Dragons. Moreover, these crimes often seem closely related to the activities of teenage gangs and petty drug dealing. There is no suggestion that these youths had been drawn into any more sophisticated cult, and the evi- dence of wider or national links is, if possible, even weaker.³⁵

Even if there was such a cult, the accounts of their supposed prac- tices, beliefs, and rituals have many problems and inconsistencies. We may initially be troubled by the impressive continuity of the charges made against such groups from the accusations against out-groups throughout history, from ancient Christians and Gnostics through medieval Jews and heretics³⁶ (compare the quotations at the beginning of this paper). This would tend to suggest that the alleged behaviors are imaginary, perhaps based on archetypal fears. On the other hand, this would not in itself prove that the actions have not occurred. However, the theorists of occult crime have described as "characteristic" of this type of offense such a wide range of acts and symbols that almost any activity could be seen as fitting.

Particularly outrageous here is the "satanic calendar" included in many sources, the list of specially significant days on which sinister rit- uals might occur. Police officers would thus be alerted to the true signifi- cance of peculiar acts occurring on such a day. There are indeed such special days, such as April 30 or All Hallow's Eve, but some recent cal- endars include forty or more dates, most with no known connection to any occult tradition. If we further include acts occurring near a special day, then it would be almost impossible to avoid suggesting some ritual significance to a routine crime. Alleged occult graffiti are equally spu- rious. Among a vast and proliferating number of examples, it is espe- cially startling to see the familiar 1960s peace symbol co-opted as the satanic Cross of Nero! Some sources include the Star of David as a symbol of what is anti-Christian, and thus satanic.



Infernal punishment for the Seven Deadly Sins: the slothful are thrown into snake pits. From *Le grant calendrier et compost des Bergiers*, printed by Nicolas Le Rouge, Troyes, 1496.

CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISM

In summary, the evidence presented for a satanic crime wave in the United States seems wholly unconvincing, a tissue of improbable charges based largely on the assertions of questionable witnesses. Also dubious is the vocabulary employed by the various authors and the lack of preci-

sion they so often demonstrate in their definitions. Other writers have discussed the problems in using terms such as "ritual," "ritualistic," "sacrifice," and so on,³⁷ but other words are even more troubling, and the most hazardous of all is probably "occult." However, the misuse of the term is highly revealing because it suggests a great deal about the political and religious agendas of those most active in creating and exaggerating the "satanic threat." "Occult" and "satanic" are confounded in a way that reflects the views of the narrowest Christian sects, for whom all religious experience outside mainstream evangelical Christianity is suspect, and anything beyond Judeo-Christian monotheism is quite literally of the devil. And it is these fundamentalist groups whose interests and concerns are reflected throughout the whole satanism panic.

The term "occult" is very flexible. Literally, it implies the study of what is hidden, usually esoteric religious or mystical doctrines, and there is the suggestion that such studies would not be suitable for the great mass of people. The word might cover long-established activities such as palmistry, spiritualism, tarot card reading, fortune telling, and divining, to say nothing of ritual magic and unorthodox religious sects. All have certainly increased since the 1960s with the emergence of a New Age movement interested in astrology, reincarnation, astral projection, and unconventional medicine. For some recent critics, however, these diverse practices are part of a spectrum that extends into serious criminality and devil worship. "Channeling," for example, is seen not as a harmless fad but as a modern form of shamanism, where literal demons are permitted to take possession of the human mind.

American Focus comments indiscriminately that "There are over five thousand occult groups in the US and Canada who have a general interest or active practice of pagan religious lore, witchcraft and satanism." The theme of the New Age as the gateway to satanism is frequently represented in the books on sale in a typical Christian bookshop. In the last decade, it has often been disturbing to witness these religious concerns and prejudices spilling over into the secular mass media. Network television programs have illustrated reports on the growth of satanism and satanic crime by depicting flourishing occult and New Age bookstores and implying a link between the phenomena. It has also been common for police sources to cite the presence of occult books in a suspect's home to buttress claims of "ritual" criminality in a particular case.

But the strong religious agenda of the critics of "diabolism" is easily discerned. Again and again, the same protagonists appear. The most quoted authority is probably Sean Sellers, a teenage parricide who

blamed his crimes on his experimentation with diabolism and who has become a media personality as one of America's youngest death row inmates. He now asserts that full acceptance of Christianity is the only way to rescue youths from the occult and practices a "ministry" with this goal. He is closely advised by Tom Wedge, a fundamentalist minister termed the "Satan Hunter," who is a contributor to *American Focus*.³⁸ The editor of this work began his list of dedications with an acknowledgement to Jesus Christ, while other contributing authors include Jerry Oglesby, of the National Council against the Antichrist Movement and Citizens against Ritual Abuse. Another is the Reverend Mike Warnke, who claims to be a former satanic priest.³⁹ Also influential is "occult researcher" Peter Michas, yet another "pastor," who has produced some of the more gruesome and far-reaching allegations.

One of the most quoted authorities is John Frattarola of *Passport* magazine, another source for claims about satanic activity, whose views are expressed in the video *America's Best Kept Secret*. Frattarola has attacked "the gradual but consistent displacement of Christianity by a hodgepodge of occultic, mystic, Eastern pagan, New Age spirituality."⁴⁰ It was *Passport* who published the widely quoted WICCA document, allegedly the blueprint of a satanic plan to subvert Christian America by 1999.⁴¹ Jerry Johnston drew the obvious parallels between this piece and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and described the document as "genre as a three dollar bill."⁴² Another of the widely sold books is by Bob Larson, who advocates Christianity as the solution to "satanic" activities and who is the author of books like *Straight Answers on the New Age* and *Larson's Book of Cults*. His *Edge of Evil* is a "crossover," sold both in religious as well as mainstream bookstores.

All the initial claims in the satanism panic can be found in the commonplaces of the religious Right in the 1970s. At that time, it was common to attack both the religious and political liberalism of mainstream American Christianity and the theological tendency to deny the existence of a personal devil. Also to be condemned was the opening to other religions—the ecumenical aperture toward Rome and the increased sympathy for Oriental and mystical religions.⁴³ For the fundamentalists of the last two decades, New Age and mystical movements have been the Devil's Trojan Horse in the subversion of America, a means to introduce the gullible young to anti-Christian concepts and practices. "These New Age techniques are not new at all, however, but are the same old sorcery under new labels."⁴⁴

At the end of the 1970s, these conservative ideas grew stronger and also gained some wider social acceptance.⁴⁵ Increased reporting about

cults and deprogramming led to public concern, while the People's Temple affair in Jonestown suggested the real and objective dangers of cult activity. An influential "occult cop" like Sandi Gallant describes this incident as a real turning point in her own attitude toward cults as a law enforcement issue. Ken Wooden was a prominent investigator of the case, while Ted Gunderson dated his interest in cult crime to 1980.⁴⁶ In addition, the religious Right was at the zenith of its political power in the early 1980s, and fundamentalist churches were rapidly gaining new adherents to surpass the strength of established liberal denominations like the Episcopalians.

Networks of religious bookstores and electronic media ensured a public voice for the movement's concerns and prejudices. Evangelical and fundamentalist bookstores have long distributed works of religious controversy, with Catholics, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses the usual targets. In the last decade, however, "cults," "satanism," and even "demonology" have acquired their own sections, often with literally dozens of recent titles on what are clearly felt to be topics of urgent concern.⁴⁷ The figures would be even larger if we include "occult" interpretations of the dangers posed by moral threats like abortion or rock music.

There exists a whole flourishing fundamentalist culture that is quite unknown to those who never frequent such bookstores. Several religious publishers have made minor industries out of attacking contemporary cults, satanism, and unbelief. Huntington House is based in Louisiana,⁴⁸ Crossways in Illinois,⁴⁹ Harvest House in Oregon,⁵⁰ Chick in California.⁵¹ Occasionally, their titles achieve sales in the hundreds of thousands, almost entirely through these religious outlets. One remarkable example of such success is Frank Peretti,⁵² whose best-selling novels like *This Present Darkness* describe Christian communities besieged by satanic and demonic assaults disguised as "New Age" cults.

Central to fundamentalist rhetoric is the real power of the devil in the world as the source of all evil. By the 1970s, there were indeed real satanists in America, and these theories may have had a particular appeal to some who became active in notorious crimes. Once a few cases were publicized, it was natural for the fundamentalists to incorporate them into their wider worldview and to construct a major national or worldwide conspiracy, suitably buttressed by impressive statistics. This provided preachers and ministers with a series of powerful arguments. If the conspiracy view were accepted, then religious liberalism had failed and the churches must come to a more basic acceptance of the reality of the force of evil. Also, an upsurge of diabolism was believed to support the funda-

mental belief in the imminence of the Second Coming of Christ, which would be preceded by the triumph of the Antichrist.

Satanism was thus intimately linked to the fundamentalist diagnosis of the secular ills of society: "The outbreak of satanic crimes and worship; an epidemic of killer diseases; the slaughter of over 22 million unborn children; the collapse of once solid financial institutions; the bankruptcy of American farmers; harsher and more unpredictable weather patterns; an increase of drug abuse, child abuse and pornography; the corruption and disintegration of morals, values, ethics and integrity . . . and the powerful rise of false religions right under our drooping eyes."⁵³

The proposed remedies were as profoundly political as the analysis. A campaign against satanism would in reality be a sweeping endeavor to remold American social life on the lines advocated by fundamentalists and extreme conservatives. "Cult" and New Age activities were not only to be stigmatized but might even be restricted or banned as leading to overt criminality. Censorship would be far ranging, extending to "occultic" influences in films and the media, even (or especially) in children's cartoons. The thought and education of the young must be regulated, and the clergy could justify religious intervention in the schools by the need to drive out "satanic" influences. It might appear trivial to most observers, but the mere existence of Halloween and its customs remains a source of deep scandal to religious fundamentalists, who would ideally prohibit it as a sinister initiation into devil worship.

Repeatedly, the critics of satanic crime attribute its prevalence to the lax parental discipline of the generation that came of age in the 1960s; this problem could only be solved by a return to "traditional moral values."⁵⁴ One speaker who emphasizes this as the antidote to the occult is Samantha Smith, of the highly conservative Colorado Eagle Forum. The assault closely reflected ultra-Conservative political opinions, as New Age ideas are often associated in fundamentalist critiques with "one-worldism," emphasis on international cooperation to the detriment of patriotism. Attacks on Oriental religions shade imperceptibly into critiques of Asian immigration into the United States.

More generally, "normal" criminal acts such as drug dealing were to be seen as loosely connected with the objective evil that was satanism, thus discouraging liberal tendencies toward lenient or rehabilitative efforts toward offenders. In fact, "devil worship" became an all-embracing label with which to stigmatize any aspect of modern society with which the conservative religious leadership did not agree, especially in matters of the media. Pornography and explicit art or literature could be associated with