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Deviant Scripturalism and Ritual Satanic Abuse Part One: Possible Judeo-Christian Influences

STEPHEN A. KENT

Sociologists are locked in a contentious debate with mental health personnel over the reality of intergenerational satanic abuse. Prominent sociologists insist that the satanic accounts are part of a moral panic fuelled by the media, conservative churches, and professionals who use directive, suggestive, or leading questions in their counselling and interviewing sessions. Many therapists, in contrast, are convinced that the intensity of their clients' horrific memories along with the basic similarities of many clients' accounts strongly suggest that the ritual abuse accounts are true. Drawing from the discipline of religious studies, this study argues that readily accessible religious texts that often are central to our culture may provide inspiration to people who either want to sanctify their deviance or venerate the reputed god of this world (i.e. Satan). Using interviews and diaries from several alleged survivors, this study compares excerpts from their accounts with doctrinal precedents for satanic ritual abuse in deviant interpretations of the Judeo-Christian tradition. While the article stops short of stating that intergenerational satanic accounts are true, it insists that at least some of them are plausible.¹

Just as occurred in the 1970s over the 'cult/new religions' debate, sociologists and the mental health community are squaring off over claims made by persons who assert that they were ritualistically abused as children by family members and others in satanic settings.² Although unanimity does not exist in either camp, significant arguments for the possible or probable truthfulness of family based satanic abuse appear in psychiatry (Van Benschoten, 1990), mental health (Fraser, 1990; Jones, 1991; Sakheim & Devine, 1992), and journalistic (Tate, 1991) publications. Sociological essays, in contrast, along with related sceptical material, insists that these claims are moral panics (see Lippert, 1990; Jenkins, 1992) that reveal either deep fissures in the fabric of contemporary Western society or are Christian social constructions that reinforce adherents' religiously ideological worldviews (Richardson *et al.*, 1991 pp. 6–7; Victor, 1991). At most, sceptics grant that some of the accounts may be examples of incest victims projecting culturally accepted images of evil onto their perpetrators (Noll, 1989; see Hicks, 1991 p. 163).

Rarely, however, has either academic discipline located the satanic abuse claims within the context of a third intellectual tradition—religious studies—even though the abuse accounts almost always involve rituals and religious rites (for an exception, see Hill & Goodwin, 1989). Although its focus on religious phenomena marginalizes religious studies in social science discourse, it nevertheless remains the discipline that takes seriously the reality of religiously motivated behaviour. In essence, an academic discipline that might be able to provide insight into the religious logic of the claims for the most part has remained outside of the increasingly divisive debate (cf. Raschke, 1990).

Several specific reasons may exist for this omission of a religious studies perspective within the debate about intergenerational satanism. From the viewpoint of the mental health community, the study of religion in any form probably is absent in most psychology and secular counselling training (Bergin, 1991 p. 396). Although counselling programs exist within the context of theological positions, secular professionals

view such programs with the suspicion that they foster doctrinal indoctrination at the expense of healing. Moreover, those aspects of mental health that are more scientifically oriented—psychiatry (arguably) and clinical psychology—often view religious beliefs or behavior as problematic (see American Psychiatric Association, 1980 pp. 182, 260; Bergin, 1991 p. 399). In short, few people in the secular mental health community have exposure to religious studies or the perspectives that it addresses, so it is likely that they do not appreciate the ability of religious studies scholars to examine traditions objectively and outside of the need to indoctrinate or proselytize. Mental health professionals are unlikely to have sufficient background in the study of religion to be able to locate the satanic abuse stories in larger ritual or textual contexts, despite their own personal religious beliefs and practices (see Bergin, 1991 p. 396).

Sociologists may also suffer from similar deficiencies regarding their ability to perceive and interpret human beliefs and practices within religious contexts. They may be especially disadvantaged from doing so regarding satanic accounts because they rarely spend time with individual ritual abuse claimants. Relying upon secondary data concerning both the satanic descriptions themselves and police investigations that sometimes follow, sociologists are poorly positioned for appreciating the religious logic of many satanic abuse accounts.

Alleged ritual memories typically emerge over extended periods, but few sociologists have the professional opportunities to spend these periods with persons who may be reconstructing past ritual events. Consequently, sociologists almost never hear or see firsthand the traumatic and convincing process of alleged survivors recalling horrific and abusive satanic experiences. The Durkheimian bias of many sociologists is to 'interpret away' these religious accounts by claiming that they are the product of larger social forces, but by arguing in this manner they neglect to realize that many of the rituals fit well within deviant strains of established religious traditions. The specific details of their accounts are not what sociologists call 'social constructions' because they seemingly reflect esoteric logic that is not part of generalized social knowledge.

Based upon my contact with nearly thirty people who have made allegations concerning satanic family abuse, I provide interpretive frameworks within religious contexts to understand the alleged rituals that they describe. Two of these people (both in their early thirties) have provided me with detailed accounts that they recorded at the time of their memories. Gail's accounts are single spaced transcriptions that run to over 200 pages, and she recorded them between 27 October 1988 and mid-December 1990.³ She was in her late twenties at the time, and her memories cover a time period from an early age (pre-adolescence) into her late twenties. Elaine's diary also contains events from pre-adolescence, and it consists of nearly one hundred handwritten pages from her diary. She, too, now is in her early thirties, and her memories are still continuing. In addition, I shall refer to two transcripts of separate interviews with alleged survivors, whom I call Mary and Samantha, who are in their late twenties or early thirties.

Gail (a pseudonym) has taken her accusations to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, but no charges have emerged from its investigation. Neither did charges result from Samantha's account, although it had initiated a major police investigation. Recently law enforcement authorities decided not to lay criminal charges based partly upon Mary's testimony. Elaine (also a pseudonym) has not gone to authorities with her memories, but she provides copies of her diary to me and another researcher who are working on the issue of satanic abuse claims. Except for Mary (with whom I met only once), I have had several meetings with these individuals, and also have had numerous phone conversations with them.

Beyond these written and transcribed accounts I have collected over thirty taped interviews that I have either conducted (or in some way participated) with at least fourteen alleged survivors. Initial contacts with my informants came through a variety of ways (such as through a reporter, a physician, an acquaintance, and an information-seeking phone call that one person made to my University). All of them willingly provided me with material both for my research on satanism, in return for my efforts to assist them with interpreting their memories after I had recorded them. Their current religious beliefs are varied, since some are rather a-religious while a few believe in various forms of Christianity. If these accounts essentially are true, then these alleged satanic abuse survivors appear to represent at least twenty-one different groups, and no direct connections have emerged linking any of them.

Without, of course, definitive independent confirmation of ritual abuse stories I cannot make a scientific claim that such accounts accurately represent abusive events. I can indicate, however, that much of the content of the accounts make religious sense, and the religious sense that they make often presupposes a degree of esoteric theological knowledge that appears to be beyond the educational or experiential horizons of the people who recount them and the professional people who work with these clients. While I acknowledge that alleged satanic abuse victims sometimes are influenced by therapists and others in the 'counter-satanic network' who make similar claims, much of what they recount baffles their counsellors and remains different in important details from their network contacts. Specifically, I will define seven possible sources of ritual inspiration that alleged intergenerational satanists appear to use, and then I will show broad similarities among many of the accounts themselves within four of the seven possible sources. Part One of this article will explore the possible influence of Judeo-Christian scriptures and practices on the nature and content of alleged satanic activity. Part Two will explore the possible influences of Masonic, Mormon, and pagan scriptures and practices on the nature and content of alleged satanic activity.

Sources of (Alleged) Satanic Rituals

Sceptics concerning the validity of intergenerational satanism dismiss the accounts of alleged satanic abuse survivors by psychologizing their assertions. At most, they claim, the accounts are fantasy by 'sick people' (Hicks, 1991 p. 178); at least, they are projections of evil onto perpetrators of sexual abuse and may be influenced by the suggestive and leading questions of counsellors (Mulhern, 1991). In a few instances, the satanic accounts are the result of probable mental illness, or so they claim (occasionally with good reason, see Fisher *et al.* 1989). No attention is given to the fact that many of the rituals that alleged survivors describe have precedent in religious texts, including the Bible, that are widely distributed throughout the Western world. A plausible explanation for satanic abuse accounts that is not explored by critics is that deviants: either develop satanic rituals from material that exists in easily accessible mainstream religious texts, or sanctify their violence by framing it within passages in otherwise normative scriptures.

If many (or even some) of the satanic accounts that I and others have heard are essentially true, then it appears that the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament sections of the Bible partly provide the inspiration or justification for particular satanic practices (most especially child sacrifice), while the Christian New Testament apparently strengthens belief in Satan's power through various passages in Revelation and elsewhere. The Bible, in turn, may influence Masonically inspired satanic rituals (of which I have four

accounts involving two separate groups) and white racist groups (of which I have one unrecorded account).

Moreover, Judeo-Christian scriptures apparently may also have contributed to Mormon-based satanic sources (of which I have had several unrecorded conversations with one person)⁴ while Egyptian and pagan traditions apparently contributed to rituals in some alleged satanic groups. Finally, pagan themes seem to appear in both Gail's and Elaine's accounts, and probably also influence Native Indian and Crowleyite occult practices. Schematically, the scriptural sources of contemporary intergenerational satanism tentatively appear in Figure 1.

I shall refrain from comment about possible connections between white racism and

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|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | 1. Judeo-Christianity | | 2. Paganism |
| | a. dog imagery | | a. harvest (wreath) |
| | b. Satan figure | | headaddresses |
| [Judaism] | | [Christianity] | b. Jackal/wolf |
| a. child sacrifice accounts | | a. baptism | figures |
| (Ba'al, etc.) | | b. communion | |
| b. mouse 'eating' | | c. white body-paint | |
| 3. White Racism | 4. Freemasonry | | 5. Mormonism |
| | (Ba'al emphasis | | a. firstborn |
| | given to Jabulum) | | sacrifice stories |
| | | | b. Cain's secrets |
| | | | with Satan |
| 6. Native (Indian) 'bad medicine' | 7. Crowleyite Magick | | |

Figure 1. Probable scriptural influences on alleged contemporary intergenerational satanism.

satanism (but see Raschke, 1990 pp. 230–9), since my best source of information on this topic is afraid to be formally interviewed. 'They don't have a conscience', she told me, 'and they have access to large weapons arsenals'. Nor will I comment on possible relationships between satanism and native Indians' widespread beliefs in 'bad magic' that allegedly hurts enemies. I will speculate, however, about particular passages and beliefs in the other traditions that appear to have bearing on (alleged) intergenerational satanism, and will base most of my comments on the lengthy written accounts that two 'survivors' kindly have provided me, along with the transcripts of two additional interviews that I conducted either alone with the alleged survivor or with other investigators.

Judeo-Christian biblical sources appear to be the primary, and most significant, sources of inspiration for (alleged) contemporary satanic practices.⁵ If this conclusion were to prove true, then it will go a long way toward explaining the broad similarities in intergenerational accounts that appear throughout the Western world. The Bible is an influential cultural source in all of the countries [Canada, the United States, Britain, Australia, Holland, South Africa (Younghusband, 1990) etc.] where intergenerational satanic abuse stories are surfacing. Its role as an inspirational source of satanism is plausible.

The most appalling satanic ritual—child sacrifice—certainly could be based upon accounts of such action that are recorded in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament.⁶ Contemporary Jews and Christians forget that 'the *principle* of the sacrifice of the firstborn was not challenged in ancient Israel except by the great prophets' (Williams, 1991 p. 118 [original emphasis]) and it plays a central role in the theology of Jesus' crucifixion.

Moreover, and most important for my argument, numerous biblical passages describe sacrifices of children to gods who rivalled Judaism's Yahweh for the allegiance of the people. Most prominent among them was the Phoenician and Canaanite male god, Ba'al (1 Kings 16:31–32; 2 Kings 11:18; 2 Kings 21:3; Psalms 106:28–39 etc.) and his female counterpart, Ashtoreth/Asherah (1 Kings 11:5; 2 Kings 23:13). Closely associated with worship of Ba'al and Ashtoreth was worship of the Ammonite deity, Molech (Moloch or Milcom [1 Kings 11:5–7; 2 Kings 23:13]). Interestingly, the Ammonite people developed from the son whom Lot's younger daughter conceived after an incestuous relationship with him (Genesis 19:34–38).

Worship to Ashtoreth involved doing 'evil' (1 Kings 11:6) and possibly performing sodomy (2 Kings 23:7), a sexual deviance that occurs repeatedly throughout Gail's, Elaine's, and Mary's memories (e.g. Mary, 1992 p. 57, see also p. 34). Furthermore, the Chaldeans apparently offered incense to Ba'al (Jeremiah 32:29), and many of the ritual accounts that people have recounted to me mention that the air was filled with incense of some kind. Moreover, both Ba'al and Molech occasionally received human sacrifices, and these sacrifices took the form of the burnt offerings of children. Indeed, the 'children of Israel' and 'the children of Judah' seemingly worshipped these gods together, since '[t]hey built the high places of Ba'al, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech' (Jeremiah 32:35).

Among the clearest descriptions of child sacrifice to Ba'al is the one that appears in Psalms 106:28, 37–39. Moses had led the Jews out of Egypt and into the wilderness, where they quickly forgot God's great works and 'attached themselves to the Ba'al of Peor, and ate sacrifices offered to the dead' (Psalms 106:28). An important aspect of worshipping Ba'al involved the sacrifice of children:

They served their idols, which became a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons; they poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with blood. Thus they became unclean by their acts, and played the harlot in their doings (Psalms 106:37–39; see Jeremiah 7:31).

Similarly, the Lord is reported as lamenting to Ezekiel about two lewd women:

That they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons, whom they bore unto me, to pass for them through the fire, to devour them.

Moreover, this they have done unto me; they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths.

For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house (Ezekiel 23:37–39; see 16:20–21).

Finally, the Lord in Jeremiah lamented that his people defiled their holy place 'with the blood of innocents' (Jeremiah 19:5), and:

have built also the high places of Ba'al, to burn their sons with fire, for burnt offerings unto Ba'al, which I commanded not, nor spoke it, neither came it into my mind. . . .

And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and distress, with

which their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall distress them (Jeremiah 19:5, 9).

The historical accuracy of these passages is far less important than their appearance in the Bible as offenses against the Hebraic (and eventually Judeo-Christian) god. One notes with interest that even Yahweh claimed to impose cannibalism as a punishment against his enemies.

Passages about child sacrifice in the Bible provide important possible validation for a recurring event in the intergenerational accounts of ritual satanic abuse. With at least fourteen of the alleged survivors with whom I have spoken, memories include one or more stories about ritual child sacrifice. Frequently these sacrifices are accompanied by orgies,⁷ cannibalism, and blood-drinking, all of which have scriptural precedent. Likewise, just as the worshippers of Ba'al wore appropriate 'vestments' (2 Kings 10:22), all of the ritual accounts involving child sacrifice describe robed figures. Gail recalled, for example, being dropped off at a local conservative church as a child and being forced to sacrifice another little girl (Gail, 1988-1989, tape 2, side A p. 8). In a religious context, a group's performance of a sacrifice in a church violated God's sanctuary much like God had decried in Ezekiel (quoted above). Worth highlighting, too, is that members of the congregation were 'wearing red and white gowns' according to Gail's account (tape 2, side A p. 7), and an orgy followed the sacrifice (tape 2, side A p. 8). Mary also described a ritual child murder that allegedly took place in a room under the altar of a Catholic Church (Mary, 1992 p. 19).

Elaine had a similar memory of a girl being ritually murdered. After supposedly being forced by the male group leader to stab the girl herself (Elaine, 1991 (1 June) p. 21, see also p. 20), she distinctly recalled how:

[o]ne white-robed woman has come forward with a large butcher knife & is repeatedly stabbing the child's body & cutting into where her heart is. At least two other women assist her & at last they take her heart out and put it on a plate. . . .

They have been drawing blood from the body and Death [i.e., a figure in the ritual] gives me a cup and makes me drink some of it then take a bite out of the heart (Elaine, 1991 (30 May) pp. 19-20).

As did Gail, Elaine claimed that the satanic group forced her to murder the child. Samantha's account differs to the extent that, as an adult, she served (against her will) as an altar. Consequently, she did not have to commit the male infant's murder herself, but after the infant's death the corpse, probably minus the heart, was put on her stomach. Apparently the robed members had drunk his blood or eaten his heart. After members tore off pieces of flesh from the corpse, the ceremonial leader cast the desecrated body into the fire (see Samantha, 1990 pp. 40-1).

All of these accounts share with the biblical stories the common elements of child sacrifice by robed figures who commit cannibalism and drink blood. One, and possibly two, of the allegedly recalled events also had the ceremonies taking place at fires.⁸ Worth noting along these lines are the passages in Revelation containing descriptions of the saved multitudes standing before the Lamb of God in white robes that (curiously) had been made 'white in the blood of the Lamb' (Revelation 7:14). If memories are true

about robed figures performing ceremonies, then in symbolic ways the participants may see themselves involved in ceremonies that reverse or alter the traditional Christian interpretation of the events in the New Testament's final chapter.

Biblical associations between the serpent in Genesis (3:1) and Satan in Revelation (12:9, 14, 15; 20:2) may explain part of Samantha's account, in which, during one ritual rehearsal and one actual ceremony, group members placed a snake on her stomach while she apparently served as a ritual altar. In the ceremony itself, the snake probably was inserted into her vagina, an act filled with satanic and sexual imagery. Another alleged survivor, whom I call Lana, recounted to me accounts of her spouse's satanic group repeatedly trying to insert a snake into her (Lana, 1992). From the perspective of the perpetrators, part of the logic to the sexual elements of the rituals involves providing Satan with opportunities to experience indulgence and lust (Karleen, 1991). Perhaps the alleged groups saw the vaginal insertion of the snake as a means of providing Satan, not to mention themselves, with perverse enjoyment.

Other biblical passages about the 'heathen' who 'make a noise like a dog' (Psalms 59:5–6, 14) may explain some of the most peculiar ritual memories that both Gail and Elaine independently recorded. Gail recalled being in a ritual which in part involved being forced to bark like a dog. 'I was told to bark', she stated. 'I was forced to bark' (Gail, tape no. 5 side A p. 2; also Kent interview with Gail, 1991). Elaine was forced to perform oral sex on her mother, and when she was finished the first time, the group leader demanded that she '[s]it up like a dog and beg for it' again. Threatened with a cattle prod, she complied, after which the leader demanded that she 'whine like a puppy' and 'bark like a dog' (Elaine, 1991 (7 May) p. 39). Later she remembered being 'dressed' as a dog. 'There are simulated claws on my hands & I am wearing a mask over my eyes—to the bridge of my nose—also a black skin is tied to my back' (Elaine, 1991 (10 June) p. 69). A third alleged satanic survivor named Anya Gray described on national Canadian television how she was forced by electroshocks to 'bark like a dog' and 'act like a dog' (CTV, 1990).

Dogs appear as enemies of the Lord in biblical passages in addition to those of Psalms. Jesus reportedly warned his followers, 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs' (Matthew 7:6), and Paul warned the Philippians to 'Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision [i.e., mutilation of the flesh or the necessity of circumcision]' (Philippians 3.2). In the ever-influential Book of Revelation, Christ warned that outside or 'without [the city of God] are dogs, and sorcerers, and fornicators, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie' (Revelation 22:15; see also Deuteronomy 23:17–18).

Certainly Gail may have been correct when she speculated to herself that 'they wanted to break me down' through physical pain and humiliation (Gail transcript, tape no. 5, side A p. 2). Moreover, her observation is worth noting that this particular animal imagery may have special importance to (alleged) English-speaking satanists who strive to reverse Judeo-Christianity (since 'dog' is 'God' spelled backwards). These speculations only enhance biblical passages that portray dogs as God's enemies, thereby heightening their satanic, ritualistic value.

Animal imagery of a different sort appears in one section of Elaine's diary, and it, too, is difficult to explain unless the animal is interpreted according to its demonic reference in Revelation. Elaine remembers being tortured by a woman wearing a mask that 'is black & bird-like. There are tufts of feathers at the edges and, it seems to me, a beak. There are long black talons on her hands' (Elaine, 1991 (11 August) p. 87). She was unaware that Revelation has an angel come down from heaven and cry 'mightily'

that 'Babylon the great is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils. and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird' (Revelation 18:2).

The Christian Basis for Satanic Ceremonies: Baptism, Communion, and Marriage

Biblically based Christian ceremonies appear to play a dominant influence on the content of various satanic rituals and beliefs about which I have been told. Gail, for example, recalls going through a satanic baptism when she was young during which the group leader asked her relative whether "'this child [has] been baptised in the name of Jesus Christ?'" At the same ceremony she remembers being shown 'a Bible where all the words were backwards'. She was forced to read a card that said, "'I pledge my allegiance to Satan the King of all Kings", and I can't exactly remember what word it was [.]It was denouncing my Christianity'. The actual baptism involved the group urinating on her (Gail, taped statement [undated]: 9, tape no. 1, side B (27 October 1988) p. 3).

When her family requested permission to leave the group, she and her mother were:

leaned over something and tied or held down over something with the [Christian] scriptures in front of our faces and we read. . . . [W]e had to read them, and while we read them there was a stick being pushed farther and farther up our anus[es], and the pain was excruciating, I can remember that. . . . [M]y mother says she can hear [the high priest] saying, '[A]re you going to tell [about the group]? Are you going to tell?' . . . They were very much afraid that we would tell and that is their biggest fear, is that of [sic] disclosure (Gail, 1988, tape no. 1, side B (4 November) p. 7, see also p. 4).

If this event actually occurred, then presumably the group was attempting to demonstrate the power of their god over its Christian nemesis, and well as to instill an association between Christianity and pain.

Elaine also remembered a ceremonial setting in which Christian scriptures were denigrated. In her memory the satanic leader quizzed her about whether any of her prayers to God ever had been answered (Elaine, 1991 (13 May) p. 30). She also remembered someone killing a young boy who then told her that the 'outsider God . . . died like this boy and I command him too'. Even worse than Gail's baptismal experience, Elaine's ritual baptizer urinated in her throat and made her swallow (Elaine, 1991 (20 May) p. 46). Obviously these accounts must be interpreted in a biblical context, since they contain disparaging references to Jesus or a Judeo-Christian god.

Similar accounts portray ritual behaviour that appears to involve a distorted application of Jesus' insistence that '[e]xcept ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you' (John 6:53). Gail, for example, recorded in 1989 that:

They did a thing like communion. I recognize the ceremony as similar to what you do in . . . church for communion [. A woman] came in from the left and she carried this little plastic bag and in it was some sort of faeces. I am not sure what it was [.]It was gross [.]It was awful and she stood on my right. I was kneeling and she said, 'this is the body of' I can't remember whether she said it was 'Christ' or 'Satan', and 'this is the body of' something and I just blocked out and take [sic] it and eat it. And then he said 'this is the blood of my body, take it and drink it' and then she pushed my head into the abdomen—the open abdomen of this child (Gail, 1989 p. 110).

More typically, people have memories of drinking liquid that many of them describe

along the lines of 'a blood-like substance' that Elaine had poured into her mouth (Elaine, 1991 (12 May) p. 15).

An additional mockery of Christian ritual appears in Gail's account about a satanic ceremony that she claims to have attended when she was in her twenties:

One of the memories I had was [a couple's] wedding night and this is a bizarre one. I had attended their original wedding which took place in the afternoon. . . . [Later that night] I do remember standing in a room with [an acquaintance] standing beside me in a room full of people. And [the couple is] at the front of the room, naked, and while we were watching, everyone's watching them, they're trying to sort of get in a particular position. And I . . . it's like I just sort of came to at that point. I felt really drugged. I'm sure I was drugged. I asked [the acquaintance], (I recognized him) what they were doing and he said, 'well, this is [the couple's] wedding'. I said, 'I had just been to their wedding', and he said, 'well, no, this is their real wedding'. I asked 'what are they doing?' and he said, 'I'm not . . . I can't remember how he put it, but what they were trying to do in this particular ritual, this wedding ritual, was to simultaneously blow air up each other's buttocks. Now yes, this is very strange. I laughed out loud apparently I can remember laughing and just thinking [that] this is the most absurd thing that I had ever heard (Gail transcript, tape no. 3, side B pp. 8–9).

Later Gail came across a book that described an ancient satanic wedding ritual where this activity supposedly occurred, and when she read about this 'Kiss of Shame' (Baskin, 1972 pp. 186–7) 'I couldn't believe it' (Gail transcript, tape no. 3, side B p. 9).

Body Whitewashing and Symbolic 'Mouse-eating'

Among the most convincing aspects of at least two accounts that I have collected involve stories of females having their bodies painted or whitewashed before they were forced to participate in satanic rituals. In her 1990 interview, Samantha recalled that, as part of the group's preparation for her unwilling participating in a satanic ritual, '[h]ands started rubbing on my body as if they were wiping a paste of some sort randomly all over my back, my front, my arms, and my legs' (Samantha, 1990 p. 22). Over two years later, she was deeply upset to read in a Canadian news magazine that a woman from another province testified before the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women that she was 'forced to take part in a graveyard cult ceremony in which she was stripped naked, whitewashed and sexually abused. Members of the cult even stuffed her mouth with mice—presumably a satanist response to a biblical exhortation not to eat mice' (Allen, 1992 p. 13). Apparently the white-painted bodies reflect an aspersion in Matthew, in which Jesus denounced his opponents with 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness' (Matthew 23:27).

Likewise, the alleged act of putting mice into the mouths of unwilling participants likely reflected a passage in Leviticus, in which the Lord outlined dietary laws to Moses: 'These also shall be unclean unto you among the creeping things that creep upon the earth: the weasel, and the mouse, and the tortoise after his kind . . .' (Leviticus 11:29; see Isaiah 66:17). At the time that Samantha had reported her alleged abuse, no one understood the meaning of having been smeared with something all over her body, nor had anyone understood the meaning of her hesitant admission 'that they had put something in my mouth and what I remembered was, was [sic] a mouse or something like a very small animal' (Samantha, 1990 p. 32).

A month and a half after the magazine article appeared that apparently answered the mysteries about Samantha's memories, another alleged survivor, Mary, recounted a similar story without apparently any knowledge of the media account. 'I was being dedicated to Satan as a new inductee at this age [i.e., early elementary school]. . . . [W]hat it involved was preparatory was as far as I was concerned. My body was, from what I understood, purified. I was, um, *white*. Just I I [sic] don't know whether it was a cream or a powder but I was *white*—absolutely just—I was as pure as I had ever been' (Mary, 1992 p. 18 [emphasis in her speech]). As they (allegedly) do regarding other biblical passages, satanists seemingly take scriptures that are negative in the original text and construct rituals around them that supposedly venerate their god by mocking or disobeying divine figures in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Conclusion

Ritual satanic accounts have many critics, and among their arguments often is the assertion that the alleged victims consciously or unconsciously acquired the content of their claims through popular media accounts or religious training. The events are real (the doubters state) only in the minds of the self-proclaimed survivors, but they do not correspond to actual behaviours. Without objective evidence, social science is correct in its scepticism, but this article should provide a basis for realizing that specific aspects of satanic abuse accounts appear to have scriptural origins and easily could have been designed by people who wished to denigrate or invert Judeo-Christian religions.

Social scientists know, for example, that religious rituals and scriptures in some modern syncretic Malaysian religious groups 'are inverted so that what the dominant culture calls "bad" is deemed "good" and the forces of domination themselves are condemned as wicked' (DeBernardi, 1987 p. 330). When this inversion occurs, 'anti-structure is for a time transformed into structure. The group, with the gods as spokespersons, challenges the larger society through the creation of new norms that upend conventional morality' (DeBernardi, 1987 p. 330). It is entirely within the range of social science that such inversions and transformations of anti-structure into structure are occurring within the contexts of Judeo-Christian influenced satanic groups.

Doubters of satanic accounts will continue to insist that the occurrence of material in traditional Western scriptures supports their insistence that alleged survivors simply have formulated stories into which they wove negative religious imagery. Believers will counter by pointing out that many of the images that the survivors tell to their counsellors or law enforcement officials make no sense to anyone at the time. In other words, the probable meaning of such acts as placing mice in people's mouths or whitewashing bodies is sufficiently esoteric that survivors would not be likely to have constructed them and counsellors would not be likely to have placed the accounts in the minds of susceptible clients who then passed them on to other self-proclaimed survivors. Believers would also challenge sceptics to provide examples of some of these stories in popular culture, which the doubters often say is an additional source of the content of alleged satanic memories.

The apparent centrality of (inverted) biblical imagery in many of the satanic accounts may give clues to possible therapeutic approaches in treating the alleged victims. For 'survivors' who operate in a religious worldview, therapists may be able to empower them by using counter-satanic, life affirming imagery that exists in most of the traditions from which alleged satanists seemingly borrow. Religion and therapy have an uneven history of co-operation, but occasionally the two disciplines can work together for clients' therapeutic benefit (Holden, 1990).

In a recent example of co-operation among a ritual abuse survivor (Rebecca), her therapist, and a local clergywoman, the three people participated in rituals that helped the client reach a point where she could say that 'I now believe (most of the time) [, that] Satan's power is limited' (Rebecca in Rebecca *et al.*, 1991 p. 31). Christian based rituals in conjunction with intense traditional therapy helped the client reach this conclusion. They involved 'the renouncing of evil and turning to freedom', 'confess-[ing] her sins of the past and then [reconciling] herself to God and to humanity', and baptism (Rebecca *et al.*, 1991 pp. 18, 23, 28). The three-fold team designed the baptism ceremony to "indicate to [the client] and to the world that she had chosen to be a child of God, and to renounce forever the claims of her abusers" (Rebecca *et al.*, 1991 p. 27). Used sensitively, religion can become a vehicle for healing the very scars that it may have helped to cause.

In addition, focus on the satanic content of many traditional scriptures may shed light on the secular motivations of alleged abusers. Gail speculated that her father was involved in satanism and performed its violent rituals 'to get success in life, and wealth' (Gail, 1988 (30 December), tape no. 3, side B p. 2), although he never obtained either goal. Her speculation about the motivation for satanic involvement is in line with an important story that appears in two of the four Christian gospels. The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness and there Satan tempted him. In one of the temptations, Satan took Jesus:

up into an high mountain, [and] showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

And the devil said unto him, 'All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou, therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be thine' (Luke 4:5-7, see Matthew 4:1-11).

Jesus, of course, resisted the temptation, but one easily can imagine how mere mortals would succumb.

Notes

- 1 Revised version of a paper delivered at the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (November 1991). Special thanks go to Bob Beaty of the *Calgary Herald* (a newspaper in Alberta, Canada), whose collaboration and friendship has helped me work with this difficult and disturbing material.
- 2 I am limiting my comments to alleged activities that occur within 'intrafamilial, transgenerational groups that engage in explicit satan worship, which includes the following criminal practices: ritual torture, sacrificial murder, deviant sexual activity, and ceremonial cannibalism' (Young *et al.*, 1991 p. 182).
- 3 The page numbers of Gail's account do not indicate a chronological progression of memories, since it appears that different people (at least two) performed the transcriptions. The dates of the two distinct sets of transcriptions often overlap.
- 4 Mormonism may also be an additional influence on some white racist groups, since many of these groups are active in the Pacific Northwest in and near Mormon strongholds, and Mormonism held a distinctively racist doctrine (concerning black skin being the mark of Cain) until 1978. Some accounts of white racism suggest that some Mormons have entered its ranks (e.g. Flynn & Gerhardt, 1989 pp. 32, 34, 43, 86).
- 5 While Judaism and Christianity are separate religious traditions, the Christian appropriation of the Hebrew Bible into its own body of scriptures necessitates that I speak of the hyphenated Judeo-Christian sources of inspiration of much alleged satanic activity. Simply because the King James Bible probably is the most widely distributed translation (albeit not the most accurate one), all of my biblical quotes come from it.
- 6 Interestingly, the earliest contemporary allegation of satanism that I have located appeared in

Canada's *Winnipeg Free Press* on 26 November 1959, and it discussed child sacrifice. Mr Leslie Roberts of Brighton, England, told Vancouver, British Columbia reporters that 'All over Europe and America organized groups of satanists—including some of the wealthiest and most respected members of the community—meet regularly to celebrate their infamous rites'. He went on to say that for these groups '[h]uman sacrifice is essential. Therefore there is a big trade in unborn children, infants and young girls. Many of Britain's unsolved murders are related to black magic'. The article concluded with Roberts saying that 'he had information that a baby was used as a human sacrifice a year ago in the Sussex village of Rottingdean. Detectives investigated his claim but told him that knowing it was one thing and proving it was another' (*Winnipeg Free Press*, 1959). Another neglected article about probable human sacrifice (the terrified reporter fled the site before seeing the ritual's conclusion) appeared in the 14–20 November 1969 issue of the *Berkeley Barb* in California, although the victim was a man rather than a child (Khwarizmi, 1969).

- 7 The earliest account that I have located about an alleged satanic orgy is an obscure article about a group near Arlington, Texas, which appeared in Milwaukee, Wisconsin's *Bugle-American* on 12 November 1975. The ritual that the reporter described also included animal sacrifices, but the group did not appear to be intergenerational since it only had been operating for about four years (Gibson, 1975).
- 8 Elaine mentioned someone waving a flaming stick over her before the ceremony began, so it is quite possible that a fire was burning nearby.

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