

World Religions: Satanism

1. Three ways to use the term “Satanism”

1. Pop culture

1. “Satanism” is used to describe the obscene, grotesque practices of various miscreant teenagers
2. People routinely use the name “Satan” to get attention
3. Pentagrams and the inverted cross
4. Police reports periodically make mention of “ritual murder” that is often credited to Satanism, with little to no evidence

2. Biblically

1. Though the Bible does not use the term “Satanism”, Christians understand that Satan is a real presence in the world
2. There are clearly some in the history of the world who have used the powers of Satan for their own selfish desires
 1. Consider the men that used the demon-possessed girl in Philippi (Acts 16:16ff)
 2. It's perhaps hard to comprehend the almost unadulterated evil of some historical figures without reference to Satan
 1. Hitler
 2. Stalin
 3. Nero
3. It seems almost certain that at least some people have chosen to worship the fallen angel Satan
 1. It would certainly be in keeping with Satan's desires: Isa 14:13-14

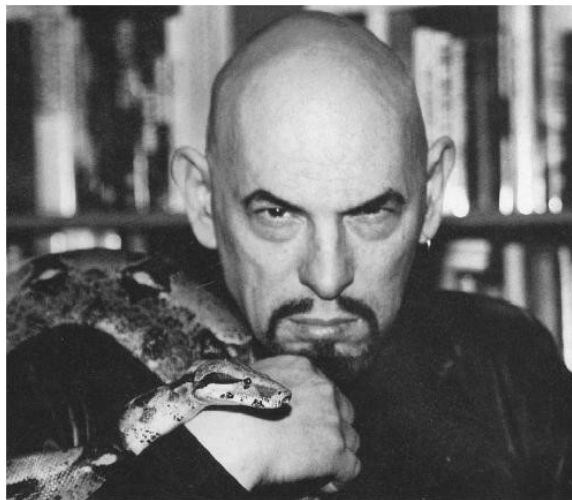
1. "I will rule on the mountain of assembly"
 2. "I will make myself like the Most High"
4. Many religious traditions have gods that seem suspiciously like Satan
1. Ancient Egyptian religion: Set/Seti/Seth
 1. The god of chaos, if not outright evil
 2. He is said to have tried to take the throne of Horus
 3. He is often associated with the Semitic goddess Ashtoreth (of Biblical infamy)
 2. Ancient Babylonian religion: Marduk
 1. There are representations of Marduk as a serpent
 2. Marduk was the chief god of the wicked neo-Babylonians, including Nebuchadnezzar
 3. Ancient Canaanite religion: Molech
 1. As mentioned in the Bible, worship of Molech involved sacrificing children
 2. "Molech" is actually a Hebrew way of insulting the god
 1. His real name would have been Melech - "king"
 2. Since the Jews would not tolerate someone other than Yahweh being called king, they took the vowel from "bosheth" - the 'o' and the 'e' - and inserted them into the consonants ... forming the false name "Molech"
 3. So here's a god who wants to be king, requires the sacrifice of children, and who gets renamed something like "shameful king" by Jewish scribes ... you be the judge

3. The official Church of Satan (CoS)

1. A religion born in the 1960s under the leadership of Anton LaVey
2. Based fundamentally upon the notion that life should be lived to fulfil one's desires
3. Most generally CoS does not understand God and Satan as actual figures, but rather as metaphors for natural forces in the world influencing the behaviour of humanity
4. Our study of Satanism will focus upon the CoS

2. The Church of Satan

1. The founder: Anton LaVey



1. The subject of *much* hyperbole and outright lies

1. It has been demonstrated that LaVey himself propagated many lies about himself for the express purpose of fame
2. One of LaVey's daughters has documented these distortions – for example:
 1. *Legend*: The 15-year-old LaVey played second oboe with the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra, making him the youngest musician ever

to play with that prestigious institution.

Reality: There was no "San Francisco Ballet Orchestra" in 1945. The San Francisco Ballet was accompanied by a local orchestra, whose records show that none of its three oboists was named "Levey" or "LaVey".

Source: San Francisco Performing Arts Library & Museum, San Francisco, California.

2. *Legend :* LaVey was exposed to the savagery of human nature during his stint as a San Francisco Police photographer in the early 1950s.

Reality: San Francisco Police Department past employment records include no "Howard Levey" nor "Anton LaVey". Frank Moser, who was a SFPD photographer in the early 1950s, said that LaVey never worked for the Department.

Sources: SFPD records, Frank Moser

3. *Legend:* LaVey's trademark shaved head was the result of a ceremonial head-shaving on April 30, 1966, to formalize his role as High Priest of Satan. This ritual was performed in the tradition of the Yezidi devil-worshipping tribes of Iraq, who were said to have carried out a similar ceremony.

Reality: LaVey shaved his head in the summer of 1966 due to a light-hearted dare from his wife. The "LaVey look" had nothing to do with the Church of Satan founding nor any mystical meaning attached to it later. Nor do Yezidi qawwals (religious teachers) shave their heads.

Sources: Diane LaVey; Ethel S. Drower, Peacock Angel, 1941; C.J. Edmonds, [A Pilgrimage to Lalish](#), Royal Asiatic Society, 1967.

1. To demonstrate how pervasive many of these lies are, check out the Wikipedia [article](#)

1. This also helps demonstrate why Wikipedia is *not* a reliable source for academic research

3. In his writings, LaVey often freely acknowledged making stories and details up in interview after interview
2. A figure of Satan
 1. LaVey has carefully crafted a confusing position regarding Satan
 1. In many places, especially in public, he took the “Satan is a metaphor” position
 1. This appeals to the philosophical side of many Americans, taking away the creepiness of the term “Satan”
 2. He argued that Satan only became a creepy word because of the influence of Christians, and that Satan is a pre-Christian concept
 3. In this way, he's arguing – sometimes fiercely; sometimes implicitly – that Christianity is false
 2. In other places, especially in private conversations, LaVey spoke of Satan as a real figure
 1. In the earliest additions of LaVey's Grotto Master's Handbook (a guide for leaders of local CoS groups), LaVey apparently included a quote detailing this tension:

“Satanists are strange creatures. We know that the idea of an omniscient, all-powerful god who watches over each of us and listens to each of our prayers is an irrationality and a deep offense to any advanced mind. We see no evidence of justice or answered prayers in the world around us. If the Judeo-Christian "God" is all- powerful, all-knowing, he's damned churlish and incompetent.

But the Satanist is also faced with his subjective experience of what we choose to characterize as "Satan" in our lives. Satan is a very personal Companion. We admire Satan and wish to gain his respect, therefore we act as he would - in defiance of anything or anyone who would demand our worship. It would be an insult to offer him unthinking worship. But this is fact: Unlike the promises of the Christians, Satan does develop an intensely intimate relationship with each of his followers. You may not perceive it until you train yourself to sense it, but since you have achieved the position of Grotto Master, You have probably already been touched by it. He will remain with you until your breath

leaves your body.”

1. In the first paragraph, LaVey gives us the standard “if God is real he must be stupid” view that is cynically expressed by most Satanists today
 2. But in the second paragraph, it's hard to escape the idea that Satan was to LaVey a very real, very personal being
 3. This sort of confused, difficult to follow understanding of Satan and Satanism seems to me a perfect representation of Satan himself
 1. Satan longs to deceive people – LaVey certainly accomplished that
 2. Satan tailors his image based on the culture he's in (you've heard the old “Satan wears a suit and tie in America” adage) – LaVey accomplished this, too
 3. Satan is a figure that most people find difficult to understand at all – again, LaVey is a fitting representation
2. Standard (sort of) false conceptions of the Church of Satan
 1. “Satanists worship the Devil”
 1. It's not quite that simple ...
 2. Most Satanists argue that “Satan” is a metaphor for the basic nature of people that has been suppressed by the “evil” Christian religion
 3. Having said that, plenty of Satanists *do* believe in a real Satan and worship him as the Lord of Darkness
 4. Finally, one might argue that even those that say they don't believe in an actual Satan are worshipping him nonetheless
 2. “Satanists hate God/Jesus”
 1. Most Satanists are not explicitly theistic at all, seeing God as a metaphor

just as Satan is a metaphor

2. Most Satanists are agnostic or atheistic
3. However, Satanists do align themselves directly against Christianity, seeing it as the enemy of their cause
 1. LaVey famously staged “Black Mass” events that were directed against the Roman Catholic Church, turning RCC rituals completely on their head
 4. Others fully understand that they are fighting against Almighty God and chose to do so as a servant of the Lord of Darkness
3. “Satanists kill people in rituals”
 1. The CoS has never been seriously implicated in any sort of murder, ritualistic or otherwise
 2. There is no doubt, however, that people are abducted and killed in bizarre, ritualistic ways each year
 1. Some of these are merely sadistic killers
 2. Others are likely in direct league with Satan
 3. Even more, in developing countries this practice seems too common
4. “Satanists practice mass sexual revelries”
 1. This particular accusation comes largely from the person of LaVey himself
 2. For publicity, he encouraged such stories though none have ever been substantiated
3. Roots of CoS
 1. Anton LaVey cites many people and ideas as having been influential in his philosophical/spiritual growth

1. Aleister Crowley

1. Crowley was a rebellious child who by age 23 had joined a cult called The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

1. It combined elements of Kabbalah with Egyptian religion and general-purpose magic to seek enlightenment
2. Due to his bisexual tendencies, some in his order were unwilling to advance him to high leadership
3. Eventually expelled from the cult, Crowley began to travel the world

2. Egypt

1. By 1904, Crowley (now in his mid 20s) had a mystical experience in Egypt

2. His wife (no stranger to occult activity) became the medium for the ancient Egyptian god Horus, who answered question after question to Crowley that his wife could not have known

1. Still skeptical, Crowley took her to a museum, where Horus/wife pointed to an Egyptian artifact with an image of Horus on it

2. The artifact was catalogued in the museum under the number 666

3. With the new-found power of Horus, Crowley contacted his guardian spirit – a spirit named Aiwass – who told Crowley to take dictation

1. For three days Crowley recorded the message of Aiwass

2. It became known as [The Book of the Law](#)

1. It's fundamental tenet? *“Do what thou wilt”*

2. Since Aiwass told him to record the Greek word for “will” - thelema – Crowley's became the founder of a group now known as the Thelemites
3. By 1909, Crowley had divorced his wife and entered fully into a life of magic, drugs, and random sexual encounters
 1. In this light, his joining the OTO (Order Templi Orientis) in 1910 is no surprise – it was a sex-magic cult
 2. By 1912 he was the leader of all English-speaking OTO groups
 3. Interestingly, during his time leading the OTO Crowley received a letter from a local OTO leader recommending one L Ron Hubbard for advancement in the magical orders
 1. Some have even suggested the Hubbard was believed to be a possible successor to Crowley one day
 2. As you know, Hubbard left the OTO and went on to found Scientology...
4. By 1925 Crowley was elected worldwide head of the OTO
5. Eventually his drug addictions (cocaine and heroine) and his deviant sexuality took their toll
 1. Crowley spent the majority of the rest of his life alone, poor, always seeking the next high
 2. He died in 1947, at the age of 72
6. Anton LaVey admitted to having read many of Crowley's works on magic and especially The Book of the Law
 1. He was critical of Crowley's emphasis on petty cultic magic, sometimes referring to him as an “occultnik”
 2. Nevertheless, clearly Crowley's “Do what thou wilt” became very

meaningful to LaVey

1. Interestingly, Thelemites today argue that “Do what thou wilt” is *not* rank hedonism, but rather refers to finding your True Will – that is, your one true purpose in life and following it
2. LaVey clearly does not understand the term in this Thelemite way, but rather as what it seems – do whatever you want to do (so long as you don't hurt others, LaVey would add)

2. Friedrich Nietzsche

1. Nietzsche is one of the most significant and yet misunderstood philosophers of the 19th century

1. It is beyond my purpose (or ability, frankly) to explain Nietzsche's philosophy at this point – what we're looking for is how his writings and thought have influenced LaVey and the Satanist movement

2. Major concepts of Nietzsche

1. The death of God

1. Nietzsche believed that God is a figment of the human imagination, a necessity for the weak-minded
2. He also believed that his generation had advanced so much in learning and understanding that they recognized they no longer needed a concept of God
3. To this end, Nietzsche spoke of the death of God – meaning the realization that God was never real in the first place and is therefore an unnecessary concept

2. The nature of Christianity

1. Nietzsche was *very* contemptuous of Christianity
2. He believed that Paul alone was the creator of Christianity and that he had done so to make himself feel less guilt

3. He believed that the Judeo-Christian faith had created the idea of sin as a tool to make people feel guilty and thereby gain power over them

1. As an aside, this point of his philosophy is one that postmodern philosophers like Derrida, Foucault, and Lyotard ran with

3. The überman

1. Many philosophers leave the term untranslated from Nietzsche's original German just to highlight that it is a technical term with disputed meaning

1. Some choose to translate it: overman or superman

2. To Nietzsche, the highest goal of life was to become an überman

3. What does this mean?

1. It means you don't live by anyone else's code – no Bible, no religion, no god

2. It means you don't concern yourself with the otherworldly, the supernatural, life after death; you stay focused on the here and now, because that's all there really is

3. It means you blaze your own trail, seeking to show others how to advance out of their more ape-like evolutionary form

3. Nietzsche or LaVey?

1. For our purposes, it really doesn't matter what Nietzsche meant in specific detail; what's relevant is how LaVey and other Satanists have understood him

1. Interestingly, modern-day pupils of Nietzsche are generally offended by the notion that Nietzsche's philosophy was in any way Satanic

2. They argue that Nietzsche didn't need concepts like God or Satan, that he had intellectually evolved past that point
2. LaVey clearly took from Nietzsche the notion that God is an unnecessary and outdated concept
3. He understood that the überman was one who pursued his own passions
4. He understood that concepts like “sin”, “guilt”, and “atonement” were all fairy tales

4. The Satanic Bible

1. Written by Anton LaVey in 1969
2. It's not exactly a “Bible”, in the sense of a traditional religious text
 1. It's really a collection of essays, random thoughts, and platitudes
 2. It's generally far more anti Christian than it is pro Satanic
 1. The opposite version of the Sermon on the Mount, for example
3. It is in many ways born of misunderstandings about Christianity
 1. LaVey plainly had very bad experiences with the RCC
 2. He goes to great lengths to mock RCC practices as oft as possible
 1. The Black Mass
 2. Wearing a priestly collar himself
 3. Being called the “Black Pope”
 3. A few glaring examples of mis-information:
 1. “The Roman god, Lucifer, was the bearer of light, the spirit of the air,

the personification of enlightenment. In Christian mythology he became synonymous with evil, which was only to have been expected from a religion whose very existence is perpetuated by clouded definitions and bogus values!” p.21

1. This argument is solely semantic – the precise term “Lucifer” means “light bearer” in Latin, and was therefore used by Christians as a name for Satan (particularly in light of Isa 14)
2. “Anyone who thinks of Satan as evil should consider all the men, women, children, and animals who have died because it was 'God's will'. Certainly a person grieving the untimely loss of a loved one would much rather have their loved one with them than in God's hands! Instead, they are unctuously consoled by their clergyman who says, 'It was God's will, my dear'; or 'He is in God's hands now, my son.' Such phrases have been a convenient way for religionists to condone or excuse the mercilessness of God. But if God is in complete control and as benign as he is supposed to be, why does He allow these things to happen?” p.22
 1. While certainly *some* pastors/priests have taught over the years that God is responsible for every individual death, the Bible is – at best – unclear about this; I would argue it is inappropriate to blame death on God
3. “Nevertheless, if a man has not lived his life in accordance with the regulations of his faith, he can at the last minute call a clergyman to his deathbed for a final absolution. The priest or minister will then come running on the double, to 'make everything right' with God and see to it that his passport to the Heavenly Realm is in order.” p.23
 1. This is one of many examples where LaVey clearly has the RCC in mind; frankly, I share his revulsion at this sometimes common (especially in Medieval RCC history) Catholic practice
4. “Anyone who buys an article of clothing for a purpose other than covering his body and protecting it from the elements is guilty of pride. Satanists often encounter scoffers who maintain that labels are not necessary. It must be pointed out to these destroyers of labels that one or many articles they themselves are wearing are not wearing are

not necessary to keep them warm. There is not a person on this earth who is completely devoid of ornamentation. The Satanist points out that any ornamentation of the scoffer's body shows that he, too, is guilty of pride. Regardless of how verbose the cynic may be in his intellectual description of how free he is, he is still wearing the elements of pride.” p.25

1. Here is a good example of LaVey's distorted understanding of sin:

1. On the one hand, he acknowledges what all sincere Christians do – that we wrestle constantly with our pride and its manifestations
2. On the other hand, he simply dismisses the concept of *growth* in spiritual maturity – if we're not fully devoid of any pride, we're hypocrites

5. “The very word "devil" comes from the Indian devi which means 'god'.” p.30

1. While it is true that one meaning of the Hindi word “devi” is “goddess” (specifically one particular goddess), this is not the accepted etymology of our word “devil”

1. “Devil” comes from the Greek term diabolos, where b/beta often gets softened to a more “v” sounds (this happens in many languages, for the record)

6. “No matter what you've been told about the 'immaculate conception' - even if blind faith allows you to swallow this absurdity - you know full well if *you* are to produce a child, there must be sexual contact with a person of the opposite sex! ” p.40

1. Here he's doubly confused:

1. First, he has the RCC concept of Immaculate Conception in mind, which the Bible plainly does *not* teach
2. Second, as you know, the Immaculate Conception does *not* refer to anyone having been born without sexual activity – it

refers to Mary having been born without a sin nature

2. Let's assume what he *meant* was the Virgin Birth of Jesus ...

1. His point then is well-taken: mere mortals are most certainly *not* going to produce children in the same manner that God chose to bring about the introduction of Jesus to the world!

7. "It has been clearly established that the majority of all illnesses are of a psychosomatic nature, and that psychosomatic illnesses are a direct result of frustration." p.45

1. Here it sounds far more like LaVey is advertising for L Ron Hubbard and Scientology than Satanism!