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## **Satanism: A Brief Introduction for Law Enforcement Officers**

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Satanism has existed for thousands of years in its more traditional form as a deity identified by Christianity as Satan. However, Anton LaVey founded the more modern Satanism in 1966 as a religious alternative to the hypocrisy he saw within the Christian churches of the time (LaVey, 1987). While most religions like Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism have a well-defined meaning, Satanism is an exception. In the United States it has become a general-purpose religion that attracts both the normal individuals of society as well as the deviants. Of all the questions asked regarding Satanism, the most profound question remains to be the understanding of the attraction to such a demonic world (Robinson, 2001).

Conservative Christians tend to believe there are only two powers within their world, God and Satan. A few religions believe that one who does not uphold the Christian views and beliefs must be worshiping Satan and living in a life of sin. Some religious organizations take this belief a step further and believe that any religion different from their own is Satanism. If this information were true, then Satanists would make up approximately 95% or more of the world's population. Using this description to define Satanism eventually makes it meaningless. There are ultimately four essentially unrelated beliefs and activities that recognize Satan within their faith: the Religious Satanism, Gothic Satanism, Satanic dabblers, and other types of Satanism (Robinson, 2001).

Religious Satanism recognizes Satan as a deity or a life principle. Followers of this form of Satanism are usually serious adults, although a few are mature teenagers. Three main traditions of this form exist today: the Church of Satan, the Temple of Set, and the Church of Satanic Liberation. According to Statistic Canada, the 1991 census found only 335 Canadians who identified themselves as Satanists. The U.S. Department Of the Army pamphlet #165-13 estimates there were as many as 20,000 members of the Church of Satan in the United States in the 1970s. Since the Church of Satan does not publicize its membership totals, it is virtually impossible to provide an accurate accounting today (Robinson, 2001).

Gothic Satanism is deemed to be an imaginary evil religion that was invented during the late Middle Ages by the Christian church. This form of Satanism was said to ritualistically kill

children, sell their souls to the devil and conduct black masses among other things. To date, Gothic Satanism has never existed as an organization and only exists today in the mind's eye of the public and in horror films (Robinson, 2001).

Satanic dabblers is a fusion religion blending essentials from Religious Satanism, Gothic Satanism and ceremonial magic as well as any other source of ritual that followers can find. This form is typically practiced by unruly teenagers or young adults and appears to burn itself out in a short period of time. The practitioners of Satanic dabbling reach as high as hundreds of thousands at any one given time in North America. It is virtually impossible to obtain specific information on these dabblers, as there is no centralized organization. They do often commit minor criminal acts such as vandalizing cemeteries and graffiti and in rare instances, a few have sacrificed small animals (Robinson, 2001).

The other types of Satanism are the self-professed criminals, usually serial killers, who proclaim their criminal acts were because "the devil made me do it." A thorough investigation of the crime and the criminal usually reveals they know little or nothing about the religion and in fact are not true Satanists. There have also been instances in which child molesters have abused children in a satanic setting pretending to use the front of Satanism to further their criminal acts (Robinson, 2001).

As often as criminals use the plea of Satan worshiping as justification for their behavior and crime, law enforcement officers often find themselves on the defending side of allegations of satanic behavior. On August 8, 2001, six years after a child-sex-ring investigation spread fear through the community of Wenatchee, Washington, those individuals wrongly accused will begin to see monetary compensation. This case is considered to be one of the largest child-sex-abuse cases since the 1980s that was primarily based on the coerced testimony from children.

Two of the accused, Honnah and Johnathan Sims, as well as three other defendants fought to clear their names and place the blame back on the Wenatchee Police Department, the Douglas County Sheriff's Office, and the Washington State Child Protective Services. The foster children of the lead detective on the case were the main source of the information leading to the investigation and arrest of 43 individuals, many of which were poor, uneducated, and some mentally handicapped (Richardson, 2001). In 1998, a Seattle judge dismissed the plaintiffs' claims against law enforcement citing state law prohibited them from being charged with negligence. Later, the state Supreme Court declined to review an appeal that such agencies could be held liable for financial damages resulting from child abuse investigations clearing the way for a Spokane County judge to award \$3 million dollars to the Sims and finding the county and city law enforcement agencies negligent on 14 counts.

The exigency of this case led to the founding of Innocence Project Northwest, a free legal aid organization, formed by lawyers and students at the University of Washington Law School. This organization was instrumental in winning the release of many of the accused. Of the 43 arrested, all have since been freed from jail either by being acquitted by juries, or by pleading to lesser-unrelated charges (Richardson, 2001).

There is no dispute that children are often abused, but the accusation of cult-like, satanic abuse leaves room for doubt. In the United States a national study identified and reviewed more than 12,000 allegations of satanic abuse. None of the allegations were substantiated, and neither the Federal Bureau of Investigation nor the local police departments uncovered any evidence linking the allegations to satanic religions (Moore, 2001).

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