

Bad Satan Psycho-Juju

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- False Memories, Broken Families, Child Sacrifice and the New Satanic Panic

by Brian Siano 4404 Walnut Street 3F Philadelphia, PA 19104 Internet Email: revpk@cellar.org "To what end or purpose is this sacrilegious offering of children, and how does it benefit the devils? . . . The first reason arises from their pride, which always increases; as it is said: 'They that hate Thee have lifted up the head.' For they try as far as possible to conform with divine rites and ceremonies. Secondly, they can more easily deceive men under the mask of an outwardly seeming pious action. . . And the third reason is, that the perfidy of witches may grow, to the devils' own gain, when they have witches dedicated to them from their very cradles."From the Malleus Maleficarum, the Inquisition's official reference on witchcraft (circa 1484)

20/20 and Geraldo Rivera notwithstanding, the incidence of exorcisms and witch-burnings has dropped off appreciably since the days of Torquemada. To most of us, this represents progress; if we're accused of bewitching the cattle, we won't have to choose between Repent While Suffering or Die Horribly. We don't start mustering up infidels for an auto da fe when the crops go bad anymore. We hope that five hundred years of progress has taught us to approach our problems with a degree of sophistication.

But the temptation to see Satan lurking in the woodpile has stayed with us, and over the past ten years or so, talk shows, law- enforcement training programs, and parents' seminars have been organized to discuss a so-called epidemic of occult-related crime. As a result, some therapists are treating Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA) as a distinct psychiatric disorder-- caused by real Satanic Rituals.

However, a growing number of experts have raised strong objections to these theories, describing them as a modern-day version of the Salem witch hunts. Researchers argue that claims of Satanic Ritual Abuse have created a climate of suspicion over minority religious faiths, mainly for evangelical and political purposes. Therapists and psychology researchers question the methods used to elicit what they term "false memories" of childhood cult abuse, incest, rape, murder, infanticide, and even abduction by UFOs. The courts are now dealing with these accusations of abuse, brought by adults against their parents.

It's a tricky field to navigate, and it could be littered with broken families and confused victims in the near future.

All the Babies You Can Eat

So why should accounts of violent, bloodthirsty Satanists be so credible? After all, the popular conception of devil worship was more like *The Devil's Rain*, a B-movie that climaxed with Ernest Borgnine and John Travolta melting into steaming goop. But Satanism has suddenly reasserted itself as the Ultimate Evil, requiring legions of purported occult experts on Geraldo to talk about a range of influence spanning from Charles Manson to heavy metal music. Aren't there worse things to worry about?

"In the 1880s," says Gerry O'Sullivan, "there was a Parisian publisher named Leo Taxil who was famous for his scurrilous anti- Catholic tracts. Then one morning he proclaimed his conversion to Catholicism. Shortly thereafter, he declared that he had unearthed the doings of the Satanic Masonic sect called the Paladins. He began publishing the memoirs of a woman named Sophia Walden, who claimed to have left the order. For two years this fed into an anti-Masonic hysteria in Europe, and there was even a Papal Benediction given to Sophia Walden, whom no one had even met. After a few years, Taxil broke down and confessed that he'd made it all up. It's interesting that one hundred years ago, you also saw nativist stories in the United States about Masons, Catholics and Mormons who were allegedly kidnapping children and holding them as slaves. And a hundred years later, we seem to be experiencing more of the same."

If anyone should be able to summarize the history of Satan rumor- panics, it's O'Sullivan. He is a co-author of *Satanism in America*, the first critical examination of the various claims of Devil-worship circulated in the mid 1980s. He is also co-author (with Edward S. Herman) of *The Terrorism Industry*, another jaundiced look at how a set of claims are circulated by a small culture of mutually-reinforcing experts. (Currently, O'Sullivan is an instructor in the humanities at the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science-- and in the spring, he'll be teaching a course on, surprise, surprise, *New Religions*.)

The Leo Taxil story is typical of our conversation, which runs over a landscape of arcane and obscure subjects that have little to do with car bombs, right-wing think tanks and lit crit. There's the theology of Anton LaVey's Church of Satan ("Basically, it's ritualized Social Darwinism; very law and order, socially conservative, with a carefully cultivated image of outrage"), the first Satanist in America ("Herbert Sloan. He operated his church out of his barbershop, and he used to

serve apple juice and cookies during his services"), and the role of "liminal spaces" like abandoned houses and graveyards in folklore.

"The Satanic panic," as O'Sullivan terms it, "has evolved out of a subgenre of evangelical and Fundamentalist Christian literature-- namely, the conversion narratives of allegedly former occultists and Satanists. Over time, these conversion narratives gained an incredible amount of popularity in evangelical and fundamentalist circuits." There were, in fact, three seminal documents that shaped the modern Christian folklore on Satanism-- Mike Warnke's *The Satan Seller*, Lawrence Pazder and Michelle Smith's *Michelle Remembers*, and Lauren Stratford's *Satan's Underground*. Most of this material has been substantially discredited, even within the Christian community.

The Satan Seller, first published in 1973, purported to tell of Warnke's college days as a high-ranking Satanist in the mid-1960's. Warnke, a protégé of evangelist Morris Cerullo, also claimed to have been a member of that ultraconspiracy, the Illuminati during this time. (But it wasn't until he found Jesus that he began making real money; his ministry currently grosses two million dollars a year. The IRS recently revoked his tax-exempt status.) The Christian magazine *Cornerstone*, in a fine display of a movement policing its own, reports that college friends of Warnke's remember him as a likeable, not-very-offensive storyteller. Beyond a little Ouija board play, Warnke's circle of friends had never gotten anywhere near the Satan worship, gang rape, and major-league drug dealing that Warnke describes. When told of Warnke's current claims of those days, most of his friends from the period responded with laughter or questions like "Is this a joke?"

During the 1970s, Jack Chick Publications-- the people behind those wallet-sized comic book tracts we've all been handed on street corners-- was one of the main sources of lurid, no-middle-ground accounts of how Satanists Are Lurking Everywhere. One of their major authorities was John Todd who, like Warnke, claimed membership in the Illuminati. Between a spat with Warnke over who-claimed-what-first, and his increasingly terrifying and grandiose conspiracy theories, Todd's star fell as Warnke's soared.

The Satanists in Chick's comic books not only have magic powers that really work, but they control the news media, the local police, and even the Catholic Church. Satanists, like most Chick unbelievers, are drawn with wattled and depraved faces, and they have subtle, pop-culture names like "Sabrina," "Endora," and "Mrs. Damien" so readers get the point. In *Spellbound*, Sabrina and her pals are called into recording studios to fuse a netherworld demon into the master tapes of rock albums. *Dark Dungeons* tells how fantasy-gamer Debbie is initiated into using the real spells, until she finds Jesus and heroically burns her *Dungeons and Dragons* equipment. Little Mandy learns to levitate tables at a slumber party in *The Poor Little Witch*, and before long, she's knocking back infant's-blood cocktails with the rest of the gang. In other Chick tracts, occultists are depicted putting razor blades in Halloween apples, eating human fingers, and abducting unwary hippie chicks for sacrifice. Even Old Scratch himself holds up a board meeting in Hell to gloat over the TV show *Bewitched*.

"Keep in mind that this is a very Manichean world view," says O'Sullivan, "and for them, Satanism is simply reverse Christianity. Now, the literature suggests that most child sexual abuse occurs within the home, and there's an increasing number of incidents of pastors and priests who are accused of abusing children. But in this central mythology of the family besieged and fortified, the people who threaten your children are outside the family, and outside of Christianity. There's a certain win-win logic involved where some Fundamentalists have decided that no Christian could abuse children to this extent-- ergo, they're really Satanists.

"The Satanist has taken the place of the mythical stranger in a raincoat-- and scapegoating day-care centers is part of the whole Christian right crusade. It's a war to get women back into a purified, insulated home."

But it wasn't until the 1980 publication of *Michelle Remembers*, by Lawrence Pazder and Michelle Smith, that hypnotically-enhanced accounts of torture and ritual murder began circulating. "The kind of religious folklore involving Satanism and spiritual warfare, that had long been believed and listened to in church basements, was eventually picked up as truth by the news media, police officers, psychological paraprofessionals and social workers," says O'Sullivan.

Michelle Remembers is based on Michelle Smith's narratives of SRA, gathered when she underwent hypnotic therapy under Pazder's direction. Efforts by both the Committee for the Scientific Evaluation of Religion and MacLean's magazine to verify Smith's stories turned up nothing-- even though Smith's Satanists cut off the middle finger of their left hands as an offering to the Devil, which should make them pretty conspicuous. Psychiatric anthropologist Sherril Mulhern, after reviewing Pazder's transcripts, noted that the Satanic themes were introduced by Pazder himself during the therapy while Michelle was under hypnosis.

Satan's Underground by Lauren Stratford (real name: Laurel Wilson), published in 1988, continued the trend toward more lurid stories. According to *Cornerstone*, Stratford was a woman with severe and tragic psychological problems-- one friend recalls her compulsively cutting her own arms with a paring knife to gain sympathy, and another reports that Stratford was retelling stories from the book *Sybil* as though they'd happened to her. Eventually, Stratford was claiming she'd been present during the Satanic rituals allegedly conducted at the McMartin Preschool, but her videotaped testimony-- with elaborate accounts of having been a breeder of babies for ritual sacrifice-- was deemed Not Credible by

the McMartin parents. (On talk show appearances, Stratford also gave different estimates as to how many babies she gave birth to for sacrifice.)

These books were the beginning of a flood of "Satan seminars" and educational materials for parents and police that constituted, in O'Sullivan's view, "evangelism posing as criminology." Informational materials provided by these sources frequently failed to make any distinction among Satanists, neo-Pagans, fans of Aleister Crowley, punk rockers, headbangers and modern Druids; even Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism were characterized as Satanic at one point or another. Telltale signs of devil-worship to look for in teenagers included falling grades, hateful stares, the word REDRUM, and the flaunting of hierarchy. Symbols such as the anarchists' circle-A, the peace sign, the Blue Oyster Cult's inverted-question-mark, and even Mr. Spock's Live-Long-and-Prosper" handsign were interpreted as ancient Devil-worship glyphs at one time or another.

Tax monies were used to send law-enforcement officials to these seminars and subscribe to their materials-- O'Sullivan mentions File 18, a newsletter published by Larry Jones's Cult Crime Impact Network, which operated out of the basement of the Trinity Fellowship Church of Boise, Idaho. "When you're concerned about the separation of church and state, these are important points to ponder." Another perennial source of Satan-crime claims are the minions of Lyndon LaRouche, whose magazine Investigative Leads is circulated to police departments around the country.

From a somewhat more secular source, a training video from AIMS media Ritual Crime: Guidelines for Identification purports to discuss telltale signs of ritual crime (inverted pentagrams, 666, the backwards "NATAS" and even the absence of blood) as well as the rapidly growing category of "systematic child abuse, often in pre-schools or other child care situations." "The officers note behavioral changes in children which may be tip-offs to ritual abuse, and they outline the proper procedures for investigations that will lead to successful prosecutions." These delicate and subtle issues in forensics are discussed on a videotape that runs all of eighteen minutes. . . and costs your local police department \$345.00 per copy. Rentals are \$75.00.

And subtlety and caution are certainly needed, especially when it comes to mystical symbology. "Back in Control," an Oregon program currently offering Family Training Workshops, once issued a booklet that included the Star of David as a diabolic symbol. Their reasoning? "If you know anything about the occult, you'll know that it's the exact opposite of Christianity. That's what the occult is."

"Back in Control" was endorsed by Parents' Music Resource Center founder (and prospective Second Lady) Tipper Gore in her book Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated Society. The PMRC bills itself as an information resource for concerned parents; for twenty dollars, they provide a thick stack of news reports and clippings on Satanism and rock-related crimes. Included in this material are lyrics of heavy metal songs, the suicide notes and pledges to Satan written by disturbed teenagers, and news accounts of suspected Satanic crimes from around the nation. Many of the materials are ads for guidebooks and seminars from such partisan sources as Bothered About Dungeons and Dragons (BADD), the American Family Foundation, and the International Cult Education Program. Only one article that expresses any doubt on the matter is included-- a brief notice about the release of the Satanism in America report. If the PMRC is an information resource, it's certainly a selective one.

This demonization of different subcultures, linking them to harmful mental and physical effects, has become a popular tactic these days. It's not enough to just dislike something; one has to show that it's as physically or psychologically harmful as dioxin or PCP. In a notorious passage in *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom described, in lurid Humbert Humbert detail, twelve-year-olds forsaking Plato and Aristotle and throbbing sexually to rock music on their Sony Walkmans. More recently, Michael Medved has portrayed the film industry as a decadent, soul-sick coterie of dissolute leftists in *Hollywood Vs. America*-- an image that isn't very different from Jack Chick's caricatures of gays, Satanists, and secular humanists. If one is convinced that a rotten elite is polluting our society with garbage culture, then it's a lot easier to believe in clandestine groups of baby-killers and blood-drinkers. Or, as Gerry O'Sullivan puts it, "Boo Radley's always living somewhere."

In striking contrast to the Satan hysteria, Ed Maxwell, a Delaware police officer, conducts workshops on occult beliefs and law enforcement that stress understanding and restraint. "We're responsible to maintain people's ability to worship, as long as they don't break local laws. In the past, if a police officer saw a group of Pagans holding a ritual around a bonfire in the woods, they might automatically think, 'Oh, this is Satanic, a baby's about to be killed.' In reality, it's their First Amendment right to practice that, as long as no laws are broken."

Maxwell's seminars are designed to avoid the kind of subculture-demonization that many of the Satan-mongers encourage. "We do an awareness type of thing, saying, 'This is what the occult is.' We try to break down the areas of Paganism, Afro-Cuban Religions, give a little background, and say as long as they don't cross that imaginary line, they're protected by the First Amendment. When they cross that line, you're dealing with a crime. You don't go arrest a Satanist. You arrest a criminal."

O'Sullivan points out that accounts of Satanic rituals and child abuse became progressively more baroque as time went by, almost trying to outdo each other in a spiral of horrors. Warnke's 1973 account (*The Satan Seller*) does not describe

any ritual killings; but twenty years later, and after the precedents of Stratford and Smith, he suddenly managed to recall child murders and ritual torture for his 1991 book *Schemes of Satan*.

By 1985, 20/20 had done a program on the subject with Mike Warnke as a consultant, and the Geraldo show had brought on Dr. Rebecca Brown, author of *He Came to Set the Captives Free*, and who could have stepped whole and breathing from Ken Russell's film *The Devils*. "Brown" was the pseudonym of Ruth Bailey, a former physician who'd had her license revoked in Indiana for a variety of professional transgressions. These included diagnosing brain tumors and cancers as the work of demons, telling her patients that other physicians were actually demons and devils, addicting her patients to Demerol, and medicating herself on the stuff as well.

Five hundred years after the Inquisition, the mainstream culture was back to hunting witches again. . . and it was no longer unreasonable to believe in blood-drinking devil cults lurking in every neighborhood.

"Getting in Touch" with Cotton Mather

Gerry O'Sullivan believes that we're entering another resurgence of the Satanic Panic. Claims of Satanic Ritual Abuse are being circulated among those he diplomatically describes as "well- intentioned, but misinformed" therapists, who are more impressed with the apparent sincerity, consistency, and narrative quality of repressed memories than with forensic verification of the stories. Rather than passing muster in peer-reviewed scientific journals, the standard documents on Satanic cult claims-- rituals, robes, chants and prayers, shapes of daggers, kinds of torture, etc.-- are circulated at conferences in a kind of samizdat of photocopied papers, outlines and standard questionnaires.

The charge is corroborated in part by George Ganaway, Director of the Ridgeview Center for Dissociative Disorders in Atlanta. "Many of the clinicians in my field began to attend seminars held by authorities around the country, who were reporting that their patients seemed to be telling similar stories about transgenerational mega- cults involved in human sacrifices. The people who attended these seminars would go back to their practices with lists of questions for their patients in the trance state, and began to report stories from their own patients."

Rev. Kathleen Roney-Wilson, of the Somerset County Chaplaincy Council in New Jersey, presents accounts of children being forced into animal sex and mind-shattering rituals in her article "Healing Survivors of Satanic Sexual Abuse." She warns that the article "is not intended as a horror story. . . nor is it intended to conduct a witch hunt" before leaping right into accounts of child torture. Roney- Wilson rhapsodizes about "pain corridors" and the Great Darkness before asserting that "If there is any hope for those who have been abused by satanic groups, it lies at the foot of the Cross of Jesus Christ."

Multiple Personality Disorder crops up a lot in the Satan literature. An extremely rare syndrome, MPD is related to childhood abuse, and is perhaps the only psychological mechanism that could explain why survivors fail to remember several years' worth of traumatic events. It also begs the question as to how someone with multiple personalities can also be integrated enough to conduct complex rituals, as well as conceal multiple murders. In many guides, it is suggested that Satanists, through a process of ritual torture, murder, and mind games, actually instill MPD in children to ensure cult control over their minds and to discredit their testimonies later on!

The Rev. Dr. Gary Lee of Heartways Counseling and Consultants (formerly Heartways Ministries), who works with SRA survivors in Illinois, estimates that perhaps two to three percent of the United States' population-- that's five to eight million people-- are actively involved in Satanic ritual abuse. According to Lee, a typical satanic group will kill between seven and twenty people a year. He also claims that these sacrifices tend to be babies kidnapped from hospitals, and that abortion clinics allow cults to use aborted fetuses in their rituals.

Locally, Rosalind Dutton, a therapist and senior partner of the Wissahickon Counselling Associates, has been holding monthly support group meetings for Satanic Ritual Abuse survivors for three years. Unlike many of the sources of SRA claims, she describes a non-hypnotic process where an adult first experiences some kind of anxiety or fear, begins to remember traumatic incidents later on, and details about sexual abuse and Satanic rituals emerge through later therapy.

Supporting Gary Lee's 2-3% figures, Dutton says that "There are animals that are sacrificed, and children are made to eat parts of the animal. Children have to kill other children in order to live: they're told that if they don't do this, they will die. They're put in cages and sold to other groups." Dutton also supports the claims of infanticide, child murder, ritual torture, and breeders that others have circulated.

In response to these horror stories, Gerry O'Sullivan says, "The great thing about Satanists-- at least, as they're depicted by evangelicals and therapists-- is that they don't exist. They're not going to come forward and say, 'We only killed two children last year, not twenty. Get it right!'"

Grand Guignol Romper Room

Apart from the say-so of former Satanists, is there any solid evidence that these horrible events are going on? If a

Satanic group averages twenty members, Gary Lee's figures would give us, at least, 250,000 separate Satanic groups in the United States, responsible for, at least, 1.75 million murders every year. This is a death rate higher than that of the Vietnam War by several orders of magnitude. (Using Lee's higher estimates, we'd have 7.5 million Satanists committing 7.5 million murders a year-- nearly three times the population of Philadelphia.) If we charitably estimate an average Satanic group at a thousand members, this would provide 5,000 groups committing a low-end yearly estimate of 35,000 murders-- a number well in excess of the 20- 23,000 murders, solved and unsolved, that are committed every year.

"Where do we get rid of 35,000 bodies?" asks Ed Maxwell. "That's 700 bodies per state. In a state like Delaware, in a bad year, you might have twenty murders. Delaware's a small state-- we'd notice 700 fresh graves."

Have any SRA survivors, flush with vivid memories of Satanic masses and multiple infanticides, ever provided enough verifiable evidence to convict anyone for these thousands of murders? In a word, no. In over twenty years, Mike Warnke has never provided police with any information about the Satanists and drug dealers he claims to have known. Michelle Smith's and Lauren Stratford's allegations haven't led to anyone being convicted for several hundred infant murders. And not one Satanic Ritual Abuse survivor has provided any evidence that would expose this nationwide conspiracy of Satanists, who ostensibly have a track record of butchery that beats out Hitler's.

To explain this, Rosalind Dutton says, "It's very complicated. . . . No one has been found guilty when it's been brought to the legal system because people don't believe it. The people who are involved in this are at every level. There are doctors who do not record the fact that babies are born because they're being killed. There are doctors that do not record the hospital work that they do. There are judges who are part of the Satanic cult who would never convict anybody. There is hardly anywhere where we as people could really find a fair hearing."

To George Ganaway, this is a familiar story. "In Michelle Remembers, sacrifices involved burning bodies in open fires. When forensic experts pointed out that an open fire isn't hot enough to completely burn a body, the stories began to change. It became that bodies were being burnt up in crematoriums, and undertakers were part of this cult. Those stories were checked out and shown that they couldn't be true. Then they came up with stories of portable crematoriums on wheels that they'd keep out of sight. When someone presented information that would contradict that belief [such a crematorium would need massive amounts of fuel, and it'd be the size of a Mack truck], the individual would come up with a new explanation." There are reports that some therapists wish to change the designation of Satanic Ritual Abuse to Sadistic Ritual Abuse-- possibly because the stories of baby-murders have met with so much disbelief and so little substantiation.

"I understand that it boggles the mind," says Dutton. "It's not something our brains can assimilate. It's something that's happened for centuries. It isn't a recent phenomenon. Satanic Ritual Abuse has its origins in Europe, a long time ago. Historians talk about it happening in the Middle Ages." Gerry O'Sullivan points out that many of these accounts were blood libels against Jews and slanders against heretics-- and supported by confessions obtained through torture by the Inquisition. "It's very interesting, three hundred years after the Salem witch hunts, to see a small group of rather credulous mental health professionals resurrecting old myths," he says.

Those Weren't the Days

Outside, it could be the last warm Saturday of the year. But Pamela Freyd is sitting in a windowless room at the University City Science Center, assembling a mass mailing for the False Memory Syndrome Foundation. During our interview, she hands me Xeroxed reprints of articles and scientific papers discussing the dynamics of hypnosis, group therapy, survivor stories and the impact of Courage to

Heal, an influential book in the incest recovery movement. It's been Pam Freyd's job since March, as the Foundation's Executive Director, to try to clarify some very arcane issues of human memory and trauma.

"Parents were calling therapists with stories that they'd been falsely accused, by their adult children, of things the parents vehemently denied," she explains. "About twenty percent of them were accused of Satanic ritual abuse, and as many as a third of the parents we've surveyed had no idea what they'd been accused of. Their adult children had gone into therapy of some sort and recovered repressed memories.

"The stories we're documenting are limited to those that come out of a particular circumstance: when there are people who claim that they've never had any awareness of something, who go into a therapeutic setting, and who recover memories that other people say are not true. The first step as a group was to see if, indeed, there was such a problem." And since March, the Foundation has been in contact with 1,400 families that are facing accusations and/or lawsuits based on recovered memories. (These families include Pamela Freyd's; her adult daughter has made similar accusations against Freyd's husband.) "What's at issue are the methods used to elicit those memories, and what happens as a consequence of the memories."

Some of the memory-recovery methods that the Foundation considers warning flags include hypnosis, the use of sodium amytal, trance work, body massages, group sessions and reading self-help books. Remember, two of the seminal books

on Satanic Ritual Abuse-- Michelle Remembers and Satan's Underground-- were based on the hypnotically-recalled memories of cult survivors.

Freyd points out that "None of those methods are known to provide memories of a kind that are necessarily reliable. In fact, if a memory is enhanced by hypnosis, it's not allowed as testimony in a criminal trial. Although these memories are extremely vivid and compellingly real to the people who have them, they're not necessarily based on events that actually happened."

In the 1950s, a federal research mandate to understand hypnosis-- prompted by dramatic stories of "brainwashed" wartime prisoners, a la The Manchurian Candidate-- led to a quantification of what psychologist Herbert Spiegel termed the Grade Five Syndrome. Grade Fives were highly suggestible, extremely susceptible to trance states, compliant with the directions of their therapists, and vulnerable to introspective therapy techniques.

As Pam Freyd points out, people enter a therapy situation "expecting to find an answer, seeking help." Indeed, Grade Fives seem to thrive in therapy situations-- there's a marked tendency to confabulate, to create fantasies that the person believes as being real. Even non-directed group therapy can encourage this; especially when the people getting the healing attention are the ones with the most sensational stories

"There is virtually no reliable way to differentiate accurate from inaccurate memories without outside corroboration," says George Ganaway. "Experimental hypnosis studies have shown that one can induce the individuals to confabulate memories and experiences that never happened, and to make up details that are just as vivid and accompanied by intense emotions."

To illustrate this, Ganaway cites an experiment by the aforementioned Spiegel. "He hypnotized an otherwise healthy volunteer to believe that there was a Communist conspiracy afoot to take over the country. When the subject was interviewed by a local news broadcaster, in order to sound more convincing, he began making up details of attending the hatching of the plot in a theater in Sheridan Square, with details about the theater, the loft, the posters on the wall, the beer they drank, and the people involved. None of those people ever existed. The subject didn't know where this belief came from, so in order to explain it, he had to invent more and more convincing details to support it."

George Ganaway may have caught a glimpse of the future of the debates over false memory syndrome. While attending a conference on UFO abductions at MIT, he "described to them the Satanic ritual abuse experiences, and how closely they parallel the UFO abduction experience-- including the entire baby-breeding phenomenon and the idea of serial abductions. The people at the conference had never heard anything about the Satanic Cult experiences. They thought that was so bizarre.

"They said that, obviously, the Satanic Ritual Abuse memories have to be screen memories for actual alien abductions, and the aliens had planted their memories of the cult experiences. Now, if you go to the Satanic Ritual Abuse seminars, they'll tell you the opposite; they'll say that the UFO abduction experiences are all screen memories for actual satanic cult experiences."

The issue of child sexual abuse virtually guarantees the Foundation some degree of controversy. Even the question of how often it happens is open to debate. The most widely-circulated estimate is that it happens to one in four people. A study from the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, estimates that two-tenths of one percent of the population has been sexually abused as a child. Another study, from the National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse, states that estimates have ranged between 6% and 62%; the Foundation's newsletter says this variance "tells us we do not have reliable information on the problem." "If people are genuinely concerned about addressing the issue of child sexual abuse," says Freyd, "collecting accurate data should be a top priority."

Add to this a certain ambiguity over what constitutes rediscovery of repressed memories in adults. Courage to Heal states that "If you are unable to remember any specific instances. . . but still have a feeling that something abusive happened to you, it probably did."

In the wake of the McMartin Preschool scandal, the battle cry "Believe the Children" has become the name of a national organization for parents who believe their children's testimonies of sexual and Satanic abuse-- despite the lack of corroborative evidence. And Believing the Children isn't easy when adults have acted as mediators, as the case of Seattle's Bill and Kathleen Swan demonstrates. The San Jose Mercury News reports that, on October 2 of 1985, Lisa Conradi was hired as a substitute teacher at the pre-school of the Swans' three year old daughter, Kimberly. Inside of her first half-hour on the job, Conradi had interrogated Kimberly-- no notes were taken, so what really was said is unknown-- and pegged her as a victim of child sexual abuse.

Within three days, Kimberly was taken into protective custody, and a month later, the Swans were arrested. They were eventually convicted of child sexual abuse, mainly because the jury and the courts of appeal decided that three year-old children do not make up stories about sexual abuse. No physical evidence of sexual abuse was ever found, but as of this writing, the Swans are serving a 50-month sentence, and awaiting a circuit court ruling in the summer of 1993. (In July,

Kathleen was allowed to see her daughter-- the first time since 1986.)

It has since turned out that Lisa Conradi, the substitute teacher who first accused the Swans, had a history of finding allegedly abused children in several other day-care centers where she'd worked. Claiming to be a survivor of child sexual abuse, Conradi has also boasted, "I've turned in at least 20 kids," and of going from door to door, accusing her neighbors of having abused her own children. There are people, Conradi said, "who would say I'm on a witch hunt and am a fanatic because I don't like to see kids abused, and when I see it, I turn it in."

Laura Davis, one of the co-authors of *Courage to Heal*, sees the Foundation as part of a backlash, saying that "We have become effective enough to make an impact on people who have an investment in abusing children, hiding abuse they're committed, denying their spouse's abuse. . . Add the people who don't want to believe that so many children are abused, and there's a sizable number to oppose us. . ."

Freyd takes the critics very seriously, although she admits that some of it is "just off-target. There is not an issue whether there are such things as repressed memories. It's known that there are." She acknowledges that "For many years, people couldn't look at the issue, and incest is so horrendous that people shut it off. But people who ordinarily would use their skills of critical analysis have suspended them just because the topic is sexual abuse."

But the prospect of well-meaning therapists discrediting the issue through bad methodology raises Freyd's concern. "I have seen a tremendous change for women in being able to come forth to say you've been abused or assaulted in some way. The awareness of abuse has come to the fore. I would hate to see us lose that."

In the meantime, a lot of families have been shattered, and at least one person is currently in prison over the matter. Paul Ingram, the former Chief Civil Deputy of Thurston County, Washington, is currently serving twenty years in prison for rape-- on the basis of what could be false memories of Satanic Ritual Abuse.

In September of 1988, Ingram's 22-year-old daughter Ericka attended a Christian retreat, where she claimed that Ingram had raped her when she was five years old. Within a few weeks, Ericka was accusing Ingram of having raped her nearly every night for the past seventeen years. Her younger sister Julie, also at the retreat, began a similar series of accusations.

When confronted, Ingram maintained his innocence at first. But, in keeping with his church's doctrines on "Satanic deception," Ingram acknowledged to the interrogators that his memories of the events might have been blocked. According to Dr. Richard Ofshe in *The International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*, Ingram was repeatedly told that sex offenders frequently repress their memories, and the interrogators promised him that, if he admitted his guilt on the matter, his memories would return.

The records of subsequent interrogations (23 sessions, over a five-month period) demonstrated how those memories eventually did come back. A psychologist whom Ofshe calls "Dr. Smith" participated in the interrogations; Dr. Smith led Ingram through a series of relaxation techniques that, in Ofshe's estimate, "dramatically heightened suggestibility and trance logic." While Ingram was in this dissociative state, the interrogators made helpful suggestions to visualize the events that Ingram was accused of.

During this time, Ericka Ingram-- prompted by a reading of *Satan's Underground*-- was claiming that 25 babies had been murdered by Satanic cults, and Julie was talking about having nails driven through her flesh and arms of dead babies being inserted into her vagina. Both daughters claimed that they'd been forced to attend hundreds of Satanic rituals where these horrible events took place. No evidence was ever found to support these claims, but Paul Ingram had no trouble 'visualizing' them under Dr. Smith's interrogation.

In May of 1989, Ingram, at the urging of the prosecutor, pleaded guilty to six counts of rape. The visits by the interrogators and Dr. Smith stopped, and within a month Ingram's confidence in his pseudo- memories had evaporated. He is, however, still in prison.

Like we said, it's a good thing we don't burn people at the stake these days.

Brian "Rev. P-K" Siano (revpk@cellar.org) sez:

"Trust your own judgement on all things; but the real work lies in making your 'judgement' trustworthy."