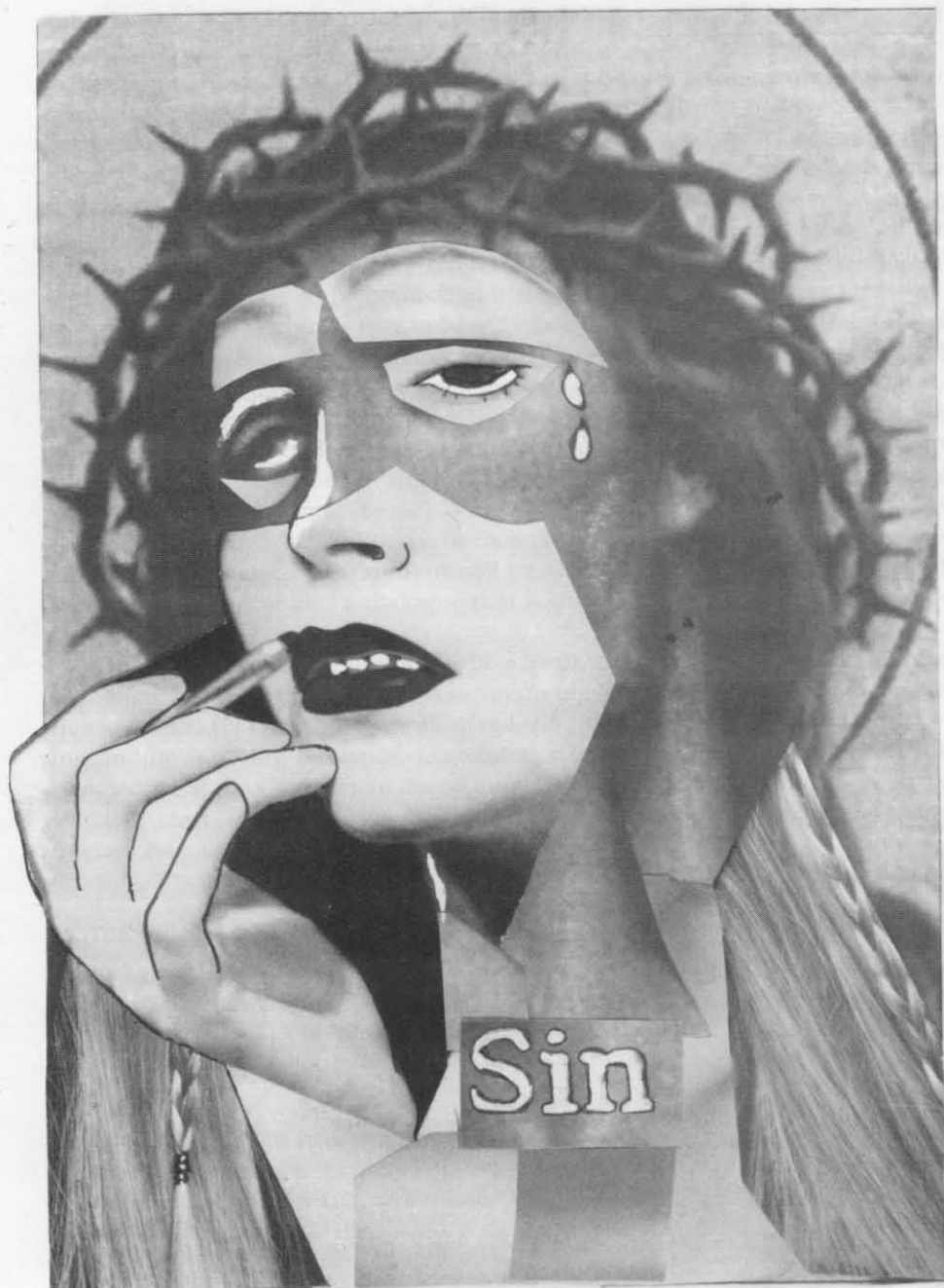




Sin By Stephen Pfohl

THE DEMONIC PERSPECTIVE: *Otherworldly Interpretations of Deviance*

I have seen the grim statistics on divorce, broken homes, abortion, juvenile delinquency, promiscuity and drug addiction. I have witnessed firsthand the human wreckage and the shattered lives that statistics can never reveal in their totality. I am convinced that we need a spiritual and moral revival in America if America is to survive the twentieth century.

The Reverend Jerry Falwell¹

Pilate went back into the palace and called Jesus to him. "Are you King of the Jews?" he asked. . . . "Indeed I am a King," Jesus replied; "the reason for my birth and the reason for my coming into the world is to witness to the truth. Every man who loves truth recognizes my voice." . . . To which Pilate retorted, "What is 'truth'? . . . Won't you speak to me? Don't you realize that I have the power to set you free, and the power to have you crucified?" "You have no power at all against me," replied Jesus, "except what was given to you from above."

John 18:33, 37-38; 19:10-11

INTRODUCTION

On February 16, 1980, a fight broke out between Arne Johnson and his best friend, Alan Bono. The 19-year-old Johnson had gone over to Bono's house to help repair a broken radio. With him were his two teenage sisters and his girlfriend. Within a short time an event occurred which radically altered the course of Arne Johnson's life and ended the life of his friend. Alan had been drinking. He started talking rudely to the young women. Arne took offense. A fight broke out. A knife flashed—a 5-inch folding knife. It belonged to Arne Johnson. Alan Bono died. In the fall of 1981 Arne Johnson stood trial for Bono's death.²

The trial of Arne Johnson was a puzzling and dramatic event. I suppose any trial of a shy, gentle small-town Connecticut boy who had delivered papers and captured Little League trophies would be somewhat puzzling and dramatic. But Arne's trial was more puzzling and dramatic. This was not simply because he was known as "such a nice boy," an all-American boy, a boy who had once used his "Newsboy of the Year" prize money to buy his mother a much-needed secondhand car. Nor was it because he had been "such a religious boy," a boy who had been honored by his local minister for bringing in the most students to his Bible class. What made Arne Johnson's trial so puzzling and dramatic was the basis for his plea of not guilty. Without challenging the facts of the stabbing, Arne's attorney argued that he should not be held criminally responsible for Bono's death. Why? The reason, we are told, is because at the time of the stabbing Arne Johnson had been possessed by a demonic spirit.

A demonic spirit? This sounds like something out of a "made-for-TV" horror movie. So do the other "facts" of Arne's case. These involve what, in Connecticut, has become known as the strange case of the "Brookfield demons." The case begins in the home of the Glatzel family. Debbie Glatzel was Arne Johnson's girlfriend. Arne was around when Debbie's younger brother began acting strangely. The 11-year-old Glatzel reported seeing frightening apparitions. He had been helping Debbie move into her new apartment when he suddenly felt a shove from behind. When he turned around he saw the shape of an elderly man pointing an ominous finger in his direction. He heard the voice of the old man warning him to beware. The old man disappeared as quickly as he had come. The frightened boy asked his mother to take him home. Later that evening he experienced a second vision, this one more terrifying than the first. It was the old man again. This time he had cloven feet and was accompanied by two hideous-looking "helpers." The first appeared to have a bullet hole in his forehead. His face dripped with blood from the open wound. The second was a dark figure—burned and blackened. This nightmarish trio would return several times to frighten and harass the young Glatzel boy. They would shortly be joined by some forty other "demons."

Several weeks after seeing the initial apparitions, Debbie Glatzel's younger brother was plagued by all the classic symptoms that experts associate with demonic possession. Two such experts, psychic researchers Lorraine and Ed Warren, were recommended to the Glatzel family by their parish priest. The Warrens were well known in psychic circles for their previous investigations of the so-called Amityville Horror. During the first ten minutes of the Warrens' visit to the Glatzel home they heard loud knocking and banging beneath their feet. Within a short time they decided that the Brookfield case fit a known pattern of what they understood as demonic possession.

The Warrens joined with Catholic priests from the diocese of Bridgeport in trying to aid the afflicted 11-year-old boy. Arne Johnson also tried to help. He was there as the "possessed" child's symptoms multiplied. The child began to quote esoteric passages from Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The child had no prior knowledge of these texts. How is it that he recited them precisely? How was

he able to report accurately on events that occurred in rooms beyond his sight and hearing? Was it the same way in which he foretold events that were yet to happen? He once told a young woman that the demons were going to "fix" her; that they were going to do something to her eye. The next day her own child "accidentally" poked his thumb into her eye, and she had to be taken to an emergency room for treatment. He told of an auto accident that subsequently occurred and accurately predicted that a neighborhood dog would be hit by a car. He also informed Arne Johnson that Arne was to die the next day. Arne fell out of a 70-foot tree. His fall was partly broken when his foot became ensnared in one of the branches. He was injured but did not die.

A team of Catholic priests performed four religious rituals aimed at freeing the boy from his possession. Arne Johnson was present at two of these ceremonies—a high mass celebrated at the Glatzel home and an all-night vigil conducted at a local convent. Johnson assisted in restraining the boy while his body shuddered under one or another of his strange "attacks." On one occasion he did more than that. He challenged the "demons" to substitute his body for that of the afflicted boy. According to Ed Warren, "He saw this little boy choking, strangling, being beaten and thrown across the room. He screamed out, 'Don't do it to him. Do it to me. Take me on. I'm stronger.' Nobody, not the priests nor the nuns nor Lorraine nor myself would ever say anything like that, because we know the consequences."³

The consequences—? According to the Warrens and other observers, Arne Johnson also began to display symptoms of possession. At least four times between August and the following February Johnson exhibited signs of "being taken over." One time he fell into a seizure of violent shaking. In another instance he smashed his fist through a chest of drawers. The next day he recalled nothing of the incident. A third time he was presented with a vision of a figure which proceeded to slap and shake him. The fourth time was the night of Alan Bono's murder. When Arne Johnson's case went to court, Ed and Lorraine Warren were prepared to testify that, at the time of his argument with Bono, Arne was again seized by demons and the demons directed his hand in the brutal stabbing of his friend.

The case of the Brookfield demons, including the murder of Alan Bono, is most extraordinary because it occurred in a time and place far from those in which demonic possession was viewed as a plausible interpretation of deviant behavior. Perhaps it would be less extraordinary if it had occurred during the Middle Ages or in bewitched Salem, Massachusetts, during the seventeenth century or in some tribal society which even today experiences the "reality" of the spirit world as equal to or greater than the "reality" of the natural world. In such contexts the "demonic perspective" functions as a powerful explanation of the causes, consequences, and control of deviant behavior. In our own western society such a perspective is apt to be viewed as little more than superstition.

It has been several centuries since western society operated under a "sacred canopy" of supernatural understanding. Historians of religious thought trace our own "breakthrough" into essentially secular, naturalistic, or non-

religious explanations of the world to a constellation of events between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. Such scholars point to the fracturing of a unitary Christianity under Protestantism, the spread of secular economic rationality under capitalism, the primacy of reason during the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, and the development of modern science and technology as forces of secularization.⁴

What does it mean to have a secularized as opposed to a supernatural or "demonic" view of the world? According to the sociologist Peter Berger, secularization refers to "the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols. . . . Put simply, this means that the modern West has produced an increasing number of individuals who look upon the world and their own lives without the benefit of religious interpretations."⁵

If western society has become increasingly secularized, why begin a consideration of theoretical perspectives on deviance with a perspective whose dominance is largely in the past? The answer is severalfold. First, as seen in the case of the Brookfield demons, our contemporary world is not entirely devoid of demonic or supernatural theories about what causes people to act deviantly. Additional evidence for this position is presented later in this chapter. Second, in order to fully appreciate the form and content of what are currently more acceptable or more plausible theories of deviance, it is important to understand that which went before and that against which these secular understandings do battle. Third, critics of certain modern secular perspectives have recently argued that some of these are little more than the same old demonic explanation under a new guise. In order to understand and evaluate such a critique we must first examine the nature of the demonic perspective in its original form.

THEORETICAL IMAGES

To go against the order of society as religiously legitimated . . . is to make a compact with the primeval forces of darkness.

Peter L. Berger⁶

The demonic perspective is the oldest of all known perspectives on deviance. It suggests that we look for the cause and cure of deviant behavior in the realm of the supernatural. Deviance is equated with sin. It is viewed as a transgression against the will of God (or the gods). According to the demonic perspective the human world is but a battleground for the forces of another, more powerful world—the world of the supernatural. We humans are pictured as constantly torn between the supernatural forces of good and evil. When we succumb to the influence of evil forces we are drawn into deviant behavior. This happens in one of two ways: through temptation or through possession.

The road of temptation is the first route to demonic deviance. Along this road we are seduced by the alluring temptations of evil. The biblical story of Adam and Eve's fall from grace into the domain of Satan is the prototype of all such seductions into deviance. Lured on by the promise of God-like knowledge, our biblical parents eat the forbidden fruit and are thereafter weakened and forever susceptible to the dark forces of evil. As the story goes, we inherit their weakness. Also seducible by the devil, we must fight a constant battle to stay on the straight and narrow path of the good.

The first road to demonic deviance, the road of temptation, is one in which we humans are afforded some measure of choice. We can, in principle, say no to Satan (or whichever demonic figure our particular religious tradition employs to symbolize the forces of evil). Yet, following our ancestral fall from grace, we are said to be weakened and seducible by the multiple forms taken by the devil—sloth, anger, lust, pride, envy, gluttony, greed, or however else one might catalogue the “deadly sins” of deviance.

The second road to demonic deviance is more determinant. This is the road of possession. A possessed person is believed to be literally taken over by the devil or by some evil spirit. Once possessed, a person may be viewed as no longer responsible—as no longer able to choose between good and evil, sin and conformity. But could an essentially good or innocent person ever become possessed? The demonic perspective is not entirely clear about this. It does suggest, however, that the possession of innocents may, on occasion, be possible. A case in point involves the outbreak of witchcraft in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1692. This case will be considered in greater detail later. For now it is sufficient to point out that the religious officials who attempted to control the manifestation of the devil in Salem made a clear distinction between a small cadre of possessed girls who had been “taken over” by Satan and the accused witches who were believed to have been seduced into acting as “mediums” or “handmaidens” for Satan's demonic mischief. The girls were to be given spiritual assistance. The witches were to be burned.

In summary, there are two roads to demonic deviance—temptation and possession. The first is less deterministic than the second. Yet, in neither does a deviant ever act entirely on his or her own. Behind every act of deviance lurks the devil. Viewed from this perspective, the deviant might quite literally employ the language of comedian Flip Wilson in proclaiming: “The devil made me do it.”

One other thing should be considered when describing the theoretical image of deviance under the demonic perspective. This involves what might be called the “cosmic consequences” of any deviant act. From the demonic viewpoint, deviant acts are believed to harm more than a particular or immediate victim. Each act of sin or deviance is also a transgression against God. Beyond that, it is also an act against the whole order of nature itself, against the entire cosmos. Every creature in the cosmos—every plant, rock, animal, or fellow human—is affected by the deviant behaviors of others. In this sense

the vested interests of all are clearly linked to the control of deviance. This sense of deviance as “cosmic disruption” is found in numerous religious and literary depictions. Deviance brings the storm or the shadow over the whole of the earthly world and human community.

In performances of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, theatrical imagery effects are often used to convey this sense of the cosmic consequences of deviance. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth tragically succumb to the temptations of ambition and greed. They set out to kill King Duncan in order to gain his throne. In doing so, they not only assume the bloody stains of their own deviance but radically upset the whole balance of nature itself. As the murderous knife strikes, so does the sound of thunder. In the background we hear the terrified sounds of screeching horses and baying dogs. All of creation feels the consequences of this deviance. Peace and order will not be restored until the guilty pay the price for their demonic acts.

Instigated by the devil and affecting the entirety of the cosmos—these are the essential features of the demonic perspective. How are the perpetrators of such deviance to be identified and controlled? In examining these issues, the next two sections, after a brief side trip to present-day Africa, take a step backward into western history, back to a period in which the demonic perspective reigned supreme. The demonic perspective continues in the west today but not to the extent it did during the Middle Ages. Thus, my description of the identification and control of demonic deviance is drawn largely from past history.

IDENTIFYING DEMONIC DEVIANCE

Demonic Deviance among the Kabré

Anthropologist Raymond Verdier provides us with a fascinating account of what might be called the identification of demonic deviance among the Kabré tribe of northern Togo.⁷ For the Kabré, justice means two things: conformity to the plan of the creating God, and respect for the God-given ways of tribal custom. The “justice of men” must then always reflect the “justice of God” in a society organized around what are predominantly supernatural beliefs. But how exactly is this form of justice accomplished? The Kabré employ a form of public trial or a tribunal of “notable elders” who attempt to hear evidence and reconcile disputes between tribal members who cannot settle allegations of wrongdoing in private. Judicial decisions, however, may not always be so simple. How is guilt assessed when alleged acts of deviance involve matters in which there are no visible witnesses? Of particular concern is witchcraft or the hurting of others by casting an evil spell.

When accusations of witchcraft are put forward, the tribe consults a diviner. Such a person is believed to possess a God-given “second sight” such that he or she can trace the origins of evil spirits and spells. The expert testimony of a diviner is, however, open to challenge. In this sense the role of the

diviner is much like that of a psychiatrist in a contemporary criminal trial within our own society. The opinion of the diviner may be very damaging. Yet, if it is denied by the accused, the tribal judges must seek a clearer reading on deviance by consulting God. This is done by subjecting the accused to a very painful trial by ordeal. An accused person who overcomes this ordeal is declared innocent. One such diagnostic ritual consists of having the accused plunge his or her hand into a pan of blazing oil in an effort to retrieve an iron ring without being burned. Of the person who succeeds, it is said *bi li sa i*, "it got him out"; of the one who fails, *bi kpa i*, "it took him."

Discovering Medieval Deviance

The Kabré trial by ordeal closely resembles the inquisitional methods used to identify deviants during the medieval heyday of the demonic perspective within our own society. These pain-producing diagnostic techniques were once satirized on the popular television program *Saturday Night Live* by comedian Steve Martin. Dressed like a medieval monk and brandishing an array of weaponlike "tools" for discovering "evidence of the devil," Martin proceeded to inflict torture on a group of accused sinners. Laughable by today's standards, Martin's grotesque satire was not far from the "facts" of the trial by ordeal as once practiced in the name of God. Such ordeals relied upon the correct reading of supernatural signs provided by God to sort the good from the bad, deviants from the rest of the faithful. These identification strategies were often equivalent to or as painful as the punishment for deviance. This, however, was of little importance to a society immersed in otherworldly concerns.

Trial by ordeal quite frankly meant trial by torture. Such trials were presided over by priests or other ordained representatives of the divine will here on earth. Admissions of deviance were literally produced by the disembodiment of deviants from their present sinful state. The reactions of suspected deviants to the searing pain of inquisitorial torture were studied as a sign from above as to whether the accused was guilty of a particular act. While the guilty eventually cried out admissions, it was believed that God fortified the innocent to persevere during the ordeal of their diagnosis. Thus it was entirely possible that the innocent might ultimately be vindicated only by the steadfast endurance of pain until death.

While such torturous diagnostic practices may today seem horrific, during the demonic period there was nothing particularly sacred about the body. In a world which gave primacy to supernatural imagery there was little profit in preserving the body at the expense of the soul. The ordeal of subjecting the body to religious authority was symbolic of the true supernatural order of things. Thus, divinely ordained inquisitioners were carefully trained to "find the tenderest point through which to assail the conscience and the heart."⁸ In the words of the historian H. C. Lea, they were "relentless in inflicting agony on body and brain; . . . using without scruple the most violent alternatives of

hope and fear. . . . Yet through all this there shines the evident conviction that they were doing the work of God."⁹

Trial by battle was another method commonly used to identify demonic deviance during the Middle Ages. The image most associated with this strategy is that of two knights jousting. Since it was believed that the justice of God was mirrored in natural events, the good person would be victorious, while the deviant would fail. Strength in combat was thus a sign of innocence. Although trial by battle was reserved more for those of wealth than was trial by ordeal, both methods used natural means to achieve supernatural ends. Both served to diagnose the handiwork of the devil.

Discerning the Devil in Colonial America

While trial by ordeal was common in continental Europe, inquisitional techniques of extracting evidence of the devil were largely absent in England. There, and in the American colonies, a system of common law evolved which emphasized such things as trial by jury, separation of prosecution and judge, and the rights to confront one's accusers and to appeal a verdict of guilt. How then, during the reign of a demonic world view, did the British system identify the "hand of the devil"? An answer is provided by the historical record of the Salem witch trials of 1692.

The "facts" of the Salem case are clear evidence of the continued dominance of demonic theorizing right up until the end of the seventeenth century. The story begins in the colonial home of the Reverend Samuel Parris. There, several young girls (ages 9 to 20) spent play time with Tituba, a mysterious "kitchen slave" from Barbados who was reputedly skilled in the art of magic. The story ends with the deaths of twenty-two convicted witches. What exactly happened may never be known. What was alleged to have happened involves the gradual possession, or "taking over," of the young girls by a demonic spirit. "They would scream unaccountably, fall into grotesque convulsions, and sometimes scamper along on their hands and knees making noises like the barking of a dog."¹⁰ Who was it that had conspired with the devil to cause such an outrage? Colonial magistrates demanded an answer. They implored the possessed maidens to identify their assailants.

The names Tituba, Sara Good, and Sara Osburne were spewed from the mouths of the possessed. One could not have imagined a more likely and more vulnerable trio of defendants: Tituba, the strange dark foreigner; Sara Good, the pipe-smoking, leather-faced village hag; Sara Osburne, a woman of higher social standing but also of scandalous reputation, a woman who had shocked the Puritan community of Salem by "living with a man" without being married to him. These three were brought to trial, convicted, sentenced to death, and executed. But the epidemic of witchcraft did not end there. More signs of the devil appeared. Animals died suddenly. Children were born dead. Good people, such as Ann Putnam, lost several children at birth. The search for more witches continued. The possessed girls were asked to name more names and did. Soon the whole Salem community was caught up

in a mania of witches. The devil and his disciples were everywhere. Such deviants were to be identified and put to death. But how, lacking a tradition of inquisitional torture, were Puritan magistrates to properly sort out evidence of the devil?

Five types of evidence were accepted to identify the Salem witches. The first was a trial by clever test, if not exactly by painful ordeal. It involved making accused witches say the Lord's Prayer in public. Since witches were believed to say this prayer backward, it was believed that they would slip up when asked to say it in the correct God-fearing manner. Any slips of the tongue were then taken to mean that those tongues belonged to demonic deviants. A second form of evidence simply involved the testimony of those who attributed their own bad fortune to the demonic activities of the accused. A third directed examiners to search for "physical marks of the devil": warts, moles, scars, or other bodily imperfections through which the devil might have penetrated the alleged deviant. The fourth was confession of guilt. Of the hundreds of persons tried, *only* fifty confessed. Ironically they were among those who by their repentance were spared the gallows. Of the twenty-two who died (nineteen were put to death by formal execution, one was pressed to death after remaining mute before the inquiries of examiners, and two died in jail), none had publicly confessed. So much for this fourth form of "hard evidence." The fifth, the most commonly relied upon, entailed what has been described as "spectral evidence." This involved reports of persons who had supposedly seen "floating specters," or ghostly forms which had taken on the shape or appearance of one of the accused. The basis for this particular identification strategy was the belief that the devil cannot assume the shape of an innocent person.¹¹

It is very unlikely that any of the five types of evidence mentioned above would be taken seriously in a court of law today. In fact, two of them (mistakes in saying the Lord's Prayer and contested accusations by afflicted parties) were precluded by Puritan officials themselves as the number of witch trials expanded into the hundreds. Two others (physical marks and confessions induced under a situation of great stress) also came to be viewed with suspicion. In actuality it seems that "spectral evidence" became the central tool used to diagnose witches as the trials dragged on to their deadly completion.¹² Can you imagine putting someone to death because of spectral evidence? In today's world someone who sees specters is likely to be put in a mental hospital, but this was far from the case during the reign of the demonic perspective. Spectral evidence was, after all, supernatural evidence, and this was the truest form of evidence available to God's community on earth.

The Confession

The Lateran Council of 1215 was of great significance in shaping the future of the demonic perspective. A centralized gathering of leading church officials, this "fatherly" assembly banned the use of trial by ordeal and battle as meth-

ods for determining the guilt or innocence of accused sinners. It also moved dominant western understandings of deviance in the direction of individualized rather than collective responsibility. This it did by instituting the sacrament of penance, or confession. This ritual paved the way for the focus on individual responsibility that would become a key aspect of classical theorizing during the eighteenth century. By shifting the locus of deviant action from the community to the mind of the sinner, confession altered the social and spiritual geography of rule breaking. It also fostered a modern sense of personal autonomy, freed from the cosmic interconnectedness that characterized demonic theorizing.

The ability and obligation of people to confess is today so common that it may be difficult to appreciate the historical importance of the cultural changes set in motion by the sacrament of penance. Indeed, as Michel Foucault points out, whether in the courtroom or in the bedroom, whether in a therapist's office or on a TV talk show, since the late Middle Ages the obligation to confess has become so widespread that "we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains."¹³ The omnipresent confessing of crimes, secrets, and passions is no neutral matter. It is indicative of a powerful shift from group-centered to individually focused senses of moral responsibility.

SOCIAL CONTROL OF DEMONIC DEVIANCE

If your right eye leads you astray, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than that your whole body should be thrown on to the rubbish-heap.

Matthew 5:29

The demonic perspective differentiated little between various types of deviants. Inasmuch as all were seen as demonically inspired, each (whether a murderer, an adulterer, or a heretic) was subject to the same general strategy of control—a religiously administered ritual of public punishment. The purpose of such punishment was to purge the sinner's body of traces of the devil and thereby to restore the body of the community as a whole to its proper relation to God. Rituals are highly patterned actions which, when performed correctly, connect people to a mythic or transcendental sense of what things are and should be, of what is real and how they should act in accord with that reality. Rituals of religious punishment remind participants of the supreme reality of God's will and, by purging evil, restore humans to their proper relationship as servants of the divine.

During the reign of medieval Christianity obedience to God meant obedience to the church. Priests acted as official mediators between God, the sinner, and a spiritual community afflicted with the devil. In presiding over the ritual sacrament of penance, priests granted God's forgiveness and prescribed punishments which cleansed an infested body of evil. Church officials also acted to prevent demonic temptations, particularly those associated with

heresy and sins of the flesh. In the years following the Protestant Reformation, for instance, the Roman Catholic Church unleashed its army of Jesuits to combat heretics by a fearsome preaching of the papal gospel. So, likewise, was the spread of unorthodox religious thought countered by church censorship. Of particular importance was the papal Index of Prohibited Books, which forbade believers to tempt their eyes with devilish reading matter. No control policies, however, were as feared or as symbolically important as the supernatural sanctioning of physical punishment. Often intense, brutal, and searingly painful, the ritual execution of such punishments symbolized the supremacy of spirit over matter. Think of the imagery evoked by burning a demonically infested body. Burning was a form of punishment which reached its peak during the high point of demonically generated deviance—the Spanish Inquisition. Why? Burning evoked an image of hell as the ultimate resting place for unpurged sinners. The act of burning the heretic or infidel symbolized this aspect of the “true” nature of the supernatural world. Thus burning functioned as a “divine reflective punishment . . . to give the living a taste of hell before he passed on.”¹⁴

Another symbolic aspect of religious punishment was found in the principle of *lex talionis*, or “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, stroke for stroke, burning for burning.” This principle was used to justify the mutilation of sinners. Thus the thief had a hand cut off, while the penis of a rapist, the tongue of a liar, or the heart of a traitor might be ritually excised. Such punishments underscored the subordination of natural bodies to supernatural struggles between good and evil.

What would become of the demonic spirit which had previously lived within the body of the dead sinner? Fear of such spirits led to a variety of apotropaic rituals—rituals which accompanied the use of the death penalty and which served as a means of warding off evil spirits. Such rituals provided “practical” protection against spirits that might be lingering in or around the body of the condemned. They also served as symbolic reminders of the primacy of the supernatural.

Consider the apotropaic function of that particularly brutal punishment known as “breaking on the wheel.” This form of purging may be traced back to the practice of *apotympanismos* in ancient Greece. After the deviant was pegged to a board with irons, an executioner proceeded to break all his or her major bones with a heavy metal bar. Later variations of the “sacred punishment” included such things as tying someone to the broad side of a wheel and then rolling it down an incline, and pegging a person to the ground and running him or her over with a spiked wheel. Why such elaborate means of death? Because in breaking the bones of a sinner one breaks the hold that an evil spirit exercises over an earthly body. As Graeme Newman suggests, “The bones are seen as the most enduring, lasting part of the body, so by breaking the bones it is believed the culprit’s spirit will be prevented from getting around too easily.”¹⁵

A similar logic has been used to explain such other practices as casting the ashes of a burned sinner to the wind, drawing and quartering, sinking a

drowned body into a bog, staking a body into a fixed position, beheading, and even hanging. For instance, it was not until comparatively modern times that the body of a hanged deviant was taken down and buried. In a world enchanted by all kinds of spirits there was fear that demons within the body of the executed might seep into the earth and thereby endanger its fertility. Hence during the earliest periods of known hangings the dead body would remain swinging between heaven and earth until it decayed and was safely "returned to dust."¹⁶

Another symbolic consequence of religious punishment was the way in which certain supernaturally ordained control rituals provided a divine blessing for hierarchical class distinctions between humans. Compare the ritual of beheading with death by hanging. Beheading was largely reserved for offenders of the highest status. William the Conqueror first introduced this type of "noble punishment" into England when, in 1076, he ordered the execution of the earl of Northumberland. Over the next six centuries the lives claimed by beheading generally included the God-ordained elite of deviants. In 1644 Archbishop Laud actually petitioned to be beheaded rather than hanged. To behead someone is to strike him or her dead with a sword or an axe to the throat, both symbols of valor since ancient times. On the other hand, "Hanging and other lesser forms of execution were appropriate to a class that was held in disdain. . . . In contrast to beheading, throughout history being hanged has been a disgrace, particularly if one were also stripped naked."¹⁷

Public Executions: "Rituals of a Thousand Deaths"

The purgative and symbolic dimensions of demonic punishment were nowhere more evident than in that spectacle of spectacles—the public execution. This elaborate ceremony of religiously sanctioned pain was neither swift nor efficient. Known as the "ritual of a thousand deaths" it involved the application of purifying pain inch by inch to the demonically infested body, with death but the last step in the restoration of supernatural order.

Michel Foucault describes the torturous detail of one such execution.

Bouton, an officer of the watch, left us his account: "The sulphur was lit, but the flame was so poor that only the top of the hand was burnt, and that only slightly. Then the executioner, his sleeves rolled up, took the steel pincers, which had been especially made for the occasion, and which were about a foot and a half long, and pulled first at the calf of the right leg, then at the thigh, and from there at the two fleshy parts of the right arm; then at the breasts. Though a strong, sturdy fellow, this executioner found it so difficult to tear away the pieces of flesh that he set about the same spot two or three times, twisting the pincers as he did so. . . .

"After these tearings with the pincers, Demiens, who cried out profusely, though without swearing, raised his head and looked at himself; the same executioner dipped an iron spoon in the pot containing the boiling potion, which he poured liberally over each wound. Then the ropes that were to be harnessed to the horses were attached with cords to the patient's body. . . .

"Monsieur Le Breton, the clerk of the court, went up to the patient several times and asked him if he had anything to say. He said he had not; at each torment, he cried out, as the damned in hell are supposed to cry out, 'Pardon, my God! Pardon, Lord.' . . . Several confessors went up to him and spoke to him at length; he willingly kissed the crucifix that was held out to him; he opened his lips and repeated: 'Pardon, Lord.'

"The horses tugged hard, each pulling straight on a limb, each horse held by an executioner. After a quarter of an hour, the same ceremony was repeated and finally, after several attempts, the direction of the horses had to be changed, thus: those at the arms were made to pull towards the head, those at the thighs toward the arms, which broke the arms at the joints. This was repeated several times without success. He raised his head and looked at himself. Two more horses had to be added to those harnessed to the thighs, which made six horses in all. Without success.

". . . After two or three attempts, the executioner Samson and he who had used the pincers each drew out a knife from his pocket and cut the body at the thighs instead of severing the legs at the joints; the four horses gave a tug and carried the two thighs after them . . . ; then the same was done to the arms, the shoulders, the arm-pits and the four limbs; the flesh had to be cut almost to the bone, the horses pulling hard carried off the right arm first and the other afterwards.

"When the four limbs had been pulled away, the confessors came to speak to him; but his executioner told them that he was dead, though the truth was that I saw the man move, his lower jaw moving from side to side as if he were talking."¹⁸

Other Rituals of Religious Control: More Shame than Pain

While the ritual application of physical pain remained a primary symbol of social control during the demonic period, other control rituals were more representational in nature. These punishments symbolized the supernatural subjugation of the body without taking pain to its human limits.¹⁹ Thus, the baker who short-weighted his loaves was punished by having bread tied around his neck, while a fishmonger convicted of selling bad fish might be fitted with a collar of decayed smelts. In medieval Europe heretics accused of advocating Judaism were forced to feed on pork in public, while gossiping "scolds" in the American colonies had their tongues cooled by a good public dunking. At other times scolds and such "mouthy" sinners as drunkards, swearers, and noisy schoolchildren were treated to the "scold's bridle," an iron cage placed over the head, with a sharp frontal plate, frequently spiked, protruding into the mouth. A remnant of this religiously inspired ritual of ridicule continued in Providence, Rhode Island, until the eighteenth century. There a "cleft stick" or "whispering stick" was inserted into the mouth of children caught swearing or talking in school.²⁰

Other symbolic rituals of religious penance were self-imposed. These included rituals of mild self-degradation in which a penitent sinner might parade barefoot, clad only in a white sheet, publicly begging God's forgiveness. Other rituals, such as the brutal self-whippings of medieval flagellants, were far more dramatic. Most rites of public humiliation were less voluntary.

Like the shaved head or the "scarlet letter" placed over the garments of the adulterous woman or the T branded upon the forehead of the English thief, the shameful stigma of demonic deviance was forced upon the sinner as she or he journeyed through this world to the next. Yet, regardless of whether punishment was more painful or shameful, two additional elements of religious control were invariably present: a reliance upon centralized authority, and the local or community nature of control practice.

In the Name of Centralized Authority

The demonic perspective centralized the control of deviance in the hands of religious authorities. Divinely ordained officials administer ritual punishments that purge offenders of demonic influence and restore God's blessing upon the entire community of the faithful. Most traditional histories of social control view this centralization of the authority to punish as a progressive development. Prior to the rule of religious authority, harm was said to beget more harm, as the kin of an offended party retaliated against a deviant clan in a direct and often brutal manner. The practice of blood revenge could lead to a spiraling cycle of ad hoc violence and prolonged periods of social instability. With the institution of centralized religious authority, the primitive practice of feuding came to an end, or so the story is usually told. Religious laws restricted the arbitrary nature of revenge, while religious officials tempered the horrors of private bloodshed by granting "asylum" to persecuted rule breakers and declaring "the truce of god" (*treuga dei*), a temporary peace for fugitives from divine justice.

Today anthropologists recognize that these progressive consequences are only part of the story. Some things were lost as well as gained in the birth of centralized religious authority. Lost was a legacy of reconciliatory control rituals, used to solve problems in the "headless," or *acephalous*, societies which characterized the first 30,000 of our 40,000 years as the species *Homo sapiens*.²¹ The rudimentary level of technology in these societies required the full-time work commitment of each member simply to secure the conditions of material survival for the group as a whole. In these collectively cooperative social units nobody was in charge; nobody was authorized to organize life for others. Power was reciprocally shared among group members in a manner which is hard for most of us to imagine today. While we typically imagine that centralized authority is a natural social condition, *acephalous* peoples imagined the opposite. In those times nobody legitimately commanded others. A cooperative sharing of power was seen as both necessary and natural.

A full discussion of *acephalous* societies is beyond the scope of our present project. Suffice it to say that the radical social and economic equality of such groups was complemented by a diffuse role structure (providing for a high degree of common experience), a kin-based social organization (creating familial blood ties between all members), and a belief system emphasizing the collective nature of success and failure. Together these organizational charac-

teristics produced a high level of cooperation and a significantly different style of social control. While blood revenge was one mechanism used to control wrongdoing between acephalous groups, it was not as common as once imagined, nor was it typically used as a form of control within acephalous groups. The reasons are simple. Between groups revenge might engender a cycle of feuding dangerous to the survival of these highly interdependent, collectively organized social units. Within groups the idea of personal revenge made no sense, given the close identification of each member with the group itself. The group rather than the individual per se was perceived as both the true offender and the victim. Trouble within or between groups must be resolved. It was not sufficient for action to be taken against a troublemaker or an individual deviant. As such, the most common control rituals of acephalous societies were directed at reconciling parties in troubling situations rather than at exorcising trouble out of particular individuals. This later practice awaited the birth of centralized religious authority. In acephalous societies ceremonial mechanisms of group reconciliation were more creative.

Often the reconciliatory control practices of acephalous communities involved the mediative efforts of skilled negotiators, such as the *monkalun* among the acephalous Ifugao tribe of the Philippines²² and the "leopard skin" mediator of the Nuer in southern Sudan.²³ Such mediators possess no legal authority. Their only power is their ability to bring deviating parties back together.²⁴ Ordinarily this is accomplished by means of symbolic rituals designed to dissolve the trouble between deviating parties. One such ritual is observed among the Tiwi of Australia.²⁵ Tiwi society is composed of large polygamous households in which older men are surrounded by many younger wives. This leads to a scarcity of young unattached females. Imagine the trouble this presents for young heterosexual males. Older males commonly accuse the young of seducing their women. How are such accusations of deviance resolved? Troubling situations of this kind are defused by an elaborate and dramatic simulation of deadly duel. In this ritual of reconciliatory control, an agile young man (unarmed or armed only with a stick) dodges spears thrown by a less threatening elder. This continues for about five to ten minutes as the younger man retains his honor. The ritual reaches its climax when the younger man permits himself to be hit. The old man thus regains honor without dishonoring his younger "opponent." The ceremony ends. Reconciliation is complete. Both parties are symbolically satisfied. Neither totally wins nor totally loses. Neither is advantaged by deviantizing the other. Neither is excluded from a return to honorable life within the group.

A similar reconciliatory outcome occurs in the "song duels" of troubled Eskimos.²⁶ A complaining victim and an accused deviant join in a sharp-tongued battle of song. In the course of exchanging derogatory verses about each other, both deviating parties are at once honored and humiliated. Trouble is dissolved. It is replaced by reconciliation. This is the most common product of diverse rituals of symbolic satisfaction. "Similar solutions can be

reached through wrestling matches or other contests of strength in which no lasting damage is done."²⁷ In acephalous groups possessing a common medium of economic exchange, victim restitution, a ceremonial paying back of harm, is another common means of reconciliation. No matter the form, acephalous control rituals typically result in the reunion of members and the defusing of trouble within the community as a whole.

All this changed as changes in technology permitted groups to create an economic surplus above and beyond what was needed for simple material survival. This enabled some members of the group to become full-time managers of the labor and social activities of others. For the first time in history, power was hierarchically arranged such that a few people were able to legitimately command the deference of everyone else. This marked the transition from acephalous to centralized state rule, and with it came a whole new strategy of social control. No longer was the reconciliation of troubled parties a primary concern. Why? Because the institution of centralized authority was itself a source of trouble. It drove an institutional wedge through the equalitarian cooperation which was so prominent a feature of acephalous life. The benefits and liabilities of group life were now no longer equally distributed. Some people were in authorized positions of greater power than others. They could announce rules and enforce them. But why? Why some people instead of others? In its earliest forms, centralized authority was justified by divine precept. Just at that moment in history when technological changes made centralized rule a material possibility, God's voice was heard by "his" prophets. They were chosen, God said, set above others to rule in "his" name. This historical link between material and spiritual developments is well documented by students of acephalous society such as the anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard.²⁸ His analysis of the end of acephalous rule among the Nuer of the Sudan suggests that the appearance of prophets was occasioned by an intrusion of Arabs and Europeans into the traditional life of the group. Threatened by the power of other state-organized societies, the Nuer suddenly found "sky spirits" gracing certain of their members (and eventually the offspring of these members) with the previously unknown mantle of divinely authorized leadership.

I am not here suggesting that material changes cause spiritual changes. I am suggesting that material changes are commonly accompanied by spiritual changes; that each impacts upon the other; that each provides a condition for the existence of the other. It is important to note that centralized religious authority is conditioned by the existence of an economic surplus which enables some people to gain an upper hand over others, just as it provides a condition for hierarchical rule by justifying this unequal power in the name of God. This, of course, is exactly what happens as the charismatic voice of a prophet becomes institutionally transformed into the lawful authority of priests. Soon an elaborate religious organization arises, complete with authorized "organizational agents" and an official code specifying who can do what, when, where, and why. Such codes also specify what is to be done to

the deviants who violate them. As such, these codes legitimately define the institutionalized social inequalities which are ushered into history with the advent of centralized authority. I shall further examine this troubling feature of centralized authority in Chapter 10. For now it is sufficient to recognize that the blessings of religious control rituals are mixed. On one hand, they reduce the arbitrary nature of revenge. On the other, they provide a justification for the authorized domination of some people by others.

Community Control of the Demonic

Although justified by the principle of centralized religious authority, supernaturally ordained control rituals were practically administered within local geographic communities. Thus, during the dominance of demonic thinking in the medieval west, there were no "out of sight and out of mind" institutions to remove deviants from the public eye. People who violated the laws of God, as written into the ecumenical laws of the church, were to be dealt with locally, purged in public as visible reminders of the ever-present struggle between God and the devil.

Except for a handful of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century "workhouses" in several of Europe's early industrialized cities, the control of demonic deviance was largely the responsibility of local communities and their families. Each community had its mentally afflicted "lunatics" and feeble-minded "idiots" who wandered the streets. The care of such persons was, for the most part, a family or neighborhood matter. Although the proper recognition of deviance was viewed in terms of centralized religious authority, the practical control of deviants was generally accomplished by informal local initiative. Moreover, no clear distinctions were made regarding an undifferentiated assembly of deviants, most of whom we presently classify and control separately.

What "care," as distinct from punishment, was provided for the dependent (i.e., lunatic, sick, poor, etc.) members of the above-described deviant class was not the effort of any organized religious or secular response. It was provided by the individuals who were intimately connected to the deviant and was generally guided by spiritual concern both for their fellows and for their own souls. It was only exceptionally burdensome deviants and people who lacked any supportive ties to family or friends who were housed under the same roof with others of their kind. Two sorts of roofs provided for the control of these exceptional cases—the small religious hospital and the jail. Both, however, were locally based and bore little resemblance to the centralized institutions which would later separate deviants from the local community.

While medieval religious hospitals sometimes provided a shelter for both the seriously sick and the honestly poor, jails housed a much wider range of deviant clientele. These early "prisons," however, should not be confused with the houses of correction and the penitentiaries of a later age. It was not

until the nineteenth century that imprisonment became a major form of punishment. As mentioned previously, demonic deviants were largely subject to physical punishment or fines. Nor were jails typically administered by the state or the church. In general, jails were small, privately administered places which housed deviants within the geographical and visual boundaries of the local community. According to Andrew Scull,

Frequently housed in ramshackle buildings, gaols [jails] were private speculations run on behalf of municipalities, or ecclesiastical dignitaries. The inmates found themselves crammed together in a single heterogeneous assemblage. As well as lunatics and debtors, some were there "as a means of securing the payment into the Exchequer of debts due to the Crown," while others were held as punishment for various minor infractions. But most were in custody simply to ensure their appearance at their trials or their executions.²⁹

The public administration of punishment was likewise a manifestation of the commitment to community control during the "demonic" period. All were invited and frequently required to witness the ceremonies of bodily penance by which the entire community was restored to grace. The exceptions to this were the deviants who had come from other communities. They were to be controlled properly in the community of their origin. Such outside deviants were generally punished and sent packing. Ceremonial punishments, such as tar and feathering, were reserved as warnings for those who broke local rules but who were themselves not "local folks."

The sentence of death would, of course, remove the body of the deviant from its earthly ties to the local "community of the faithful." Bodily removal from the community was, in this sense, the ultimate in punitive sanctions. Interestingly enough, a form of symbolic bodily removal, "outlawry," was considered almost as severe. This form of punishment emerged during a time in the late Middle Ages in which epidemic plagues reduced vast proportions of the laboring population, thus making the extensive use of mutilations and executions a severe hardship on the bodily needs of an agrarian workforce. Fines and various forms of economic compensation to victims of deviants' acts were instituted as punishment substitutes. These economic punishments exacted from convicted lawbreakers the fruits of the body's work, if not the agony of the body's pain. Fines were calculated, moreover, on the believed social-community value of the victims. Thus, even in communities guided by demonic visions of deviance, not all members were equally valued in the "eyes of the Lord." Greater compensation was demanded if one offended a person of higher social standing. Thus it was safer then, as it is today, to victimize the poor than to disturb the rich.

In any event, if a fined deviant was unable to pay the demanded compensation, he or she fell under the sentence of outlawry. Bodily present within the community, outlaws were condemned to be outside the protected lawful body of "those faithful gathered together." It was as if they were legally dead. Unguarded and unprotected, outlaws were literally outside the law which

bound others together.³⁰ Should harm be committed against them, the community of "insiders" would no longer respond. A feared punishment, outlawry symbolized the importance of the local community in its immediate and direct responsibility for its own body of deviants—punishing most, while physically or symbolically removing the bodies of the worst.

In the Name of the Father: Heterosexist Patriarchy and Religious Control

To this point I have been discussing demonic control rituals as if they applied equally to both men and women. Following the lead of feminist historical scholarship it is today evident that western uses of demonic imagery have been considerably more biased. Indeed, since their historical origins the most dominant strands of Judaic-Christian thinking about deviance have valued abstract male ideas about the purity of spiritual forms over the sacredness of women's bodily experiences. This is not to condemn all Judaic-Christian thought as inherently sexist. The historical record is at once more complex and more contradictory. Indeed, many advocates of gender equality have emerged from within the confines of the Judaic-Christian heritage. Nevertheless, as disturbing as this may prove to those of us reared under the theological sign of the Judaic-Christian "God the Father," when western religious uses of demonic imagery are placed in a historical perspective it becomes undeniably apparent that certain of the most powerful forms of western religious thinking have for far too long favored the viewpoints of men over those of women.

The male or *phallogentric* bias of dominant western religious thinking is evident in many of the founding texts of the Judaic-Christian tradition, but nowhere is this male bias more evident than in the religiously inspired mass murders of suspected pagan witches that took place between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries. While historical estimates concerning the extent of this genocide range from 1 million to 9 million, one fact appears certain: approximately 80 percent of the people who were hunted down, tortured, and burnt were women. This is evidence of a terroristic patriarchal logic at work within dominant forms of western religion.

Paganism, the avowed target of the witch hunts, is a religious practice which honors the earth as the "Great Mother" (or the "Goddess"). Pagan rituals also emphasize the spiritual significance of women. Since the late Middle Ages, the rites of pagan peoples have been ruthlessly attacked, destroyed, or driven underground by zealous Christians. Christians who attack the religion of the Great Mother picture God in almost exclusively male terms. Indeed, for many Christians the earth is but a waiting room for the future revelation of supernatural truths. Christian zealots have often confused paganism's reverence for the earth with Satanism or devil worship.

In the third chapter of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, it is written that the Lord said to Eve, "Let your urge be for your husband, and he shall rule

over you." Following this edict, a central target of the bloody European witch-hunts was pagan women who had rejected heterosexual marriage (spinsters, including lesbians, who are discussed below) and women who had survived marriage (widows). Also high on the list of Christian targets were peasant women who practiced herbal medicine and rites of "natural healing" and midwives who delivered children outside the auspices of the emerging male medical profession. Accused of such alleged "superstitions" as necromancy, geomancy, and hydromancy (the unauthorized study of death, the earth's cycles, and water), such women were feared because they lived outside heterosexual hierarchies and the logical imperatives of patriarchal social control.³¹

The wrath of Christian inquisitors was also directed at gay men, lesbians, and others who refused to honor the heterosexist inequalities of "blessed" family life. Indeed, large numbers of men whose "sin" involved nothing but the sharing of sexual intimacies with other men were also tortured and burnt at the stake. This is the tragic origin of the association between the term "faggot" and male homosexuals. In the name of the Christian God, gay men were often bound together as kindling or "faggots" and used to ignite the pyres used to burn witches.³² This link between gay men and pagan women was no accident. In the religion of the Great Mother both were afforded a freedom and respect subsequently denied them by Christian authorities from the late twelfth century onward. Indeed, it was not uncommon for Christian judges to combine charges of witchcraft with accusations of lesbianism and male homosexuality. Writing of pagan assemblies in 1619, Henry Boguet, a judge responsible for the death of many "sorceresses," commented:

You may well suppose that every kind of obscenity is practiced there, yea, even those abominations for which Heaven poured down fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah are quite common.³³

Although condemned as heretical, paganism represented a primary form of religion for the vast majority of Europeans until the late Middle Ages. Christianity, with its official Latin language and organizational hierarchy, remained a religion of the elite. Peasant masses, on the other hand, practiced the "old religion" and honored its ancient agricultural Goddess. At the core of pagan beliefs was a ritual recognition of the sacred character of the ever-changing earth, which was poetically imagined as the Mother who periodically changed forms, like the phases of the moon, the seasons of the year, or the cycles of life itself. What was sacred for pagans was that which was materially in touch with the rhythms of nature. This image of the sacredness of natural processes contrasts greatly with the supernatural imagery of the Judaic-Christian tradition. The Father God of Jews and Christians calls upon his humble servants to bring profane nature under "man's" spiritual control.

From the fall of the Roman Empire until the late Middle Ages, pagan and Judaic-Christian religious practices existed side by side. It was not until the twelfth century that Christianity was in a military position to launch an all-out

attack on pagans. Following several centuries of Christian crusades, aimed at seizing the "Holy Lands" of Palestine from Muslims and Moorish-pagan "infidels," Christians began to turn their arms against threats closer to home. By the early thirteenth century a sustained war against the pagan masses was well under way. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the war against pagans reached genocidal proportions. Theological justifications for the wholesale violence were already an established part of Judaic-Christian belief. Consider the first several chapters of Genesis, the epistles of St. Paul, and the writings of early Christian church fathers. Each values the pure word of the orderly male sky God over the supposed chaos and impurities of women's bodies.

In Genesis, creation is pictured as transcendent over nature's cycles—as coming from the supernatural voice of God speaking from the outside. This places the Judaic-Christian understanding of creation at odds with existing Mesopotamian pagan sacred stories of the serpentlike Goddess who gave birth to all forms of life from the womb of earth itself. In the Judaic-Christian scriptures the creative role of the Goddess is suppressed. Creation comes from the word of the male God as he erects an expanse that cuts her chaotic fluidity in half. In so doing, he is said to enlighten her darkness and fix what appears unformed by the power of his speech. If God's actions here appear both *logocentric* (operating through the words that ideally subordinate messy female matters) and *phallogocentric* (as his expanse is thrust between her waters), perhaps this is because "unlike many deities of the ancient Near East, the God of Israel shared his power with no female divinity, nor was he the divine husband or lover of any. He can scarcely be characterized in any but masculine epithets: king, lord, master, judge, and father. Indeed, the absence of feminine symbolism for God marks Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in striking contrast to the world's other religious traditions."³⁴

The masculine bias of Genesis is further revealed in examining its depiction of the creation of male and female humans. Of particular interest is the fact that Genesis contains two separate accounts of the creation story. In the first (Genesis 1:26–28), God is said to make "man" in his image, and "male and female created he them." Here man and woman come into being at the same time. Both are charged with ruling over "the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on the earth." Then, in the second passage (Genesis 2:18–23), the story is retold. It is as if the first is canceled by the second. The often-cited second passage begins with God saying, "It is not good for man to be alone." What follows is an account of the creation of woman from man's rib. Thereafter, Adam (the first man) names the woman just as he names the rest of nature—the cattle, the birds of the sky, and the wild beasts. "The man named his wife Eve, because she was *the mother of all the living*" (Genesis 3:20; italics added).

Why this doubled story of the creation of man and woman? What happened to the first woman, who was created at the same time as man? The answer may lie in a variety of supplemental Jewish texts that were never

officially incorporated into the Old Testament. Known as the Midrash and interpreted as a kind of allegorical commentary on the meaning of the canonical scriptures, texts such as *Alpha Bet Ben Sira* suggest that ancient Hebrews may have once recognized the creation of a first woman prior to the creation of Eve. This was Lilith, a dark and powerful female figure who militantly refused subordination to Adam's phallic demands. Accordingly, "Adam and Lilith never found peace together. She disagreed with him in many matters and refused to lie beneath him in sexual intercourse, basing her claim on the fact that each had been created from earth. When Lilith saw that Adam would overpower her, she uttered the ineffable name of God and flew up into the air of the world. Eventually she dwelt in a cave in the desert on the shores of the Red Sea."³⁵ After escaping from Adam's claims on her body, Lilith is said to have lived a life of "unbridled promiscuity," consorting with demons and posing a continuous threat to the orderliness of "man's" God-given world. In western legends of Lilith we are presented with destructive, chaotic, and erotically charged images of a dark femininity cut off from its previous pagan connections to cycles of creative regeneration and spiraling rebirth.

The legend of Lilith is associated with frightening tales (or male fantasies) of female vampirism, unbridled feminine sexuality, and seduction. Lilith, like the enigmatic winged serpent that embodies her image, was transformed from a woman of power, equal to man, into a man's witchy nemesis—a kind of "bitchy" figure born of male dread and fear of castration. Later, she was replaced by Eve who, unlike Lilith, was not created alongside man but out of man's own body. "This one at last," says Adam, "is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called Woman, for from man she is taken" (Genesis 2:22–23). But what happened to Lilith after she was replaced by Eve? She was exiled to the darkly sexualized margins of western culture. There she haunts man's self-righteousness in but a disguised and shadowy form. There she is forced to assume a kind of pornographic image—an alluring, if uncanny, threat to male power that men have long sought to recapture, tie down, and domesticate.

The imaging of women in Genesis doesn't improve much with the story of the fall from the Garden of Eden. Since this tale is well known within our culture, I will not repeat it in detail. Suffice it to say that the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" which lay in the center of the Garden and from which the Lord God forbade Adam and Eve to eat was itself an ancient pagan symbol of ecstatic wisdom. To eat of the fruit of this tree was (for pagans) to participate in the sacredness of life itself.³⁶ And who was it that tempted the woman to transgress God's spoken commands not to eat of this tree? It was none other than the serpent, that symbolic figure of the once sacred Goddess, now transformed into a demonic figure of sin itself. When the Lord inquired about how all this had come to pass, "The man said, 'The woman you put at my side—she gave me of the tree, and I ate.' And the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done!' The woman replied, 'The serpent duped me, and I ate'" (Genesis 3:1–13).

As a punishment, the Judaic-Christian God condemned woman to painful childbearing and commanded her perpetual subordination to man, saying, "Your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." He also condemned all humans to suffer from the obligation to work and the (animal) certainty that we must someday die. Behind all this travail lies a shameful image of woman as a conduit of evil. As St. Paul declared, "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in . . . transgression" (1 Timothy 2:14). In the words of the early church fathers, she was "the devil's gateway," a pushover for Satan and his demons.³⁷

As negatively as woman was presented in these canonical texts of the Judaic-Christian tradition, worse still was her fate as a central target of the Christian Inquisition. As a theological justification for mass murder and the use of such severe tortures as "the pear" (a metallic device that operated like forceps; it was heated to red-hot and then inserted into the mouth, vagina, or anus of an accused witch), those who persecuted accused witches commonly cited passages from Genesis, such as those discussed above. Indeed, in constructing the *Malleus Maleficarum*, the infamous 1486 manual for the identification of witches, Dominican priests Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger wrote: "For though the devil tempted Eve to sin, yet Eve seduced Adam. And as the sin of Eve would not have brought death to our soul and body unless the sin had afterwards passed on to Adam, to which he was tempted by Eve, not by the devil, therefore she is more bitter than death."³⁸

The violence directed against accused witches was a cruel manifestation of the patriarchal religious control. Such violence continues today in less dramatic forms. Indeed, many aspects of Judaic-Christian ritual still subordinate the body of women to the word of men, often prohibiting women from participating equally as ministers, priests, rabbis, and other religious officials. Furthermore, both the Roman Catholic Church and a variety of conservative Protestant groups today appear committed to restricting a woman's right to make private choices concerning pregnancy and abortion. Basing their attacks on feminism on alleged Christian doctrine and a defense of "traditional family values," some conservative religious leaders have gone so far as to picture advocates for women's rights as demonic agents inspired by Satan. Indeed, even as I write, the United States has yet to pass an equal rights amendment (ERA) to the Constitution guaranteeing women the same public and private privileges enjoyed by men. A symptom of patriarchal forces still very much alive within today's society, the defeat of the ERA suggests the continuing power of heterosexist religious beliefs as ritual mechanisms of social control.

THE DEMONIC PERSPECTIVE TODAY

Originating in antiquity and continuing as the predominant interpretation of deviance until the time of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, the demonic perspective may seem far removed from the secular and scientific world views that are so influential in contemporary society. Yet, for more than a few

people demonic explanations remain the only true explanations. Indeed, judging from the popularity of stories about demonic possession, satanic cults, and exorcism that are regular features of both sensational tabloid newspapers and TV talk shows, the demonic perspective remains alive and well in the spiritual imaginings of many contemporary people. Moreover, given the abstract, bureaucratically indifferent, and technologically guided rationality governing much of everyday life, it is not surprising to find a huge market of people buying into the mysterious, emotionally charged, and seductive logic of demonic theorizing. Evangelical preachers fill football stadiums and amass large radio and television audiences with sermons suggesting that behind rising crime rates, the spread of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), sexual immorality, and family breakdown lies the malicious hand of the devil. Few of us who own a TV set, listen to the radio, open our mail, or walk in public places have not been confronted by the "word" of those who tell us that deviance is sin and that giving ourselves (or our money) to a holy cause is the best form of social control.

Recent advocates of the demonic perspective have made particular forms of deviance targets of highly organized moral and media crusades. Many such crusades are aligned with the conservative religious politics of the Christian right. In the United States well-funded moral campaigns have been directed toward the prohibition of abortion, the elimination of liberal social welfare programs, the censorship of sexually explicit and politically motivated forms of art, a retreat from advances in the areas of civil rights (particularly the rights of women, gays and lesbians, and peoples of color), and the advocacy of a foreign policy dedicated to the worldwide spread of capitalism and the "American way." Some contemporary forms of demonic theorizing are even more dramatic. Calling for the implementation of Christian public policy by using such homophobic slogans as "God's plan for man was for Adam and Eve and not Adam and Steve," right-wing religious and political leaders have even blamed the AIDS epidemic on the "sins" of homosexuals. Others have targeted rock music as a "degenerate" form of entertainment inspired by Satan.³⁹

Attacks on homosexuals have been a recurrent aspect of contemporary demonic crusades. This is a major reason few U.S. states have yet to pass legislation guaranteeing the public rights of gays and lesbians. While I was a graduate student in Columbus, Ohio, a gay rights bill was presented to the mayor. A group called the Full Gospel Christian Businessmen's Association parked itself outside City Hall. Led by a Bible-quoting car dealer, this group of wealthy fundamentalists cited passages from scripture "proving" that homosexuality was sinful and demanded that the mayor veto the proposed ordinance. The bill was vetoed. Several years later the popular singer and orange juice promoter Anita Bryant led a national "Christian" campaign against a gay rights referendum in Dade County, Florida. Bryant proclaimed that homosexuality was the devil's doing and that her own prayers have turned numerous "sinful gays" away from their demonic deviance.

Over a decade later, religious opposition to homosexuality is still strong. Although a number of "liberal" congregations have come out in favor of accepting gays and lesbians, mostly compulsively refuse to sanction the blessedness of anything but church-ordained heterosexual unions. In June 1992, for instance, 18,000 delegates from Southern Baptist congregations (the largest Protestant denomination in the United States), meeting in Indiana's Hoosier Dome, voted to both bar homosexuals and withdraw from "fellowship" with churches that permitted the participation of gay and lesbian members. According to the delegates' resolution, homosexual actions "are contrary to the teaching of the Bible on sexuality . . . and are offensive to Southern Baptists."⁴⁰

In numerous state legislatures debates over the ERA have also had an "otherworldly" religious tone. Arguments opposing guarantees of legal equality for women have suggested that the ERA would lead to a deviant state of affairs, out of keeping with the will of God. Yet, perhaps the most focused religious opposition to "deviance" involves militant campaigns aimed at denying women the right to abortion. For those who organize under the slogan "Right to Life," abortion is perceived as something demonic or sinful. Defending the "sanctity" of an unborn fetus in opposition to the difficult moral choices faced by women who experience unwanted pregnancies, various groups—including the male-led hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church and Operation Rescue, a militant organization known for its efforts to block entrance to abortion clinics—make continued use of demonic theorizing in their attempts to restrict women's control over their own reproductive options.

Contemporary Televangelism and the Moral Majority

If you are still unconvinced of the contemporary political clout of groups organized around a demonic perspective on deviance, consider the recent impact of the so-called Moral Majority. In the late 1970s and early 1980s this group, spearheaded by the Reverend Jerry Falwell, was instrumental in the political defeat of numerous liberal-leaning legislators and in the election of conservative President Ronald Reagan. The extremely well-financed Moral Majority views such things as homosexuality, abortion, sexual permissiveness, and even the rights of women as demonically inspired deviance. In the words of Falwell, a Baptist minister from Lynchburg, Virginia, whose TV program *The Old Time Gospel Hour* reaches millions of Americans weekly:

It is now time to take a stand on certain moral issues. . . . We must stand against the Equal Rights Amendment, the feminist revolution, the homosexual revolution. We must have a revival in this country. It will come if we will realize the danger and heed the admonition of God found in II Chronicles 7:14, "If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will I forgive their sin, and will heal their land."⁴¹

The extent and influence of groups like the Moral Majority as new voices for the demonic perspective are today enormous. In 1980 this resurgence in demonic thinking was being broadcast nationwide by thirty-six separate "religious" television stations, 1,300 "religious" radio stations, and dozens of programs that bought time on mainstream commercial airwaves. Moreover, during that same year an assembly of 18,000 fundamentalist pastors who gathered in Dallas, Texas, for the "Religious Roundtable Conference" were urged to turn their parishes into political precincts in order to bring America back to God.⁴² The political objectives of this curious blend of "old-time religion" and new-time electoral politics are described by critics as a "New Prohibitionism."⁴³ Much of its theological base is rooted in a selective use of the Scriptures. According to the editors of the periodical *Christian Century*, while using the Bible to attack gays and women and to defend the free enterprise system, the new religious right conveniently overlooks scriptural references to matters such as social justice. "They are not accurate and they are not fair. But they are effective."⁴⁴

In the late 1980s the power of televangelist ministries—such as those of Falwell and other well-known TV preachers, including Pat Robertson, Jim and Tammy Bakker, Robert Schuller, Jimmy Swaggart, and Oral Roberts—underwent contradictory twists and turns. With the announced Republican presidential candidacy of Pat Robertson, host of the influential *700 Club* TV show, it appeared as if the demonic message of televangelism was stronger than ever. A skilled communicator and defender of a Christian "will to empire," Robertson showed surprising strength in running against George Bush in the Michigan Republican caucuses. Then came the lurid news of sex scandals involving prominent televangelists such as Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart. These were followed by allegations of financial misdealing on the part of the Bakkers. Televangelist power seemed for a moment shaken.

Today, the dramatic fall of TV prophets appears to have been short-lived. In the 1990s, the airwaves are again filled with televangelists calling for a national moral revival and the marketing of all kinds of "Christian" merchandise. This involves the promotion of religion as something to consume at home via broadcasts, call-in phone banks, prerecorded audiocassettes, and a host of other items that can be bought with credit cards. Moreover, since the summer of 1989, Pat Robertson and other conservative religious leaders have joined forces to form the Christian Coalition, a grass-roots organization boasting over 175,000 members in forty-five states.

Attracting enormous sums of money and the most prominent figures of the Christian right, including former Lt. Col. Oliver North, Jr., Paul Weyrich, and the Reverend James Dobson, the Coalition aims to exert "low-profile" but massive and "tax-free" influence on the U.S. electoral process. Indeed, as evidenced during the 1992 Republican Presidential Convention in Houston, Texas, by the spectacular attacks on feminists, gays and lesbians, and anyone else who dares to question the sacredness of patriarchal family values, the religious right has gained more than a small share of power in mainstream

electoral politics. However, the contradiction inherent in this movement is that while most televangelists decry the evils of materialism, secular values, and self-interested consumption, they market with one hand what they condemn with the other. Thus, although they operate in the name of traditional Christian values, many televangelists interpret the accumulation and consumption of wealth as a sign of God's blessings. Indeed, as "the 1987 PTL scandal transparently revealed, it is the same logic of capitalist exchange with its peculiar dynamics of corporate concentration and relentless growth that has guided the various televangelists' quests for bigger market shares, not to mention their defensive moves against hostile takeovers by their competitors."⁴⁵

Progressive Uses of Religious Imagery

To see Reality in our time is to see the world as crucifixion. . . . The revolutionary is the man [or woman] of conscience in today's world.

James W. Douglas⁴⁶

Much of this section so far may have left you with the impression that contemporary political uses of the demonic perspective have been conservative in nature. This is not always the case. In recent years we have also witnessed the change-oriented, or progressive, use of religious imagery to "deviantize" certain forms of social oppression, domination, or injustice.

Think, for instance, of the role played by black ministers and other religious leaders in combating racism during the U.S. civil rights movement. The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. and others were clear in viewing racism as a form of spiritual malaise and as a social blot covering this nation's soul. During the height of the civil rights movement, the National Council of Churches denounced segregation and racism as a violation of the Gospel and called upon the church "to confess her sin of omission and delay, and to move forward to witness to her essential belief that every child of God is a brother of every other."⁴⁷ Through prayer, fasting, and other forms of non-violent protest, King and other religiously informed dissidents hoped to eradicate the national sin of racism.

Religious imagery was also a vital part of certain persuasive sectors in the antiwar movement of the Vietnam era. Consider the religious motivations of the "Plowshares Eight" and people like Daniel Berrigan and William Sloane Coffin, who violated draft headquarters and destroyed draft records in an attempt to end U.S. participation in the war. The dissenting voices of Catholic priests, brothers, and nuns as well as Protestant clergy, Jewish rabbis, and Buddhist disciples all rendered spiritual as well as political judgment on what may be described as the demonic nature of U.S. foreign policy in that era.

Even with the alleged ascendancy of the "New Religious Right" in the 1980s, progressive uses of what might be considered a demonic perspective

are still having a significant impact in the world today. The Protestant and Catholic churches, for example, act together as a major force in the nuclear weapons freeze movement that is sweeping both the United States and Europe. Leaders of all the major religious groups have taken strong stands against the "idolatry" of the arms race.

Perhaps most innovative and radical of all is the work currently being done in the area of "liberation theology," particularly by the Catholic church in Latin America. Theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez and José Miranda have combined Marxian social analysis with traditional Catholic social teaching in order to help realize the "Kingdom of God" for the poor, oppressed, and dispossessed of Latin America and the entire third world.⁴⁸ Meeting in Medellín in 1968, Latin American bishops declared that "God has sent his Son so that in the flesh he may come to liberate all men from slavery which holds them subject, from sin, ignorance, hunger, misery, oppression—in a word, from the injustice and hate which stem from human egoism."⁴⁹ In the words of Camilo Torres, a revolutionary priest from Colombia: "If the good of all mankind cannot be achieved except by changing the temporal structures of society, it would be sinful for Christians to oppose change."⁵⁰

This commitment to revolutionary Christian action is no easy task. It has cost numerous priests and members of Catholic religious orders the support of their own church. Under orders from the Pope, some politically active Roman Catholic priests have been forced to choose between their official religious ministries and their call to serve the poor. Still others have been the target of brutal right-wing assassinations and "disappearances."

The recent history of "liberation theology" in El Salvador represents a tragic case in point. El Salvador is a Central American country where U.S.-backed elites have long exercised tyranny over the nation's massive population of peasants. Beginning around 1969, liberation theology began to play an increasingly important role in the spiritual and political lives of El Salvador's peasants and Church workers. Forming a network of *comunidades eclesiales de base*, or "grass-roots Christian communities," Salvadorans began mixing heartfelt religious beliefs with aspirations for social justice. In November 1974, for instance, a Christian community in La Cayetana occupied an idle parcel of land, beseeching the land's wealthy owner to rent it to local peasants. The result was an attack by government troops. Six peasants were killed and another twenty-six arrested. Of these, thirteen were "disappeared," or secretly made to vanish without being officially recognized as murdered.

Struggle escalated thereafter. Increasing Christian resistance met with unprecedented levels of governmental violence and the terror of right-wing death squads, many of whose members were actually soldiers in disguise. In January 1977 the government began rounding up influential priests and torturing them. In February 1980, the day after telling soldiers that they should refuse government orders to kill their peasant brothers and sisters, Cardinal Oscar Romero, the Catholic archbishop of San Salvador, was himself gunned down while saying mass. A decade later, over 70,000 more struggling

Salvadorans had been killed as, under the leadership of Ronald Reagan and George Bush, the U.S. administration poured over \$1.4 million per day into El Salvador to ensure that this small country would not fall into the hands of its own peasant peoples. Reagan and Bush claimed to be protecting El Salvador from communists, not from Christians. In November 1989 the distorted truths about this aspect of U.S. foreign policy were made more manifest than ever, as military commandos (probably acting upon orders from El Salvadorean government officials) entered the Jesuit University of El Salvador and brutally assassinated four priests, all leading exponents of liberation theology, along with the priests' cook and her daughter.

A tragic testimony to progressive use of religious imagery in a world in which power appears to be more allied with conservative theological positions than with progressive causes, the death of so many committed Christians in countries such as El Salvador is also a reminder that religious perspectives on social control are not the exclusive prerogatives of the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition, Operation Rescue, and other conservative organizations.

ASSESSMENT OF THE DEMONIC PERSPECTIVE

How adequate is the demonic explanation of social deviance? How are we to assess its adequacy? Judged by the naturalistic standards of the secularized modern world, the demonic perspective is very inadequate. It relies on belief rather than on observable fact and is thus said to be totally untestable. More correctly, one might say that the demonic perspective relies on beliefs that are no longer believed as much as other beliefs. That is, a belief in the primacy of supernatural explanations has been superseded by a belief in the primacy of naturalistic explanations. This has not happened worldwide. Indeed there are numerous places in the world where supernatural or demonic explanations still prevail. Spokespersons of our modern western perspective often refer to the "primitive" character of such beliefs. Yet, when viewed from the opposite direction, the western world may appear to be little more than a wasteland of godless infidels. Indeed, for many of the spiritual leaders in certain Islamic countries, such as Iran and Iraq, it is not uncommon to find the United States referred to in supernatural terms as the land of "the Great Satan."

Nor is the use of naturalistic explanations entirely dominant even within a largely modernized nation like the United States. Recall the previous discussion of the rise of the Moral Majority. Consider as well the current controversy over what has come to be referred to as "creationism" or "creation science." As late as the mid-1980s an Arkansas state law required a balanced treatment for creationism and evolution theory in public schools.

Creationism involves belief that the universe and human life were brought into being in a sudden instance of creation, that humans and apes are of distinctly separate ancestry, that there once was a worldwide flood, and that the earth is of relatively recent origin (e.g., that it was created several thou-

sand years ago, at a time corresponding to biblical estimates, and not several million years ago, as suggested by the most modern techniques of carbon dating). All this, of course, is contradicted by the evolutionary tenets of conventional science. Creationism attempts to reconstruct the "facts" of science to fit the "facts" of the Bible.

The Arkansas law which required that creationism be taught in a balanced manner alongside teaching about evolution was successfully challenged by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) on the grounds that creationism is religion and not science, and that the U.S. Constitution guarantees a separation of church and state. ACLU attorneys argued that creationism is not a science because science requires a commitment to materialistic causation which is at once tentative and testable. Scientific theory, in other words, is always open to the possibility of being proved wrong or revised. This is not the case with creationism. It is based upon unchangeable beliefs rather than verifiable naturalistic observations. In the words of one scientific expert called to testify, "It's religion, it doesn't invoke natural laws. It invokes miracles."⁵¹

Both sides in the debate over creationism raise issues that are as important as they are disturbing. While it may be true that creationism and other forms of supernaturalist or demonic interpretations of the world are essentially untestable, it is also true that natural science implies a certain commitment to looking at the world in a particular way. Without challenging anyone's religious faith or trying to come to a final resolution of this issue, I believe that there are distinct analytic advantages to suspending a supernatural view of the world in order to take a rigorous naturalistic look at the study of deviance and social control. The advantages of this approach are straightforward and simple. By suspending belief in the primacy of the supernatural interpretation, we are able to critically examine the way that things in this world impact on one another. By taking a naturalistic approach to the study of deviance and social control, we can consider such things as whether or not certain characteristics of the body make it more likely that a person will engage in certain acts of deviance, or whether a particular form of social organization is related to a specific type of social control strategy. These things are valuable to find out regardless of the nature of our religious beliefs. We cannot, however, truly discover much about them until we suspend our commitment to a demonic perspective. Otherwise we are forever stuck with saying that God or the devil caused our bodies or our forms of social organization to be this or that way. We learn nothing beyond the beliefs we start with. For these reasons the remainder of this book employs an essentially naturalistic focus on deviance and social control.

Some Naturalistic Observations about Spiritual Perspectives

Some naturalistic accounts of the demonic perspective have tried to explain away events which the perspective itself attributes to supernatural causes. The Salem witchcraft epidemic is a case in point. In a 1949 book, *The Devil in*

Massachusetts, M. L. Starkey substitutes a psychoanalytic interpretation for a demonic one. According to Starkey, the young colonial girls were not possessed by the devil but by "hysteria." Their suffering was caused not by Satan but by sexual repression and boredom.⁵²

Starkey's interpretation of the events in Salem attempts to explain away invisible things which most people no longer believe in (e.g., demonic possession) but substitutes an account based upon a new order of invisible things (e.g., psychologically induced hysteria) that are more acceptable to the modern mind. How is it that the invisible things of psychology or psychiatry are today more believable than the invisible things of demonology? This question is raised by contemporary critics of psychiatric explanations of deviance, such as the psychiatrist Thomas Szasz. According to Szasz there are numerous parallels between the untestable belief systems of religious explanation and those of medicine or psychiatry.

For millennia, men and women escaped responsibility by theologizing morals. Now they escape from responsibility by medicalizing morals. Then, if God approved a particular conduct, it was good; and if he disapproved it, it was bad. How did people know what God approved or disapproved? The Bible—that is to say, the Bible experts, called priests—told them so. Today, if medicine approves a particular conduct, it is good; and if it disapproves it, it is bad. And how do people know what medicine approves or disapproves? Medicine—that is to say, the medical experts, called physicians—tells them so.⁵³

Not all naturalistic accounts of demonic deviance attempt to explain away the supernatural world view. Hansen's analysis of the events at Salem contrasts sharply with that of Starkey. Hansen assumes that, since witches were a part of the belief system of people in the seventeenth century, and since witchcraft was known to have been practiced in New England, the 1692 outbreak of demonic possession was a serious social reality which both fit within and threatened the spiritual life of the Salem community as a whole.⁵⁴

But why did the devil make his appearance in 1692? This question is examined by sociologist Kai Erikson in his book *Wayward Puritans*. Erikson relates the appearance of witches to social disruptions within the Puritan community. According to Erikson, "No other form of crime in history has been a better index to social disruption and change, for outbreaks of witchcraft mania have generally taken place in societies which are experiencing a shift of religious focus—societies . . . confronting a relocation of boundaries."⁵⁵

Erikson's contention that witchcraft appears at times of social and religious disruption is well illustrated in his own analysis of the witchcraft in Salem. In 1692 a new British government had revoked the once-secure charter of the Puritans in Massachusetts Bay. The entire community was enveloped in doubt and confusion. The once-proud leaders of a rigorous experiment in religious orthodoxy were becoming isolated from a new wave of religious tolerance sweeping through Europe and their mother country. Moreover, the internal religious beliefs of the community had been undergoing a radical

shift. The original Puritan settlers believed that their destiny was totally in the hands of God, who personally supervised their every action on earth. Yet, after decades of fighting for survival on the fierce frontiers of America, there was born a new breed of Puritans. The sense of mystique which had accompanied the piety of a previous generation was being transformed into a sense of mastery which accompanied the power of their descendants.

The changes described above were compounded by the onset of extensive internal dissension. The once-unified followers of the "New England Way" had become divided by quarreling factions, land disputes, personal feuds, greed, jealousy, and a mass of litigation and counterlitigation. According to Erikson, "At the time of the Salem witchcraft mania, most of the familiar landmarks of the New England Way had become blurred by changes in the historical climate, like signposts obscured in a storm."⁵⁶

The onslaught of the changes described by Erikson produced what he refers to as a "new wilderness" of religious turmoil and confusion. The old wilderness of thick forests and frightful storms gave way to a new wilderness of mythical beasts and flying spirits. As this happened, so too did the devil change his shape. He was no longer embodied in the form of the Native Americans, who, for the moment, had been defeated and driven westward. Nor was he experienced in the new waves of unorthodox "heretics." Treated with previously unknown tolerance, such persons were permitted to live in peace. Nor did the devil present himself in the shape of the attacking armies of the Counter-Reformation. Such armies remained far from the distant shores of Massachusetts Bay. The devil came instead out of the new wilderness of spiritual malaise. He came in the form of demonic spirits. He came in the form of the witch.

Erikson's analysis suggests that even in a world dominated by demonic thinking the specific shape of the devil is dependent upon how religious communities are organized or disorganized at a given point in time. But why did the devil so often come in the form of a woman? As suggested previously, from the earliest of Judaic-Christian perspectives on the sacred to the present there remains a discernable masculine bias in the formulation of western religious experience and what it renders taboo. As mentioned previously, some scholars estimate that of the 1 million or more persons executed for witchcraft throughout history, 80 percent were women. Indeed, beginning with the scriptural tale of Eve seducing Adam, women have been blamed for luring men into evil. The religious traditions which make such charges are, of course, dominated by men; men who theorize about their own roles as instrumental providers, and masters of nature, and about the roles of women as expressive receptacles of nature, sensuous earth mothers, and the like. Given this imprisonment of gender within the stereotypical confines of male language, it is hardly surprising that during times in which the great male mastery over nature seemed least secure, times of economic hardship and political instability, the priestly finger of men often found bewitching women to blame. Indeed, the 1484 *Malleus Maleficarum*, the authoritative theological guide to witch-hunting in the west, makes reference to "normal female witch

behavior" which "spirits away" male sex organs "resulting in impotence or castration."⁵⁷ Such projections of male inadequacy onto allegedly evil women are today the stuff of many a popular song. During the reign of the demonic perspective the classification of women as witches led to such ritual punishments as baths in boiling water, crushing by heavy weights, tearing the flesh from the breasts with searing-hot pincers, and torture of the female sex organs. Historians even recount incidents where the entire female populations of peasant villages were put to death in order to drive away the devil.⁵⁸

The hunting of witches also distracted people from noticing the contributions of church officials to the perpetuation of medieval poverty. Convicted "witches were mainly peasant and lower-class women who opposed the existing authority structure and thus represented a political, religious, and sexual threat to the dominant class, particularly to men."⁵⁹ In the ritual of the witch-hunt, religious leaders diverted attention from themselves while putting the lower rungs of the social order in fear and suspicion of each other. Thus the shape of the devil may be seen as influenced by social stratification as well as social disorganization.

Elliot Currie's analytic comparison of witchcraft in England and on the European Continent suggests that witchcraft is "shaped" by the organization of social control machinery as well. For years Continental Europe experienced huge outbreaks of witchcraft, while in England rates were considerably lower. Why? According to Currie, the answer is found in the contrast between the Continent's "repressive control" machinery and the more "restrained control" mechanisms available in England.⁶⁰

On the Continent, control was organized according to an inquisitorial approach wherein "accusation, detection, prosecution and judgment" were concentrated in the hands of the same officials. The trial, rather than being a matter of accusation and defense, was more of an attack pointed toward obtaining a confession. It usually involved a trial by ordeal. It included something else as well—the prerogative of the court to confiscate the property of an accused witch. The processing of witches was, then, not only efficient but also profitable. It resulted in what Currie describes as a "witchcraft industry." Control agents were paid well for their work. Moreover, the more witches they "discovered," the bigger the problem appeared to be. As a result, the unique organization of repressive control machinery guaranteed that both the "problem" and the "solution" would continue at high levels in somewhat of a self-fulfilling manner.

England's restrained control apparatus was much different. Witches, like all other demonic deviants, were assured some form of accusatorial rather than inquisitorial trial as I mentioned in the discussion of the witch trials in Salem. Moreover, England never developed a system for confiscating the property of the accused. As a result, control agents in England, as contrasted with those on the Continent, "had no continuous vested interest in the discovery and conviction of witches. . . . They had neither the power nor the motive for large scale persecution."⁶¹

Currie's analysis, like Erikson's, indicates that without explaining away

demonic beliefs, it is possible to understand them in a different way by situating these beliefs within the social and historical context in which they are used. This is done by suspending judgment about the truth of the demonic perspective and by naturalistically considering it as something which is influenced by and which also influences a wide range of other cultural, political, and economic "things" by which the social world is organized. Once we apply a naturalistic perspective to the study of demonic theorizing, a number of new and exciting questions present themselves. We may ask, for instance, why at this point in time the United States is experiencing such a revival in demonic imagery. Why have groups such as the Moral Majority risen to such importance in recent years? Such groups see modern-day demons and witches behind nearly all forms of secular humanism. One wonders whether Erikson's analysis of the explosive appearance of witches in seventeenth-century Massachusetts can provide clues to the widespread belief in a new wave of demons in our own age. Erikson posited a relationship between the disrupted society and the society which sees demons. Is this what is going on in the United States today? Is it possible that the cultural disruptions of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the political disruptions of the post-Vietnam and post-Watergate era, and the economic disruptions of recession and never-ending inflation are producing a spiritual malaise not unlike that experienced by the Puritans in the late seventeenth century? A naturalistic view of the demonic perspective directs our attention to questions such as this.

Some Spiritual Observations about Naturalistic Perspectives

I hope that what has been said above has convinced you of the advantages of taking a naturalistic perspective on spiritual issues. In closing, however, I think it is important to mention that in recent years there have been several calls by noteworthy scholars of deviance and social control to do the opposite—to reexamine naturalistic analysis in terms of its supernaturalistic dimensions. These scholars, at least the ones I have in mind, are in no way suggesting that we return to the primacy of the demonic or supernatural viewpoint. They are asking instead that we "transcend" or expand the confines of a purely naturalistic perspective, a perspective which often becomes so preoccupied with testable explanations of the "things" in this world that it forgets to consider their moral, spiritual, or cosmic dimensions. This call for transcendence of a purely naturalistic perspective is raised in a variety of recent works of critical sociological scholarship.

In his book *The Seven Deadly Sins* Stanford Lyman argues that a major deficit in most sociological studies of deviance is the lack of any perspective by which to judge the evils of the modern world. According to Lyman,

Evil is a term that is rarely found in a modern sociology text. . . . To the extent that sociological thought embraces the study of evil today, it does so under the embarrassing, neutered morality of "deviance." Adopting for the most part an uncritical stance toward the normative structure of any given society, the . . . sociologist of

deviance takes his cue from whatever the forces of law and restriction define as evil. Hence, the concerns of the vocal and powerful elements of a society become the resources for a sociological investigation of evil.⁶²

Guided toward their fields of study by the "forces of law and restriction," most students of deviance have been content to examine what Alex Liazos once referred to as "the sociology of nuts, sluts, and perverts."⁶³ Lyman calls upon sociologists to transcend the limits of a research diet prepared for them by the most vocal and powerful chefs of our modern day. The most important evils, suggests Lyman, are to be found at a deeper level, evils entrenched in the foundational bedrock of our society itself, evils rooted in "the corporate structure of modern society."⁶⁴

One sociologist of deviance whom Lyman need not remind to look for the deeper structures of evil in society is Richard Quinney. Quinney's early critical analysis of crime, deviance, and social control linked the impersonal forces of corporate dominance to the political and economic structures of modern capitalist society. More recently Quinney has suggested that the material problems of capitalism are multiplied by its "sacred" (i.e., spiritual) void. In Quinney's words:

The contemporary world is caught in . . . a sacred void, the human predicament on both a spiritual and sociopolitical level. Among the characteristics that contribute to this void are a mode of production that enslaves workers, an analytic rationalism which dissipates the vital forces of life and transforms everything (including human beings) into an object of calculation and control, the loss of feeling for the bond with nature and the sense of history, the demotion of our world to a mere environment, a secularized humanism that cuts us off from our creative sources, the demonic quality of the political state, and the hopelessness of the future. . . . The void is historical, beginning with the emergence of capitalism and the breakdown of religious tradition under the . . . enlightenment.⁶⁵

How is this sacred void to be overcome? Quinney urges us to move away from a purely naturalistic critique of society to one that incorporates the concerns of "prophetic theology." He argues for a form of "religious socialism" which will both promote social justice and heal the void found in contemporary existence. "By integrating into a Marxist materialist analysis a critical and prophetic theology of culture," Quinney believes, we will "develop an understanding of the world and a way of transcending the contemporary historical condition."⁶⁶ This cannot be done by a purely naturalistic critique or secular socialism. According to Quinney: "A socialism without the sacred would become a system as materialist and alienating as that of capitalism. What is emerging in the transition to socialism is a new religious concern, a concern which not only repudiates the essential secularity of capitalism, but one that makes socialism whole by integration of the sacred void."⁶⁷

A third call for a type of spiritual transcendence of the purely naturalistic approach to deviance and social control is found in Larry Tifft and Dennis Sullivan's book *The Struggle to Be Human*. Tifft and Sullivan articulate an

"anarchist" approach in which the rule of law or "external authority" is viewed as a villain which separates us from direct responsibility for the good and bad we create for one another. Once this happens we are said to "become the historical ghosts from whom we are struggling to free ourselves."⁶⁸ We forget that the world which seems to rule us is "in reality" a world of our own making. According to Tifft and Sullivan, "We deny ourselves our spiritual homes and our ability to become part of the process we create."⁶⁹

Tifft and Sullivan reject an approach to social control which permits the state to act on our behalf in containing the legally defined deviant. When this happens, as it does in our own modern society, we lose the "cosmic sense" of ourselves as humans struggling together.⁷⁰ Approaches to the study of crime or deviance which accept the existence of state authority as something natural, as something given, are said to be guilty of a "warped spirituality." Just as impersonal control by state institutions should be replaced by strategies of mutual aid, direct personal resistance, and communal reconciliation, so also do Tifft and Sullivan urge that we "turn scientific inquiry over to the community" and that our research be guided by a sensitivity "to the mystery of life, the mystery of human experience, the mystery of a world of mutual aid."⁷¹

Bridges between sacred understandings and naturalistic control processes are also embodied by people committed to maintaining or reexamining the values of pagan world views and practices. While driven underground in the west from the late Middle Ages to the present, paganism has remained a material aspect of the religious lives of many so-called third-world peoples. This is particularly true with regard to a wide variety of religious rituals of Africans and of the indigenous peoples of what we today call the "new world." Indeed, whether in Caribbean voodoo, or in the continuing shamanism of various North, Central, and South American "native" peoples, or even in the lineages of Afrocentric religious practices that constitute what Zora Neale Hurston once called the "Sanctified Church" of the black diaspora living in the United States, the resistance of pagan forms to the disembodied male violence of modern western religious controls continues.⁷² A recognition of this resistance by people who would pave the world over with modern white-male-oriented economies based on western moral logic and belief is evident in their continuing demand for conversion of others whose pagan spiritualities refuse a clear-cut distinction between pure spirit and the impurities of living bodily in a world that is itself sacred. Where conversion is resisted politically—for instance, in Guatemala, where native peasant opposition to U.S.-based economic domination typically draws spiritual strength from shamanistic religious counselors and healers—figures of "the old religion" have been systematically targeted for "disappearance" by paramilitary death squads. In other settings, such as Puerto Rico, where "ecstatic" pagan undertones mix with a surface adherence to the ways of Christianity, conservative Protestant evangelists have recently used the appeal of new television-based ministries in gaining "Christian access" to practitioners of *Santería* and other pagan-influenced religious forms.

Even as the future of pagan practices is today being contested in the third world, there is, in the United States and in other overdeveloped countries, a resurgence of interest in Goddess-directed "feminist spirituality" and other pagan spiritualities.⁷³ This is occurring, in part, because of a growing feminist critique of and dissatisfaction with the silencing or marginalization of both women and non-male-identified religious awareness within the dominant western religious organizations. For a great many women and for some men, paganism is attractive today also because of its reverence for nature in a time of great ecological catastrophes; its relatively reciprocal approach to power in an age of democratic questioning; and its respect for the sacredness of the body in an era in which the body is everywhere profaned, commodified, and pornographized. Paganism offers an immanent understanding of the sacredness of interdependent life (and death) processes and a vision of social control as an ever-changing ritual dialogue between humans and the rest of nature. The fluid, poetic, and power-reciprocal promise of contemporary pagan perspectives is articulated by the feminist witch Starhawk in the following manner:

Witchcraft offers a model of a religion of poetry, not theology. It presents metaphors, not doctrines, and leaves open the possibility of reconciliation of science and religion, of many ways of knowing. It functions in those deeper ways of knowing which our culture has denied and for which we hunger. The worldview of Witchcraft is cyclical, spiral. It dissolves dualities and seeks opposites as complements. Diversity is valued, both poles of any duality are always valued because between them flows the on-off pulse of polar energy that sustains life. The cycle is the rhythm of the dance. . . . Finally, the Craft provides a structural model, the coven, the circle of friends, in which there is leadership but no hierarchy, small enough to create community without loss of individuality. The form of ritual is circular, not an altar or a podium or a sacred shrine, because it is in each other that the Goddess is found. . . . There are no hierophants, no messiahs, no avatars, no gurus.⁷⁴

In different ways the writings of Lyman, Quinney, Tifft and Sullivan, and various pagan and feminist theorists remind us to temper the naturalistic analysis of deviance and social control with an awareness of the moral, spiritual, or cosmic nature of this subject matter. This reminder is a fitting way to close the chapter on the demonic perspective. After all, the demonic perspective informs us that control of deviance is first and foremost a battle between good and evil. It is a battle over who gets to name the good and control the bad. This is often overlooked (or perhaps covered up) by the neutral-sounding language of some of our more "modern" perspectives. Let us not be fooled by this "devilishness." Deviance is and always has been a moral battle in which the winners are declared saints and the losers sinners.

NOTES

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- 4 For a systematic review of the different processes contributing to secularization, see N. J. Demerath III and Phillip E. Hammand, *Religion in Social Context: Tradition and Transition*, Random House, New York, 1969, esp. pp. 103–114.
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- 8 H. C. Lea, *The Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, Harper & Row, New York, 1969, p. 168.
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- 30 Gillin, *Criminology and Penology*, p. 203.
- 31 Mary Daly, "European Witchburning: Purifying the Body of Christ," in *Gyn/ Ecology: the Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1978, pp. 178–192.
- 32 See, for instance, Monica Sjöö and Barbara Mor, *The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth*, Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1987, pp. 298–314; and Arthur Evans, *Witchcraft and the Gay Counterculture*, Fag Rag Books, Boston, 1978, pp. 88–99.

- 33 Henry Boguet, "Discours des Sorciers," quoted in Evans, *Witchcraft and the Gay Counterculture*, p. 77.
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