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The Devil Made Me Do It - Chapter 1 of "Counseling and the Demonic"

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CHAPTER ONE

THE DEVIL MADE ME DO IT

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (1 Pet. 5:8)

We live in a day in which interest in demonism and occult phenomena is growing in society at large and, as a consequence, within the Christian community as well. The following anecdotes, collected over a period of a few months as I began work on this manuscript, illustrate the practical importance of this topic, not only for the Christian public, but for the general population, the press, and the courts as well. I quote the stories as they appeared.

Church Teaching Implicated in Drowning Death of Girl

The death of a five-year-old Seattle girl who was drowned by her mother in a Portland motel room has prompted intense criticism of a suburban Seattle Pentecostal parish which teaches that some people are possessed by demons.

Janet Cole, 37, drove from Seattle with her daughter March 20 and checked into the Ramada Inn in North Portland. There she put five-year-old Brittany into a bathtub and drowned her. Police found the girl's body on a motel bed.

Psychiatric evaluations ordered by the court described Cole as severely disturbed, and suggested that this resulted from her involvement with the Community Chapel and Bible Training Center in Burien, Washington. The \$9 million complex south of Seattle started as a small fundamentalist parish, and is now run by the Rev. Donald Lee Barnett, a former Assembly of God minister.

Barnett teaches that some people, including children, can be possessed by demons, and also teaches that children who have not reached the "age of accountability" will enter heaven. Both of these teachings are common in mainstream Christianity, but court records indicated that Cole put the teachings together, and determined that she could protect her daughter from evil by killing her before she reached an age of accountability.

Reports also indicate that Cole planned to commit suicide through [a] drug overdose after killing her daughter. Cole called police about her daughter's death, according to police reports.¹

Satan's Servant or Clever Con Man? Britons Wonder

MAIDSTONE, England—Beneath the heavy bronze British coat-of-arms and in front of a bewigged judge in the local court, a bizarre trial focusing on the power of the devil is fascinating this nation of established Christianity.

The question is whether Derry Mainwaring Knight, a

striking 280-pound presence, is Satan's satrap, or an extraordinary con-man.

He is accused of deceiving church and society leaders out of £300,000 in what might be called a satanic sting.

If the prosecution is right, he persuaded his victims, all committed Christians, to part with their money through an anti-devil scam designed to finance his licentious high-life.

If the defense is right, he used the funds to try to promote his own ascension within the satanic cult to get into position to rob it of its power by destroying its all-important regalia, including a chalice, a sceptre, a sword and a throne.

Is it a case of good vs. evil, or human gullibility vs. criminal greed?

. . . .

"Satanism is far more rampant in this country than people believe," said Susan Sainsbury, wife of multimillionaire Tim Sainsbury, Tory member of Parliament. Sainsbury is heir to a grocery fortune.²

Satan Promotes Church

Satan has joined an advertising campaign for St. James Lutheran Church in Portland. The devil, probably not a willing participant in the promotion, is pictured in bus advertising for the church saying, "I don't have a prayer at 1315 S.W. Park"—the address of the church.

"I guess you could say the devil made me do it," the Rev. Joe Smith explained. "This church is interested in being open to people. Rather than beating them over the head with a steeple, we thought we'd try humor."³

Channeling

One of the latest forms of spiritualistic phenomena to appear in the United States is known as "channeling." While some do not believe that this form of activity involves demonic influence, others clearly believe that it does.

In California these days, consumers can consult a reincarnated "spirit" for as little as \$10 or as much as \$1500 an hour. Hundreds, possibly thousands, do so each week.

. . . Channel, observers point out, is a new name for medium, someone who professes to have the power to communicate with the dead

Last year, J. Z. Knight, a Yelm, Washington woman became perhaps the nation's best-known channel after the entity she says she speaks for, a 35,000-year-old man named Ramtha, was described in a best-selling book by the actress Shirley MacLaine.⁴

The phenomena included in channeling are "as simple as an artist's creative inspiration or as complicated as 'entities' speaking through a person's body (much as a television set picks up electrical energy)."⁵ Channeling is a contemporary version of the spiritualism of the 1850s in which mediums and clairvoyants held seances to contact dead loved ones.

Channeling has much diversity, but a certain characteristic pattern as well. Common features include: the use of stilted phrases, foreign accents—often changing inconsistently—emphasis on the view that each person is god and needs only to look within, and the use of exotic names such as Myissa, Quax, and Ramtha. In addition, most "channelers" seem to have a background of sales and human potential training.⁶ This last feature suggests that there may be a common pattern for the development of channeling phenomena.

While only illustrative, articles like these suggest that the issue of Satan and demons is a live one in our contemporary world. Although Satan has been out of fashion for most of the twentieth century, interest in the occult has revived in the last two decades.

Several industries are not only cashing in on the rise of this phenomenon, but actively promoting it as well. In the late 1960s and early 1970s movies such as *Rosemary's Baby*, *Poltergeist*, and *The Exorcist* came into the entertainment market; more recently, we've been offered *The Prince of Darkness*.

Popular parlor games that encourage an openness to spirit powers are the Ouija board and the use of tarot cards. Somewhat more recent, and very successful in some quarters, is the game *Dungeons and Dragons*, in which the players are able to take on imaginary magical powers.

The entertainment industry has also brought to contemporary Western society a number of rock groups with names, costuming, and popular songs that evoke prevailing conceptions of occultic phenomena and of Satan himself. Among them are KISS (Knights in Service to Satan), AC/DC, Judas Priest, and a number of others.

At the same time, we see an apparent increase in actual cultic and occultic rituals. I view horoscopes, published in the daily papers, as a part of these. Witches and warlocks openly acknowledge their practices, and covens may be readily found in major cities. A satanic cult has been openly started in the San Francisco area. There have been reports even of ritual slayings of animal and, apparently, human sacrifices.

While some of these phenomena are quite blatant, it seems likely that more subtle forms of influence are more effective in most instances. C. S. Lewis captures this notion very dramatically in his space trilogy, *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*. In these novels, Lewis introduces the notion of being “bent.” Just as a tree is shaped to the gardener’s design by gradually increasing the degree of bend in its limbs, so people are shaped to Satan’s purpose by being pressed ever so gradually to depart from the straight and narrow. Lewis’s point is that what is dangerous to truth is not the full 180-degree bend of the blatant lie; anyone will recognize such obvious falsehood. Rather, the greatest danger comes from truth with a slight twist.⁷

As the subtlety and variety of his approaches demonstrate, Satan is a being of vast intelligence and ability. He is a wily adversary who knows where we are most vulnerable. Consequently, we can expect that his methods will be adapted for what he deems most effective in the current intellectual, philosophical, and political climate. If we are to be effective in combating him we must understand his strategy and tactics; only thus can we recognize and defend against his attacks before we are overwhelmed. In order to effectively guard against this adversary we must avoid two common contemporary errors: 1) spiritualizing all of our personal struggles as demonic, and thus neglecting the affect of the world and the flesh, or 2) materializing our personal struggles so that we acknowledge

the world and the flesh, but ignore or even deny the reality of the devil.

As interest in occult and demonic phenomena is increasing, many within the church have become involved in some of these activities, believing they are “innocent recreation.”

If the current publicity is a valid indication that more demonic activity is occurring, then Christians should be aware that renewed spiritual warfare is at hand. The Scriptures command believers to be aware of the devil’s activities and schemes (2 Cor. 2:11). Once aware of Satan’s battle plans they are to put on God’s armor (Eph. 6:11–20), and resist Satan’s attacks (James 4:7).⁸

In a recent article, Billy Graham told the Southern Baptist Convention that the “scandals involving television preachers were the work of the devil.” Apparently referring to the scandal involving Jim and Tammy Bakker and PTL, Graham said: “When I started out, we had to contend with the image of Elmer Gantry. And we had lived down that image until it’s been resurrected by the devil.”⁹

If as believers we choose to take seriously the reality of demons and of spiritual warfare, then we must understand the nature and scope of demonic activity and be prepared to respond according to biblical guidelines in dealing with this challenge. The purpose of this book is to help counselors better understand the nature of spiritual warfare and their roles as agents in this cosmic conflict, particularly in the context of counseling.

It is natural that among pastors, psychologists, and others concerned with the care and growth of Christians, questions should arise regarding how to deal with demonism within the church. Answers to these questions are diverse, though those who are most vocal about these issues often represent one of two extreme views. One view focuses on exorcisms and the casting out of demons, even from believers. The other, to a greater or lesser degree, makes light of the possibility that Christians may come under demonic influence. Any thoroughgoing effort to develop a comprehensive approach to counseling and psychotherapy from a Christian perspective must address all aspects of these issues.