**Gothic, a New Religious Movement?**

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**Methodology**

In order to answer the question whether religion and spirituality exist within the gothic movement, we must approach the subject methodologically. If the gothic movement contains religious or spiritual elements, then it fits within the framework of a new religious movement.

In order to judge whether the gothic movement is a form of religion or spirituality, a clear definition of religion is required, as well as a clear overview of the methods used in religious studies to describe new religious movements. These are the basic tools for answering the question, followed by research into the gothic movement. In order to get a clear picture of the modern gothic movement I conducted field research in the gothic movement itself. I conducted numerous interviews with active members within the movement, and I attended several parties and gatherings. I listened to many music cd's, read lyrics, and visited many web sites. I read every book I could find (116) about this topic. Armed with all this information, I put together a description of the movement.

**Portrayal of mankind in gothic literature**

There are four kinds of gothic literature: the male gothic novel, the female gothic novel, the supernatural gothic novel, and the scientific gothic novel. In gothic literature, mankind is evil both individually and collectively, and there is no hope that good will prevail. Good is not denied as a reality, but it will always lose the inner and external battle against evil. This is why it is the dark side of romanticism. In gothic literature you must ultimately surrender to evil and be reconciled to it, because the evil within mankind cannot be overpowered or overcome

**Gothic subculture**

Gothic websites are full of dark themes; the most common are dark emotions such as despair, depression, anger, hate, and fear; experiencing these emotions is the essence of gothic. Gothic is the oldest underground musical genre with a history of twenty-plus years, which makes it the oldest of the youth subcultures. The punk movement in the Seventies gave rise to the gothic genre. In 1979, the band Bauhaus came out with the song "Bela Lugosi's Dead". This song marks the birth of the gothic movement. The actor Bela Lugosi was the most popular interpreter of Dracula, in the 1931 film "Dracula" by Ted Browning. Even today, Bela Lugosi's interpretation of Dracula is the image that comes to mind for most people when they think of Dracula, with his dark cape, white make-up, and red lipstick. Bela Lugosi is Dracula personified, or rather, incarnated. Bela Lugosi identified so much with Dracula, that he was buried as Dracula in August of 1956.

**Motivations for identifying with evil**

Most people have a tendency to long for "the good old days" when things don't go well. Feelings of longing and nostalgia for a home, rooted in an inability to identify with modern society, may lead someone to look to the past for a new home. Religious motives also play a part in this yearning for the past. The gothic movement is a return to the dark side of ancient religion, to the monsters and the occult, magical religiosity of the past. Another motive for identifying with evil stems from rebellion. Teenage youth culture rebells against the status quo of society, of which established traditional religions are a part. It is the natural tendency of youth to go against the established order. This tendency towards rebellion gives rise to youth subcultures. Gothic is a youth subculture which is unique among other youth subcultures because the rebellion is directed against the christian faith. The gothic movement gives expresseion to blasphemy and violations of the christian faith.

**Short introduction to the "Dark Reign of Gothic Rock".**

"The Dark Reign of Gothic Rock--In the Reptile House with The Sisters of Mercy, Bauhaus and The Cure" written by Dave Thompson is an extensive history of the gothic music genre. The gothic band "The Damned" created the gothic style of clothing and appearance. Frontman Dave Vanian also fanned interest in paranormal occult and magical phenomena.

**Origin and characteristics of gothic music**

Gothic Rock is a dark form of punk which focuses on the macabre, the mysterious, the dark, and the occult. It is characterized by the expression of desolation, emptiness, loneliness, destruction, and themes of the bizarre--in other words, absolute hatred of humanity. This misanthropy is, in essence, a rejection of human existence which runs like a red thread through the gothic movement. The music consists of dissonant sounds made by semi-accoustic guitars, a monotonous solid base, simple but fast rhythms, use of synthesizers and electronic effects led by a powerful, dark vocalist. The style is black, the attitude dark, and the social m.o. is individualistic. It wasn't long before occult and magical symbolism (amulettes, talismans, symbols, drawings, incantations, formulas, etc.) were at the heart of goth music, particularly in bands like "Southern Death Cult", "Sisters of Mercy", "The Mission", "Nine Inch Nails", "Christian Death", "The Damned", "Alien Sex Fiend", "Theatre of Hate", "London After Midnight", "Marilyn Manson", "Within Temptation", "The Cult", and most especially "Fields of Nephilim". The musical goal is to create, first of all, a magical, surrealistic space in which one can physically experience the dark supernatural reality. "Sisters of Mercy" put it like this: "Absence of finding any hope in light, but finding only hope in darkness. It;s a grim world and that must be basis for everything else" Secondly, they want to liberate themselves from old christian thought patterns by destroying them completely through radical blasphemy, both in their music and their lifestyle. This is what the band "Christian Death" calls "exorcizing of demons" and which is known as "Blasphemetal" in the pop world.

The gothic music genre developed alongside many other genres, and there are many areas that overlap. Examples are many forms of punk, metal, and industrial music, dark wave, ethereal, house, and dark ambient.

Gothic music is essentially focused on "angst". It is eager to create a dark atmosphere in which visions of abnormality, corruption, and destruction become reality. "Angst" is the ultimate gothic experience, the essence of gothic. "Angst" is what someone experiences when he or she has a momentary personal taste of all human misery in the world. Gothic music revolves around experiencing "angst", in a mysterious, somber, extremely dark, supernatural spiritual atmosphere. In order to create this atmosphere, gothic parties and concerts are held late at night, in old, deserted churches or buildings decorated with dark occult and magical symbols and blasphemous scenes ridiculing the christian faith. Music is gothic if it is "angst-centric" and if the lyrics contain gothic themes such as mystery, destruction, occult or magical spirituality, the supernatural, desolation, the bizarre and macabre, blasphemy against the christian faith, and the grotesque. Musicians must be gothic in dress and appearance. In addition, the music world must label the music gothic, or the gothic crowd must consider it gothic.

Gothic music regards itself as the final bastion against the commercial pop and rock of music labels. Being non-commercial is the most important characteristic of gothic music lovers. To be commercial means being part of the mainstream culture, which means conforming instead of rebelling. A gothic band must be authentic by making gothic music without compromise, and having the integrity to ignore commercial labels and remain faithful to the orthodox gothic music doctrine. The worst thing that can happen to a gothic band according to goths is that they turn commercial; they call this "selling out". The band has sold its gothic authenticity and integrity and is therefore no longer a gothic band to the hard core of the gothic movement.

**How to tell if someone is gothic?**

A typical goth is someone who listens to gothic music, reads gothic literature, watches gothic movies, and who regularly attends gothic parties, concerts, and gatherings (participating in role-playing games, visiting old ruins, old deserted churches or cemeteries). He or she dresses in a gothic style: all clothes are black, face and skin are pale (gothics are night creatures who destest the day and avoid sunlight), black make-up such as lipstick, eyeliner, nail polish, and hair dyed black. Clothing ranges from monastic robes, velvet dresses, wedding dresses, sexual sado-masochistic bondage clothing, metal-studded leather, a slim silhouette, pointy shoes, spike heels, army boots, black trench coats, white pirate or poet shirts with lots of frills, lace, corsettes, or victorian clothes. Accesories include religious occult symbols and artefacts, spooky items, black sunglasses, lots of silver jewelry, and dark tattoos or piercings. The most important aspect of a goth is that he or she must have a gothic mentality and personality. The bottom line is that being gothic is not just a teenage phase, but an inner, permanent part of the individual. This is expressed in individualism, an interest in the dark side of life, belief in an occult supernatural reality, participating in occult rituals, and a predilection for dark and somber emotions, particularly depression. Creativity and artistic sensibility are focused primarily on a dark esthetic which is dramatic and mysterious. Highly regarded characteristics are intellectualism, self-analysis and introspection, emotional expressiveness, sensitivity to the supernatural (paranormal experiences), contempt for authority and organized, established, traditional religions.

**Gothic styles**

There are many different gothic styles. Victorian gothic finds inspiration in the Victorian and romantic period. These gothic adherents try to live in a dark, Victorian, romantic style and dress accordingly. They come across as intelectual, conservative, cultured, and classical.

"Devil bunnies" are gothic adherents who believe in, and associate themselves with, Satan or satanism. Many goths dress as vampires and try to live and think like vampires.

Then there is the depressive gothic style, the central theme of which is morbid fate and the expectation of impending cosmic doom.

There are also "alternative teens" or "baby bats", young teenagers who want to be alternative and who flirt with gothic themes. They are potential new growth for the gothic movement.

"Bondage babe or boy" are goths who identify with, associate with, and flirt with the sado-masochistic world. They wear clothes and assecories associated with sexual fetishism from the sado-masochistic world.

"Glamgoths", goths who want to look glamorous with their clothes, make-up, and personal appearance, are characterized by exhibitionistic behavior.

"Mansonites" are followers of the gothic metal band "Marilyn Manson"

"Kindergoths" are goths who are younger than 16. The list goes on and on.

**Gothic terminology**

The gothic movement employs the following terminology:

"In the scene" means to be truly present in the movement by active participation and frequently attending parties and concerts.

"Oh so gothic" can be either a compliment or a sarcastic remark to someone who really seems gothic, or it can be an understatement.

"Oh the angst of it all" may emphasize grim bleakness and fate, but it can also denote sarcasm or understatement.

"More gothic than thou" expresses contempt and disapproval towards fringe goths.

**Dichotomy**

A typical characteristic of gothic is an all-encompassing tension between attraction and rejection--a dichotomy. It is a dualism which reveals, simultaneously, an interconnected unity and an inner conflict between all things. With this dichotomy gothic reveals, as in a mirror, the essence of life. For the goth there is ultimately no difference between good and evil, as they are, deep down, the same. Good and evil are inseparably connected, yet evil is stronger and more prominent than good. Good is always represented by the christian faith, and evil by occult and magical religiosity.

**Eschatology**

Many goths have a very clear view of the end of the age. They believe that the powers of darkness ruled over the earth before the flood, that they were conquered and suppressed afterwards, but that they will rise again in the last days to rule the earth once more. They look forward to the reign of cosmic darkness with its malevolent principalities, powers, and supernatural beings. This will result in the total destruction of the human race on earth.

**Religion and spirituality**

Most goths believe in the existence of a dark transcendental power. They are focused on this power and want to make contact with it by means of occult magic and rituals. Gothic is absolutely against organized religion (whether it be christianity or other world religions); religion ought to be personal. The gothic movement is very open towards religions which do not meet the approval of the mainstream culture and which tend towards occult and magical rituals focused on darkness and evil. There is a lot of experimentation with religion within the gothic movement, particularly with western occultism, esoterica, wicca, neo paganism, black magic, and satanism.

**Depression and personality disorders**

Within the gothic movement, depression is regarded as a blessing, not a disorder. To be a goth means being a tragic, sad, and somber individual with a disturbed personality. Gothic is the subculture which is farthest removed from the mainstream culture because it glorifies the opposite emotions. The christian fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22 (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control) is replaced by everything that is the opposite. From different interviews it is clear that for most goths, depression is the core of the movement.

**Fixation on death**

The gothic movement is focused on the dark aspects of the human psyche. Gothic aims at liberating the dark, human subconscious which is normally suppressed, and allowing it expression in daily life. It wants to confront society with its own inner fears. The greatest fear in modern western life is the phenomenon of death. Because death is the greatest taboo, gothic has elevated it to the main theme of the movement. This goes along with a fascination with death and flirting with suicide. Several interviews revealed clearly that death and the longing for death are very important to a goth. The deepest wish of a goth is to be able to experience death while living, to be a "living un-dead". The perfect song within this framework is "Suicide" by the band "Damned".

**Self-mutilation**

Goths engrave and cut words or symbols related to occultism or magic in their own flesh. The most common occult symbol is the pentagram. All kinds of sharp objects are used for this purpose. They do it because they rebell against the norms and values of the mainstream culture by means of the absolutely dark, macabre and bizarre.

Self-mutilation can be a way to get attention (pity) or status (courage, daring). It is a ritual to master one's body or to overcome fears. But it can also be done for relief of inner pain, by inflicting physical pain which distracts from the inner pain. The reason for the inner pain is the excessive emphasis on dark emotions. Another reason is punishment for wrongs one has committed by submitting to the self-imposed punishment of mutilation. Piercings in strange places or in large numbers are also a form of self-mutilation. Another form of self-mutilation, which is also the most common according to interviews, is extinguishing burning cigarettes on one's own skin. Suicide is a logical extension of self-mutilation, especially given the gothic fascination with death.

**Bloodletting and drinking blood**

Bloodletting and drinking blood occurs primarily among goths who either consider themselves vampires or who are satanists. It may be a solo activity or a group event. One can drink blood by performing a bloodletting, or by creating extreme suction with kisses on one's own or someone else's skin. Once can also press blood from raw meat, or, in more extreme cases, obtain blood from a ritually slaughtered animal (or worse yet, from a human sacrifice, which is a rare exception). The drinking of blood usually occurs in conjunction with with sexual activity, particularly during occult and magical rituals. During interviews, goths claimed to know people and to have witnessed people who practise the drinking of blood. Hardly anyone, however, admits to these practices themselves. Perhaps they are ashamed to admit it, or it may be an important esoteric event which they would rather not discuss with an outsider.

**Cemetaries, ruins, deserted churches or buildings, and unhallowed places**

Goths seek out places where they can experience a dark, supernatural presence. Cemetaries, ruins, deserted churches, etc, are ideal because a dark, malevolent transcendence is already present without having to be summoned first. They also make pilgrimages to well-known gothic places; this is called "legend tripping". These places are usually particular cemetaries where a notorious personality lies buried. This often goes along with initiation rituals which are rooted in occultism or black magic. Often animals are sacrificed on such locations, and corpses are dug up from their graves and mutilated..

**Writing poetry**

Interviews revealed that writing poetry is one of the most popular solo activities for goths, besides listening to goth music. They are mostly poems about inner feelings of angst-experiences, one's own tragic fate, and the inevitable approaching doom of inner darkness.

**Drug use**

Goths use the same drugs as youths in other subcultures, in particular when they go out. Youths in a subculture use more drugs, however, than those in the mainstream culture. What is unique about goths is that they even want their drugs to be exclusive. Cigarettes, for example, are often from exclusive brands, and alcohol consumption consists of all kinds of strange, exotic cocktails.

**Sexuality**

Sexiality within gothic is free and experimental, with an emphasis on dark, taboo practices and emotional feelings of humiliation, angst, and fear. It goes without saying, therefore, that sado-masochism is more common than in the mainstream culture. There is a high level of willingness to experiment with homo- and bisexuality. In the gothic movement, sexuality and violence go hand in hand. One goth put it this way: "You can't separate violence and intelligence from sensuality. Sex has to get an element of violence in there to be truly great."

Sexual intercourse often includes occult or magic rituals such as the ones described by Marquis de Sade and Aleister Crowley. These two writers have inspired this dark take on sexuality and they have both attained cult status within the movement. Interviews revealed that sex is a core element of the gothic movement; sexual experimentation, in particular, is important. Goths will kiss several different people at a party, and they usually do not have a steady partner. Sex is engaged in with as many people as possible, in as many ways as possible, and rife with sado-masochism and fetishes. A goth habit for boys is to kiss each other on the mouth in greeting.

**Fascination and passion for the occult**

Goths show an avid interest in rituals and magic practices, and in performing them. They are especially intrigued by everything having to do with black magic and dark, malevolent transcendence such as magical music, songs, incantations, curses, symbols and actions. They seek out rituals and ceremonies where supernatural powers are summoned, and they put this occult knowledge into practice.

The gothic movement is very eclectic because it draws its rituals from from all kinds of occult and magical traditions, such as wicca, neo paganism, satanism, black magic, Aleister Crowly's books, etc. They also have a creative occult tradition of creating their own magical practices. Starhawk calls this creation of occult practices the "creative tradition" within the magical occult world.

Different interviews revealed clearly that most goths believe in wicca or neo paganism. In addition, many were involved in occult or magical practices. The most commonly practised occult phenomenon is laying tarot cards, which actually works, according to goths. In addition they also read and study numerous esoteric and occult works such as Aleister Crowley's books and "The Satanic Bible" by Anton LaVey. Reading and studying esoteric and occult works is considered a relaxing experience.

**Supernatural phenomena, fears and nightmares**

H.P. Lovecraft says, "Emotions are humans' first and foremost way to know the world, and the strongest of all emotions is fear."

Many goths are plagued by voices in their heads, paranoia, paranormal appearances of spirits or supernatural beings, and nightmares. These psychic phenomena are possibly caused by demonic, supernatural influences, or by self-projection of their fantasies, or by a combination of both. This can lead to suicide.

**White, pale, and thin**

Goths are almost without exception from white, urban families, and they usually have a protestant-christian background. Almost all goths want to look like the living "undead", like a vampire or "the Crow". He is like someone who died in his human body yet lives for ever as a monster. It follows that goths hate sunlight and prefer the night, in order to become as pale as possible. Interviews strongly indicated that goths enjoy night more than day, just as they enjoy winter and fall more than spring and summer because of the sunlight. Goths eat little in order to be as thin as possible and look more like a corpse. They detest fat and obesity, although there are now some goths who are overweight. Gothic immerses itself in, and associates itself with the dark side of the white, western historical cultural heritage, that is, the medieval superstitious heritage. The gothic movement is also fascinated by the philosophy of Nazi-Germany. They flirt openly with the symbols and ideas of fascism. Although they adapt it for their own creative puposes, they are still influenced by it.

**Anti society**

The gothic movement has enormous contempt for the mainstream culture, and is therefore adverse to established society. In interviews it became clear that the goth has nothing good to say about the state, the authorities, government, political parties, political leaders, and society as a whole.

**Gothic parties**

Goths prefer to have their parties in old buildings, preferably in deserted churches with a dark atmosphere and decorated with occult and diabolical artefacts and symbols. The space must be dark, so there is little in the way of lighting: preferably just a few candles and dim disco lights for special effects. The space must be filled with a smoky fog from smoke machines, the point being that you shouldn't be able to see too far. The space must be drenched in incense vapors.The attendees are all dressed exclusively in dark clothing, and they wear pale make-up with black accents. Dancing is really a solistic, individualistic affair: people dance for themselves. There are two dance styles, the minimal and the dramatic style. The minimal dance style consists of small steps and mostly arm movements. Everything is calm and collected. The dramatic style involves lots of wild movements which are performed explosively, such as falling down dramatically and violently and then jumping up again.

The goal of gothic dancing is to enter into a kind of trance in which you lose yourself and are no longer aware of your environment. Dancing is experienced as a spiritual event in which you cleanse yourself by replacing negative energy with positive energy. Negative energy includes everything you experience in daily life, and positive energy is the goth mentality. During the party there is little conversation, and then only with people they know. They are very self-oriented and isolated, and there is a high level of individualism.

**Fascination with vampires**

Gothic is fascinated with vampires and emphasizes personifying the monsters and the fears of western christian society. The most popular monster is the vampire.

**Ritual murders**

Although ritual murder within the occult magical esoterical world is rare, it does exist. Within the gothic movement, as well, ritual murders based on religious motives have been committed. The most notorious mass murder committed by two goth teenagers was the attack on Columbine High in Littleton, CO. The gothic teens first shot 12 students and 1 teacher, and then took their own lives. These two gothic youth were very much influenced by the gothic rock music of Marilyn Manson, by the magical literature of Aleister Crowley, Nazi idelology, and the movie "The Matrix". Although it is difficult to prove that this was a religious ritual murder, it does show that killing and extreme violence occur within the gothic movement.

On January 18, 2002, a bizarre murder was committed in which the victim was offered as a human sacrifice in a satanic ritual in Stuttgart, Germany. A gothic couple (Daniel and Manuela Ruda, 26 and 23), confessed to ritually murdering a collegue at their home as a sacrifice to the devil. The collegue was stabbed multiple times with a knife, then sacrificed to the devil on a table in a room filled with candles, occult objects, signs and symbols. The gothic couple lived a vampire lifestyle, drank human blood, slept in coffins and frequently vistited cemetaries. They claimed that the devil had told them to do this through voices and visions. This is a clear example of a ritual murder with the purpose of bringing human sacrifice based on occult esoteric, satanic motives, in this case by goths. Ritual murder does, therefore, occur within the gothic movement.

**Countries where gothic is found**

Gothic is found primarily in countries with a substantial germanic anglo-saxon influence, such as America, England, Germany, France, and the Netherlands. In former British colonies such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa there are thriving gothic movements, as well. Germany has the largest number of goths. In Germany, the gothic movement is called "Gruft", "Grufti", or "Grufters". In addition, gothic can be found in northern, southern, and eastern Europe.

Moreover, in countries with a growing western cultural influence, a gothic movement can be found which is not part of the germanic culture, for example the huge gothic movement in Japan and the Phillipines in Asia, and those of Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina in Central and South America.

**Essential elements of the gothic movement**

The gothic movement has a polycentric organization which is driven by individual personal spontanaety, creativity and freedom, combined with an inner dislike of any organized structure with established rules and a centralized form of government. The gothic polycentric structure is an integrated network made up of different individuals, social circles, bands, parties, music festivals and concerts which are all connected with the gothic subculture. The connecting lines within the integrated network are pluralistic. The connecting lines are the paths along which the ideology is proclaimed and spread. Each individual member has access to a large number of different connecting lines. These lines are plural, diverse, and bridge vast geographical distances. Members attending different parties, concerts, and festivals, and live performances by bands touring internationally, insure that the connecting lines within the movement are alive and dynamic. The internet also contributes to the continuous increase of connecting lines within the movement. The essence of the movement is the shared clothing style and outlook on life, which is the same at the core of the movement, although there are an infinite number of variations. There are also connecting lines to other groups and movements outside the movement which have certain things in common with the movement, such as heavy metal music, wicca, neo paganism, and satanism. This increases the reach and the influence of the movement, both outward and inward. Heavy metal music as a genre has a lot in common with gothic music. There are several bands that are a mix of both genres. The most well-known examples of this are Ozzy Osbourne, Rammstein and Marilyn Manson. Many goths, in addition to being goths, are also active practitioners of wicca, neo paganism or satanism, a fact which was revealed by the many interviews I conducted with goths. Almost all goths participate in magic rituals or practices such as predicting the future by means of wicca, neo paganism or satanism. The most popular magical practice is laying tarot cards. There is a lot of overlap and mutual influence between the different genres, because goths draw inspiration from, or even actively participate in, other movements as well.

**Gothic leaders**

The leaders of the gothic movement are primarily the bands. Different bands have things in common, but there are differences and rivalry, as well. This phenomenon of leaders who have some things in common yet are completely different and compete with one another also occurs in social circles at festive gatherings. Each band and each individual goth wants to be unique and independent; they do not even consider themselves gothic, because that would mean they are no longer unique and independent. They compete by emphasizing their own creativity and personality by being different than the others. Yet they all represent the same clothing style, musical themes, and outlook on life.

Leadership within the movement shares the following characteristics. Certain members are considered "primus inter pares", "first among equals". These kinds of leaders can be found on all levels in the movement. This type of structure is called "polycephalous". A typical leader in this structure obtains his status by attracting new members and creating a group of followers, and by influencing the movement with his style and ideology. He must continually prove his ability to lead if he wants to retain his position in the movement. The leaders are charismatic and action-oriented personalities. The most prominent leaders in the gothic movement are number of international bands. In addition, writers such as Anne Rice, H.P. Lovecraft, Aleister Crowley, and LaVey (The Satanic Bible) are very influential. Anne Rice has, in my opinion, been the most important and far-reaching influence on the movement as a whole with her "Vampire Chronicles". Her books, and the movies based on the books ("Interview with the Vampire" and "Queen of the Damned") are the primary sources of inspiration for all goths and goth bands. Different leaders can be very diverse, and they usually do not agree with each other. In the gothic movement many music styles, clothing styles, and philosophes have been developed. Leaders have only limited reach and influence in the movement. Moreover, leaders have virtually no regulating power over the movement. Neither do they have the authority to determine who is part of the movement, not even among their own followers. Leadership exchange occurs because they travel constantly and come out with new cd's at irregular intervals. Individual members and leaders in the movement compare themselves with each other, which creates and atmosphere of competition and rivalry. This personal competition leads to splits and the creation of new clothing styles, music and philosophies centered around the same core themes. This process of constant renewal, while a challenge for members, also makes the movement very attractive to outsiders.

**Method of attracting new members**

People may become gothic because they are attracted to the gothic lifestyle as expressed in the clothes, music, or philosophy, and the initiative to become gothic is theirs. The primary factor in someone becoming gothic is interpersonal relationships. Friendship is the most important factor in attracting new members to the gothic movement. To the extent that the friendships grow in influence and importance, the influence and importance of family ties decrease. Friends become the most important thing in life. The gothic movement attracts new members by means of friendship.

**Personal devotion**

The values of the gothic subculture are diametrically opposed to the values of the mainstream culture. This is why the transition from mainstream culture to gothic subculture is a radical event. The way of life of the mainstream culture is left behind, in order to be transformed according to the gothic way of life.

This outward and inner change toward a gothic way of life is a radical step which clearly announces to society: I no longer belong to the mainstream culture; I detest your opinions and habits, and from now on I belong to the subculture which seeks out and enjoys darkness."

Personal devotion to the movement is a requirement for becoming gothic, because you shut youself off from the mainstream culture and from your social and relational background. It is both an inner and an outward transformation. Outward, because you start to dress differently from the rest of society, by changing your biorhythm from day to night, and by looking like you are physically dead but spiritually alive. You change inwardly by developing a gothic philosophy of life which nurtures those emotions which the meanstreams culture considers negative: depression, melancholy, hate, and revenge, and a lust for the macabre and bizarre, dark side of life, combined with and interest in and a fascination for occult and magical religiosity and spirituality.

Anyone who chooses to become gothic makes a considerable personal sacrifice of devotion for the movement by leaving behind the old way of life and adopting a completely new way of life. P. Heelas describes three levels of devotion within the New Age movement:

1. Total involvement.

2. Serious part-timers.

3. Occasional part-timers.

This division is applicable to goths, as well:

1. These are the ones who dress gothic every day and who try wholeheartedly to live out the philosophy.

2. Those who dress gothic every day, but are not as serious when it comes to "walking the talk".

3. Those who do not make gothic a part of their daily lives because they do not have a genuine gothic mentality.

**Observation of resistance and opposition from society**

Conversations with goths revealed clearly that society does not look kindly on the gothic movement. Gothic is seen and experienced as something bad and negative, resulting in conscious or subconscious discrimination. They are teased and harrassed. They are outsiders, and people look down on their clothes and appearance.

In America, negative publicity had led to a widespread witch hunt against the gothic movement. This social persecution of the gothic movement merely serves to make it all the more attractive and mysterious for rebellious teenagers to join the gothic movement (in large numbers.)

**Modern vampire religions**

Young people who consider themselves vampires usually come from broken families. Sexuality is a very important part of the vampire life style. Desire for sexual experimentation may even be the reason becoming a vampire. Vampires are pictured as very sensual, unusually passionate creatures. Vampires are bisexual creatures who live off the life force of other people, obtained through sexual intercourse. Many young people become vampires because they envision a life of endless sex. The opposite, however, is often true. There is now a vampire-porn industry in magazines and on internet websites with images of sexual acts incorporating sucking blood through kisses or wounds.

Another big reason for the immense growth of vampires among young people is the fact that they are very superstitious. Research done in the USA by Norine Dresser in 1986 came up with the following numbers: 27% of high school and college students believe that vampires may actually exist. In addition, the research showed, young people have trouble distinguishing between fact and fiction on television.

**Conclusion**

Theology of monster worship The monster is the ultimate representative of chaos and disorientation in the midst of order, and reveals the profound uncertainties in our faith, our society, and our world view.

We usually see monsters as devils rather than divine messengers in our midst. The word monster, however, is derived from the Latin words "monstrare" (to reveal) and "monere" (to warn); they are messengers who bring revelations and who warn us about impending divine judgment. Monsters are not frightening, unnatural apparitions; they are frightening supernatural manifestations.

Monsters in gothic literature are role models for the gothic subculture. A goth is an acolyte of the monsters in gothic novels and movies. Imitating monsters and identifying with them are characteristics of a monster cult. The main monster which occupies a central place in the gothic subculture is the vampire. The vampire was originally a man, is dead yet he lives, and he longs to be a part of a society to which he can never truly return anymore. This tragic monster symbolizes the core of the gothic subculture. The gothic subculture is an ode to gothic monsters, but primarily to the vampire. The vampire is cursed by society and religion, especially from a christian point of view. Goths consider themselves cursed by society and before God, cursed forever to live in enmity with society and the christian faith; to live among them but never to belong.

**Religion in gothic music**

Music is the primary means of self-expression in the gothic subculture. Music in the gothic subculture serves to relate, create, and experience myths. The gothic movement nearly always attempts to communicate with the supernatural or to create a supernatural atmosphere through music and lyrics. During performances of goth bands and parties the audience is involved in creating this atmosphere and communicating with the supernatural. Goths have declared unanimously that they consider listening to goth music a spiritually purifying, cleansing, and liberating experience. These experiences are powerful at gothic parties, and their intensity is increased by dancing.

**Gothic subculture as a new religious movement**

Gothic is a new internal religious movement.

In addition, a new religious movement may be a cult or a sect. If a new religious movement is derived from a historically existing religion, it is a sect. But if it springs up without any connection to a historically existing religion, it is a cult. As a new religious movement, the gothic movement is a cult and not a sect, because it did not branch off from an existing religion. It is an internal movement which has sprouted from western historical cultural roots. Gothic is a new internal religious movement, and it is a cult. Its position is oppositional because it detests the mainstream culture. Gothic is a religion because it has a clear lifestyle and life philosophy which is inspired by the supernatural and which applies to all members. It wants to be a "religion of difference" because it wants to be opposed to established society. Gothic as a religious movement arose from a subculture model/evolution model, that is, as a subculture which gradually develops into a religion. Gothic as a new religious movement meets all the requirements for a new religious movement according to O'Dea:

1. Voluntary membership

2. Resistance and protest against the established order

3. Emphasis on personal conversion and experience

4. Takes hold of something from the past that had been neglected

5. Emphasis on equality for all

The root causes for the birth of the movement are primarily of an emotional nature, such as the search for self-worth, personal identity, and social contacts. Another cause is social criticism on established society and the need to visibly express resistance and distancing. The gothic subculture emphatically fulfills prophetic and mirror functions in society.

Goths function as monsters, messengers from a malevolent divine world who confront society with evil. As a new religious movement, the gothic subculture belongs to the magic family. The gothic subculture incorporates three genuine religious practices: the worship of monsters as divine beings, a magical world view, and a ritualistic, shamanistic life style.

**The religious definition of the gothic subculture**

The goal of the gothic life style is to experience this higher, transcendental reality and to communicate with it by summoning this supernatural reality through the worship of malicious monsters, identification with them, the practice of magic and a ritualistic, shamanistic lifestyle.

One definition of gothic is:

Reality is filled with evil, and this is caused by the supernatural.

The goal of the gothic religion is to reconcile with supernatural evil. By worshiping supernatural monsters through magic and a ritualistic, shamanistic lifestyle, one can identify with evil. If you do this, you no longer have to fear the supernatural evil which threatens reality, because you have become part of this evil yourself.

**Gothic, a New Religious Movement? 2008**

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