

Devil's in the Details

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My name is Charlie, and for the sake of making a point, let's just say I'm a Satanist. No, I don't have huge gauges or tattoos. I don't kill small animals, and I don't worship evil. I've never tortured children, unless you count that one time I made the child I was babysitting finish his steamed carrots. Religious intolerance begins with ignorance. Ignorance can come from many places, but no matter where it comes from, it means the same thing: someone is going to be mistreated because another does not understand how a group of people perceive the world. Satanists seem from the outside to be a group that worships evil. But, in fact, Satanism is an intricate and interesting religion.

This may come as a surprise, but Satanism actually forbids violence unless someone attacks you first. Satanists absolutely abhor violence against children and animals because "Satanism respects and exalts life. Children and animals are the purest expressions of that life force, and as such are held sacred and precious.... Children and animals are not abused or killed" (1). Satanism is a peaceful and tolerant religion, as it basically allows everyone in the world to practice whatever makes them feel fulfilled. Most people aren't even vaguely aware of the true nature of Satanism, but because of the common stereotypes, they believe Satanists worship the devil and torture animals and children. But Satanism is not about evil or doing harm. In fact, according to the seven tenets of Satanism "One should strive to act with compassion and empathy towards all creatures in accordance with reason." The official Church of Satanism says that "It is the position of The Satanic Temple that religion can, and should, be divorced from superstition. As such, we do not promote a belief in a personal Satan." According to ReligiousTolerance.org, "They believe that 'no redeemer liveth'—that each person is their own redeemer, fully responsible for their own life (2). The teachings of Satanism strive to instill confidence in individuals and to teach them to exercise their power over their lives. The unique character of people and the creativity of human nature is celebrated and worshiped by Satanists. Once Satanism has been examined more closely, it seems a reasonable, interesting, and tolerable religion. Satanism is an extreme example, but religious tolerance seems to be lacking in today's society.

So why do we as people, citizens of the world, decide that some religions are more acceptable than others? Who told people that they can judge others based on their religion without getting to know them or learn anything about their faith?

Imagine if every person on Earth had at least a basic understanding of every religion, and didn't rely on a biased source to educate them about other people. Would Satanists be ridiculed for finding a religion that makes sense to them and empowers their individuality? Would Islamophobia still rampage through America, or would people acknowledge that Islam, when not twisted and warped by extremists, is a religion that celebrates peace and love? Would millions of innocent Jewish men, women, and children have died in the Holocaust? Would people stop

judging all practicers of a religion based on a few bad eggs? I believe that when people begin to learn about each other's values and beliefs, we as a species will become more accepting, kind, and compassionate. Before casting judgement upon others for their religious beliefs, attempt to acquire more knowledge and develop a deeper understanding of their world view. No religion is surface-deep.

Sources:

1) "FAQ." The Satanic Temple. May 03, 2015. Accessed December 14, 2016. <https://thesatanictemple.com/faq/>.