HOW THE SATANIC TEMPLE IS CHANGING THE WAY WE TALK ABOUT RELIGION

SPEAK OF THE DEVIL

JOSEPH P. LAYCOCK

Speak of the Devil

Speak of the Devil

How The Satanic Temple Is Changing the Way We Talk About Religion

JOSEPH P. LAYCOCK

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press in the UK and certain other countries.

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America.

CIP data is on file at the Library of Congress
ISBN 978–0–19–094849–8

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Printed by Integrated Books International, United States of America

For my alma mater St. Stephen's Episcopal School,
where I learned sympathy for the devil.

Contents

Prologue

I am not now, nor have I ever been, a Satanist. But people have accused me of being one—both as a middle schooler for playing D&D (Dungeons and Dragons) and doodling monsters in notebooks and as a scholar for writing a book about self-identified vampires. (Most vampires are not Satanists, but anti-Satanists have little use for nuance.) Perhaps it is because of these accusations that I was so interested when a group of Satanists offered to erect a statue of the devil next to a monument of the Ten Commandments. I have covered The Satanic Temple (TST) for *Religion Dispatches* and other news outlets since 2013. It wasn't that TST lacked for headlines—in the age of "click bait," online media is madly in love with TST. But most of the coverage was and remains shallow, sensationalistic, and uninformed. Few outlets understood the constitutional issues at stake (or else grossly distorted them), and fewer still had any theoretical framework to think about TST's assertion that they are, in fact, a *religion*.

TST grew so fast and did so much in its first six years that it took patient observers to keep track of what was happening. The canard that TST members are "just trolls" has, in part, served as a convenient way of shirking the hard work of sorting out just what this group does and why. Amazingly, even when lawsuits filed by TST began to move into circuit courts and I started receiving calls from attorneys and prison chaplains asking me to explain what TST is, some persisted in telling me that the whole thing was "obviously" just a PR stunt.

While the future of TST is far from clear, I think there are several reasons why it is worth understanding this group, its arguments, and its history better. First, as a professor of religious studies, TST is "good to think with." Their provocations provide almost ideal case studies for classroom discussions precisely because they problematize our assumptions about religion and religious freedom. I have several colleagues who have asked their students to analyze TST for just this reason.

Second, TST is eliciting similar conversations—in a less organized and productive fashion—on a national scale: the more their provocations are discussed, condemned, or even dismissed, the more "unsettled" previous

assumptions about religion and religious freedom become. These are strange times: while exploring the discourse surrounding TST, I encountered skeptics professing a newfound appreciation for the value of religious ritual and community and conservative American Catholics openly denouncing the idea of religious freedom.

Third, TST seems to have played a major role in a global renaissance of religious Satanism. Since 2013 new Satanic organizations have formed throughout the United States, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. There are also rumors of groups forming in South America and the Middle East. Some of these emerging forms of Satanism are allied with TST and some are not; some reject supernaturalism as TST does, and some do not. But many of these groups have emulated TST in seeking a public platform and a degree of social engagement that is largely unprecedented in the history of religious Satanism. A decade ago, Satanists marching in gay pride parades, adopting highways, or running donation drives to aid the homeless would have been considered an absurdity. Today, such activities occur around the world.

This book, therefore, seeks to do two things. First, there is a need for a detailed history of TST. This history is short but far more complicated than the casual observer may suspect. The media has reported sporadically on TST, providing arresting headlines for their campaigns and provocations, but little context. I have already seen a number of legal and theoretical arguments put forward regarding TST, but without an understanding of what TST is or where it came from these arguments will be counterproductive. I have attempted to provide a history that is comprehensive if not exhaustive that includes details that might otherwise have been lost and arranges them into a coherent narrative.

Second, I hope to show how TST's provocations are affecting our national conversation about important issues. TST punches above its weight due to its ability to draw media attention, its creative use of the legal system, and its tactical manipulation of its opponents' rhetoric. Due to these factors, TST has a real effect on how we talk about "religion," morality, and what a religiously plural democracy ought to look like. There is already a body of scholarly literature on religious Satanism, but I think TST shows why Satanism has wider implications and should be taken more seriously by religion scholars.

Researching this book took far longer than any project I have previously done. In order to see the full range of discourse surrounding TST, I set up a daily news alert for the word "Satanic." Each morning I went through all the

local news segments, blog entries, and editorials discussing TST. Working over a period of years, I created an archive of over 2,600 news items.

I did ethnographic observation with TST chapters in San Marcos and Austin, Texas, as well as in Salem, Massachusetts, and Little Rock, Arkansas. I also conducted research interviews with over fifty people spread across fifteen states as well as the United Kingdom and Australia. With many of these individuals there were second and even third interviews. Many people interviewed for this book use pseudonyms for safety reasons. I have tried as much as possible to protect the identities and privacy of my informants. Because TST often requires its leaders to sign non-disclosure agreements (NDAs), I should mention that I never signed an NDA and was never asked to do so.

Several months into the ethnographic phase of my research, TST went through a major schism and several chapters left to become independent. As a scholar of new religious movements, it was an interesting experience to watch a religious group splinter before my eyes. While witnessing this was exciting from a pure research perspective, it was very painful for everyone involved. Several of my interview subjects exhibited signs of anxiety and depression, and at times I felt depressed myself. Some approached me for follow-up interviews about how they were feeling, and at times I felt more like a confessor than an ethnographer.

Unfortunately, the schism affected my relationship with my research subjects as some saw this book as an opportunity to "set the record" straight about what had happened. It is said that history is written by the victors, but bending the ear of the historians is itself a form of victory. I have tried to be as neutral as possible and to respect the experiences described by my informants. At any rate, this book is meant to be the first word in a scholarly conversation about the history of TST, not the last.

I would like to thank everyone who was interviewed for this book including TST's co-founders and executive ministry, Malcolm Jarry and Lucien Greaves (Doug Mesner); early collaborator David Guinan; Greg Stevens, Amber Saurusrex, Sadie Satanas, Chalice Blythe, and Sebastian Simpson from TST's National Council; Shiva Honey, TST's Director of National Events; Stu de Haan, legal counsel for TST; Satanic activist and artist Jex Blackmore; Hofman A. Turing, Emma Story, and Belle Phomet from LORE:SCNYC (League of Rebel Eve: Satanic Collective of NYC); Salome DeMeur of FAUST; David Suhor and Nelcitlaly from TST-West Florida; Seraphina from TST-NYC; Chris Turvey from TST-Colorado; Christopher

Paul from TST-Atlanta; Lex Manticore and Lux Armiger from TST-Chicago; Jill, Jesse, and Brandon from TST-Boston; Daniel Walker and Simone from Satanic Bay Area; Bel Citoyen of HelLA; Damien Ba'al of United Aspects of Satan; Mara Gorgo and and Damien Blackmoor from TST-Indiana; Rose Vespiria and Marius Omnes from the Crossroads Assembly; Lilith Starr from TST-Seattle, Michelle Shortt and Jack Matirko from TST-Arizona; Cara Jeanne in Philadelphia; Steve Hill in Los Angeles; High Cardinal Zeke Apollyon of Global Order of Satan; F. Felix Fortunado in Dallas, Jon and Laura Winningham from TST-Houston; Donny from TST-Springfield; Dex Desjardins and Sekhmet Solas from TST-Albany; Koren Walsh (Jezebel Pride) of The Minnesota Left-Hand Path Community; Artemis Pine and Sutekh of Satanic Australia; Lanzifer Longinus and Lilim Camus from TST-San Marcos; Brian Valencia from TST-San Antonio; Alex from TST-Austin; Evyn and Thom of Satanhaus; filmmaker Joy Davenport (Erin Morningstar); attorney James McNaughton; actor Michael Weiner; Dianne Post of the Freedom from Religion Foundation; and Francis X Clooney, SJ, of Harvard Divinity School. I would also like to thank everyone who supported me in thinking through and executing this project including Evan Derkacz at *Religion Dispatches,* James R. Lewis and David Bromley for their guidance as peers, author Don Webb for his insights into the Left-Hand Path and its history, Jeffrey Sanchez for his needed assistance with preparing this manuscript, and my patient wife Natasha Mikles who tolerated her husband being out late fraternizing with Satanists.

1

The Day Satan Came to Oklahoma

> Even if they mock Judeo-Christian-Islamic values, even if they ridicule everything most of us hold dear, devil-worshippers (if there are any) are entitled to practice their religion, so long as they break no constitutionally valid law.
>
> —Carl Sagan, *The Demon-Haunted World*[1]

> Now these Satanists are *abusing* this loophole. That . . . is so Satanist.
>
> —Stephen Colbert on The Satanic Temple (May 6, 2014)

When people asked me, "what I was working on," and I answered, "The Satanic Temple," I would often be met with looks of befuddlement. That is, until I said, "You know, those guys who wanted to put a statue of the devil up at the Oklahoma state capitol." After I said that, *everyone* knew whom I was talking about. The Satanic Temple (TST) is a political and religious movement that advocates progressive values and the separation of church and state. Although they reject supernaturalism, they argue that they have a sincere religious commitment to Satanism as evidenced by a shared ethos, symbols, and rituals. Satan, for TST, is a symbol of rebellion rather than a literal force of evil. I have been following the dizzying growth and activity of TST since December 2013 when the group announced its intention to donate a monument of Satan to the Oklahoma state capitol. Although the offer was initially regarded as a joke, the statue—entitled *Baphomet with Children*—has become a reality and has traveled across the country from Salem, Massachusetts, to Detroit, Michigan, to Little Rock, Arkansas. Baphomet has become a sort of metonymy not only for TST but also for a cultural moment defined by social polarization and the ongoing erosion of political norms. But to understand how this situation arose and why I think TST is significant to the study of religion and American culture, it is necessary to back up several years.

Speak of the Devil. Joseph P. Laycock, Oxford University Press (2020). © Oxford University Press.
DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780190948498.001.0001

In 2009 the Oklahoma legislature enacted the Ten Commandments Monument Display Act that mandated the construction of a Ten Commandments statue on the grounds of the state capitol. Although the US Supreme Court has made some creative exceptions, in principle, erecting a monument to a set of religious laws at a site where a secular state government writes laws is a violation of the Constitution's establishment clause. The reason for this is obvious: a religious symbol at the state capitol sends a message that the state of Oklahoma favors a particular religion and that its legislators intend to pass laws that privilege the interests of this religion to the exclusion of others.

Proponents of such monuments often claim that the Ten Commandments are "the foundation of American law." It is true that three of the prohibitions in the Ten Commandments (against lying, killing, and stealing) are congruent with American law. However, these simple prohibitions have been traced through the earliest versions of English Common Law and back to Germanic tribes from before they were Christianized.[2] Meanwhile other commandments (restricting which gods can be worshipped, what kinds of images can be constructed, and mandatory observance of religious holy days) directly contradict the freedoms guaranteed in the First Amendment.

The Oklahoma legislature sought to circumvent the establishment clause by exploiting a loophole. In 2005, the Supreme Court decided two similar cases on the same day: *Van Orden v. Perry* concerned the constitutionality of a Ten Commandments monument at the Texas state capitol, and *McCreary County v. ACLU of Kentucky* concerned displaying framed copies of the Ten Commandments in court houses and public schools. In two 5-4 decisions, the Kentucky display was struck down but the Texas monument was permitted. The "swing vote" was Stephen Breyer. Breyer felt the Texas monument was different from the Kentucky displays for two reasons: First, it had already been standing for forty years without controversy. Second—and important for future cases—it was located alongside other monuments around the state capitol. This context, Breyer reasoned, showed that the religious content was part of a "broader moral and historical message."[3] This kind of hairsplitting is common when the Supreme Court is asked to assess whether religious monuments and holiday displays on government property are constitutional. One lower court judge commented, "The endorsement test makes judges render decisions that are more like interior decorating than Constitutional law."[4]

HB1330, the 2009 Oklahoma bill sponsored by state representative Mike Ritze that proposed the Ten Commandments Monument Display Act, relied heavily on the precedent set by *Van Orden v. Perry*:

> The Ten Commandments monument shall use the same words used on the monument at issue in Von [*sic*] Orden v. Perry, that the United States supreme court ruled constitutional. . . . The placement of this monument shall not be construed to mean that the state of Oklahoma favors any religion or denomination thereof over others, but rather will be placed on the Capitol grounds where there are numerous other monuments.[5]

In the logic of the bill, the presence of other monuments at the capitol grounds is the primary factor at stake in determining whether a Ten Commandments monument amounts to a state endorsement of religion. Strangely, the bill also attempts to legislate how individuals may interpret symbolic expression, prohibiting any interpretation that views the monument as unconstitutional.

HB1330 justifies the monument by invoking a particular view of history that arguably resembles religious belief rather more than historical fact:

> That the Ten Commandments represent a philosophy of government held by many of the founders of this nation and by many Oklahomans and other Americans today, that God has ordained civil government and has delegated limited authority to civil government, that God has limited the authority of civil government, and that God has endowed people with certain unalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.[6]

The belief that the God of Israel (the God referred to in the Ten Commandments) has ordained civil government, delegated and limited its authority, and endowed people with rights is described as a "philosophy of government," but it could also be described as a religious creed. An atheist would not, and could not, be persuaded by these claims. The same could be said about people of many religions, including Christians who believe civil government was invented by humans rather than God.

HB1330 does not explicitly endorse these claims about God, but it does emphasize that these claims were believed by the nation's founders as well as "many Oklahomans and other Americans today." It then explains that the monument is necessary so that the people of the United States and Oklahoma

"may understand and appreciate" that these claims about God were believed by so many people. The monument is necessary because the people "need to identify the Ten Commandments, one of many sources, as influencing the development of what has become modern law."[7] The claim that a particular set of beliefs about a particular God has so much historical importance that the government must erect monuments to impress the significance of these beliefs on the public certainly seems like a government establishment of religion. The stated purpose for building the monument is clearly more relevant to its constitutionality than whether or not there are any other monuments nearby.

HB1330 was signed into law, and in March 2012 a monument was installed on the capitol grounds. Mike Ritze's family paid $10,000 to build it so that no tax dollars were used in its construction. In the summer of 2013, Baptist pastor Bruce Prescott complained that the monument's location violated the state constitution and filed a lawsuit with the help of the ACLU. In June 2015, the Oklahoma Supreme Court ruled 7-2 in *Prescott v. Oklahoma Capitol Preservation Commission* that the monument violated article 2, section 5 of the state's constitution, which forbids the use of public money or property for religious uses, either "directly or indirectly." The court ruled that *Van Orden v. Perry* was irrelevant because this case concerned state law rather than federal law. The court was also dubious of the distinction implied in the language of HB1330 between endorsing religious truth claims and endorsing the historical significance of religious truth claims. The court's opinion explained, "Prohibiting uses of public property that 'indirectly' benefit a system of religion was clearly done to protect the ban from circumvention based upon mere form and technical distinction. . . . As concerns the 'historic purpose' justification, the Ten Commandments are obviously religious in nature and are an integral part of the Jewish and Christian faiths."[8] Justice Steven Taylor added that the Ten Commandments are not mentioned in the Federalist Papers, the Declaration of Independence, or the Constitution, were not mentioned during the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention, and have never been invoked by the Supreme Court as a source of law. In October the monument was removed late at night under guard at the cost of $4,700 to the city.

While the Oklahoma Supreme Court addressed the issue at stake with the Ten Commandments monument and its stated purpose of informing the public about a particular religion's historic significance, the contours of this argument were not explained in news coverage of the decision. I found virtually nothing in sources like CNN and *USA Today* explaining *why* the legislature thought the monument was constitutional or why the court ruled it was

not. This is par for the course in discussions of constitutional law: most press coverage of the Supreme Court only explains who won or lost and makes no attempt to explain why. Because the underlying legal principles were not explained, it was easy for politicians such as Oklahoma representative Bobby Cleveland to frame the controversy over the monument as a case of Christianity under attack by "political correctness" rather than a principled ruling by a court.[9] TST's intervention was significant not because it led to the removal of the Ten Commandments monument, but because it changed the narrative around the controversy.

On November 17, 2013, while the ACLU's suit was still in litigation, TST's two founders, using the pseudonyms Malcolm Jarry and Lucien Greaves, sent a formal letter to the State Capitol Preservation Commission offering to construct a monument to Satan that would accompany the Ten Commandments monument. Their letter stated, "We are aware that there is currently a legal dispute over the presence of the Ten Commandments monument. Granting us permission to make our donation would certainly reinforce the arguments being made by Oklahoma City in defense of the current monument."[10] The proposal had been Jarry's idea although as the story became national news, Greaves stepped forward as TST's official spokesperson. Greaves explained to CNN, "They said they wanted to be open to different monuments and this seems like a perfect place to put that to the test." Greaves approached the Oklahoma Capitol Preservation Commission, obtained the required forms for proposing a new monument, and set to work designing a statue of Satan that would meet the Commission's standards. Greaves stated, "We want something big and bold that will be able to stand up to the weather or whatever other kinds of assaults. . . . My favorite idea right now is an object of play for children. We want kids to see that Satanism is where the fun is."[11]

No one knew what to make of Jarry's proposal. One representative remarked, "I think it is a joke."[12] Cleveland, apparently asked whether TST was also attacking Christianity out of political correctness, responded, "I think these Satanists are a different group. You put them under the nut category."[13] Brady Henderson, the legal director of the ACLU's Oklahoma chapter, seemed uncertain whether TST was an ally. He was initially supportive of the Satanists' intervention, stating:

> We would prefer to see Oklahoma's government officials work to faithfully serve our communities and improve the lives of Oklahomans instead of erecting granite monuments to show us all how righteous they are. But

> if the Ten Commandments, with its overtly Christian message, is allowed to stay at the Capitol, the Satanic Temple's proposed monument cannot be rejected because of its different religious viewpoint.[14]

However, in a subsequent interview, Henderson stated, "Their basis for saying we have [a] right to have this on the Capitol lawn is inconsistent with our case. The state shouldn't have a religious monument at all."[15]

Nevertheless, the Baphomet proposal led to some interesting consequences. Despite the mention of other monuments in HB1330, it seems clear that the Oklahoma legislature was not actually interested in creating a diversity of monuments, but rather in trying to replicate the conditions of the *Van Orden v. Perry* decision to justify a Ten Commandments monument. By "calling their bluff," TST created doubt about this argument. Days after TST's offer, the Pastafarians—a satirical "parody" religion—offered to build a monument to their object of worship, the Flying Spaghetti Monster. The Universal Society of Hinduism, based in Nevada, offered to erect a statue of the monkey deity Lord Hanuman. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) proposed a monument as well. In response, the Oklahoma Capitol Preservation Commission declared a moratorium on new monument proposals.[16]

The moratorium put pressure on the Oklahoma legislature to give a rationale—other than state endorsement of Christianity—as to why the Ten Commandments were being prioritized and other monuments were not even being considered. The ready-made answer was that the Ten Commandments have historical significance while the other religious symbols do not. Representative Paul Wesselhoft explained:

> What will disqualify them [The Satanic Temple] has really nothing to do with Satan, as such. It's that it has no historical significance for the State of Oklahoma. The only reason why the Ten Commandments qualified is because at the Capitol, what we do is we make laws. We are lawmakers. Well, one of the earliest laws we have are the Ten Commandments. So therefore, it has historical significance.[17]

Mike Reynolds, another state representative, went even further, claiming that the Satanic monument was being proposed for religious purposes while the Ten Commandments monument was put up for historical purposes.[18] But Lucien Greaves countered that Satan is also a significant figure in the history of jurisprudence:

> Satanism is a fundamental component at the genesis of American liberty. Medieval witch-hunts taught us to adopt presumption of innocence, secular law, and a more substantive burden of proof. Today, we are rightly offended by the notion of blasphemy laws and divine fiats. Acknowledging wrongful persecutions has helped shape the legal system that preserves the sovereignty of our skeptics, heretics, and the misunderstood. It has shaped a proud culture of tolerance and free inquiry. This is to be a historical marker commemorating the scapegoats, the marginalized, the demonized minority, and the unjustly outcast.[19]

Since getting to know Greaves, I do not think he is being entirely facetious here. In line with skeptics like Carl Sagan, Greaves sees tolerance and free inquiry as core American values that were hard won by freethinkers who challenged the religious establishment of their day. More importantly, by mirroring the Oklahoma legislature's argument back at them, Greaves revealed its disingenuousness: if many religious symbols can be framed as having historical significance, it seems that the real reason the legislature chose the Ten Commandments was to designate Christianity as privileged by the state. Reynolds's claim that one religious symbol is "actually religious" in purpose while another is merely historic only highlights how arbitrary and politically motivated these distinctions are.

TST also attempted to reframe who the aggressor was in this situation. Political theorist Corey Robin argues that conservatives have a tendency to "play victim and victor" by advancing their privilege while framing their actions as a restoration of some damage perpetrated by subversive forces.[20] This dynamic is especially at play in debates surrounding Ten Commandments monuments at courthouses and state capitols. Often the politicians who propose these monuments find themselves in a "win/win" situation. If their monument goes unchallenged, they have proven their credentials as a Christian politician. On the other hand, if such proposals are defeated in court, this is not seen as evidence that proposing them was a bad idea or that the legislator is ignorant about constitutional law; rather, the legislator can claim to be the victim of political correctness and anti-Christian persecution. Either way, a conservative Christian base will be energized. The narrative that opponents of such monuments are hostile to Christianity in general is an extremely effective diversion from the more nuanced constitutional issues at stake. This narrative is also so entrenched that contradictory evidence is often ignored. For example, almost no one

noticed that it was a Baptist pastor who first filed suit against the Oklahoma monument.

TST attempted to derail this narrative by emphasizing that their offensive proposals are only possible because Christian politicians have damaged an arrangement that had been beneficial to everyone. Greaves said of Mike Ritze, "He's helping a satanic agenda grow more than any of us possibly could. You don't walk around and see too many satanic temples around, but when you open the door to public spaces for us, that's when you're going to see us."[21] The narrative of Christian persecution became even more untenable during a panel discussion of the monument that aired on Fox News's *Don Imus in the Morning* on January 9, 2014. Bernard McGuirk, the show's executive producer, opined, "They should be able to put the statue up and then they should be shot right next to it." Legal counsel for TST responded with a letter to Fox News demanding an apology, stating: "Advocacy of the murder of American citizens based on their religious beliefs is intolerable and sickening. For [Fox News] to disseminate such a position as part of a televised debate on a national network strikes at the heart of this country's founding principles and potentially places the Temple's members in imminent danger." McGuirk responded with an on air apology, stating: "My comments were rooted in ignorance. Satanists do not promote evil a la Charles Manson or Hitler. Regardless, I don't want to see anybody shot, that's the truth of the matter, so I do apologize unequivocally. I apologize for those comments and certainly, certainly withdraw them."[22]

The longer the conversation about TST's monument went on, the more assumptions that had gone largely unstated began to bubble to the surface. In a moment of honesty that undermined claims that the Ten Commandments monument was not religious, Representative Earl Sears expressed his opinion that "this is a faith-based nation and a faith-based state." "Faith," in this context was code for Protestantism symbolized by a monument with the Protestant version of the Ten Commandments. Sears added, "I think it is very offensive they would contemplate or even have this kind of conversation."[23] The fact that the *conversation* is deemed offensive is telling: it is not the statue itself, but the discussion of it that is disruptive because it unsettles assumptions.

Important insights into how the public understood the controversy were uncovered when TST filed a Freedom of Information Act request with the Oklahoma Capitol for any communications concerning their statue. They were given a sizable archive of emails and voicemails from citizens who were

alarmed over the proposed statue, which they shared with me. Most of these messages demonstrated only a partial understanding of the situation: a caller from Florida had been told by his pastor that the Satanic statue was in response to a private citizen erecting a Ten Commandments monument on his own property; a woman from Oklahoma wanted to know if the governor was in favor of or opposed to erecting a statue of the devil; several callers seemed to think the Satanic statue had been put up to a popular referendum. The most striking voicemail was a tearful, rambling message pleading not to erect the statue. The caller, who identified herself as a Christian, explained how she had used peyote and read Nietzsche in the 1960s before invoking the plight of crack babies and genocide in Africa as evidence of why the statue must not be erected. She was still weeping when the allotted space of three minutes ran out and the voicemail was cut off. Significantly, this caller *did* understand the underlying principal of the establishment clause. At one point she stated:

> I am gonna beg this community not to put that Satanic crap on the lawn of our White House—our state building—whatever, where the governor lives. It can't be done and if they're combatting that just to get us to take the Ten Commandments down, then take the damn Ten Commandments down. Don't put something for Satan on the lawn![24]

This response suggests that TST was at least somewhat successful in persuading the public that the establishment clause is good for everyone.

The most significant political ramification of TST's proposal came in the aftermath of *Prescott v. Oklahoma Capitol Preservation Commission* decision. Only days after this decision, a conservative think tank called the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs announced a campaign to simply alter the state constitution by repealing article 2, section 5. Rather than presenting themselves as sore losers, they argued that this section of the state constitution had been written in a historical moment of anti-Catholic bigotry. This view is heavily indebted to the work of legal scholar Philip Hamburger.[25] Although the states disestablished their formerly established churches between the 1770s and 1833, Hamburger notes that, in the nineteenth century, Protestants turned to the idea of "separating church and state" as a way of repressing a wave of Catholic immigrants who formed parochial schools to maintain their distinct religion and identity. The Blaine Amendment was a constitutional amendment proposed in 1875 that would have applied the establishment and free exercise

clauses to the states and banned the use of tax revenue to fund parochial schools. It was never adopted, but in the fifty years after it was proposed, twenty-two states passed laws blocking funding for parochial schools. These state laws are likewise referred to as "Blaine Amendments" or, often, "Little Blaine Amendments." Hamburger's retelling of the history of the separation of church and state is appealing to conservative groups that oppose separation. It is very unpopular to attack the idea of separation if it is enshrined in the First Amendment. On the other hand, if separation was invented much later as a political cudgel to disenfranchise Catholics, then opposing it can be framed as progressive and even tolerant.

Supporters of the Oklahoma Ten Commandments monument claimed that article 2, section 5 of the Oklahoma constitution was "a Blaine Amendment" and therefore rooted in bigotry. Two justices of the Oklahoma Supreme Court, writing separately, specifically rejected this claim, noting that the 1875 Blaine Amendment would have forbidden only the use of government funds for parochial schools, while article 2, section 5 forbids the use of government funds or property to support any religion.[26] Nevertheless, after the monument was removed, the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs began soliciting donations for its campaign to "eradicate the bigotry in Oklahoma's Constitution that is the Blaine Amendment."[27]

For some Oklahomans this might have been a compelling argument for amending the constitution: the Christian majority could enjoy a religious symbol at the capitol and simultaneously feel they were correcting an injustice against religious minorities rather than marginalizing them. But some people now saw TST as a credible threat if the separation of church and state were removed. Wayne Green, an editor for *Tulsa World*, opined, "The legislature can pass a lot of laws but they can't repeal the law of unintended consequences." He added that the reform might "open the door to all sorts of crazy things, for example there was a group that wanted to put a Satanic statue on the grounds of the state capitol. I think the chances of that become much greater if you just take out article 2, section 5."[28] TST's "stunt" had made them a factor in the state's political calculus.

The Wandering Baphomet

When CNN first reported on the proposed monument to Satan at the Oklahoma capitol, the article noted rather mockingly that TST had created

an Indiegogo page to fund the statue, which had only raised $150 toward its $20,000 goal.[29] But by the time the fundraising ended, the public had contributed $30,000 to the project.[30] By some estimates, the final product—an 8-foot-6-inch bronze statue weighing one and half tons—cost over $100,000.[31] It seemed that no one—including TST—had anticipated how much interest there would be in such a project. When I interviewed Lucien Greaves in December 2013, I asked him whether he would really create a monument to Satan. He explained they were quite serious, and anyway they had no choice because the project had been crowd-funded: there was no way to return the money, and TST was obligated to use it for its stated purpose. In fact, the founders of TST ended up paying much of the cost from their own pockets.

As the plan developed, Greaves decided to make an image of Baphomet. The name "Baphomet" dates back to the fourteenth century when the Knights Templar were suppressed by the French monarchy. The knights were accused of worshipping an androgynous idol named "Baphomet," likely an old French corruption of the name "Muhammad."[32] In 1856 occultist Eliphaz Levi published an image of Baphomet as "the goat of the sabbath." Levi's illustration showed a goat-headed entity with feathery wings, female breasts, and a caduceus in its lap suggesting a phallus. Levi's Baphomet was not meant to portray an evil entity but rather to symbolize the reconciliation of opposites. This image has been parodied and pastiched by Christian moral entrepreneurs and heavy metal culture alike ever since.

TST's Baphomet is based on Levi's illustration, although it lacks breasts and the phallic wand (in order to meet the standards of the Oklahoma Capitol Preservation Commission). Jarry wanted to design the statue so that visitors could sit in Baphomet's lap for "contemplation and introspection." He also added a cherubic boy and girl that stand on either side of the creature reverently gazing up at its face. Jarry's friend, David Guinan, began researching construction costs. The statue could be constructed cheaply using spray-on cement, but everyone agreed it should be made of bronze. Bronze showed this was a serious proposal and it would be more difficult for vandals to destroy. Guinan found New York sculptor Marc Porter. He recalled Porter asking him, "Are you serious about this? Because if you are, I'm going to have to clear my schedule for the next six months." Porter worked for the next six months, using space Guinan found in a vermouth distillery in Brooklyn. Actual children were brought in as models, who had latex casts made of them. Baphomet's rather emaciated torso was modeled on

that of punk rocker Iggy Pop. When Porter's sculpture was complete, a mold was taken and the bronze was poured in a foundry in Florida.[33] The mold was also kept so that replacements could be crafted. Greaves joked that if the statue were insured for enough, destroying it would provide the resources to build two more.

TST had always emphasized that their monument was meant as a complement to, and not a replacement for, the Ten Commandments monument. In October 2014, Michael Tate Reed—a self-described "Jesus freak" diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder—destroyed the Ten Commandments monument by crashing his car into it. Greaves released a statement announcing that TST was "appalled" by this act of vandalism. He explained, "To be clear, The Satanic Temple will not seek to erect its monument unless the 10 Commandments is restored."[34] The Baphomet statue was officially unveiled in a ceremony in Detroit held in July 2015. But only a few months later, the Ten Commandments monument was removed from the Oklahoma capitol, leaving Baphomet without purpose.

Unmoored from the conflict in Oklahoma, Baphomet began a series of peregrinations across the country. Currently, Baphomet resides in Salem, Massachusetts, where TST opened its official headquarters in September 2016. As TST formed chapters across the country, local members began lobbying to bring the statue to courthouses and town halls in Indiana and Arizona where religious displays were present. Some suggested sending Baphomet to the Texas capitol, the site of *Van Orden v. Perry* case.

In 2015 a nearly identical controversy began when the Arkansas state legislature passed a bill decreeing the erection of a Ten Commandments monument at their state capitol. Once again, the bill sought to replicate the *Van Orden v. Perry* decision. In October 2016, Greaves traveled to Little Rock and attended a meeting of the Arkansas State Capital Arts and Grounds Commission to discuss bringing Baphomet to the capitol. The Commission treated the proposal seriously and actually discussed possible locations on capitol grounds where Baphomet might be installed. A public hearing for further discussion of the monument was scheduled for May 2017. But in February, TST was informed that their hearing was cancelled because of a new law—that was applied retroactively to their proposal—that the legislature must first approve any monument proposals before they can be considered by the Arts and Grounds Commission. HB1273 even featured a clause

declaring the situation to be an emergency and stating the bill would go into immediate effect because it was "necessary for the preservation of public peace, health, and safety."[35]

In response, Stuart de Haan, an attorney and TST member, sent a letter to the deputy secretary of state arguing that applying HB 1273 retroactively was a clear case of religious discrimination. TST and the ACLU began preparing for lawsuits. Undaunted, the legislature installed the Ten Commandments monument on June 18, 2017. But less than twenty-four hours after installation, Michael Tate Reed, a resident of Arkansas, once again destroyed a Ten Commandments monument using his car. This time, Reed filmed himself shouting "freedom!" as he crashed into the monument. He later explained he had committed this act of vandalism to defend the separation of church and state.[36] In response, TST postponed their lawsuit.

Pureflix—an evangelical film company that produced the *God's Not Dead* films—donated $25,000 for a second Ten Commandments monument that was installed on April 26, 2018. This time, the monument featured concrete barriers to deter car attacks. In response, TST announced that it was resuming its religious discrimination lawsuit and would file an "intervenor," merging it with other suits against the monument. The Liberty Institute, a conservative group that defends Christian monuments on government property, pledged to pay for any court costs accrued in defending the monument.

On August 16, 2018, TST took the bold move of loading the Baphomet statue onto a flatbed truck and driving it from Salem to Little Rock, where they parked it in front of the capitol to hold a "rally for religious liberty." A podium was placed on top of the truck, and religious leaders representing atheists, mainline Protestants, evangelicals, and Satanists spoke on the importance of the establishment clause. Afterward the Baphomet was covered in a tarp and returned to Salem.

TST's lawsuit against the state of Arkansas is still pending at the time of this writing. Whether or not Arkansas is forced to take down its Ten Commandments monument, it is a near certainty that no government or municipality will ever accept Baphomet on public property—and any community willing to house TST's statue wouldn't be offered it in the first place. And so the homeless statue remains a perpetual threat, wandering from battlefield to battlefield across America's culture wars.

The Age of Socially Engaged Satanism

The Baphomet controversy is representative of an emerging form of Satanism that is political and *socially engaged*. I use the term "socially engaged Satanism" in the same way Thich Nhat Hanh used the term "socially engaged Buddhism" to delineate a form of activism rooted in a religious tradition.[37] Historically, the accusation of Satanism has been used as a smear for one's political and religious opponents. With some rare exceptions, no one identified as a Satanist until Anton LaVey founded the Church of Satan (CoS) in 1966.[38] While LaVey's Satanists expressed their contempt for Christianity, they shared the assumption of many in the 1960s that Christianity was dying. LaVey sometimes described his vision to improve society, but the CoS was primarily interested in improving themselves: instead of challenging Christianity's political power, they wanted to challenge its ability to inculcate guilt and shame so that they could better enjoy what pleasures the world offered. This project mostly involved creating enclaves of decadence where the morals of "the herd" could be safely mocked or ignored.

By the 1980s, America was deep in the clutches of a Satanic Panic. A coalition of conservative Christian leaders, talk show hosts, credulous law enforcement agents, and therapists presented the public with a conspiracy theory that an organized cult of criminal Satanists was active in America. Some claimed they tortured children and murdered thousands of people a year in human sacrifices. The Satanic Panic was a boon for some politicians. Around the country, bills were introduced that raised the penalty for hurting people or animals if done in a "ritualistic" context. In 1985, conservative leader Jesse Helms proposed an amendment to a bill that would deny tax-exempt status to "any cult, organization, or other group that has as a purpose, or that has any interest in, the promoting of satanism or witchcraft."[39] Of course, there were virtually no actual Satanists performing sacrifices that might object to this legislation. The imaginary threat of the Panic meant politicians could propose anti-Satanism legislation that pleased their constituents with no political consequences.

Occasionally deviant individuals (usually adolescent males) would declare themselves Satanists and carry out the very crimes alleged by the claimsmakers, ranging from vandalism to killing animals (a phenomenon folklorists call "ostension.").[40] Adolescent murderers also found the public was more sympathetic to them if they blamed their crimes on involvement in Satanism. But organized Satanists, to the extent they existed, had no political

voice. LaVey complained, "Whenever I got on TV or the radio, I was given a few seconds to say what they desperately needed me for. Someone else who had lost 240 pounds of ugly fat got 20 minutes of air time. A woman who saw Jesus on a tortilla had even more time to recount her experience. If Satanism was so hot, why wasn't I able to talk about it?"[41]

But since 2013, there has been an unprecedented cultural moment in which Satanic speech, symbolism, and ritual have been deployed for political purposes, of which TST is only the most prominent example. Conservative Christian leaders, particularly Catholic ones, have noted this trend with horror. In 2015, after TST sought participation in an "open forum" of holiday displays at the Florida capitol, Catholic League president Bill Donahue exclaimed, "Until two years ago, Satanists were never bothered by the presence of a menorah on public property in Tallahassee."[42] The following year, John Ritchie of the traditionalist Catholic political group The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family, and Property described the lawful public actions of multiple Satanic groups as a "Satanic revolution" that was "gnawing at our nation's moral fabric, numbing our culture to the horror of sin, and paving the way for more sordid aberrations."[43]

This new brand of Satanism is being spearheaded by a generation that came of age during the Satanic Panic of the 1980s. The CoS emerged in a decade when many Americans believed Christianity was dying out. By contrast, this new generation perceives core American values of tolerance and free inquiry as under assault by a radical Christian agenda. Satanism—the boogieman presented to them in their youth—is now looked to as a weapon against their enemies and a symbolic expression of their anger.

TST first appeared in January of 2013. Since then they have grown from a handful of people into a national organization with chapters throughout North America, hundreds of chapter members, and thousands of members who support TST's campaigns. TST has initiated dozens of projects addressing issues of church and state, education, reproductive rights, and LGBTQ rights. TST chapters have also engaged a wide variety of philanthropy projects, including cleaning highways and beaches and donation drives to help the homeless and needy—all activities not normally associated with Satanism.

Religion scholars have described Satanism as a "self-religion" in the sense that it holds the self as sacred and regards the demands of society as a hindrance to being one's "authentic" self. In this, Satanism is actually a cousin to the New Age and Human Potential movements.[44] While TST members I interviewed