

Marilyn Manson: Anti-Christ Superstar or Creation of Institutional Christianity?

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Email: jjsmulo@yahoo.com

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Introduction

The musician and cultural icon known as Marilyn Manson has gained widespread interest, and perhaps a stronger than usual negative reaction by the mainstream media in a vocation where the excesses of the stereotypical rock musician are well known. Though some of Manson's critics have falsified information about him, his autobiography will show that he unashamedly admits to having been involved in a multitude of practices that would generally be described as unacceptable behaviour in mainstream society.¹ Yet most have merely taken the effort to form a quick opinion of Manson, rather than asking questions such as, "Why does he do the things he does?" Or, "What have been the influences on his life?"

Though Manson has described much of his music as "autobiographical", it is safe to say that Manson has had a far wider influence through what he has said in interviews as well as what he has written for his fans, often known as *Spooky Kids* or *Mansonites*, on the internet. Of particular influence has been his bestselling autobiography, *The Long Hard Road Out of Hell*.² Because of this, it is important not only to have an understanding of Manson's lyrics, but also of what he has spoken and written in non-musical forums. We agree with those who believe Manson's music is overshadowed by the rest of his public persona. As his biographer, Gavin Baddeley has written regarding Manson's music, "while I'm not ignoring it, it's seldom the most interesting part of the Marilyn Manson package."³ Manson himself is not unaware of his societal impact exclusive of his music. He admits,

Once I assumed the role as a villain, the whole thing stopped being about music. I had started out just exploring something and pretty soon it was having this effect in politics and culture. It raised conversations in families and churches.⁴

It is also important to have an understanding of the cultural framework or worldview in which Manson is working within. Though each philosophy or worldview has their own

¹ Eliezer rightly perceives the reverse effect that those who have sought to discredit Manson without a concern for accurately representing who he really is and what he really has done has had. She writes, "It was undoubtedly good publicity when the US religious right spread wild rumours about his shows—"He encourages the rape of women in the audience!", "He prays to Satan!", "He sacrifices pets!", "He throws bags of drugs into the audience!"—and would try to ban Manson from their cities." Christie Eliezer, "Dark Angel" in *Rolling Stone*, January 2001, 64.

² Marilyn Manson and Neil Strauss, *The Long Hard Road Out of Hell* (New York: NY: HarperPerennial, 1998).

³ Gavin Baddeley, *Dissecting Marilyn Manson* (London: Plexus, 2000), 12.

⁴ Marilyn Manson as quoted in *Ibid.*, 12.

variations, Manson could be essentially described as a Postmodernist and a Satanist.⁵ Because these are wide topics, below we will interact with aspects of these worldviews that Manson is most representative of. The remainder of this essay will concern itself with understanding Marilyn Manson especially in light of postmodernism and Satanism, and interacting apologetically with Marilyn Manson from a Christian perspective.

1. Marilyn Manson: His Background

Brian Warner, the man who later became known as “Marilyn Manson”, was born in 1969 in Canton, Ohio. In 1974, his parents, Hugh and Barbara Warner, enrolled him in the private Heritage Christian School. His family was not particularly religious, but wanted the young Brian to have the best education possible.⁶ Warner’s Christian schooling experience was a negative one, and he would later say to those who disagreed with his ethics, “I blame everything I do on Christianity. So why aren’t they out there arresting the preachers I was raised listening to, or the Sunday school teachers?”⁷ Evidently his father agreed and would later confess in an interview regarding the choice to send Warner to a private Christian school, “But if I new the result would be the demise of the rest of his morality that happened, I would never have done it.”⁸ According to Marilyn, it was during this time that he began to express himself in ways that are familiar to those who know of him today. He is refreshingly honest and reflective regarding his childhood connection to his present vocation. He says,

You do what I do because you want attention. I don’t want to over-analyse what I do, but it is a thinly-veiled cry for attention. I was just a kid, 14 years old, when I first started putting on my mom’s make-up and wearing Hallowe’en masks in summer. I knew I was different, but it was also my way

⁵ Though some types of Satanism would be best described as a religion, LaVeyan Satanism, which Marilyn Manson practices, while appropriately described as a religion, is perhaps better labelled a philosophy. Not only do many LaVeyan Satanists describe their beliefs as a philosophy, but this is most notably evidenced in the fact that they do not believe that a supernatural realm—much less God or Satan—exists. As LaVeyan Satanist Gavin Baddeley says regarding Anton LaVey, the initiator of LaVeyan Satanism and the Church of Satan, in the 1980s LaVey “had been consciously widening the gap between the Church of Satan and occultism, until Satanism became more of a cultural or social movement than a magical one.” Gavin Baddeley, *Lucifer Rising: Sin, Devil Worship & Rock ‘n’ Roll* (London: Plexus, 1999), 153.

⁶ Kurt B. Reighley, *Marilyn Manson: A Biography* (London: Omnibus, 1998), 10.

⁷ Chuck Weiner, *Marilyn Manson...In His Own Words* (London: Omnibus Press, 2000), 62. Weiner’s book consists largely of quotes from Marilyn Manson. The title is a play on Charles Manson’s book, *Manson in His Own Words*. See Charles Manson and Nuel Emmons, *Manson in His Own Words* (New York, New York: Grove, 1986).

⁸ Hugh Warner as quoted in Reighley, 11.

of getting noticed. All this stuff I'm doing today is really no different, and no more harmful than that. I just want the world to know I'm here.⁹

In 1989, Warner combined the name of the beautiful actress Marilyn Monroe with the name of the infamous murderer Charles Manson to become the person now known as Marilyn Manson. In his words, "The name (Marilyn Manson) really described what the music was always intended to be: a juxtaposition of opposites. Taking two things that normally don't belong together, Marilyn and Manson."¹⁰ Both of these personalities had an impact on Manson. He has said that Marilyn Monroe was the archetypal woman for him growing up.¹¹ As for Charles Manson, his later namesake used a lyric from one of his own songs and placed it as the opening line on his debut album, *Portrait of an American Family*, which stated, "I am the god of fuck" Manson later used this as a personal title for himself.¹² There are some similarities between Warner and his chosen namesakes. Most notably, like Marilyn Monroe, Marilyn Manson has become a tragic figure. And similar to Charles Manson, there is a lot of controversy and unsubstantiated rumours surrounding him. As Baddeley notes regarding Charles Manson, "To this day his supporters maintain Charlie never killed anyone, while less sympathetic commentators have linked him to as many as 35 unsolved murders."¹³ Similarly, in Marilyn Manson's case, many fans claim that he is misunderstood and has something to say that society should hear, while some of his most outspoken critics, who are normally Christians, have linked him to murder, encouraging rape, sodomy, throwing drugs to kids, among other things—and most of these while performing on stage.

2. Marilyn Manson: Satanism

Not unlike Marilyn Manson, Satanism is often misunderstood and inaccurately stereotyped. Perhaps it should therefore come as no surprise that he is an ordained Reverend in the Church of Satan. Fellow Church of Satan Reverend and Manson biographer Gavin Baddeley believes, "With the shock-rocker's fortunes on the rise, he

⁹ Weiner, 9.

¹⁰ Ibid., 15.

¹¹ Ibid., 87.

¹² Marilyn Manson often uses coarse language. However, in the interests of accurately representing him, such language will be used in this essay. Surprisingly, Manson claims that he doesn't like the use of excessive swearing. He says, "If I do it, I'm generally being sardonic, or it's the legitimate or only way to express an angry thought. If you use too much of anything, it becomes watered down. If every other word is 'fuck,' then what's the barometer of fuckness?" Marilyn Manson as quoted in Tucker Carlson, "Marilyn Has A Secret" in *Talk*, November 2000, 76.

¹³ Baddeley, *Dissecting Marilyn Manson*, 24.

undoubtedly helped raise the Church of Satan's profile."¹⁴ Blanche Barton of the Church of Satan states,

We've received a number of enquiries from kids who first got interested in Satanism because of Marilyn Manson's music and attitudes. The Doctor [LaVey] feels one reason Mr Manson's popular is because he's the Real Thing. He makes no secret about his advocacy of true Satanic ideals—and he's articulate enough to explain exactly what those ideals are, rather than just the typical spook stories of sacrifices and criminal cartels.¹⁵

Manson's first encounter with Satanism was a terrifying one that occurred one night when he and his friend John were invited into John's brother's room. John's brother was a self-styled Satanist who had an altar to Satan and red candles everywhere. John and his brother encouraged Manson to smoke marijuana for the first time, as different demons were invoked. During this experience, Manson was terrified. However, at the end of it all Manson says,

I realized that I had learned something from the previous night: that I could use black magic to turn the lowly lot life had given me around—to attain a position of power that other people would envy and accomplish things that other people couldn't.¹⁶

This scenario is consistent with the practice of so-called Satanism by teenage dabblers who have sought to practice Satanism through a misunderstanding that is more often than not due to media and Christian misinformed stereotypes. In the same way that Christianity has had to deal with other religions and organizations from the Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) to the KKK claiming that their beliefs and practices are consistent with being a Christian, so Satanists have had to work through the difficult circumstance that anyone who chooses to do so can call themselves a Satanist. Examples of this include the mass murderer Richard Ramirez, who identified himself with Satanism, or lonely outcast teenagers who find in the character of Satan in the Christian Bible someone that they can relate to.

However, all of the mainstream Satanic organizations have sought to repudiate the often malicious stereotypes of Satanism, such as the mistaken claim that Satanists offer human or animal sacrifices to Satan.¹⁷ According to the late Anton LaVey,¹⁸ who in 1966 started

¹⁴ Ibid., 148.

¹⁵ Blanche Barton as quoted in Ibid., 148, 150.

¹⁶ Manson and Strauss, 45.

the Church of Satan that Manson is a priest in, and who is synonymous with LaVeyan Satanism,

There are sound and logical reasons why Satanists could not perform such sacrifices. Man, the animal, is the godhead to the Satanist. The purest form of carnal existence reposes in the bodies of animals and human children who have not grown old enough to deny themselves their natural desires. They can perceive things that the average adult human can never hope to. Therefore, the Satanist holds these beings in a sacred regard, knowing he can learn much from these natural magicians of the world.¹⁹

Another false stereotype of Satanism is that Satanists worship the Satan who Christians believe exists, and who is described in the Christian Bible. Except for a few satanic groups, most notably The Temple of Set, Satanists don't believe in a personal being called Satan or a similar equivalent.²⁰ This explains Manson's statement that, "I've never been and never will be a Satan worshipper, or someone who worships the Devil."²¹

If the common stereotype of Satanism is inaccurate, what then is Satanism about? Though a thorough understanding of Satanism would require far more space than is possible here, it is safe to say that the two most prominent ideals in Satanism revolve around indulgence and self-interest.

In regard to indulgence, LaVey writes,

¹⁷ There has been a thorough refutation of the belief that Satanists are involved in what has been labelled "Satanic Ritual Abuse". See for example, James T. Richardson, Joel Best, and David G. Bromley (editors), *The Satanism Scare* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991); Bill Ellis, *Raising the Devil: Satanism, New Religions, and the Media* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000).

¹⁸ Of Anton LaVey, Manson has written, "I admired and respected him. We had a lot of things in common: We had experience as extravagant showmen, successfully placed curses on people, studied criminology and serial killers found a kindred spirit in the writings of Nietzsche, and constructed a philosophy against repression and in support of nonconformity. In short, we had both dedicated the better part of our lives to toppling Christianity with the weight of its own hypocrisy, and as a result been used as scapegoats to justify Christianity's existence." Manson and Strauss, 164.

¹⁹ Anton Szandor LaVey, *The Satanic Bible* (New York, New York: Avon Books, 1969), 89.

²⁰ Members of The Temple of Set, or Setians, believe in an ancient Egyptian deity named Set, and not the Satan of the Christian Bible.

²¹ Marilyn Manson as quoted in Baddeley, *Dissecting Marilyn Manson*, 141. When asked why he chose Satan as the name for the entity he believed in, Paul Douglas Valentine of the Worldwide Church of Satanic Liberation answered in a way that is representative of many Satanists. He said, "Quite honestly, it was for show. It's a very potent, shocking term—LaVey was right about that. But, as I got older I realised Satan was the perfect term because He embodies ideas of freedom and individuality you don't find in other concepts of religion or God. Satan represents liberty in its utmost form. There's no guilt involved in being who you are, standing up for what you believe in, even if it is contradictory to social mores." Paul Douglas Valentine quoted in Baddeley, *Lucifer Rising*, 163.

Satanism encourages its followers to indulge in their natural desires. Only by so doing can you be a completely satisfied person with no frustrations which can be harmful to yourself and others around you.²²

It should come as no surprise that the Satanic hedonistic lifestyle is often expressed in terms contrary to Christianity. Again, to quote LaVey,

For two thousand years man has done penance for something he never should have had to feel guilty about in the first place. We are tired of denying ourselves the pleasures of life which we deserve. Today, as always, man needs to enjoy himself here and now, instead of waiting for his rewards in heaven. So, why not have a religion based on indulgence? Certainly it is consistent with the nature of the beast."²³

In regard to self-interest and Satanism, Manson writes that what nearly everyone in his life

had misunderstood about Satanism was that it is not about ritual sacrifices, digging up graves and worshipping the devil. The devil doesn't exist. Satanism is about worshipping yourself, because you are responsible for your own good and evil.²⁴

Satanists celebrate self-interest, or selfishness. This doesn't mean that they are unconcerned about others, but it does mean that they don't hold to the belief that all people equally deserve their kindness or goodwill.

The Satanic ideals of indulgence and self-interest are commonplace virtues in a postmodern world. Many no longer even pretend to follow a general societal ethic because they no longer believe that there is such a thing. Rather, for postmodernists, the norm is to live according to one's personal desires—hence selfishness, and often indulgence. Marilyn Manson, undoubtedly aware of this, perceptively notes,

People will never accept Satanism, though it exists everywhere. There's nothing more Satanic than the way Christians exploit their followers. It also exists in all forms of art, in our selfishness, in rebellion in its purest form, in

²² LaVey, 81.

²³ Ibid., 54.

²⁴ Manson and Strauss, 164.

any free-thinking area. But to be honest, I've grown tired of trying to explain to people who are already living it. Why bother giving it a name?²⁵

Though Christians are more apt to hold to virtues of informed restraint and selflessness, they should sympathize with at least the frank honesty of Satanists. Whereas most are comfortable deceiving themselves and others when they live indulgently and selfishly, at least to the extent that they can, Satanists at least have the courage to name aspects of postmodern culture for what they are, even if under a different title, and to live consistently with their professed beliefs. Furthermore, for Satanists and other individuals who do not hold to the Christian position that the Bible contains a guideline for one's behaviour, it must be admitted that Satanism makes more sense than many rival philosophies, worldviews, or religions that others hold to in this regard.

3. Marilyn Manson: Nihilism

It is difficult to find grounds to argue with McGregor's critique of postmodernism when he writes, "It is pessimistic even nihilistic; it tends to be skeptical, directionless and relativist to the point of illogicality; in its most common forms it seems to have given up any attempt to deal seriously with the world."²⁶ Of course, nihilism isn't unique to postmodernism and was particularly evidenced in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche.²⁷ Hibbs writes, "Doubts about the meaning of life and suggestions that it may ultimately be pointless are not peculiar to our era; indeed, the threat of nihilism seems to be coextensive with human life."²⁸ Nonetheless, we believe the postmodern expression of nihilism is due to different factors than the forms of nihilism that went before it, and thus is not always synonymous with earlier expressions of nihilism.

There are several reasons that account for postmodernism's nihilism. To begin with, postmodernists no longer believe the metanarratives preached by science and Christianity. As a result, there is no overarching story to bring life ultimate meaning, least of all the metanarrative that is Postmodernism. For postmodernists, there are no longer absolute answers to the big questions in life such as, "Why do I exist?" or "Why is there pain and suffering?" There is no longer a belief that technology promises a bright hope for the future. This is understandable for postmodernists who have fresh in their

²⁵ Weiner, 67.

²⁶ Craig McGregor, "In Love with the Postmodern Whirl" in *The Sydney Morning Herald Spectrum*, 8.

²⁷ Many postmodernists and Satanists including Marilyn Manson have referred to Nietzsche as a main influence on their worldview. For a helpful introduction to Nietzsche's thought in relation to postmodernism see, Dave Robinson, *Nietzsche and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Totem, 1999).

²⁸ Thomas S. Hibbs, *Shows About Nothing: Nihilism in Popular Culture from the Exorcist to Seinfeld* (Dallas, Texas: Spence, 1999), 7.

minds the terrible by-products of technology in two relatively recent World Wars, not to mention the threat of nuclear war. Whereas modernism affirmed a strong sense of progress, postmodernists aren't so sure. In fact, many believe we are moving backwards.

The Catholic philosopher Frederick Copleston helpfully states,

Nihilism can take more than one form. There is, for instance, passive nihilism, a pessimistic acquiescence in the absence of values and in the purposelessness of existence. But there is also active nihilism which seeks to destroy that in which it no longer believes.²⁹

Both of these forms of nihilism are evident in postmodern culture.

Passive nihilism is observed in the escalating problems people are having with low self-esteem and particularly with depression. The Director of Counselling services at Houghton College, Michael Lastoria has said,

Depression has been called the common cold of mental illnesses. Current estimates from the National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH) suggest that each year more than 11,000,000 people in the United States suffer from this illness.³⁰

Unfortunately, the American trend with depression is not unique. Passive nihilism is also portrayed in current television shows and movies. In his often helpful book on nihilism in popular culture entitled, *Shows About Nothing*, Hibbs notes, "There is little doubt that Hollywood's nihilism has the effect of coarsening our public life, desensitising us to violence, and making us generally more cynical."³¹ However, while this is plausible, it is more likely that current popular television shows and movies are more of a reflection of the people we already are living in a postmodern world. Nihilism, and what Copleston describes as passive nihilism, is an unfortunate outgrowth of many today that live without hope.

Not all relate to the "pessimistic acquiescence" that Copleston has spoken of, however. Some nihilists, such as Marilyn Manson, would more naturally be categorized under Copleston's description of "active nihilism". Such nihilism "seeks to destroy that in which it no longer believes." This can be seen in part by Manson's statement in regard to

²⁹ Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Volume 7 (New York, New York: Doubleday, 1963), 405.

³⁰ Michael Lastoria, "Depression" in *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology and Counseling*, second edition, Edited by David G. Benner and Peter C. Hill (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1999), 335.

³¹ Hibbs, 4.

both himself and Anton LaVey. In his words, “we had both dedicated the better part of our lives to toppling Christianity with the weight of its own hypocrisy.”³²

It is evident, especially in Manson’s life, that active nihilism does not leave ones own life unscathed. Manson’s nihilistic outlook on life is shown below. He says,

I could easily give in and become a tragic figure like (John Lennon), or Marilyn Monroe or JFK. Half of me is very nihilistic and very self-destructive and the other half of me is just trying to hold off the rest of the world. So it’s like a real struggle. I think in the end I would be happier if I killed myself than if I let some idiot Bible-thumper shoot me. But it’s always a struggle with optimism to want to even exist. The only thing that really makes it worthwhile is being able to create music.³³

Even when Manson stresses that he doesn’t want to die, he shows that his despair with life has repeatedly brought him to the point of suicide. He admitted to one interviewer,

I wouldn’t say I want to die, but I don’t think I’m afraid of dying and there’s a difference between that. I’ve faced my own death by my own hands so many times and through the way I’ve felt over the past few years that I kind of conquered that fear.³⁴

If Manson’s lyrics could be summarized in a word, it would most certainly be *nihilistic*. A short sample of nihilistic and despairing lyrics follows from the albums Marilyn Manson has produced.

You cannot sedate all the things you hate.³⁵

I was made in America/And America hates ME for what I am/ I am YOUR
shit.³⁶

There’s not much left to love/Too tired today to hate/I feel the empty/I feel
the minute of decay/I’m on my way down now.³⁷

The World is so ugly now/Because it’s a great big white world/And we are
drained of our colors/We used to love ourselves/We used to love one
another.³⁸

³² Manson and Strauss, 164.

³³ Weiner, 46.

³⁴ Ibid., 49.

³⁵ Marilyn Manson, *Portrait of an American Family* (Nothing/Interscope Records, 1994).

³⁶ Marilyn Manson, *Smells Like Children* (Nothing/Interscope Records, 1995).

³⁷ Marilyn Manson, *Antichrist Superstar* (Nothing/Interscope Records, 1996).

³⁸ Marilyn Manson, *Mechanical Animals* (Nothing/Interscope Records, 1998).

I wanna outrace the speed of pain for another day.³⁹

I'll just suffer in a hope to die someday.⁴⁰

I am resigned to this wicked fucking world/On its way to hell/The living are dead and/I hope to join them too.⁴¹

Sometimes I feel so worthless/Sometimes I feel discarded/I wish that I was good enough/Then I'd know that I am not alone.⁴²

Due to the large numbers of people who have found in Manson an artist who understands and speaks for them, it is evident that nihilism is unfortunately all too common amongst at least a particular cultural subclass of postmodernists who listen to Manson's music and read what he says. However, it appears that the problem is far more widespread.

If there is any question regarding how poorly Christians have done in helping such people deal with their difficulties and in providing an alternative worldview, one only needs to reflect on Manson's personal experience at a private Christian school, and the subsequent harassment that he has suffered at the hands of Christians.

4. Marilyn Manson: Christianity

Marilyn Manson's perspective on Christianity, as with most other subjects, verges on paradox. However, it appears that Manson has uniformly been positive about Jesus. Or at least the Jesus that Manson envisions. Though most LaVeyan Satanists are atheists or agnostic, it is difficult to say where Manson is at. He certainly does not feel the need to conform to everything in any religion or philosophy, including Satanism. One of the lyrics in his CD entitled, *Holy Wood*, states, "I never really hated the one true God/But the god of the people I hated."⁴³ The meaning of this lyric is summed up in Manson's statement that "(The Bible)'s interesting and has a lot of important values and things like that in it, but the way people use it is where the problems lie."⁴⁴

This isn't to say that Manson doesn't have difficulties with Christianity. One of Manson's ideals is individuality. He says, "When people say 'I want to be like you', I tell them if

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid..

⁴² Marilyn Manson, *Holy Wood: In the Shadow of the Valley of Death* (Nothing/Interscope Records, 2000).

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Weiner, 61.

you want to be like me, then be yourself.”⁴⁵ Christianity, in Manson’s opinion, promotes the opposite, which is a herd mentality. Another important postmodern and incidentally satanic ideal that Manson supports is freedom to live by ones natural instincts. According to Manson,

Christianity’s war against the devil has always been a fight against man’s most natural instincts—for sex, for violence, for self-gratification—and a denial of man’s membership in the animal kingdom.⁴⁶

It is particularly difficult to understand what Manson believes regarding God. It would appear that the most familiar understanding of God for Manson is the God of the Bible. Yet he asks, “Why should we believe in a God that doesn’t believe in us?”⁴⁷ This is reminiscent of Manson’s lyric in *Antichrist Superstar* that says, “I can’t believe in the things/That don’t believe in me.”⁴⁸ However, in a surprising statement in his autobiography that arises through his telling of an instance where his record company made a mistake and sent out copies of an original version of an album that he had desired released as opposed to a reworked version, Manson surprisingly admits, “God, however irrelevant he may be to me, works in mysterious ways.”⁴⁹

It appears that Manson, in spite of the irreverent way in which he often speaks of him, feels some sort of an affinity with Jesus. Marilyn Manson announced to his Spooky-Kid fans on a radio show that, “A long time ago, there was a man as misunderstood as we are and they nailed him to a fucking cross!”⁵⁰ In the multitude of quotes that I have come across with Manson speaking of Jesus, never have I come across one that has been negative towards him. Unfortunately, Marilyn is all too clear about his feelings towards Christians in general and the atrocious way in which they have responded to him. Speaking of an earlier time, Manson confesses, “I always felt like I was supposed to believe and I felt isolated because I didn’t. I began to resent a lot of people because of that, because I wanted to fit in. I just had too many questions.”⁵¹

⁴⁵ Ibid., 48.

⁴⁶ Manson and Strauss, 164.

⁴⁷ Weiner, 62.

⁴⁸ Manson, *Antichrist Superstar*.

⁴⁹ Manson and Strauss, 192.

⁵⁰ Marilyn Manson as quoted in Baddeley, *Dissecting Marilyn Manson*, 161.

⁵¹ Weiner, 62.

5. Marilyn Manson: Apologetics in a Postmodern World

Christian apologetics in a postmodern world must have genuine understanding and a willingness to listen and dialogue as a primary foundation. Christians should learn from the mistakes of those who have inaccurately misrepresented Marilyn Manson and those who associate themselves with him. There are real human beings involved and not merely people under Satan's influence, as many Christians have been quick to say. In order to truly understand Manson, it is necessary to be aware that a lot of what he says and does is for the purpose of making a statement. Manson says,

It's one thing for people to be confused or outraged by what I do, because what I do is controversial, but it is another thing to lie, to say I torture children and have anal sex onstage. Okay so I'm not Neil Diamond, but I don't do the things people say. This is the irony of Marilyn Manson. I am a mockery of sensationalism and these people create even more sensationalism about what I do.⁵²

Without taking the time to understand the beliefs and actions of others, genuine understanding and apologetic interaction will not take place.

The former rock star Alice Cooper was once branded with many of the same labels that Manson is at present. However, Cooper has since become a Christian, and has been outspoken about his disagreements with what Manson has said and done. He states,

I know that Marilyn Manson is probably saying things for shock value, but it cuts right against what I believe. That's a personal problem I have with it, a matter of taste. I'm diametrically opposed to a lot of things he stands for, especially the theological things. But at the same time I understand where he's at, and I'm glad there's somebody doing theatrics out there.⁵³

Cooper models Christian understanding and empathy, which does not have to equal agreement. There's something here that we can learn from.

⁵² Ibid., 35.

⁵³ Alice Cooper as quoted in Ibid., 51.

Conclusion

Marilyn Manson has stated, “I’m a member of the Church of Satan and I’m still a member of St Paul’s Catholic Church in Ohio, my main influence and something I never officially left.”⁵⁴ Manson’s admiration of Jesus is evident. Yet apparently his verdict on Christianity is still out. Unfortunately, his experience from Christians has been misunderstanding instead of the Christian apologetic ideal of understanding, and harsh judgment rather than gentleness and respect. In the future, Christians need to learn from the mistakes of others, and seek to apologetically interact more appropriately with Manson and others we have formerly pushed away.

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⁵⁴ Ibid., 63.

- _____. *Smells Like Children*. Nothing/Interscope Records, 1995.
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