

**The Exorcist and Peter Pan:
How Satanic Panic Haunts Adventist Deliverance Ministries**

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In 1993, Robert Gale, writing under the pen name Vaughn Allen, recounted a tale of delivering a woman from a demon of immaturity. He describes her as having “the body of a mature woman, but she thought like a little girl.”¹ Throughout the 1980s and 90s, Gale wrote books on deliverance. He believed that one must obtain the name of the demon in order to cast it out. To free Ellen he would need the name of her demonic tormentor.

Ellen’s demon revealed itself as “Peter Pan.” This demon “would not allow her to grow up emotionally.”² According to the demon, he had entered Ellen when she was a child. After her deliverance, Ellen confirmed she had seen Peter Pan around fifteen times as a kid and had become obsessed. The result was that she always thought of herself as a child. Gale reminds the reader of 2 Corinthians 3:18’s words, “By beholding we become changed.”

This story of “Peter Pan” is the culmination of Gale’s warnings that demons may take control of a person’s life not only through occult involvement, but also through Nintendo games, monster toys, TV, video tapes, and “a hundred other ways.”³ As one reads about these other ways, it becomes clear that Gale was influenced by tropes belonging to a period known as The Satanic Panic. This moral panic had seeds sown in the 1970s, but erupted during the 1980s and early 90s. It contained numerous hoaxes related to satanism that resulted in real-life trauma.

While Robert Gale remains controversial within Adventist deliverance ministry, his work continues to influence it, particularly among missionaries and missiologists. Gale’s work has become part of “the social stock of knowledge,” or “recipe” knowledge, knowledge people take for granted as true.⁴ The tropes promoted by Gale, and perpetuated by those who learned from his work, risks re-traumatizing people with hoaxes that lead to moral panic.

This paper situates Gale’s work in the context of the Satanic Panic and demonstrates how both Gale and the panic influence contemporary Adventist deliverance ministry. The paper highlights four key tropes developed during the panic that haunt Adventist deliverance ministries decades after they have been debunked. Haunting, or spectrality, in rhetorical studies, refers to anachronistic elements in contemporary texts related to a call for justice.⁵

¹ Vaughn Allen, *Victory on the Battlefield: Setting the Captives Free* (Teacher Services Inc., 2008), 162.

² Allen, *Victory*, 162.

³ Ibid, 44.

⁴ Peter L. Burger and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (United Kingdom: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1967),

⁵ Seth Pierce, *A Theory of Spectral Rhetoric: The Word Between the Worlds* (United Kingdom: Palgrave- Macmillan, 2021).

There are relatively few in Adventism working in deliverance. Those mentioned have been selected from a small pool based on their publications, platforms, and cross-references to each other. This paper does not seek to question the sincerity, service, or efficacy of those in deliverance, only to note the haunting influence of the satanic panic on their work. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of relevant missiological dynamics related to deliverance that may help in the ongoing development of deliverance practices.

Preparing for Panic

During the 1970s interest in exorcism and deliverance haunted the religious landscape. A combination of forces that included the social changes of the 1960s, the rise of the charismatic renewal movement, and supernatural Hollywood horror films focused on children, such as *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Omen*, and *The Exorcist*, created a concern that Satan was at work more directly in people's lives than before.

In *The Exorcist Effect*, Joseph Laycock and Eric Harrelson, demonstrate how supernatural horror cross-pollinated with Christian concerns. They claim:

...supernatural horror films are actually part of a feedback loop wherein: (1) actual events become the basis of films; (2) those films shape the way audiences interpret the world, giving rise to new beliefs and experiences; and (3) these beliefs and experiences lead to new events that become the basis of new horror films, and the cycle begins again. We call this feedback loop “The Exorcist effect.”⁶

This dynamic was most visible after the release of *The Exorcist*.

After *The Exorcist's* release, the Catholic Church received a significant increase in requests for exorcism. Wanting to distance itself from the practice, Catholic clergy referred people to Ed and Lorraine Warren. The Warrens were paranormal investigators that reinvented themselves as exorcists. As the Warrens became involved in exorcisms their stories became the content for Hollywood horror such as *The Conjuring* franchise. In turn, the content of horror movies became the content for deliverance ministries and spiritual warfare concerns.⁷

In 1975, evangelist Billy Graham, weighed in on the film. In *Angels: God's Secret Agents* he discusses “the current cult of the demonic.” He observed demonic influence on every bookshelf and newsstand from the airport to the university, and in films such as *The Exorcist* depicting “frighteningly accurate” accounts of possession.⁸

⁶ Joseph Laycock & Eric Harrelson, *The Exorcist Effect: Horror, Religion, and Demonic Belief* (Oxford, 2023), 11.

⁷ Laycock and Harrelson, *The Exorcist Effect*, 72.

⁸ Billy Graham, *Angels: God's Secret Agents* (NY: Doubleday & Company, 1975), 5.

A year later, former Jesuit, Malachi Martin, published *Hostage to the Devil* in which he describes five exorcisms. Historian Michael Heyes observes that Martin was a “divisive figure, and both his life and writings straddle the line between fact and fiction.”⁹ That did not stop Adventists from promoting his work. Even today in Amazing Facts’ *Storacles* lesson on “Bowling to Babylon” Martin is described as “the consummate Vatican insider.”¹⁰

While *The Exorcist* was capturing attention, an alleged ex-witch named John Todd appeared on the evangelical speaking circuit. Todd’s sordid insider testimonies spread like wildfire through evangelical and Adventist communities. Other narratives similar to Todd’s, such as Mike Warnke’s *The Satan Seller*, in 1972s helped reinforce the idea of secret satanic cabals practicing dark rituals and abusing children.

During this time, charismatic renewal moved into the mainstream, and several manuals on deliverance emerged. Kurt E. Koch’s *Occult Bondage and Deliverance* was released in 1971. In 1972, charismatic minister Don Bashan published *Deliver Us From Evil*. In the book he tells a story about listening to a tape by a minister named Derek Prince. While Prince hadn’t written any books on deliverance yet, he had begun a deliverance ministry in the mid-60s that would go on to become a major influence on Adventist deliverance.

In 1973, C. Peter Wagner wrote a book entitled, *The Pentecostals are Coming!* Wagner shares with readers that exorcisms are key to the rapid growth of Pentecostal Churches in Latin America¹¹ Church growth and deliverance go hand in hand. Wagner suggests American churches reclaim these practices. Wagner would go on to co-develop theologies of territorial spirits, spiritual strongholds, objects of power, and the concept of the 10/40 Window all of which have influenced Adventist missiology and deliverance.

Next, Frank and Ida Mae Hammond, released *Pigs in the Parlor: A Practical Guide to Deliverance* in 1973. This book claimed extra-biblical revelation gained from the Holy Spirit and from demons during deliverance sessions. Learning a demon’s name through conversation is critical for deliverance. The authors offer a taxonomy of 53 “ruling spirits” and the indwelling demons underneath them.¹² For example, the ruling spirit Depression might possess someone with the spirit of Discouragement or Insomnia. It contains such a comprehensive general list that almost anything could lead to possession.

⁹ Michael E. Heyes, *Demons in the U.S.A.: From the Antispiritualists to QAnon* (Routledge, 2024), 79.

¹⁰ “Storacles of Prophecy: Bowling to Babylon,” *Amazing Facts*, Accessed November 10, 2025, <https://www.amazingfacts.org/study/storacles-of-prophecy/bowling-to-babylon/>.

¹¹ C. Peter Wagner, *The Pentecostals are Coming!* (Illinois: Creation House, 1973), p. 134.

¹² Frank Hammond and Ida Mae Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor: A Practical Guide to Deliverance* (MO: Impact Books, 1973), 111-122.

Finally, a less sensational book entitled *The Adversary: A Christian Versus Demon Activity*, was released by Moody Press in 1975. There are more works, but these books are key publications by persons mentioned or alluded to in Adventist deliverance materials.

A final ingredient enhancing The Exorcist effect and Christian concerns of the demonic in the 1970s, were two pieces of legislation designed to protect children. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) of 1974 and the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act, of 1980 highlighted the vulnerability of children. All this created a spiritual powder keg that would be ignited in 1980 with a book called *Michelle Remembers*, and give Adventists several tropes deployed in current deliverance ministry.

SDA & SRA

In *Michelle Remembers*, psychologist Lawrence Pazdar tells the story of his client, Michelle Smith. Through memory recovery therapy, Pazdar reveals Michelle was given over to a satanic cult by her mother and subjected to abuse. The book's details rival the most extreme horror movies. It became a bestseller. Pazdar and Smith went on tour, left their spouses, and married. In the end, the story was revealed to be fraudulent with Pazdar admitting that it really didn't matter if it was objectively real, as long as it was real to Michelle.¹³

Michelle Remembers popularized the narrative of secret satanic cult abuse. Pazdar is credited with creating the term "ritual abuse" as it relates to satanist conspiracies.¹⁴ Therapists, child advocates, and social workers began using the term "satanic ritual abuse," or SRA, to refer to abuse by secret cults as featured in *Michelle Remembers*. Its usage was further popularized by a criminal trial at a preschool.

In 1983, a woman named Judy Johnson began accusing a teacher named Ray Buckey of molesting her child at the McMartin Preschool in Manhattan Beach, California. Police sent over 200 letters to families encouraging them to ask their children if they had been abused. The result was panic that led to hundreds of allegations. Children were questioned using coercive techniques by social workers at Children's Institute International and other therapists.¹⁵

Under pressure, children gave details of underground tunnels and encounters with witches, Satanic rituals, animal killings. No evidence was found. However, by 1984, seven

¹³ Allen, Denna and Janet Midwinter. "Michelle Remembers: The Debunking of a Myth," *The Mail*, September 30, 1990.

¹⁴ James M. Wood, Debbie Nathan, M. Teresa Nezworski, and Elizabeth Uhl, "Child Sexual Abuse Investigations: Lessons learned from the McMartin and Other Daycare Cases," In *Children as Victims, Witnesses, and Offenders: Psychological Science and the Law*, eds. Bette L. Bottoms, Cynthia J. Najdowski, and Gail S. Goodman (New York: Guilford Press, 2009), 81–101.

¹⁵ Richard Beck, *We Believe the Children: A Moral Panic in the 1980s* (NY: Hachette Book Group, 2015).

teachers and staff were indicted including Peggy McMartin Buckey (the owner) and her son Ray Buckey. They faced hundreds of child molestation charges.¹⁶

Ray Buckey spent five years in jail without bail waiting for the trial to begin. During the trial, SRA accusations were included by the prosecution while the defense argued against the interview techniques and lack of evidence. It was demonstrated that the accuser, Judy Johnson, was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia.¹⁷ After seven years of legal proceedings, the jury acquitted Peggy McMartin Buckey on all charges. Ray was acquitted on most charges, but two hung juries led to a mistrial which prosecutors declined to retry.

The trial cost Los Angeles County close to \$15 million. It is considered the most expensive criminal trial in U.S. History. The financial and reputational cost to the McMartin family was irreparable. Despite the eventual outcome of the trial, it gave a popular platform to embed satanic ritual abuse (SRA) in the cultural imagination. It was magnified by Geraldo Rivera's *Devil Worship: Exposing Satan's Underground* in 1988,¹⁸ and Oprah's interview with Lawrence Pazder and Michelle Smith in 1989, which talked about satanism and rituals involving cannibalism and infants.

As the 1980s came to a close an investigation was conducted to assess the claims of satanic ritual abuse (SRA). Gail S. Goodman, principal investigator for the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect examined over 12,000 claims of SRA. At the end of her report she concluded that there were no verifiable claims of SRA. What she did find was more chilling:

Our research leads us to believe that there are many more children being abused in the name of God than in the name of Satan. Ironically, while the public concerns itself with passing laws to punish satanic child abuse, laws already exist that protect parents whose particular variants of belief in God deny their children life-saving medical care.¹⁹

Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA) is a term associated with moral panic, hoaxes, and fraud. What's the term created panic led to trauma.

SRA has been widely discussed and debunked for decades. It has received attention in both general and peer reviewed literature and was largely abandoned by the mid to late 1990s. Yet, Adventists who speak on demonization have not yet been delivered from this language.

¹⁶ Beck, *We Believe*, 154.

¹⁷ She continued to add bizarre details such as claiming teachers could fly through the air.

¹⁸ Occult Demon Cassette, "Devil Worship Exposing Satan's Underground [Geraldo Rivera Satanic Panic Special] [1988] [VHS]," *YouTube*, Accessed November 3, 2025 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjVpqMHRpU> 42:11.

¹⁹ Gail S. Goodman, "Characteristics and Sources of Allegations of Ritualistic Child Abuse Grant No. 90CA1405, Final Report to the National center on Child Abuse and Neglect," *U.S. Department of Justice/National Institute of Justice*, 1995, 14.

The first mention of Satanic Ritual Abuse within Adventism seems to occur in Clifford Quantz' 1994 Dmin project, "An Investigation of Satanic Influences Upon Physically, Emotionally, and Spiritually Disturbed Christians: Selected Case Studies." In the project, Quantz endorses Lauren Stratford's book *Satanic Underground*, claiming she was "groomed for Satanic rituals of sexual perversion and torture" by satanic priests.²⁰ Quantz observes, "SRA is so widespread, and independently reported by the press, counselors, therapists and social workers that denial of this scourge in our society cannot reasonably be entertained."²¹ This is four years after Harvest House pulled Stratford's book from shelves for its fabricated claims.²²

While Adventist publications in the 1990s such as *Ministry Magazine* are critical and suspicious of the term, contemporary missiological works take it for granted. Adventist Frontier Missions established the Set Free in Christ Institute to provide training and resources for deliverance ministries. AFM in partnership with the Department of World Mission at the SDA Theological Seminary at Andrews University produced a manual in 2018. In a chapter entitled, "A Field Manual for Deliverance Ministry," Michée Badé writes, "Some people, because of tragic circumstances, have very fragile or multiple personalities, often arising from severe abuse in childhood or Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA)"²³ Badé has included SRA in his work since at least 2015 in the *Journal of Adventist Missions*.²⁴

In Appendix 4 of the manual, various levels of occult involvement are discussed. The section notes "...there are also those who become part of a covenant involved in overt Satan worship, involving sexual orgies, torture of children in SRA (Satanic Ritual Abuse), blood sacrifices of humans or animals, and sexually explicit parodies of Christian worship."²⁵ SRA here is linked with problematic tropes established during medieval witch trials.

Conrad Vine, a contributor to the manual, has conducted many deliverance training and presentations for audiences around the world. In one seminar, dated April 23, 2023, and viewed nearly 30,000 times, he refers explicitly to traps set by the devil to ensnare people in the West.

²⁰ Clifford Quantz, "An Investigation of Satanic Influences Upon Physically, Emotionally, and Spiritually Disturbed Christians: Selected Case Studies," (Dmin. Project, Andrews University, 1994), 91, Digital Commons Andrews University.

²¹ Quantz, "An Investigation," 92.

²² "Publisher Withdraws Satanism Story," *Christianity Today*, February 19, 1990, https://www.christianitytoday.com/1990/02/controversy-publisher-withdraws-satanism-story/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

²³ Michée Badé, "A Field Manual for Deliverance Ministry," in *Finding Freedom in Jesus: A Deliverance Ministry Manual*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer (Adventist Frontier Missions, 2018), 84.

²⁴ Michée Badé, "A Biblical and Theological Foundation for a Seventh-day Adventist Practical Approach to Deliverance Ministry," *Journal of Adventist Missions*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 115-138.

²⁵ Bruce L. Bauer, ed., *Finding Freedom in Jesus: A Deliverance Ministry Manual*, (Adventist Frontier Missions, 2018), 133.

Vine states before claiming “there is satanic ritual abuse, SRA, at some of the elite levels in society.”²⁶ He later discusses SRA as a means of becoming demonized.²⁷

Scholarship in the areas of trauma²⁸ and pastoral care,²⁹ as well as deliverance and witchcraft,³⁰ have embraced the terms spiritual abuse religious/ritual abuse (RA), or spiritual and ritual abuse (SARA). These terms separate the painful reality of abuse in a religious context from the alleged conspiracy of a satanic cabal of the 1980s. While all abuse is satanic in the sense it is evil, not all abuse is part of a cabal of occultists. Abuse and trauma can happen anywhere, as evidenced by the horrific tragedy of the Adventist associated Miracle Meadows.³¹ It would be wise to eliminate SRA language and replace it with RA or SARA. SRA language not only links deliverance ministries with debunked, sensationalist narratives, but risks masking abuse focused on religious others, instead of minding what happens in our own communities. It also risks adopting other satanic panic plot points.

SDAs & VCRs

Just before and during the satanic panic, several moralpreneurs took advantage of Christian ignorance of media and popular culture by linking it with satanic conspiracy. Arguably the most notorious was John Todd. Todd promoted ideas such as celebrity pacts with Satan for success, music being produced by witches, and how they relied on a book called *The Necronomicon* for power. Because most Christians didn’t read horror, many did not realize *The Necronomicon* is a fictional work by H.P. Lovecraft. Todd’s work was boosted by fundamentalist cartoonist Jack Chick in two books: *The Broken Cross* and *Spellbound*.

Eventually, Todd’s narratives began to unravel. He was not only shown to be a fraud, but also a violent rapist. However, many Seventh-day Adventists clung to his messages. James Coffin lamented in the *Australasian Record* in 1979 that even after he had demonstrated fraud, parishioners asked, “So what if John Todd is a fraud and not what he claims to be? Isn’t his message about the Illuminati and witchcraft still beneficial?”³² The inability to let go of fabricated narratives of witches and demons, even when proven untrue, would take deadly turns.

²⁶ Conrad Vine, “Deliverance Ministry Part 3,” Streamed live on April 23, 2023. YouTube video, 3:10-3:41. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hq2c4M2JOTc>

²⁷ Vine, “Deliverance Ministry,” 51:39.

²⁸ Craig S. Cashwell and Paula J. Swindle. “When Religion Hurts: Supervising Cases of Religious Abuse,” in *Trauma-Informed Supervision, The Clinical Supervisor*, Vol. 37, no.1, 182–203.

²⁹ Eileen Clark, “Who Cares? The Changing Health Care System,” *Health Sociology Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (December 2014), 132-133, <https://doi.org/10.5172/hesr.2001.10.2.132>.

³⁰ “Spiritual and Ritual Abuse: SARA and Harmful Practices,” *Endwitchhunts.org*, Accessed November 3, 2025, <https://endwitchhunts.org/spiritual-and-ritual-abuse/>.

³¹ Randy Yohe, “\$100 Million Settlement May Prompt State To Rethink Internal Insurance Program,” *WV Public Broadcasting*, August 29, 2023, <https://wvpublic.org/tag/miracle-meadows-school/>.

³² James Coffin, “Letters to the Editor,” *Australasian Record*, Vol. 84, No. 19, Feb 26, 1979, 13.

Todd called for people to arm themselves for conflict. His work had a direct influence on Ruby Ridge and the Branch Davidians.³³ It also inspired Fritz Springmeier who wrote *Bloodlines of the Illuminati* in 1998. This book is arguably the first work to link Disney with occult programming to brainwash children. This is a popular theme popular among Adventist ministries such as Little Light Studios who produced a film about the occult side of Disney and Youtube Videos discussing Disney's hidden messages.³⁴ Springmeier was later convicted of fraud and his work is downloadable on the CIA website, likely due to its connection to Osama Bin Laden.³⁵

As deliverance ministries responded to cultural currents, most works on the subject mentioned the dangers of possession via media. Don Basham's *Deliver Us From Evil* recounts a story about listening to a tape by Derek Prince. Prince describes the "many ways" evil spirits gain access to people. One way is movies. He gives an analogy of a young child left in front of the television while the parent steps out of the room. A horror movie comes on. "The child sits before the television and becomes terrified and a spirit of fear rides in."³⁶ Basham says this resonated with him and traces his own harassment to seeing a vampire movie in the 1930s.

In 1986, traveling evangelist Phil Phillips published *Trouble in the Toybox*. While Disney gets a pass in this book, the author lays out the fear of passive children being taken over by the media. Phillips notes:

The real danger lies in the occult and violent images connected with the toy which are conveyed to the child via cartoons, television and movies. As a child watching these shows, he sees the producers' idea of the toys' capabilities. He watches the toy as it displays certain 'powers' and projects certain images through the cartoon or movies.³⁷

This leads to a downward spiral due to occult curiosities woven into the fabric of children's toys, cartoons, and movie programs. These messages resonated with Adventists.

Seventh-day Adventists have viewed new media and entertainment with suspicion. Lisa Clark Diller notes that, Seventh-day Adventists "exhibit a decidedly hostile response to popular entertainment practices within their societies"³⁸ These 19th century attitudes carried into the 20th

³³ Paul Murphy, "Cover Up: The Conspiracy Tapes," Podcast audio. May 1, 2024.

³⁴ *Magic Kingdom*. DVD. Little Light Studios.

³⁵ BBC, "What Was On Osama Bin Laden's Bookshelf," BBC, May 20, 2015, Accessed September 14, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32816412>.

³⁶ Don Basham, *Deliver Us From Evil* (Chosen Books, 1972), 181.

³⁷ Basham, *Deliver Us*, 181.

³⁸ Lisa Clark Diller, "Adventists, Popular Culture and the Arts," in *The Oxford Handbook of Seventh-day Adventists*, eds. Christie Chui-Shan Chow, David Holland, Denis Kaiser, Michael W. Campbell, Nicholas Miller (NY: Oxford University Press, 2024), 559.

century and inspired Adventists to make parallel institutions to avoid corruption by secular society. They engaged, but were wary of media and entertainment.³⁹

In her work on Adventists and movies, Lynelle Ellis observes that the emergence of television and VCRs in the 1950s through 1980s dramatically shifted how Adventists discussed media. Her work reveals a complex relationship of using television for evangelism, but remaining wary of, and even lamenting, its influence.⁴⁰ Ellis' work surveys Adventist publications and demonstrates Adventists use of new media for evangelism, but also its people being highly critical of it. She cites an informal survey on movies conducted by Adventist Review in 1987, where one respondent wrote, "Leave our church *alone!* Drama has been principles, lead, guide, and instruct. the devil's biggest tool in the promotion and spreading of evil in the world"⁴¹ There are enough sentiments like this for thematic analysis.

In 2024, Allan Novaes examined Adventists messages about media during the 1950s-1980s. Novaes uncovers what he calls a "subliminal thesis" that is most "striking" during "the Satanic Panic of the 1980s and 1990s."⁴² The subliminal thesis concerns Adventism's embrace of a post-WW2 framework about mass media that suggests audiences are passive and influenced through subliminal messaging. Novaes analyzes 13 different books/pamphlets from the era, and official church publications, and determines that keywords such as "subliminal" and others are used freely in relation to new media/entertainment.

Novaes discovered that Adventists have often used the media to warn others of subliminal satanic messages in the media. His research reveals that the period of the satanic panic saw "the most blunt, demonizing, and speculative language on the subject of the subliminal." After exploring several key works from this era Novaes concludes:

...the subliminal thesis gains traction as the elements of conspiratorial rhetoric materialize: Satan, evil angels, the media, and communication and entertainment professionals would be the conspirators; mind control through media content, the secret plan; and Adventists, possessing the knowledge to which few would have access, would be the ones who reveal the machinations...⁴³

³⁹ Diller, "Adventists," 559-560.

⁴⁰ Lynelle Ellis, "Seventh-day Adventists and the Movies: An Historical and Contemporary Exploration of the Conflict Between Christianity and Visual Media" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Regent University, 2019), 76. ProQuest.

⁴¹ Miriam Wood, "Adventists and the Movies: An Informal Survey Reveals a Wide Variety of Adventist Opinion, *Adventist Review*, Vol. 164, No. 3 (January 15, 1987): 11.

⁴² Allan Novaes, "'The Battle for Men's Minds': Subliminal Message as Conspiracy Theory in Seventh-day Adventist Discourse," *Religions*, Vol. 15, (2024): 9.

⁴³ Novaes, "The Battle," 145.

As the church moved into the 2000s, there remained an "unofficial discourse" built around the satanic panic that still haunts church communication, even in recent church social media posts warning members that they *are* what they watch, listen to, or read.⁴⁴

By the time *Victory on the Battlefields* was published by Robert Gale in 1993, the trope of satanic media was well established. His account of a woman watching Peter Pan too many times as a child mirrors Bashan's account of a child being possessed by watching movies. His reference to a Disney film echoes Todd's claims as well as works like *Turmoil in the Toybox*.

Adventist deliverance practitioners and writers have continued this theme. In 2009's *Spirit Baptism and Deliverance*, Dennis Smith recounts a spiritual attack when watching Disney's *The Shaggy Dog* and hearing a mention of a witch.⁴⁵ In Appendix 5 of the *Freedom in Christ Manual* it states, "Many movies and a lot of popular music have natural and occult teachings contained within them and that may not even be noticed by the people who watch, listen, or play them."⁴⁶ In a YouTube interview, Micheé Bade suggests the *Harry Potter* books contain real spells,⁴⁷ echoing John Todd's claims of fictional works containing secret messages.

Another Adventist ex-Satanist, Gabriel Estavao, has been featured on numerous media discussing witchcraft and deliverance. In one interview from 2023, he claims to have been raised going to a secret school of witchcraft that bestowed supernatural powers on him.⁴⁸ His testimony mirrors the plot from *Harry Potter* and warns that media have been taken over and produced by Satanists, repeating the claims of Todd. His videos have views in the hundreds of thousands and he has been on the Adventist speaking circuit this year.

In his deliverance training, Conrad Vine observes the prevalence of cultic imagery in media.⁴⁹ He mentions removing *The Exorcist* or *The Omen* from homes during deliverance sessions.⁵⁰ Most recently, two missionaries continue the trope of subliminal satanic media in their books and presentations

David Ng presented a 5-part series on deliverance at the 2024 Jesus for Asia camp meeting. Ng speaks of "unseen agencies of evil" increasing activity in the last days. He mentions movies, music, and books of "fiction fantasy" as all being used by the devil to possess

⁴⁴ @Adventistchurch, "You are what you consume," *Instagram*, December 26, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DECS4gFqPqR/>.

⁴⁵ Bauer, *Freedom*, 155.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 139.

⁴⁷ Michée Badé, "L'occultisme | Le combat spirituel," *Vers Jésus*, Apr 20, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1EbP0exnA4>.

⁴⁸ Gabriel Estevão, "Interview With An Ex-Satanist | Gabriel Estevão | Part 1 | Powerful Testimony," *The Blue Pattern*, streamed live April 21, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4M7_I10zRY.

⁴⁹ Conrad Vine, Deliverance Ministry Part 2," *QVtv Media*, Streamed live on April 22, 2023. YouTube video, 5:27, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsTq3QjM2Ho>.

⁵⁰ Vine, "Deliverance," 47:41-47.

people.⁵¹ Ng states watching certain movies and television too many times can lead to homosexuality.⁵² He also says, “If we get addicted to movies or we love to watch movies and we open our minds to movies then movies will start to imprint on our minds” which will lead to fantasies⁵³ that results in self harm. Ng observes that horror movies cause demons to come straight into people’s hearts and take control.⁵⁴ The solution is to burn all science fiction and fantasy books,⁵⁵ and carefully pray about C.S. Lewis.⁵⁶

In 2025, Adventist missionary Tim Maddocks published *Fallen Angels: One Man’s True Encounters with Evil*. The book opens with a story about the author watching a Disney movie and experiencing an attack when the words ‘I hate God’ began repeating in his mind. He concludes, “This seemingly harmless entertainment contained hidden themes that opened a dark door.”⁵⁷ This likely occurred in the late 1970s when Todd’s work was well-established, as well as the subliminal message theme in Adventist literature. Maddocks highlights video games, entertainment, and movies as demonic gateways.⁵⁸

This survey of malevolent media messages, isn’t meant to suggest that media don’t have a spiritual influence. Instead it demonstrates the presence of a media dialogue that mirrors many of the narratives and tropes of moralpreneurs during the Satanic Panic. These moralpreneurs were often found to be guilty of fraud, violence, and even domestic terror. Yet their content haunts Adventist deliverance dialogue decades after they have been debunked.

It also highlights the need for more interdisciplinary work in the area of communication and theology. Communication studies within the church tend to focus on praxis and neglect theory, history, culture, and philosophy. The result is perpetuating media effects myths or justifying sensationalism for engagement. Media effects are notoriously complex. While studies continue to debate the effects of media, one general rule agreed upon is correlation is not causation. Increasing education, dialogue and accountability would help.⁵⁹

SDA and D&D

⁵¹ David Ng, “Jesus for Asia Presents David Ng ‘Spiritual Warfare,’” *Jesus for Asia*, streamed live on November 11, 2024. Youtube video, 56:54-57:32 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_5TIhfx4Sc.

⁵² Ng, “Jesus for Asia,” 6:17.

⁵³ Ibid, 7:25-8:55.

⁵⁴ David Ng, “2/6 Jesus for Asia Presents David Ng ‘Spiritual Warfare,’” *Jesus for Asia*, streamed live on November 12, 2024. Youtube video, 9:02-9:09, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQs6SKzHBWo>.

⁵⁵ Ng, “2/6 Jesus for Asia,” 23:20.

⁵⁶ David Ng, “3/6 Jesus for Asia Presents David Ng ‘Spiritual Warfare,’” *Jesus for Asia*, streamed live on November 13, 2024. YouTube video, 23:00-27:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txAVeCdgP0U>. To his credit, Ng does warn his audience “not to go crazy on these things.”

⁵⁷ Tim Maddocks, *Fallen Angels: One Man’s True Encounters With Evil* (TN: Teach Services, Inc. 2025), 11

⁵⁸ Maddocks, *Fallen Angels*, 96-97.

⁵⁹ This call is made in: Gordon Lynch “Religion, Media and the Cultures of Everyday Life,” *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, second edition. John R. Hinnells (ed.) London: Routledge. 2011, 1849.

An enduring symbol of the Satanic Panic is *Dungeons & Dragons*. This board game became a major source of terror in the 1980s with a handful of tragic teenage deaths. The game was believed to hold occult rituals and powers that would lead children to take their own life. Three notable cases and a movie starring Tom Hanks helped establish this myth.

In 1979, James Dallas Egbert, a 16-year old prodigy at Michigan State University, vanished into the steam tunnels below the school. A private investigator named William Dear speculated the boy's disappearance was due to his engagement with D&D. Mike Warnke, in his books *Schemes of Satan*, falsely wrote that Egbert left a suicide note claiming the teen gave his heart to Satan. The 1982 movie, *Mazes & Monsters* starring Tom Hanks, dramatized the incident. Later scholarly⁶⁰ and popular⁶¹ accounts revealed that Dear was driven by his own heroic aspirations, and Egbert's death was the result of a long battle with depression.

In 1982, Irving Pulling, a high school student, shot himself. His mother, Patricia, blamed D&D. In response, she founded B.A.D.D. (Bothered About Dungeons and Dragons), dedicated to exposing the board games ties to Satanism. She became a celebrity and leading "expert." However, investigation of the death revealed that Irving only played D&D for nine hours, and that his death had been "an act of aggression towards his mother" since both of his parents had been having affairs.⁶² Likely, emotional stress contributed to Pulling's death.

Finally, in 1988, a college student named Chris Pritchard, murdered his stepfather. Prosecution emphasized D&D and how it led to a disconnect with reality. However, court documents⁶³ and other reports⁶⁴ reveal that Pritchard was after a multi-million dollar inheritance. Yet, the D&D connection stuck in the minds of those caught up in the moral panic.

In *Dangerous Games: What the Moral Panic over Role-Playing Games Says about Play, Religion, and Imagined Worlds* Joseph Laycock observes, "...as with the panic over role-playing games, it was not the children but the *adults* whose response indicated a failure (or perhaps a refusal) to differentiate between imagination and reality."⁶⁵ Research shows tabletop games like

⁶⁰ Joseph P. Laycock, *Dangerous Games: What the Moral Panic over Role-Playing Games, Says about Play, Religion, and Imagined Worlds* (CA: University of California Press, 2015), 81-89.

⁶¹ Jon Peterson, "The Missing Teen Who Fueled 'Cult Panic' Over Dungeons & Dragons," *Wired*, October 12, 2021, Accessed November 3, 2025
https://www.wired.com/story/the-missing-teen-who-fueled-cult-panic-over-dungeons-and-dragons/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

⁶² Laycock, *Dangerous Games*, 112.

⁶³ *State v. Upchurch*, 421 S.E.2d 577, 332 N.C. 439 (1992). Accessed November 3, 2025,
https://law.justia.com/cases/north-carolina/supreme-court/1992/89a90-0.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

⁶⁴ Brooke Cain, "Notorious NC Murders That Struck Close to Home, New Observer, Updated November 25, 2024, Accessed November 3, 2025,
https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/article222789440.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

⁶⁵ Laycock, *Dangerous Games*, 213.

Dungeons & Dragons improve mental health and have pro-social benefits.^{66 67} Hit shows like *Stranger Things* even use the panic around *Dungeons & Dragons* as a tongue-in-cheek pot device, and some churches use it to build community connections.

Yet, Adventist deliverance ministries have not been able to let go of this long debunked narrative. In *Victory On the Battlefield*, in a section called “Satan’s Toys,” Robert Gale warns, “Nintendo games and Dungeons and Dragons are in many instances nothing but a form of witchcraft.”⁶⁸ In Appendix 1, in the *Freedom in Christ* manual the reader is asked: “Have you ever played with an Oijia board, crystal ball, Dungeons & Dragons, or other occult games?”⁶⁹ This is also reiterated on a downloadable slide presentation from Bruce Bauer.⁷⁰ Church leaders, such as Dan Serns, also list *Dungeons & Dragons* as a getaway to denomination on his personal website.⁷¹

Little Light Studios lambasts the game, even mentioning the satanic panic, before dismissing it without investigation. What’s more, the hosts comments, “Have you heard of the satanic panic from the 80s? So that was big in the 80s, people went crazy over specifically this game so I want to show you a little bit of those cool nostalgic clips from the 80s. It’s basically a Little Light from the 80s.”⁷² This ministry explicitly identifies with the satanic panic of the 80s. It mentions none of the many pieces of research that have found satanic panic claims fraudulent.

Little Light Studios is also the platform where many contemporary deliverance ministers such as Tim Maddocks are featured. Maddocks mentions Little Light in his new book, which also recounts the story of a young man “whose life was being traumatized by demonic attacks” due to playing *Dungeons and Dragons*.⁷³

⁶⁶ Alyssa Merrick, Wendy Wen Li, and Dan J. Miller, “A Study on the Efficacy of the Tabletop Roleplaying Game *Dungeons & Dragons* for Improving Mental Health and Self-Concepts in a Community Sample,” *Games for Health Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (March 20, 2024): 128-133. <https://doi.org/10.1089/g4h.2023.0158>

⁶⁷ Joël Billieux, Loïs Fournier, Lucien Rochat, Iliyana Georgieva, Charlotte Eben, Marc Malmndorf Andersen, Daniel L. King, Olivier Simon, Yasser Khazaal, Andreas Lieberoth, Jonathan Bloch, “Can Playing *Dungeons and Dragons* be Good for You? A Registered Exploratory Pilot Programme Using Offline Tabletop Role-Playing Games to Mitigate Social Anxiety and Reduce Problematic Involvement in Multiplayer Online Video Games,” *R Soc Open Sci*, Vol. 12, No. 4, (April 9, 2025): 250273. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsos.250273>.

⁶⁸ Vaughn Allan, *Victory on the Battlefield: The Gospel Commission: Its Nature, Restoration, and Authority* (TN: Teach Services, 1993), 82.

⁶⁹ Bauer, *Set Free in Christ*, 107.

⁷⁰ Bruce L. Bauer, “Biblical Responses to Demonizations,” Powerpoint Presentation, May 2019, Accessed November 4, 2025, <https://www.setfreeinchrist.org/books.html>.

⁷¹ Dan Serns, “Deliverance from Demonic Intimidation,” *Danserns.wordpress.com*, April 13, 2028, Accessed November 4, 2025, https://danserns.wordpress.com/2018/04/13/deliverance-from-demonic-intimidation/?fbclid=IwY2xjawNjSIRleHRuA2FlbQlXMAbicmlkETFQbU8zaEtJTE44Ykw4N1E2AR7vhwU78i6_rbyXkECdHra5UUcksy6qbm34yljowgbleGWh5BF9j3OmYz7lBw_aem_ZWqjYfTOoybOaQ9o0mRaFg

⁷² Little Light Studios, “The Dark Side of Roleplaying Games,” *Little Light Studios*, YouTube video, 2:45-3:02, published September 2, 2022. Accessed November 4, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUWIuwjiO6w>

⁷³ Maddocks, *Fallen Angels*, 95.

Church leaders' promotion of D&D as a dangerous occult artifact is influenced by fraudulent narratives deployed to cover real emotional distress. Numerous academic disciplines, including communication, theology, and religion have made space for nuanced engagement with popular culture to gain nuanced understanding. It may be time for Adventists to do the same.

SDAs and Rock & Roll

The final carry over from the satanic panic of the 1980s involves rock music. Between 1972 and 1996, Adventists publications featured ex-Rocker turned evangelist Bob Larson. Larson's name appears more than 80 times in Adventist publications, including an exclusive interview in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*.⁷⁴ He's even mistakenly called an Adventist pastor in the *Australian Record*.⁷⁵ Bob Larson, who moved into deliverance ministry, is one of the most influential voices on SDA worship sensibilities..

Larson began his oeuvre by crafting links between musicians, rock music, and Hinduism which leads to demonization.⁷⁶ He raised concerns about the use of "Christian Rock,"⁷⁷ and then linked rock music to homosexuality, witchcraft, and the occult.⁷⁸ Eventually Larson moved into a colorful deliverance ministry where he uses a silver cross to "stab" demons, and offers Zoom exorcisms for \$500. Larson softened his position on rock music in the 1990s, but Adventists did not. This is noted by one Adventist minister in *Ministry Magazine*.⁷⁹

Bolstering Larson's claims were those of John Todd. In one lecture Todd speaks of his career as a high ranking witch in the music industry and how rock is part of an occult plot, including "Jesus rock," to ensnare Christians.⁸⁰ Todd claimed to have been the manager of Zodiac Productions, the "largest music conglomerate in the world." Tragically, or conventionally, Todd claims the name has been changed since his time and he doesn't know what it is now; but it owns all major record labels.

Todd shares that the purpose of rock is to cast spells on people that otherwise would be immune to witchcraft. Todd describes how this happens:

⁷⁴ Gerald Fuller, "Rock Unmasked," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, December 18, 1975, 4-7.

⁷⁵ Pearl McRorie, "Ex-Star Speaks Against Hard Rock," *Australian Record and Advent World Survey*, Vol. 77, No. 33, August 13, 1973, 5.

⁷⁶ Bob Larson, *Hippies, Hindus, and Rock & Roll* (FL: Creation House, 1969) 15, 78.

⁷⁷ Bob Larson, *Rock and the Church* (FL: Creation House, 1971), 11.

⁷⁸ Bob Larson, *Rock: Practical Help for Those Who Listen to the Words and Don't Like What They Hear* (IL: Tyndale, 1980), 22.

⁷⁹ Michael Tomlinson, "Contemporary Christian Music is Christian Music," *Ministry*, Vol. 69, No. 9 (September, 1996): 27.

⁸⁰ John Todd, "The Final Tape, History as a Witch, Evils of Television & Rock Music - Tape #6A/6B - John Todd Collins," *Urban*. Podcast audio. Accessed November 4, 2025
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-final-tape-history-as-a-witch-evils-of/id1817855537?i=1000711051625>.

On a full moon, it's [master copy] taken into a temple room about the size of this auditorium that is in every one of the major music companies...and it's placed on an altar, sitting in the north of the room, and a pentagram engraved on the floor. And 13 chosen witches and wizards in a coven come in and conjure a principality or a power up...and order him to tell the demons under him to follow every record and every tape coming off of that master. As I tell Christian parents, you can go home and count your kids' records, probably yours too and count how many demons at least are there.⁸¹

This is why rock is so addicting. Rock music allows Christians to cast spells on themselves.

Even after Larson and Todd are debunked, other bestselling works solidified the trope. In 1986 Rebecca Brown published *He Came to Set the Captives Free* in which she claimed: "Rock music is Satan's music...the whole movement of rock music was carefully planned and carried out by Satan and his servants..."⁸² To elaborate on this, she talks of "Elaine" a former high ranking witch who gives Brown the inside story on rock music.

Elaine tells her that when it comes to rock stars, "They have **all** agreed to serve Satan in return for money and fame."⁸³ Elaine recounts occult ceremonies at rock labels and how she personally placed "satanic blessings on the rock music recorded" and used "incantations which placed demons on EVERY record and tape of rock music sold."⁸⁴ These demons also spoke on records and could be accessed through backmasking. All for the purpose of mind control.

Adventists deliverance ministers pick these narratives up beginning with Robert Gale's *More Than a Match for Satan* in 1983. He lists "Rock Music" as the name of a specific demon.⁸⁵ He notes that "much is being written today painting out that rock music is a definite tool of Satan."⁸⁶ He further states, "It is public knowledge that many of the rock groups and stars are Satan worshippers."⁸⁷ Finally he claims it a "well-known fact" that "much of the so-called music performed by these devotees of Satan contain hidden messages which appeal to the mind in a devilish way."⁸⁸ Gale's *Victory on the Battlefield* repeats these accusations and adds "Some have thought that there are subliminal evil suggestions mixed with the 'Music.'"⁸⁹ Gale is concerned these recordings are in Christian homes.

⁸¹ Todd, "The Final Tape."

⁸² Rebecca Brown, *He Came to Set the Captives Free* (PA: Whitaker House, 1992), 145.

⁸³ Brown, *Captives*, 63.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 146.

⁸⁵ Vaughn Allen, *More Than a Match for Satan* (TN: American Cassette Ministries, 1983), 44.

⁸⁶ Allen, *More Than a Match*, 77.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 32.

From here, rock music is a demonic presence in nearly all Adventist deliverance works. For example, Dennis Smith mentions feeling an evil presence when hearing the song “House of the Rising Sun.”⁹⁰ Ironical, since the folk song is a warning *against* ruining one’s life with sinful practices. However, no example of satanic panic influence on music is as clear as found in the work of David Ng,

In 2025, Ng released *His Victory is Ours: A Spiritual Warfare Guide*. In a chapter dedicated to exposing demonic entrances into people’s lives, Ng focuses on music. He tells a story of attending a music seminar held by a woman who educated them on backmasking, which Ng says was “a common thing in the 80s and 90s.”⁹¹ Backmasking originated in the 1960s, but became popular in the 80s and 90s when, in 1983, a youth pastor named Jacob Aranza wrote *Backward Masking Unmasked: Backward Satanic Messages of Rock and Roll Exposed*. Despite being debunked as auditory pareidolia,⁹² backmasking persists in Adventist deliverance.

Ng regurgitates old stories of artists like The Beatles and Rolling Stones hiding satanic messages. Then he says the woman doing their training played contemporary Christian music revealing satanic messages in works by Christian artists like Hillsong, Bethel Music Group, and Lauren Daigle.⁹³ Finally, Ng cites Rebecca Brown’s *He Came to Set the Captives Free* where “Elaine’s” testimony explains how rock musicians are witches casting spells on “every record and tape of rock music sold.”⁹⁴ He concludes this section with lists of ungodly artists such as Andrew Peterson, Phil Wickham, Taylor Swift, and Amy Grant.⁹⁵

Music is powerful and influential. However, as with media effects, how music works on people is complex. In *In Tune With God*, Adventist music scholar Lilian Doukhan notes that assigning moral elements to specific beats, chords, and styles reflects a pagan mindset, not a Christian one. She writes, “...to the Greeks, the impact of certain melodies, rhythms, and instruments went beyond a mere effect on the emotions. These musical elements indeed were understood to act directly on the very character of the person and to have power to shape, change, and transform it.”⁹⁶ She points out aesthetics are important, but they aren’t the same as ethics. Those who claim certain styles are inherently devilish are preaching a pagan message under the guise of Christian gospel.

⁹⁰ Dennis Smith, *Spirit Baptism and Deliverance: Do You Desire Victory Over Satan's Oppressions and Influences in Your Life?* (Holy Spirit Ministries, 2009), 156.

⁹¹ David Ng, *His Victory is Ours: A Spiritual Warfare Guide* (NC: Barnes Printing, 2025), 171.

⁹² Michael Shermer, “Turn Me On, Dead Man,” *Scientific American*, May, 2005. Accessed November 4, 2025 <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/turn-me-on-dead-man/>.

⁹³ Ng, *His Victory*, 171.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Lilian Doukhan, *In Tune With God* (MD: Autumn House, 2015), 5.

In addition to an underlying pagan worldview, the narratives of spellcasting satanists infecting albums with demons and hidden messages are problematic. They are pulled directly from fraudulent sources. They also boldly label fellow Christians as being worshippers of demons, forgetting that Jesus warns that such actions could cost us our salvation.⁹⁷

Discussion

The relatively little attention Adventists have paid to deliverance and demonology has resulted in a dangerous discourse. Left with no church resources, Adventists confronting the powers of darkness drew on charismatic theologies that walk a fine line between scripture, sensationalism, and animism. These charismatic sources stress charismatic gifts, such as the discerning of spirits (1 Cor. 12:10), which Adventist deliverance also emphasizes over formal education, to establish authority. Additionally, concepts such as "objects of power," popularized by John Wimber, Peter C. Wagner, and Charles Kraft,⁹⁸ promote the idea that demons reside in inanimate objects, which also blended with narratives during the satanic panic.

These frameworks intersect with Adventist missiologists label the "witchcraft" mentality. Bruce Bauer notes a "witchcraft mentality" among Africans that "blames misfortune...and almost every kind of problem of witchcraft"⁹⁹ Christopher R. Mwashnga notes "the fear of witchcraft accusations occupy the minds of many people most of the time."¹⁰⁰ Mensah Adinkrah highlights how "conversion to Christianity does not necessarily mean the complete abandonment of traditional believers" such as "animism, ancestor veneration, witchcraft, ghosts, and other supernatural forces."¹⁰¹ What's more, missionary preaching may exacerbate these beliefs.

An analysis of Christian broadcasting, found that "the menace of witchcraft is a central theme" of sermons that inadvertently "affirm the public's palpable fear of witchcraft."¹⁰² These sermons focus on conspiratorial narratives of witches and Satanists."¹⁰³ The recent ethnographic work of Matthew Gmalifo highlights how witchcraft has increased among some people groups due to the spread of Christianity.¹⁰⁴

Norman Miller, one of America's early African specialists, recounts conversations about the work of missionaries. Miller notes how fundamentalists "see sin and Satan everywhere if a

⁹⁷ Mark 3:28-30

⁹⁸ Charles Kraft, *Christianity with Power: Experiencing the Supernatural* (Marshall Pickering, 1989), 131-132, 162.

⁹⁹ Bruce L. Bauer, "Cultural Foundations for Fear of Witchcraft in Africa," *Journal of Adventist Missions*, Vol. 13 No. 1 (2017): 9.

¹⁰⁰ Christopher R. Mwashnga, "Relationship Between Social and Economic Status and Witchcraft in Africa" *Journal of Adventist Missions*, Vol. No. 1, (2017): 32.

¹⁰¹ Mensah Adinkrah, *Witchcraft, Witches, and Violence in Ghana* (NY: Berghahn Books, 2015), 46.

¹⁰² Mensah, *Witchcraft*, 20.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Matthew Gmalifo, *Witch Camps and Witchcraft Discourse in Africa: Critiquing Development Practices* (MD: Lexington Books, 2023), 64.

witchcraft case arises.”¹⁰⁵ He criticizes missionary preaching that replaces witchcraft with a “Christian spirit world.”¹⁰⁶ While not theologically nuanced, he highlights the possible syncretism of animist and Christian beliefs that reinforce witchcraft and demonization.

It is also noteworthy that satanic panic narratives tend to come from Western sources in the form of testimonies. Karen Swallow Prior notes that, “Evangelicals love a good conversion story. The more dramatic, the better. The starker the difference between ‘before’ and ‘after,’ the more often the story will be retold.”¹⁰⁷ In a desire to promote missions, and increase views, major ministries such as 3ABN and *It Is Written*, broadcast these testimonies, often endorsed by well-known pastors, or religion faculty and staff from our universities.

The incorporation of satanic panic tropes functions may function as a type of ostension. This term, taken from folklore studies, refers to “stories manifesting into action.”¹⁰⁸ In this framework people “misinterpret events in terms of an existing legend.”¹⁰⁹ Horror films, legends, hoaxes, and panics become the interpretive lens by which phenomena are interpreted. Adventist deliverance preaching seems to recycle satanic panic tropes via testimonies which creates a mythos rooted in misinformation that could lead to abuse and trauma.

Conclusion

This study explored the haunting influence of satanic panic tropes on Adventist deliverance ministries. By perpetuating debunked narratives, Adventists not only bear false witness, but they spread narratives linked to fear and violence with the potential to re-traumatize people with moral panic. Ignoring popular discourse about demonology and deliverance, particularly at a time when Charismatics have brought spiritual warfare into American politics, is detrimental to an Adventist worldview.

Adventists can affirm the spiritual realities of *The Great Controversy* without resorting to urban legends, moral panic, and sensationalism. Adventists can create ethical standards and expectations for sharing the Three Angels Message instead of allowing the message to be possessed by spirits of ignorance and a desire to grow at any cost. We can also celebrate conversions while exercising more caution on sensational elements. In sum, Adventists can fulfill the fundamental belief of *Growing in Christ*—by moving beyond the panic that haunts believers, leaving them as frightened children stranded in spiritual Never Neverland.

¹⁰⁵ Norman Miller, *Encounters with Witchcraft: Field Notes from Africa* (State University of New York Press, 2012), 25.

¹⁰⁶ Miller, *Encounters*, 146.

¹⁰⁷ Karen Swallow Prior, *The Evangelical Imagination: How Stories, Images, and Metaphors Created a Culture in Crisis* (MI: Baker Academic, 2023), 59, epub.

¹⁰⁸ Laycock, *Exorcist*, 35.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 36.