Satanism in Sweden

Henrik Bogdan

Satanists and Satanic Organisations in Sweden

Although it is likely that a number of Swedes during the 1970s and 1980s took an interest in Satanism, and a few perhaps even joined foreign organisations such as the Church of Satan, it is during the first half of the 1990s that Satanism enters the Swedish religious landscape in earnest (Bogdan 2008). As in the other Nordic countries, organised Satanism in Sweden can be divided into two main categories: (1) groups inspired by or directly linked to “mainstream Satanism”, in particular the LaVeyan brand as codified by The Satanic Bible and institutionalised as the Church of Satan, and (2) groups that have evolved from the Scandinavian Black Metal scene. It should be noted, however, that organised Satanism has always been a small phenomenon in Sweden, even during its heydays in the 1990s. The majority of the Swedish Satanists appear to have been individuals who did not belong to any satanic group or organisation, and who thus can be labelled as “solitary Satanists”. The majority of these solitary Satanists got in contact with Satanism through either the Internet or by reading The Satanic Bible, which was translated into Swedish in 1995 by Carl Abrahamsson, and published with the title Den sataniska bibeln (Stockholm: Looking Glass Press). Although Abrahamsson during the early 1990s was often considered to be a high ranking member of The Church of Satan and a personal friend of Anton LaVey, there has never been an official Swedish section of the CoS.

The Temple of Set, on the contrary, has had a more formal presence in Sweden with a so-called pylon (i.e., a local section) in Uppsala with the name Black Rûna Pylon. This section was according to their website (now defunct) founded in 1997, and the first Swedish member joined the ToS in 1993. The Swedish members appear to have had close contact with the Finnish section at the time, the Kalevala Pylon, founded in 1991. The ToS only appears to have operated for a few years in Sweden, however, and it does not seem to have any formal presence in Sweden at the time of writing, although it still has a few solitary Swedish members. It is debatable, however, whether the Temple of Set should be considered as belonging to the Satanic milieu despite of strong
historical links between the CoS and ToS. In 1975 a number of high-ranking members of CoS left the organisation and founded the ToS, under the leadership of Michael A. Aquino. The ToS differed primarily in how Satan, identified as the ancient Egyptian god Set, was interpreted. In contrast to the “rationalist” form of Satanism encountered in the writings of LaVey and the CoS, Aquino’s understanding of Set/Satan is theistic, and Satan is thus worshiped as a deity rather than a symbol. ToS has distanced itself over the years from its origins in Satanism, and the members today usually refer to themselves as Setians rather than as Satanists.

Of the Swedish satanic organisations it is in particular Svenska Satanistkyrkan (The Swedish Satanist Church) and Misantropiska Lucifer Orden (The Misanthropic Luciferian Church) that stand out, both in terms of the attention they have received in the media and in terms of their organisational efforts. Svenska Satanistkyrkan (SSK) was founded in Uddevalla in 1996 by Tommy Eriksson, and according to their journal Anti-Krist (2000) the church merged with another existing organisation, The Satanic Order, in 1998, and for a number of years both names were used by the organisation. It had at one stage two local sections, the Muspelheim lodge in Uddevala, and the Nexion lodge in Malmö. In addition to these sections, it maintained for a number of years an Internet-based bookstore called Belial Center in Uddevalla, which sold esoteric and satanic literature, specialising in books by Anton LaVey. The form of Satanism that Svenska Satanistkyrkan represented was heavily coloured by LaVey’s atheist and rationalist Satanism, although they emphasised that they did not want to limit their understanding of the satanic view of life and philosophy to that of LaVey. In an interview with Tommy Eriksson, published in the first issue of Anti-Krist (1999), Eriksson explained how he interpreted Satan, in terms akin to those of LaVey: ‘He represents the eternally burning life-force. I see Satan more as a symbol that motivates my will-power and energy towards a specific goal, rather than as the Christian version of Satan as a physical entity’. The Church emphatically stressed that it did not have any formal ties to other satanic organisations, such as the Church of Satan. With the waning interest in Satanism during the first years of the twenty-first century the Svenska Satanistkyrkan gradually appears to have ceased its activities, and at the time of writing seems to have closed down.

Misantropiska Lucifer Orden (MLO) was founded in the mid-1990s in Gothenburg, and it received a lot of attention from the media in connection with a homicide on Ramberget in Gothenburg in 1997. Two leading members of the organisation, “Vlad” and Jon Nödtveidt, shot and killed the Algerian Josef Ben Meddaour, whom they believed to be homosexual. Nödtveidt, who was also a member of the Death/Black Metal band Dissection, would later commit