

The Strange Case of Ben Kadosh: A Luciferian Pamphlet from 1906 and its Current Renaissance

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Abstract

In diesem Aufsatz wird ein früher und ziemlich unbekannter Satanist namens Ben Kadosh behandelt (Carl William Hansen 1872–1936), der in Dänemark am Anfang des 20en Jahrhunderts tätig war. Kadosh hat in der Gründung mehreren Freimauerlogen teilgenommen und stand mit einer Reihe von wohlbekannten esoterischen und literarischen Persönlichkeiten in Verbindung. Als sein System eine eklektische Mischung darstellte, wo der griechische Gott Pan beispielsweise mit Gnostizismus, Freimauermystizismus und Lobpreisungen von Luzifer verbunden wird, können verschiedene mögliche Influenzen auf seine Lehre angeführt werden. Es ist ganz unwahrscheinlich, daß Kadosh in seiner Zeit mehrere Anhänger gewonnen hat. Heutzutage sind aber seine Ideen von einer Gruppe rehabilitiert worden, die hauptsätzlich in Dänemark und Schweden aktiv ist. Wichtiger für die Anhänger dieser Gruppe erscheint die Verwendung von Kadosh als ein Werkzeug um ihre eigene Wirksamkeit Legitimität und historische Wurzeln zu geben, als für die eigentliche Fortsetzung seiner Gedanken zu sorgen.

Keywords

Satanism; Luciferianism; Denmark; Lucifer; Pan; Gnosticism

It is often claimed there were no systematic attempts at creating a satanic ideology before Anton LaVey founded the Church of Satan in 1966. However, several such examples can in fact be found, as I have shown in my book *Mörkrets apostlar* (2006).

Here I will focus on one of these pioneering early Satanists, the undoubtedly obscure and marginal Danish dairy salesman, alchemist and Luciferian freemason Ben Kadosh, whose real name was Carl William Hansen (1872–1936). I will also discuss how the teachings of Kadosh have undergone a somewhat unexpected renaissance in the satanic milieu of today.

1. A Luciferian Pamphlet

Kadosh was born in Copenhagen in 1872, and came from a poor working-class background. His mother started receiving welfare checks when her son was nine years old, and was continuously on welfare from 1898 until her death in 1917. For her funeral, the state paid the burial fee of 30 Danish crowns. All the same, her son apparently managed to acquire a certain level of education and in his late twenties secured a job as a bookkeeper.¹ A few years later, he was initiated in the esoteric group *L'Ordre Martiniste*, the first of a vast number of such societies he would join in his life.²

In 1906, Kadosh published the pamphlet *Den ny morgens gry: verdensbygmesterens genkomst* (“The Dawn of a New Morning: The Return of the World’s Master Builder”). This unstructured and highly eccentric text presents a type of Satanism that remains both original and confusing to this day. Most commentators agree that Kadosh was being deliberately obscure, one author describing his work like this: ‘It is written in a rather muddled language, and when the author in addition evidently has tried to give his words an abstruse oracular disguise, one understands that for the non-“illuminated”, i.e. the non-initiated, it is difficult to comprehend.’³ The syntax of the text is odd, to say the least, and the risk of misinterpretation thus becomes grave. Therefore, the following “exegesis” must be read with these particular difficulties in mind.

The purpose of the pamphlet is stated to be the spreading of the cult of Satan/Lucifer, ‘the recruiting of proselytes’, hopefully leading to ‘the formation

¹⁾ De tre søjler, *Ved frimurerlogen*, 7, Pedersen & Madsen, ‘Den Hellige Søn’, 3–4.

²⁾ Lomholt, *Vinkelfrimureriet*, 113–114. As Lomholt points out, it is perhaps doubtful if Kadosh received all of the initiations personally and in the cities he himself stated (Lyon, Berlin, Vienna, etc.), as it would most likely have been too expensive for him to travel so extensively. Lomholt directs several snide remarks towards Kadosh, making fun of his collection of Masonic patents and charters, and relates how he once asked Kadosh if he could acquire a Chinese Masonic patent as well, something the latter deemed not unthinkable. Nothing more was then heard of it, and Lomholt wryly comments that perhaps the language barrier hindered correspondence with the Chinese Masons. *Ibid.*, 61–62.

³⁾ ‘Den er affattet i et temmelig knudret sprog, og når hertil kommer at forfatteren bevidst har forsøgt at give sine ord en dunkel orakelmæssig forklædning, forstår man, at den for de ikke “illuminerede”, d.v.s. de ikke indviede, er vanskelig at fatte’. In the manuscript from the Masonic lodge De tre søjler, it is described as being authored in ‘an incredibly affected and partly incomprehensible language’ (‘et usandsynligt forskruet og delvis uforstaaeligt Sprog’), whilst his other pamphlet is said to be written in ‘unreadable and hopelessly incorrect language’ (‘ulaeseligt og haabløst ukorrekt Sprog’). De tre søjler, *Ved frimurerlogen*, 8, 10. All translations from Danish are my own.

of a closed circle, almost under the form of a new *esoteric* Order of Freemasons, which should be fully dedicated to a cult similar to that of the ancients'.⁴ Kadosh explains that Satan and Lucifer are 'totally alien to the Christian teaching', and have been misunderstood by exoteric Christianity since they 'both belong only to an esoteric cult and magic'. What, then, is this entity in fact? Lucifer, Kadosh lays down, 'is the "Sum"—or Ego—of the material nature, the creating Logon and Force!', and both 'personal and impersonal', 'a true physical reality, though of a semi-material nature' and 'the potency of the forces in living matter, in an individually personified form, the "Sum" of the creating nature.' Kadosh further states that 'If one is in possession of the necessary keys or knowledge', it is possible to evoke or call him forth. Those interested in these keys are encouraged to call on Kadosh personally in his home, on Hjørringgade 29.⁵

Later in the pamphlet, Kadosh quotes a long passage verbatim from Carl Kohl's book *Satan og hans kultus i vor tid* ("Satan and his cult in our time", 1902), a popularly written overview of ideas about Satan and Satanism.⁶ With reference to Kohl's description of Gnosticism, Kadosh states that his goat-god is a demiurge, the Father and Creator of this world. Then he makes a bold leap, identifying Satan with the Grand Architect Hiram from Masonic lore.⁷ Such a correspondence is certainly not traditional in the Masonic context, and is a novel invention of Kadosh's, perhaps with some inspiration from an infamous French prankster (more of which shortly). According to Masonic legend, Hiram was the master builder who erected the temple of Solomon, and was in possession of a secret word, or the secret correct pronunciation of God's name. Early Masons made a rhetorical jump and identified Hiram with God, the latter metaphorically being the "master builder" of the universe. The correspondence with Lucifer, however, is entirely unknown amongst real-life

⁴⁾ 'hverve Proselyter', 'Dannelsen af en lukket Cirkel, nærmest i Form af en ny *esoterisk* Frimurer-orden, der helt vilde hellige sig en Kultus i Lighed med de Gamles', Kadosh, *Den ny morgens gry*, 5.

⁵⁾ 'ganske uhjemlige i den kristelige Laere', 'De høre begge ene esoterisk Kultus og Magi til', 'er den materielle Naturs "Sum"—eller Jeg—den skabende Logon og Kraft!', 'personel og upersonel', 'en sand, fysisk Virkelighed, omend af halvmateriel Natur', 'Potensen af den levende Materies Kraefter i individuel, personificeret Form, den skabende Naturs "Sum"', 'Er man i Besiddelse af fornødne Nøgler eller Kundskaber', Kadosh, *Den ny morgens gry*, 4–5.

⁶⁾ Kadosh, *Den ny morgens gry*, 17, Kohl, *Satan og hans kultus*, 3–4.

⁷⁾ Kadosh, *Den ny morgens gry*, 19.

Masons.⁸ In the realm of fantasy and satire, though, it had been heard of before. There is a possibility that the idea of Satan and Hiram being connected comes from Kohl's recapitulation of the practical joker Leo Taxil's first book, one of many he wrote to make fun of Catholic gullibility, where Hiram is crowned by Satan.⁹ It is peculiar that Kadosh appears to have taken up some of Taxil's fantasies about Masonic Luciferianism, in spite of the fact that Kohl details the big scam and prank it all turned out to be.¹⁰ Another passage in Kohl's book that might have influenced Kadosh is his summary of Jules Bois' description of a Satanic temple, where a picture of Lucifer, designated "the world's builder" ("Verdensbygmesteren"), hangs above the altar. This is followed by a footnote quoting a Catholic Abbé's assertion that the Masonic Grand Architect is in fact the demiurge of the old Gnostics, Satan.¹¹

Kadosh's Lucifer is hardly a character one would recognise from any real, practised esoteric system of his time. Nor would any of the antique Gnostics have viewed the demiurge as his helping deity (but rather as an evil pseudo-God, or ignorant hinderer). The idea of a benevolent demiurge is a contradiction in terms in a Gnostic context. Most forms of Satanism that are heavily inspired by Gnostic ideas tend to regard the demiurge as identical with the Christian god, whose enemy Satan is.¹² The Lucifer-demiurge of *Den ny morgens gry* is thus an entirely original and odd figure, uniquely the creation—or rather, creative amalgamation—of the eccentric Dane.

Lucifer is portrayed by Kadosh as a sort of rebellious and "criminal" initiator, giving man access to mysteries that the Christian church has tried to keep hidden. He is, according to Kadosh, a phallic and expansive personification of energy, which is why he is the nemesis of all attempts to confine and limit.¹³ This vitalistic element links him to Eliphas Lévi's Baphomet, whom the French occultist identified with the astral light, a sort of cosmic energy that flows through the entire universe. It could also be considered part of the period's

⁸ On Hiram in the Masonic context, see Bogdan, *From Darkness to Light*, 119, 125–127.

⁹ Kohl, *Satan og hans kultus*, 32.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 35–36.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 81–82.

¹² Interestingly, a partly parallel view of Satan as a *benevolent* (if somewhat harsh) *demiurge*, can later be found in the writings of German esotericist Gregor A. Gregorius (Eugen Grosche, 1888–1964). It is unlikely, but not impossible, that Gregorius was aware of Kadosh's ideas. It would, however, appear more likely that they could have a mutual source in some obscure neo-gnostic esoteric tradition, or that they came up with these thoughts independently of one another. On Gregorius, see Faxneld, *Mörkrets apostlar*, 177–188.

¹³ Kadosh, *Den ny morgens gry*, 27.

broader interest in vitalism, which had as its basis ideas formulated by Franz Mesmer (1734–1815) and Carl Reichenbach (1788–1869). The source of all life is, according to Kadosh, Lucifer's father, 'that which language does not have any understandable pronounceable word for'. Lucifer himself is 'the expression of the unpronounceable', i.e. his father, and the Luciferian cult should be viewed as centred on 'the worship and adoration of [an] eternal, hidden, mighty or omnipotent force in nature'.¹⁴ Satan, in other words, is the vehicle of the hidden, unknowable God, and the appropriate path for man to approach this mystery beyond words. God can only be known through his vessel, Lucifer. The fact that the latter is maligned by Christianity is therefore a tragedy that Kadosh sought to undo. In another section of the text, it is emphasized that Lucifer is not the ugly creature of man's imagination, but 'in fact he is beautiful in his dark apparent obscenity'.¹⁵

2. Pan the Goat God

Before the actual text commences, there is a quotation from an Orphic Hymn, in which Pan is invoked.¹⁶ Throughout the pamphlet, Lucifer/Satan is equated with Pan, and the resurrection of the 'no longer dead' great god Pan is a key theme.¹⁷

Kadosh's description of Pan has characteristics—for instance, wings on his back—which clearly signal that this is not simply the Greek god Pan, but a mixture of this deity and the Devil of Christian lore, who also incorporates features of the Baphomet figure as conceived by Eliphas Lévi.¹⁸

Equating Pan with Satan is nothing new. The Greek shepherd god, being half man and half goat, is often considered the origin of the goat-like features of the Devil in Christian iconography.¹⁹ A view of Pan as a demon can be found already in the writings of Eusebius (d. 340 CE), and in Jean Bodin's famous *De la démonomanie des sorciers* ("On the Demon-Mania of Witches", 1580) he is named prince of the so-called *incubi*, male sexual demons. Henry More, in his

¹⁴ 'den som Sproget ikke ejer noget forstaedigt udtaleligt Ord for', 'det uudtaleliges Udt-ryk', 'Dyrkelsen og Tilbedelsen af evig, forborgen, maegtig eller alt formaaende Naturkraft', *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁵ 'i Virkeligheden er han skøn i sin mørke tilsyneladende Obskønitet', *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9, *passim*.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 14. On Lévi's Baphomet, see Faxneld, *Mörkrets apostlar*, 103–107.

¹⁹ Russell, *The Devil*, 125–126.

Praeexistence of the Soul (ca. 1647), connected Pan to the goat-like Devil who presides over the witches' sabbath.²⁰ Pan is identified with Satan also in Jules Michelet's *La Sorcière* ("The Witch", 1862) and Stanislaw Przybyszewski's *Die Synagoge Satans* ("The Synagogue of Satan", published as a series of magazine articles in 1897, collected as a book in 1900), both of which Kadosh may very well have read.²¹ Eliphas Lévi in turn claimed that the goat god worshipped by the citizens of the Egyptian city of Mendes, according to the account of Herodotus (who himself stated that this god was equated by the locals with the god Pan of his own country), was in fact the mysterious Baphomet supposedly adored by the Knights Templar. A connection between Pan and Baphomet was thus established.²²

The figure of Pan was immensely popular as a motif in poetry and prose around the time when *Den ny morgens gry* was written, especially in Great Britain and the USA. Keats and Shelley had written about him back in their day, and around the turn of the century Swinburne (in three of his late poems) and Wilde were hymning him. Occultists like Aleister Crowley were also writing Pan-poems, and practised an actual cult of Pan.²³ In short, Kadosh's passion for Pan was something fairly typical for his time.

Through an antique misunderstanding of the etymology of the word Pan, the god's name was understood to be derived from the Greek word for "all", and thus Pan came to be perceived as the soul of the world.²⁴ Such a view lived on past antiquity, and clearly influenced Kadosh. There was an ample literary heritage concerning Pan available to him, and he was probably familiar with texts like Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817), where he speaks of Pan as a mysterious god representing 'intelligence blended with a darker power, deeper, mightier, and more universal than the conscious intellect of man',²⁵ a phrasing strikingly similar to some that can be found in Kadosh's text.

²⁰) Merivale, *Pan the Goat-God*, 13–14, 27–31, 163, 238, 246. Rudwin, *The Devil in Legend and Literature*, 79.

²¹) Michelet, *Häxan*, 127–128, 236. Przybyszewski, *Die Synagoge Satans*, 32–33. Kadosh peppered *Den ny morgens gry* with expressions in French and German (sometimes misspelled and with bad grammar), so it appears he may have been able to read these languages. *La Sorcière* was also available in an English translation.

²²) Faxneld, *Mörkrets apostlar*, 105–106.

²³) Merivale, *Pan the Goat-God*, vii–viii, 118. On Crowley and Pan, *Ibid.*, 122–123, 133, 266.

²⁴) *Ibid.*, 9–11.

²⁵) Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 117.

3. Literary Friends and a Sinister Reputation

What sort of a man, then, was this Satanic innovator? Perhaps the richest source of information regarding Kadosh as a person is a lengthy memorial article by a friend of his, the writer Aage Welblund, published in the Danish newspaper *Socialdemokraten* in 1946. Here we can read about how Kadosh tried to persuade the Danish section of The Society for Psychical Research to assist him in summoning a salamander (fire elemental), as well as a delineation of the many interesting personal contacts Kadosh had.

One of his acquaintances by correspondence was the Swedish author August Strindberg (1849–1912). Unfortunately, the letters they exchanged have all been lost, but there is documentation of their discussions in other letters Strindberg wrote. In a letter addressed to Kadosh's esoteric mentor, the Finnish nobleman August Walleen-Borneman, Strindberg complains that the secrecy surrounding Kadosh's pleading for monetary assistance for his gold making smacks of humbug and charlatanism.²⁶ The main point of disagreement between Strindberg and Kadosh would seem to be the latter's insistence on keeping alchemy firmly grounded in classic esoteric-mystical speculation, whereas the Swede propagated a gold-making process entirely based on methods gleaned from contemporary natural science. On the last page of his pamphlet, Kadosh explains that the alchemical gold is in fact Lucifer, or is at the very least closely tied to him.²⁷ Therefore, the alchemical striving to create gold must in Kadosh's mind have been the equivalent of struggling towards or evoking Lucifer, or embarking on a Luciferian quest for Satanic enlightenment. Such a view of things was naturally far removed from that of Strindberg.²⁸

Kadosh does not appear to have received any money from Strindberg, but a Danish nobleman in deep monetary trouble, grasping for straws, financed his experiments for a while, and let him use a huge oven in the basement of his estate suitable for such proceedings. When the hoped-for results failed to appear, the alchemist was kicked out. According to him, this happened right on

²⁶ Strindberg, *Brev*, 185.

²⁷ Kadosh writes, among other things, that Lucifer is the “original principle” (“Urprincip”) of gold. Kadosh, *Den ny morgens gry*, 29.

²⁸ Strindberg did show some sympathy for the Devil in the mystery play incorporated in *Mäster Olof* (1878) and *Inferno* (1897), and actually stated at one point that he used to be a Satanist, but his alchemical practice bears no mark of these ideas. On Strindberg and Satanism, see Faxneld, *Mörkrets apostlar*, 134–140.

the brink of a major break-through that would have solved the age-old riddle.²⁹ Even so, whether or not this would have resulted in anything that would have helped his financer to pay off his debts is another matter.

Another famous author Kadosh corresponded with was the Austrian Gustav Meyrink (1868–1932), whose novel *Der Golem* (1914) remains a classic of Gothic and fantastic fiction. Sadly, none of these letters are preserved either. Authors were not the only celebrities Kadosh came into contact with. When Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925)—the founder of Anthroposophy—visited Copenhagen, Kadosh paid a visit to his hotel room to discuss esoteric matters. Steiner is supposed to later have said that ‘surrounding Kadosh’s person there was an aura, that fully revealed that he was in communication with the powers of darkness’.³⁰ Sinister stories also circulated about Kadosh being able to magically attack his enemies regardless of distance, and it would seem he himself did nothing to quench these rumours, since he actually rather enjoyed them. Welblund confirms there was indeed a dark streak in Kadosh’s personality:

Something demonic could occasionally come over his person and especially showed itself in his oral laying out of people’s horoscopes, where he revealed a very sharp eye for people’s weak sides, which perhaps was connected to his predilection for the dark and disharmonic side of things.³¹

Further such dark streaks appear in another source, in a passing mention of “psychic experiments” performed by Kadosh, where the intervention of other parties was necessary to avoid a murder and a suicide.³² Kadosh was somewhat infamous in his own time, due to his pamphlet, the many rumours about him, and writings like Carl Kohl’s article in a daily newspaper, entitled ‘Er der satanister i København?’ (“Are there Satanists in Copenhagen?”). Welblund quotes from the article, where we can learn how a Luciferian celebrates Christmas:

²⁹⁾ Welblund, ‘Den sidste guldmager og kabbalist’.

³⁰⁾ ‘omkring Kadosh person stod en aura, der til fulde afslørede at han havde forbindelse med mørkets magter’, *Ibid.*

³¹⁾ ‘Noget demonisk kunne lejlighedsvis komme over hans person og kom i særlig grad frem i hans mundtlige udlægninger af folks horoskoper, hvor han afslørede et meget skarpt blik for menneskers svage sider, hvad der måske hang sammen med hans forkærlighed for tingenes mørke og disharmoniske side’, *Ibid.*

³²⁾ De tre søjler, *Ved frimurerlogen*, 9.

I can certify that there are also those here at home, who in the deepest earnestness have summoned and conjured, and who believe to have seen and worshipped, the Church's Satan, Baphomet, who is the black god of Kabbalah. While I write these lines I have before me a letter from a Danish Satanist and in it I read amongst others the following lines: 'While Europe celebrates Christmas for the "white Christ", I celebrate it as a feast for the highest one, the buck's head ... I celebrate it as a feast for Baphomet, the hidden divinity, whom I worship and worship again'.³³

Such Christmas-time celebrations of Baphomet would have been conducted in a rather prosaic home environment (if they took place in the family home, that is). Kadosh's wife ran a small dairy store in the house where they lived, earning the family's upkeep. Her husband devoted his time to occult activities and chemical experiments of a secular nature. In the kitchen of their small apartment he tried, unsuccessfully, to manufacture, for instance, colour bands for typewriters.³⁴

Kadosh was unrelenting and firm in his convictions: In a national census of 1906, he stated his religious affiliation to be "Luciferian". The rest of his family, his wife and two children, answered "Lutheran" to this question.³⁵ In 1928, Kadosh issued another pamphlet, *Rosea-Crucis: Rosen-Korset: Ars-Sapiens-Philosophia-Vita* ("Rosea-Crucis: The Rose Cross: Art-Thinking-Philosophy-Life"), stating the author simply as "én Frater" ("a brother"). Here there are no Satanic references, and the imagery is instead Christian for the most part. The wording regarding God—for instance the exhortation to 'direct

³³) 'At der også findes dem herhjemme, der I deres sjæls dybeste alvor har påkaldt og besværget, og som tror at have set og tilbedt den kirkens Satan, Baphomet, der er kabbala's sorte gud det kan jeg bevidne. Mens jeg skriver disse linjer har jeg foran mig liggende et brev til mig fra en dansk Satanist og deri læser jeg bl a følgende linjer: "Mens Europa fejre julen for den "hvide Crist", fejer jeg den som en højtid for den højeste ene, bukkehovedet Jeg højtideligholder julen som en fest for Baphomet, den formummede guddom, som jeg tilbeder og etter tilbeder".' Welblund, 'Den sidste guldmager og kabbalist'.

³⁴) De tre søjler, *Ved frimurerlogen*, 7–8.

³⁵) Folketællingen 1906. Available online at: <http://www.arkivalieronline.dk/Folketaelling/default.aspx>

The archival background material on Kadosh was originally unearthed by Peder Byberg Madsen and Bjarne Salling Pedersen, and is thus not my own discovery. I wish to thank Madsen and Pedersen for generously sharing photocopies of archival materials. Their findings are presented in their introduction to the 2006 edition of *Den ny morgens gry* (Pedersen & Madsen, 'Den Hellige Søn'). However, some slight inaccuracies can be found there; for instance they state (pp. 8–9) that the national census where Kadosh stated that he was a "Luciferian" took place in 1921, the correct year in fact being 1906 (as I found out when I checked the records myself).

the flame within you towards God³⁶—is non-specific enough to be interpreted as referring to the master builder Lucifer of the previous pamphlet. And indeed this last published writing ends with the Latin words ‘Per tenebres ad lumen!’ (“Through darkness towards light!”),³⁷ which tie in nicely with his older ideas about the dark entity Satan as a way to reach the true God.

4. Kadosh and Organized Esotericism

In William Hartmann’s *Who’s Who in Occultism, New Thought, Psychism and Spiritualism* (1927), Kadosh is listed as:

Chemist, Author, Kabbalist, Astrologer, Patriarch and Primas, Naassenic Gnostic Synode (Scandinavia), Grand Master General, Grand Orient of Denmark, President Alchemical Society of Denmark; General Delegate and Hon. Member, Società Alchemica Italiana; President, Kabbalistic Order (Denmark); Grand Master and General Delegate, Martinist Order, etc., etc.³⁸

It is interesting to note that Kadosh was also a member of Theodor Reuss’ O.T.O. (Ordo Templi Orientis), before the position as O.H.O. (Outer Head of the Order) was taken over by Aleister Crowley, and he eventually became its leader in Denmark. Neither under his leadership nor under his successor did it however become Crowleyan.³⁹

Unfortunately, it is difficult to find detailed documentation concerning the practical consequences of Kadosh’s involvement with the O.T.O. and the groups mentioned in Hartmann’s book, but it is decidedly something worth pursuing in further Kadosh scholarship. For the time being, this aspect of his activities remains more or less veiled in obscurity due to a lack of available source material. It does not appear unlikely, however, that further archival investigations will sooner or later yield more correspondence or other relevant materials pertaining to the matter. At the moment, we shall have to make do with ascertaining that he was well-connected in the esoteric milieu of his time, and had many international contacts. A detailed comparison, discussing a possible influence on Kadosh from ideas propagated in these orders is beyond

³⁶) ‘ret Flammen indenfor Dig mod Gud’. “en Frater”, *Rosea-Crucis*, 13.

³⁷) “en Frater”, *Rosea-Crucis*, 17.

³⁸) Hartmann, *Who’s Who in Occultism*, 62. There is also a separate listing for “The Naassenic (Ophitic) Gnostic Synode”, whose Patriarch & Primas is Kadosh, *Ibid.*, 91.

³⁹) <http://user.cyberlink.ch/~koenig/sunrise/hansen.htm>

the scope of the present article, but also something that ought to be treated in future scholarship.

There is no direct indication that any of the many other orders Kadosh was involved with had Luciferian leanings, except perhaps for the Naasenic Gnostic Synod. The antique Naasene Gnostics considered, if we are to believe the descriptions we have of them, the serpent in the Garden of Eden a messenger of the true god, sent to help mankind break free from the illusions and lies of the demiurge. In other words, they had a positive view of a Biblical figure considered by mainstream Christian tradition to be the Devil. Since the Neo-Gnostic group that Kadosh led as “Patriarch & Primas” took their inspiration from the Naasenes it is not a wild assumption that there might have existed certain receptivity in this context for his Luciferian ideas. However, how many members Kadosh’s group had is not known, and it may very well have been a minuscule synod consisting of one or two persons, with no actual “church” to rule over (the term synod usually denotes the ruling body of a church). A manuscript from one of Kadosh’s Masonic lodges states, in a passage regarding the Luciferian pamphlet, that ‘His goal was to establish a Luciferian-Gnostic “congregation” with himself as “patriarch”, but he naturally never managed to.’⁴⁰

There is a slight possibility that this statement may not be entirely true, if we consider the small occult circle (“et slags okkult broderskap”) Kadosh launched together with two other men: the Swedish shoemaker N.A. Wessmann, who was attempting to build a *perpetuum mobile*, and the student of astrology Vilhelm Jespersen. They were later joined by the illustrator Niels Wivel (1855–1914), famed for his humorous drawings.⁴¹ Whether or not this little group were heeding the call from *Den ny morgens gry*, to create a Luciferian ‘closed circle, almost under the form of a new *esoteric* Order of Freemasons’,⁴² and were in effect a Satanist clique, is not possible to tell from Welblund’s account.

⁴⁰) ‘Hans Maal var at faa oprettet en luciferiansk-gnostisk “Menighed” med sig selv som “Patriark”, men det lykkedes ham naturligvis aldrig.’ De tre søjler, *Ved frimurerlogen*, 8. It appears he might occasionally have tried to sneak some Luciferian elements into the more conventional Masonic groups, like when he was allowed to invoke the high Demiurge (“Høje Demiurg”)—in Kadosh’s worldview of course meaning Lucifer—at an opening and closing of the lodge De tre søjler in 1926. *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴¹) Welblund, ‘Den sidste guldmager og kabbalist’. See also De tre søjler, *Ved frimurerlogen*, 9.

⁴²) ‘lukket Cirkel, nærmest i Form af en ny *esoterisk* Frimurer-Orden’, Kadosh, *Den ny morgens gry*, 5.

During the 1920s, Kadosh was also involved in the founding of a number of Masonic lodges and orders in Copenhagen, none of them Luciferian as far as we know.⁴³ In December 1930 he was, due to his continued peddling of irregular Masonic charters, expelled from several of them.⁴⁴ The following year he wrote a letter, in dubious English, to Harvey Spencer Lewis (1883–1939), the founder of the Rosicrucian order A.M.O.R.C., proclaiming: 'I am no more interested in great Orders & Societies, and no more I am fascinated by the many Seals and more.'⁴⁵ He mentions his early schooling in the French occultism of Papus, Stanislas de Guaita, Jean Bricaud, et al, but concludes that he is now 'only Rosicrucian, Astrolog, Alchemist and high learned semitic Cabaliste.' Somewhat despondently, he then remarks: 'yes, many titles, charges and patents I have (but only: few penni in the purse.)'.⁴⁶ The tragic dimension is also emphasized in a description of his life, written by a Masonic brother, as being rich when it came to fantasy, but poor in material goods and (non-imaginary) friends.⁴⁷

5. Kadosh as a Character in Literary Works

Not only did Kadosh correspond with famous authors in other countries, he also got portrayed several times in literary works by his countrymen. He first appeared in J.I. Kronstrøm's novel *Den gyldne kunst* ("The Golden Art", 1918), and then in J. Anker Larsen's *De vises sten* ("The Philosopher's Stone", 1923).

One of Denmark's most famous authors, Hans Scherfig (1905–1979),⁴⁸ immortalized Kadosh by depicting him in his two novels *Idealister* ("Idealists",

⁴³⁾ Lomholt, *Vinkelfrimureriet*, 113–122, 174–176, 275. Lomholt's hostile retelling of events should perhaps be taken *cum grano salis*, but even if Kadosh would appear to have been a sincere mystic in many respects, there is also doubtless some truth to Lomholt's description of him as an opportunistic peddler of irregular Masonic patents. On Lomholt's vitriolic attacks on (according to him) irregular Masonic groups in Denmark, launched mainly through the evening press, and the eventual outcome of his actions, see *De tre søjler, Ved frimurerlogen*, 20.

⁴⁴⁾ Circular letter addressed to all Danish Masonic lodges, 1930. Kept in the archives of Frimurerlauget, Smallegade, Copenhagen. I wish to thank Peder Byberg Madsen for sharing this document with me.

⁴⁵⁾ Quoted in Clymer, *The Rosicrucian Fraternity in America*, Vol. II, 346. Clymer's italics removed from the quote.

⁴⁶⁾ *Ibid.*, 347.

⁴⁷⁾ *De tre søjler, Ved frimurerlogen*, 9.

⁴⁸⁾ According to the blurb on the cover of the Swedish edition of *Frydenholm*, he is even the best-selling Danish author of all time.

1944) and *Frydenholm* (1962). In *Idealister* we can read about how Kadosh gets carried away by his esoteric rituals, conducted in an attic room above the family's dairy store, wildly swinging a little sword made out of cardboard and wearing a hat fashioned from an old margarine container, decorated with pentagrams and magical characters. His loud incantations sometimes disturb the customers who come to buy dairy products, and his wife tries to persuade him to calm himself—but to no avail, as her husband keeps struggling with the invisible powers and swinging his cardboard sword, which he pompously refers to as “Shibulah”.⁴⁹

Welblund states that much of the novel's depiction of Kadosh is based on real facts, but of course it is after all a literary text first and foremost. This goes for the portrayals by Kronstrøm and Larsen as well. The portraits have all the same become part of the legend surrounding Kadosh, and he emerges as such an uncommonly ridiculous guru that you would think it unlikely anyone would want to revere him as his or her esoteric master.

6. A Luciferian Renaissance

Reading Kadosh's pamphlets further strengthens the impression that this person was, to put it bluntly, a somewhat laughable eccentric. His writing style is decidedly obscure and incompetent, the ideas bizarre (or very original, depending on your point of view) and his way of reasoning often difficult to follow (or very mystical and profound, again depending on your perspective). A number of people in our own time have chosen to adopt the positive stance in this question, and a small group of esotericists—Michael Bertiau and Bjarne Salling Pedersen, with assistance from I.M. Berg—formed The Neo-Luciferian Church (hereafter the NLC) on Candlemass 2005. On the NLC website, it is stated that in certain circles there had been a wish ever since the 1970s ‘to re-establish a Danish Luciferian Church and carry on the magical current from Carl William Hansen’.⁵⁰ Bertiau is an author who is well-known in the Thelemic and left-hand-path sections of today's esoteric milieu, and who is head of a staggering number of interrelated organizations (not entirely unlike Kadosh, in this respect). There are Luciferian elements to be found in his teachings, and some of these may have their origins in the nineteenth-century

⁴⁹) Scherfig, *Idealister*, 172–177. In *Idealister*, Kadosh is one of the main characters. In *Frydenholm*, on the other hand, Kadosh's appearance is limited to a single page. Scherfig, *Frydenholm*, 361.

⁵⁰) <http://www.neoluciferianchurch.org/church/church.html>

context from which Kadosh's ideas sprung forth.⁵¹ However, the highly complex system presented in Bertiaux's writings, where Voodoo is blended with Thelema, Martinism and many other traditions, falls outside of the scope of this article.

One of the NLC founders, Pedersen, had earlier translated *Den ny morgengry* into English, and the text was published in Swedish Satanist Carl Abramsson's journal *The Fenris Wolf* in 1993.⁵² This was the first translation of it, and as we have seen, it is safe to assume Kadosh's Luciferian teachings did not gain many followers during his own lifetime. Even now, things appear not to have gotten off to a flying start immediately back in 1993. But Kadosh's name did start to become better known, especially among Scandinavian esotericists. Thus, the ground was to some extent prepared for starting an organisation based on his creed. In 2006 a new Danish-language edition of *Den ny morgengry* was published, and a Swedish translation is presently in preparation. The NLC has managed to attract a handful of members in Denmark since it first started, and recently a Swedish congregation was established as well. In total, the number of members is around 12–20. Membership is by invitation only, and most members are people in their 30s and 40s, typically with an education in the humanities at university level.⁵³

It is interesting to note how strong the cult of Kadosh's person appears to be, and also how this necessitates an ironical approach from his followers—he is after all a rather ludicrous character.⁵⁴ The Church sells coffee mugs and notebooks with a photo of Kadosh on them, stating that the first of these

⁵¹) Lewis, *Satanism Today*, 179–180. Bertiaux is a fascinating and original (some would say bizarre) writer, who is yet to receive any real scholarly attention. Lewis' brief mention of him is one of very few in scholarly literature.

⁵²) Fr. GCLO, 'Lucifer-Hiram', 72–97.

⁵³) E-mail to the author from Bjarne Salling Pedersen, 2009-10-25. Rev. Prophragege estimates the number of members to be around 10–15. (E-mail to the author from Rev. Prophragege, 2009-10-24).

⁵⁴) This is the impression one gets when perusing the material, though it is worth noting that Pedersen, when I asked him what role Kadosh plays, answered: 'Kadosh plays no role as a special "saint" or anything similar. We're equally inspired by such people as Herman Hesse, Bulwer-Lytton, Aleister Crowley or Eliphas Levi + dozens more.' (E-mail to the author from Bjarne Salling Pedersen, 2009-10-25) Another member, Rev. Prophragege, answered: 'He is seen as one of our "fathers" and respected as a founder, albeit more in spirit/ideology than in actual succession.' (E-mail to the author from Rev. Prophragege, 2009-10-24). It may seem inappropriate for a historian of religion to label an object of study a 'ludicrous character' (even if this fact is fairly evident and uncontroversial, and he was considered so

items is intended for ‘the occult geek’.⁵⁵ Humour permeates other areas of the Church as well, and certainly not every Satanic order would have a quote (from one of the members) like ‘Come join the dark side/we’ve got cookies’ on their homepage.⁵⁶ At the same time, the NLC is paying for the upkeep of Kadosh’s grave, and seems to perceive his ideas in deadly earnest. Neither is there anything particularly humorous about their Luciferian creed, which is written in a typically bombastic Satanic style.⁵⁷

7. Strategies of Legitimation within the Neo-Luciferian Church

What, then, can be gained from having a guru who died way back in 1936? For one thing, we have to remember that Satanism as a systematic teaching cannot really be found prior to the ideas presented by Stanislaw Przybyszewski around the year 1900, and no one has yet tried to appropriate him as a prominent predecessor. Therefore, having a holy writ published as early as 1906 makes a Satanist group remarkably and uniquely grounded in tradition and history. Kadosh’s pamphlet could even reasonably be said to be the very first consistently Satanic *esoteric* text (Przybyszewski’s Satanism was of a more philosophical type).⁵⁸ Many Satanists, such as the ONA, claim to be the custodians of an ancient tradition. But in fact, none of them have solid evidence to back these claims. The NLC actually do have a canonical writing that is over 100 years old. In a way, they could thereby be said to be the “most traditional” Satanist group in the world, since they have a (relatively speaking) genuinely old Satanic teaching as their basis. However, it is not a case of an unbroken line of transmission, but rather of reviving an esoteric heritage that had lain

by many of his contemporary peers), but I do so here to make a rhetorical point: that the (obvious) tragicomical aspects of Kadosh’s person necessitate a special approach when he is appropriated by today’s esotericists.

⁵⁵ <http://www.cafepress.co.uk/nlcmarket>, where it is also possible to buy things like a ‘Satanic BBQ Apron—for the true gourmet’ (could do double duty as a Masonic apron, perhaps?), a ‘Neo-Luciferian Cap of Invisibility’ and ‘Anti-Christian Boxer Shorts—f*cking sexy’. Even if Pedersen underscores that Hesse, Crowley et al are just as important to the NLC, things like the merchandise on offer make it clear that Kadosh *does* have a special position.

⁵⁶ <http://www.neoluciferianchurch.org/members/members.html>

⁵⁷ <http://www.neoluciferianchurch.org/text/creed-english.pdf>

⁵⁸ Though there are sympathies for the Devil in the writings of Blavatsky and to some extent Lévi, neither of them develops this into a major theme. On Lévi and Blavatsky, see Faxneld, *Mörkrets apostlar*, 101–117.

dormant for a couple of generations. The oldest Satanist group, if we count age in terms of unbroken tradition, still remains the Church of Satan, founded in 1966.⁵⁹

The NLC recommends 'all members and applicants to start a general study in the Western Occult Tradition', naming authors like Eliphas Lévi, Michael Bertiau, Dion Fortune, S. MacGregor Mathers, Israel Regardie, Aleister Crowley, Francis King, Kenneth Grant and Austin Osman Spare as suitable reading.⁶⁰ Crowley in particular seems to be of great importance, since 20 of his texts can be found translated into Danish on the NLC homepage. Also, Crowley's most famous dictum ('Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. Love is the law, love under will.') is displayed on the front page of the website, which is also decorated with the Crowleyan unicursal hexagram.⁶¹ This is one of the many modifications and additions to the teachings of Kadosh that we can observe. It is obvious that he is certainly not the sole source of inspiration for his present-day heirs. This would naturally be a bit difficult, given that his writings total no more than 49 small pages (counting both pamphlets), a rather slim canon for any religion to make do with.

Somewhat surprisingly, there are few explicit references to Kadosh's writings on the homepage (the only one is in fact a quotation from *Den ny morgens gry* at the top of "The Neo-Luciferian Manifesto"),⁶² but quite a few to Aleister Crowley, as well as scattered references to the writings of authors like the Mason Albert Pike, the amateur folklorist Charles G. Leland and Eliphas Lévi. It is possible to find some parts of the actual ideology that seem to be vaguely inspired by Kadosh, though. In "The Neo-Luciferian Manifesto" the fifth item ("Lucifer is a primeval force") talks of Lucifer as 'a personified, as well as abstract, reality', echoing what Kadosh writes in his pamphlet.⁶³ In "The Neo-Luciferian Creed" (note 6) it is stated that: 'Lucifer is the deity of freedom and a natural enemy towards them that enslaves [sic] man and beast.

⁵⁹) That is, unless one would want to categorize Fraternitas Saturni as still being Satanists. It would seem, though, that they have distanced themselves from such ideas since the death of Gregor A. Gregorius, who was probably largely responsible for the strongly Satanic content of some early texts and ritual practices. *Ibid.*, 177–188.

⁶⁰) <http://www.neoluciferianchurch.org/members/members.html>

⁶¹) <http://www.neoluciferianchurch.org/text/text.html>. As mentioned, Kadosh was a member of the pre-Crowleyan O.T.O., but never became associated with the later Crowleyan version of the order.

⁶²) <http://www.neoluciferianchurch.org/manifest/nl-manifest-uk.pdf>

⁶³) <http://www.neoluciferianchurch.org/manifest/nl-manifest-uk.pdf>

Lucifer has some element of rebellion and anarchy, a kind of civil disobedience against claimed authorities.⁶⁴ This is similar to Kadosh's words about Lucifer as the opponent of those, for instance the Christian church, who want to keep people in ignorance, but it is also a phrasing of such a general nature that it does not necessarily point towards an influence from him.⁶⁵ It would therefore seem that the function of Kadosh, at least judging by the material on display for the non-initiated, is mostly as a link to history, one of many strategic tools employed to underline the authenticity, legitimacy and high age of the spiritual current represented by the NLC.

The NLC claims to be the successor to a number of different churches, some of the gnostic-magical variety and some belonging to traditional Christianity. Twenty-one such churches are listed on their homepage, among them the Vintrasian Carmelite Church, the Boullanian Carmelite Church, the Liberal Catholic Church and, surely to the surprise of some, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church. The 21 succession lines are meticulously documented on the homepage, with a detailed separate PDF document available for each of them.⁶⁶ This underscores the great importance attached within the NLC to tradition and ancient lineages as a means to create legitimacy, something that is in fact rather typical of the esoteric milieu in general.⁶⁷ It is mainly as yet another such instrument that Kadosh seems to be utilized.

⁶⁴ <http://www.neoluciferianchurch.org/text/creed-english.pdf>

⁶⁵ Pedersen is, of course, right, however, when he writes (in response to a question from me regarding to what extent the ideology of the NLC is inspired by Kadosh): 'to be looking for Kadosh in the written material of the NLC is like looking for a ghost—not least because Kadosh's work ain't exactly filled [with] plain statements suited for quotation' (E-mail to the author from Bjarne Salling Pedersen, 2009-10-25). Rev. Proprophegge answered the same question by stating that 'Kadosh's writings have influenced us I would say primarily through the luciferian ideology, which we have translated into our rites and rituals, ceremonies and consecrations. This can be seen e.g. in our statement of faith' (E-mail to the author from Rev. Proprophegge, 2009-10-24).

⁶⁶ <http://www.neoluciferianchurch.org/church/church.html>

⁶⁷ Rev. Proprophegge underscores that 'even here we have divergence among the members of the church, where some have a preference for the gnostic illumination per se and say that the lineages are of lesser value to the personal illumination, there are others that put a value in the apostolic and gnostic consecrations as means of boosting the personal illumination (a kind of initiation, or perhaps more correctly a 'consecration'), and see a value in being a link in the chain of wandering bishops in order to continue moving the light through the ages for current and future generations (a kind of "illuminator custodian" if you will)' (E-mail to the author from Rev. Proprophegge, 2009-10-24).

In his groundbreaking book *Legitimizing New Religions* (2003), the first full-length study of the topic, James R. Lewis draws on Weber and groups legitimization strategies into charismatic appeals, rational appeals and traditional appeals.⁶⁸ To some extent, Kadosh, even if he is a historical figure and long since dead, could be said to possess charisma as a visionary. Rationality is not overtly invoked by the NLC, but tradition very much is, as we have seen. Lewis does not underscore continuity as an essential element of tradition, but the NLC does seem to attach great importance to this, considering their preoccupation with succession lines. On the other hand, they freely admit to having revived a dormant tradition when they elevated Kadosh as one of their most important gurus. The comparatively (in the context of Satanism) high age of his teachings makes him important for reasons that may be, in Lewis' words, 'based on a deep pattern in the human psyche that tends to regard ancient origins as particularly sacred.'⁶⁹ Other Satanist groups have tried to bolster their teachings with references to archaic religions from ancient cultures (Egypt, Sumeria, etc). But as far as actual Satanism (understood as a religious system celebrating the Devil) goes, Ben Kadosh is as ancient as it gets.

When Anton LaVey wrote *The Satanic Bible* (1969), he constructed his legitimacy primarily by basing his religion on a rational secularist worldview underpinned by natural science, coupled with suggestions about mysterious forces that today may seem like magic, but will eventually be scientifically comprehended. In the development of the Church of Satan after LaVey's death, the focus shifted to tradition instead, and the writings of LaVey have acquired a status as quasi-scripture.⁷⁰ The NLC use Kadosh in a considerably freer manner, and no member is ever likely to bash someone over the head with a copy of *Den ny morgens gry* in a debate. But even if the NLC stress that they are undogmatic and unhierarchic, for instance describing their creed as 'a work-thesis rather than a dogmatic comprehension of reality',⁷¹ it is worth keeping in mind Olav Hammer's words that 'the construction of tradition is indeed a question of taking the right to speak authoritatively.' Hammer further explicates that when 'a spokesperson uses a discursive strategy', such as tradition, 'rather than a more formal demonstration to support the claim that his or her interpretations should be a valid grid through which others could

⁶⁸⁾ Lewis, *Legitimizing New Religions*, 13–14.

⁶⁹⁾ *Ibid.*, 80. Note that 'a pattern in the human psyche' should here be taken to mean a culturally transmitted pattern, not something inherited in a Jungian sense.

⁷⁰⁾ Lewis, *Legitimizing New Religions*, 105–106, 118–122.

⁷¹⁾ <http://www.neoluciferianchurch.org/text/creed-english.pdf>

or should interpret reality, this is an ideological maneuver.⁷² This applies even when this grid of interpretations is soft as silk and applied without much force.

In his book about the discursive strategies of the Modern Esoteric Tradition, Hammer writes about Esotericism that 'Its movement texts are engaged in the construction of a historical lineage', but goes on to demonstrate that following developments after the very first period of Blavatsky's Theosophical Society, the direct references to older generations of specific esoteric writers as predecessors have decreased somewhat in importance.⁷³ This does not hold true for the section of the contemporary esoteric milieu where figures like, for instance, Bertiaux or Kenneth Grant belong, and the latter builds much of his legitimacy on his direct links to Aleister Crowley. The NLC, firmly planted in the same section, also take a more "oldfashioned" approach. Still, tradition is by no means the only strategy of legitimization employed by the NLC. Some references, mostly vague, to the other two strategies discussed by Hammer—(narratives about) experience, appeals to rationality and science—are also present. Still, the appeal to tradition is by far the most prominent strategy visible to an outsider. Worth noting in this context are also the references to Secret Chiefs or Hidden Masters in the Neo-Luciferian creed: 'Thus, from time to time, Prophets arise on earth, claiming to have had contact with these Secret Chiefs or Hidden Masters, and with their results and success, render probable that they have had access to non-human intelligence and insight.'⁷⁴ However, a discussion of this interesting motif, well-known from Theosophy and several later groups, goes beyond the goals of the present article, which focuses specifically on the legitimization strategies related to Ben Kadosh (even if he, of course, implicitly can be assumed to be one of the prophets mentioned in the quote).

8. Conclusion

This article has shown that, contrary to what is often stated, there existed systematic attempts to formulate a Satanic teaching long before the Church of Satan was founded in 1966. It is plain, however, that such early Satanisms had extremely limited long-term influence, and clearly Ben Kadosh did not create a Satanism anywhere near as influential as LaVey's.

⁷² Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 501.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁷⁴ <http://www.neoluciferianchurch.org/text/creed-english.pdf>

As has often been the case with Satanism, authors of fiction have played an important part in nourishing and preserving the legend of Kadosh. He himself seems to have drawn on fictional accounts of Satanism, in his likely borrowings from Taxil's books. Kadosh's Satanism is, as has been demonstrated, very much a product of its time, with components lifted from vitalism, masonic lore, and the contemporary enthusiasm for Gnosticism and the Greek god Pan. The resulting conglomerate is highly idiosyncratic, obscure and difficult to grasp—even for an esoteric system. In part, this is caused by an exceptionally odd writing style.

It is surprising to note that Kadosh appears not to have been universally scorned and rejected by his peers in spite of being a fairly outspoken Satanist. This indicates an unexpected potential openness to such ideas in the esoteric milieu of his era, that suggests a greater probability that systematic Satanism may have deeper and wider historical roots than is commonly assumed.

Ultimately, as far as Kadosh is concerned, it should still be stressed that he was a local eccentric, whose ideas did not, it seems, during his lifetime spread much further than his hometown. His specifically Satanic ideas perhaps didn't attract any followers at all. But it is definitely possible to imagine there may have been others like him elsewhere around the same time. As Satanists continue to search for their historical roots, and scholars with an interest in older forms of Satanism could be said to be assisting them,⁷⁵ it appears likely that other rare specimens of the Kadosh variety will eventually be found. Hereby, unprecedented possibilities will be created for Satanists to look backwards in history for inspiration, in a more tangible way than making vague references to Satanic witch cults in the Middle Ages (that historians doubt ever existed) and secret (previously unheard of and in all likelihood imaginary) hereditary traditions, as has previously typically been the strategy of choice.

Judging from what we can observe in the case of the NLC, such more or less newly unearthed predecessors need not have an ideology that is fully suited to the needs of our time in order to be useful as a strategic tool for satanic legitimization. It is fully sufficient that they were praisers of Satan and had at least *some* ideas that are deemed appropriate.

⁷⁵⁾ I have spoken to several Satanists who had never heard of Kadosh before they read about him in my book *Mörkrets apostlar*, but who were now very enthusiastic about his work. Scholars should not underestimate the impact their writings may potentially have on the religious groups they are studying (in this case, though, the impact is most likely marginal, but it still strikes me as both somewhat amusing and potentially problematic).

As Lewis' study of the Church of Satan after the demise of LaVey shows, tradition provides legitimacy in the Satanic milieu just like in most other contexts. Such legitimization strategies are always closely bound up with issues of power, even in the case of a nonhierarchical and undogmatic group like the NLC. This should not be misconstrued as a claim that this group's leadership is exceedingly hungry for power and wants to gain uncritical followers bowing to their word. Rather, an appeal to tradition is a completely natural part of an emerging religious group's endeavours to establish the legitimacy needed to solidify their position and emphasize what makes them (more) valid and worthwhile in comparison to their competitors in the field.

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