
Book Review

In defense of children

by Carol White

On Trial: America's Courts and Their Treatment of Sexually Abused Children

by Billie Wright Dziech and Judge Charles R. Schudson

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227 pages, hardbound, \$24.95.

One fail-safe metric of the survival potential of a society is its treatment of children. Today children are almost an endangered species. From the time of conception on, their worth is systematically devalued.

On Trial mounts a vigorous advocacy on behalf of abused children. Its focus is the virtual impossibility under prevailing judicial practice, to bring a perpetrator to justice. The authors document how the U.S. court system contrives to prevent prosecution of even the most blatant child abusers, by making demands upon the child witnesses which are almost impossible for them to satisfy.

The book is a sober account of how the judicial system is stacked against children and their parents. It is a particularly bitter irony—although a point which the authors do not make—that in the United States the innocent are framed and railroaded to prison, while degenerates go scot free—under protection of the justice system.

Statistics show that one in three-to-four American females and about one in six males have been sexually victimized in their youth. The American Humane Association in 1984 reported 200,000 cases of child sexual abuse in that one year alone. This does not mean that all of these children were subject to Satanic rites, or even that they were violently mistreated.

Abuse occurs by definition, when an individual five years older than the minor, commits a sexual act with the subject, or a sexual act of any sort occurs with a child under the age of 12. But abuse may involve only the initial phase of enticement, including relatively mild touching, as well as the most vicious sodomy and so on. In that sense the statistics can be misleading.

Nevertheless, clearly the situation is alarming, especially since there are many instances of abuse that go unrecorded. Child abuse, like more restricted Satanic practices, tends to be generational. Abused children tend to become abusers when they grow up—between 70 and 85% of child victims become sexual abusers. The American Humane Society defines the average age of child sexual abuse victims as 9.3 years. It reports that 27% of victims are 0-5 years old, 61% between 7 and 12 years, and 25% between 13 and 18 years.

As the permissiveness of the society has increased, particularly over the past 20 years, the barriers against adult-child sexual activity seem to have come down. Around half of all child abuse occurs in the home itself, that is with a parent or close relative as the abuser. It is not too much of an exaggeration to place parents of the late 1960s generation who were subjected to the more extreme counterculture in the category themselves of abused children. Many of these are unfit to become parents.

Children are also increasingly subject to abuse by professionals whom working parents trust with the care of their children. As more mothers are forced onto the job market while their children are young, the opportunities for Satanists and pedophiles expand. Even where the child is abused by a parent, that parent will frequently be drawn into, and draw the child into group activity.

While the etiology of pedophilic behavior and of Satanic ritual use of child victims is not identical, abuse of children tends to attach to other criminal activity, such as the sale of pornographic pictures taken during the incident. In some cases, this pornography may terminate in the death of the child. It is believed that both the Son of Sam killings and the Atlanta Child murders were the subject of "snuff" films.

The picture today

There has been an effort by libertarians to discredit parents and others, who seek to expose the growing epidemic of child abuse, as either hysterical or, worse, as publicity seekers. They say that the recent wave of discoveries of child abuse has taken on the nature of a witch hunt, and that a network of parents and social service workers is encouraging children to manufacture standardized tales of abuse. The authors of this book convincingly rebut this vicious lie.

The libertarianism which has become hegemonic and which now threatens to overwhelm Western civilization, with the replacement of Judeo-Christian moral values by hedonistic and in some cases overtly Satanic values, has not occurred by accident. Individuals such as Dr. Benjamin Spock and Alfred Kinsey were key in deliberately engineering this cultural shift. (Kinsey, by the way, was helped in his project of studying American sexual mores by none other than Kenneth Anger, the *avant garde* film maker who has laid claim to the mantle of Satanist Aleister Crowley. Very evil men and women conspired to produce the counterculture and the continued degeneration which has followed since

the 1960s. The Kinsey Report was intended to portray the hegemonic moral values of the immediate postwar period as merely a hypocritical charade. Kinsey's message was everyone does it, so why don't you?

The following quotation from Kinsey's book, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, is appropriately cited by the authors, as relevant to their particular subject: "It is difficult to understand why a child, except for its cultural conditioning, should be disturbed by having its genitalia touched, or disturbed by seeing the genitalia of another person. . . . Some of the more experienced students of juvenile problems have come to believe that the emotional reactions of the parents, police and other adults . . . may disturb the child more seriously than the contacts themselves. The current hysteria over sex offenders may well have serious effects on the ability of many of these children to work out sexual adjustments some years later in their marriages."

The child's day in court

Those who would defuse the present outcry against the abuse of children, will cite supposed instances in which children have told exaggerated stories, or contradicted themselves, thus supposedly discrediting their testimony. The authors document how the investigative process drives the children to embellish their accounts, by subjecting them to adversarial cross examination.

Children who have suffered abuse are usually shamed by the experience. They frequently will have been threatened by their abusers, not only with harm to themselves, but to their families as well. Children who have been subjected to Satanic rituals may be even more terrorized by what they witnessed. The very young are easily frightened by situations which are strange to them. They will try to propitiate an adult who is questioning them, and if pressed hard enough, will seek to answer questions which they do not really understand, or in some instances simply "admit" that the abuse which they suffered did not really take place. The latter will typically occur where they feel that they are not being believed.

Young children have particular difficulty in placing events in time and space. They also do not necessarily understand what is occurring, although they can certainly testify to physical abuse to which they are submitted. Their memories are not as good as those of adults, and memories also tend to fade faster.

They are hesitant to revealing what has occurred to them, even to sympathetic adults. Most court proceedings are nothing short of exercises in brutality, in which the children are treated as adversaries. Investigations preceding trial may be almost as threatening. Children have also been held accountable for explaining why their accounts deviate in particulars in the telling, even though they may not remember each particular debriefing to which they have been submitted—particularly after year-long time lapses. The authors cite one such instance—which resulted in the acquittal of the defen-

dants—where the children were being grilled in this manner but the defense attorneys and the judges were on record confusing the children's names and not recollecting specific testimony which occurred during the trial!

A recent CBS movie, "Do You Know the Muffin Man?" was an effective fictionalization based on the McMartin pre-school case. Typically of the anti-child lobby, the *Washington Post* television critic, Tom Shales, previewed the movie as a piece of cheap sensationalism.

Over 400 children were involved in Satanic abuse at the McMartin pre-school, a prestigious day care center in Long Beach, California. These children recounted experiences of being forced to participate in pornography, rape, sodomy, eating feces, engaging in sex acts with animals, animal mutilation, Satanic rites, and even corpse viewing. The media discounted the children's stories as inherently implausible. The manager of the center and her son have finally been brought to trial, but most of the children have been eliminated as witnesses in the case, and the Satanic aspects of the abuse have been suppressed by the prosecutor, who is aiming for a conviction on straight sexual abuse.

The case has dragged on interminably. The preliminary hearing alone, took 18 months. Some children were made to testify before prosecutors and defense attorneys for more than a week; one 10-year-old gave testimony for 16 days.

Various similar accounts are given in the book, all making the same case. The authors give a number of recommendations which would redress the situation. One key recommendation is to allow the admission of parent and medical and social work testimony of children's accounts of abuse, where the children themselves are too disturbed to appear in court. Such evidence is now dismissed as hearsay, but there are exceptions to the hearsay law currently in other situations. They also suggest that children be protected from having to face their abusers in open court, when they testify.

If there is a criticism of this book, it is only that the authors have taken the honesty of officers of the court, at face value. Unfortunately countless experiences by parents have raised the question of whether Satanists or at the least pedophiles, have not situated themselves in key positions in law enforcement and the courts in order to protect these abuses.

The existence of the North American Man-Boy Love Association (NAMBLA), which lobbies for lowering the age of consent for minors, is a case in point. Ethan Geto, who was a major fundraiser for the campaign of New York State Attorney General Robert Abrams, is a leading gay rights activist with connections to NAMBLA.

No doubt the authors are aware of these and similar atrocities, but they have rigorously delimited the case which they are making, so as not to diminish its credibility, in order to convince the widest possible audience. In this, we cannot fault them.