



Icon: Holy Archangel Michael pray for us !

## **Rock 'n' Roll, Satanism, and Our Children**

*By Fr. Paul O'Callaghan*

The subject of rock 'n' roll has been controversial and a source of conflict between parents and children ever since it first appeared on the scene in the mid 1950's. When Elvis Presley performed on the Ed Sullivan Show for the first time in 1956, the cameras only showed him from the waist up, because adults were offended by the way he shook his hips. The kids loved it!

When the Beatles arrived in the mid 1960's, parents were shocked again this time by the mop-top haircuts. But young people were swept away by the infectious enthusiasm of their music. After the Beatles, more shocks were in store as groups like the Rolling Stones and the Animals popularized a more coarse, gritty, and vulgar style of blues-influenced rock.

Still later, the psychedelic explosion brought new controversy to the world of rock. Bands such as the Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead openly lived a hippie lifestyle and freely admitted to the use of drugs like marijuana and LSD. This was a new source of alarm for parents as young people adopted hippie ways and the abuse of drugs became epidemic. In the twenty years that have followed, rock 'n' rollers have continued to try to keep the shock waves coming with the violent aggressiveness of "heavy metal" rock, the open rebellion of "punk" rock, and music advocating sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, drug abuse, and finally, Satanism, the worship of the devil.

However, one thing has changed over the 30+ years of rock history. People aren't shocked much anymore. Parents aren't alarmed much anymore. Rock 'n' rollers are still putting in a mighty effort to keep the shocks coming, but the fact is that rock has become accepted in our society. Rock music that I would have considered radical when I was a teenager is now commonly heard on commercials. Even an old rocker like Eric Clapton, who spearheaded the group "Cream" in the 60's, is shown playing

live on a beer commercial on T.V. Many parents are now content to keep their kids quiet by letting them stay glued to MTV at home.

The question for us is, how should we, as Orthodox Christians, and especially, as Orthodox parents, approach the subject of rock 'n' roll? Should we be in a continual state of alarm? Should we, as some preachers and churches do, condemn rock as evil, forbid our children to listen to any of it, and burn the records or tapes we might have? Or should we simply accept rock? Should we just figure our children are good Orthodox young people and music can't have any bad effect on them?

How about "none of the above" for an answer?

Before we get into this, let me point out one thing. It is nearly impossible to generalize about rock 'n' roll. If someone says "rock is this," someone else can always show an exception, and say, "no, rock is that!" So I cannot give you a lot of easy absolutes about rock. I can only indicate general trends in rock music. But my observations do come from 25 years of watching the rock scene. So I'm not just "shooting from the hip" on the subject like some preachers do, which unfortunately only encourages rock enthusiasts to casually dismiss their criticisms.

So how do we approach rock? If we can just use one word, that word should be "honestly." We must be honest and unprejudiced as we attempt to analyze it.

Viewing rock honestly means, first of all, that we can say there is some good in rock music. The person who cares to listen closely to rock can find examples of deep human sensitivity, elevated poetry, valid social criticism, inspired performing, and expert musicianship. And all of these are things that an Orthodox Christian can and should appreciate. But more than this, occasionally in rock music, we find themes that are genuinely biblical and Christian.

When I was a teenager, a group called the "Quicksilver Messenger Service" did a song called "Pride of Man" about God's judgment on sinful human pride — full of material from the Bible. More recently, a group called "Mister Mister" did a song called "Kyrie Eleison" — right out of the Liturgy. Other groups like "The Call," "U2," and several others have distinctly Christian and Biblical themes to much of their music. Several groups have even done modern renditions of old hymns. So there are things in rock music that even the strictest of us can appreciate.

But while there is some good in rock music, there is much evil. (However, most rock music falls somewhere in between. It is not completely good or totally evil. Like most of life, it contains some of each). And just as we can enjoy the good, we must recognize and reject evil. I would list some of the wrongs in rock under the following categories:

1. Sex and Lust — While male-female attraction has always been a part of music, art, and literature, and rightly so, because it is a normal and healthy part of life, much rock music serves to celebrate the most crude forms of lust: casual and promiscuous sex, the use of women purely as sex objects, bisexuality and homosexuality. For example, a video by the group "Motley Crue" called "Girls, Girls, Girls", takes you into one striptease bar after another. A popular song from a year or two ago called "Sugar Walls" is about a woman inviting a man to experience the pleasure of her sexual organs. A song on the charts just recently stated the message pretty bluntly: "I Want Your Sex" was the title of it. In addition to these there are many more with a much more subtle message that is basically the same. This is the

greatest moral failing of much rock music: It celebrates, not the marriage that God has called pure, but the most crude forms of lust.

This fascination with crude and debased sexuality is why (I think) we see so much androgyny or sexual confusion, among rock stars. Many male rock personalities, following the early lead of the Rolling Stones' Mick Jagger, deliberately put forth a sexual image that confuses male and female elements. They wear makeup, style their hair in a feminine way and adopt many of the other trappings of female sexuality. Of course, this is appropriate for much of the rock world, which seeks to cultivate an atmosphere of unbridled lust where all normal standards and distinctions disappear.

2. Rebellion — Rebellion has been one of the key themes of rock since the very beginning. Since rock is basically music for teenagers, rock 'n' rollers have seized on and exploited the natural rebelliousness of teens with much success. Rock has attacked parents, school, society, Church, and even God Himself — anything that would be an impediment to a completely uninhibited pursuit of pleasure.

I was one who went through a decidedly rebellious stage during my teen years. Many years later, I was talking to one of my fellow rebels about what motivated us to rebel. Looking back at it, it seemed that we had very little reason. He then made a remark that illuminated the question. Although he's not what I would call a practicing Christian, he said, "You know how people are always saying that rock music is an instrument of the devil. I really think that it was the music that made us rebel." The more I thought about it, the more sense this suggestion made. After all, when I was young, one of my favorite songs was called "It's My Life and I'll Do What I Want!" Not a message that would encourage you to cooperate very much with parents or school!

3. Violence and Aggression — A third danger in much rock music is its appeal to violence and aggression. You can see this if you've ever taken the time to watch much MTV. After the preoccupation with sex and lust, violent and aggressive behavior is its most outstanding characteristic. There's a simple reason for this: Most rock is not intellectual or spiritual music; it's meant to connect directly with the most base and low levels of the unconscious mind.

So-called "heavy metal" rock is a good example of this. This music is the loudest, most abrasive, most violent and aggressive form of rock music. Who does it appeal to? Mostly boys aged 13-18. Why does it appeal to them? Because it connects directly with the chaotic and aggressive forces in their minds.

This is an example of why you'll notice a sudden and intense interest in music in most kids today at about age 13 — just about the age of puberty. Rock music connects immediately and directly with what they feel inside, but in a way that bypasses their mind and understanding. All they know is that it's just perfect — it's just what they always wanted without being aware of it. And in the case of young boys, it's because it seizes on and gives form and substance to all that stuff in their unconscious minds particularly their violent and aggressive tendencies.

4. Immediate gratification — A last feature of rock that probably includes the other three is the emphasis on immediate gratification. I won't say much about this other than the fact that most rock does not appeal to people to deny themselves and struggle to gain the true blessings of life; rather, it preaches and practices immediate gratification and excitement here and now — forget about tomorrow. (This is why drugs have been so

right at home in the rock scene). Needless to say, this appeals to many teenagers, but it is a totally disastrous attitude both spiritually and in terms of maturity.

Now, finally before I finish, I want to take a couple of minutes to discuss the role of Satanism in rock music.

Interest in Satan, black magic, and things of that sort first started developing among rock musicians in the late 1960's when drug experimentation began to get serious among them. Their interest in the altered states of mind brought about by drugs soon led some to a fascination with the supernatural, the mysterious, and the bizarre. You may remember that the Beatles became disciples of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi soon after their period of drug experimentation began. Not long afterward, the Rolling Stones produced an album entitled "At Their Satanic Majesties Request;" their involvement with black magic and Satanism during this period has been documented. Later, some of the "heavy metal" groups began adopting much of the trappings, symbolism and rhetoric of Satanism.

As far as I can tell, their motivation was basically the same rock desire for shock value, plus a desire to associate themselves with a symbol of the mysterious, the awesome and the powerful. So why not use the premier symbol of unbridled lust, rebellion, violence and aggression, and immediate gratification? Who better than Satan himself to fit the role?

Some rock musicians have no doubt actually practiced Satan worship, but as far as I know, they're in the minority. The majority of those who've adopted the Satanic imagery have done so out of sensationalism and the desire to clothe themselves with this image of evil. But in doing so, these musicians have been primarily responsible for the dramatic rise in Satanic practices among young people today.

It's interesting to note that recent resurgence in Satanic worship and activity has almost directly followed the introduction of MTV showing these various heavy metal groups with all their Satanic symbolism. The Satanic activity of the late 1960's had almost totally fizzled out until MTV came along. The sad thing is, a lot of young people have been led into insanity and demon-possession by these practices, to say nothing of the rumors of child sacrifice and other horrible practices that we hear about. (And think about this: if your kids are in high school, they probably know someone who's engaged in Satanism of some kind. It has become rampant). So what are parents to do?

I think it is our serious responsibility to pay close attention to what our kids are listening to — to look at the albums and tapes they bring home. Look for the signs I've listed — listen to the words — for inappropriate sexual content, rebellion, violence or aggression and especially anything that smacks of the Satanic. If there's a problem in any of these areas, then that music doesn't belong in your home and neither you nor your kids should be listening to it. (One point in our favor, though, is that most kids really pay little attention to the words in the music they listen to). However, we should still be concerned, although it would be a mistake to throw all rock music out because some is bad.

As parents, most of us try to give our children the best we can to prepare them for success in this life. How much more important it is to care for the salvation of their souls, that they become devoted lovers of Christ. We cannot allow rock music — or anything else for that matter — as far as we can prevent it, to interfere with that

process.

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*From Word Magazine*

*Publication of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America*

*October 1988*

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