

Atheism Is Not The Only Way

Lithos

Welcome back, sweaty sinners! This is the Devil's Discourse hitting your ears in a heatwave. We're your light relief from climate grief, the cool retreat from searing heat, putting ice-cold pads on your sweaty nads. And with me today, I have Ligeia.

Ligeia

Hail Satan!

Lithos

I have Pike.

Pike

Hail Satan!

Lithos

I have Leraje.

Leraje

Hail Satan.

Lithos

And I have our very special guest from the United States, from the First Church of the Morningstar, Pastor Johnny.

Pastor Johnny

Hail Satan!

Lithos

Pastor Johnny, first of all, to start off, tell us a bit, a general rundown about what the church, First Church of the Morningstar, is and what kind of things you do.

Pastor Johnny

Okay, so First Church of the Morningstar is a theistic, left-hand path, mainly Satanic church existing at this point mainly online, although there is an in-person congregation in San Francisco, California. We were founded in 2019. We were founded because we'd noticed, you know, there's a lot of theistic Satanists who are left-wing, who are what I would consider to be right-thinking progressive people.

Leraje

Mm-hmm.

Pastor Johnny

There are very few theistic Satanic organisations which are not far right. So back in 2019, we were looking at what was out there, and if you were sort of left-leaning progressive, or just not a flaming Nazi asshole, you could be in maybe Church of Satan, you could be in the Satanic Temple. If you were theistic, that wouldn't necessarily be the most appropriate venue for that.

Lithos

Mm-hmm.

Pastor Johnny

So we were trying to fill a niche that we knew existed because we were in online communities of theistic Satanists on Discord, on Tumblr, various places. We just had nowhere to go. So that's why we exist, essentially. When I say theistic Satanist, I'm sure you'll have questions about that. We, we definitely allow people who are atheist and agnostic, and theism might not look the way you expect it to look, but

generally speaking, we're people who do magic, who believe in the devil as some kind of existing energy or force or personality, etc., or at least believe in that on good days when we're feeling optimistic.

Lithos

There's, there's also, from looking at your website, there's— it's not just sort of Samael, Lucifer, Satan. There are a whole host of other kind of left-hand path...

Pastor Johnny

Yes, yes, yes. So we are polytheistic Satanists, frankly. And we also have a little bit of a big tent approach in general, because, well, because theistic Satanism is not that big, and because there's a number of sort of more darkly inclined Pagans who don't feel quite welcome in certain Pagan spaces. For example, maybe someone who— we say we worship scary gods, essentially.

So people who are into Loki or The Morrígan or Hecate or, you know, deities that freak people out, deities that get kind of a bad rap. That's all welcome.

Lithos

Okay. Excellent. Right, folks, fire away with your questions. Who wants to go first?

Pike

This wasn't one of my questions, but it just cropped up now listening. When you mentioned— you said the theistic Satanism, it might not be what you imagine, it might not look what you think. What does it look like?

Pastor Johnny

Okay, so not... Wow. I mean, in so many ways. First of all, I was saying theism might not look what you think it looks like. I find— so I actually went to a

seminary. I went to a progressive, uh, multi-religious seminary in California called— well, I was at Starr King School for the Ministry, which is a Unitarian Universalist seminary that took me because the UUs will take anyone. And that was part of a consortium called the Graduate Theological Union, which is just this beautiful clusterfuck of all these different seminaries, religious studies centres. You know, you've got Jewish studies, you have a, well, actually, the Centre for Islamic Studies, I can't remember if that actually had been added yet, uh, Dharma studies, you know, various kinds of Christianity, whatever. I used to be a militant atheist personally, and if you still are, rad. Going to seminary, I realised that progressive, educated religious people are just not the way that a lot of movement atheists imagine much of the time.

Leraje

Mm.

Pastor Johnny

The theist that most movement atheists think of is often based on an American right-wing fundamentalist Christian. I met many religious people who I think believe less than I do, and I have a degree of scepticism and groundedness in my belief that, you know, some people would assume that I'm agnostic because I'm not sure, but I think agnosticism is sort of a redundant word for what a progressive religious person is like.

There is an anecdote that someone told me. It was actually, I believe, an Anglican whose mom was like, why are you an atheist? This, you know, atheist child of Anglicans. And, well, mom, it's because I don't believe in God. Or, well, mum, I suppose, since they're an Anglican. And their mother goes, well, just because you don't believe in God, that's no reason to be an atheist.

I don't believe in God and I go to church. See, my point is there's a spectrum of belief within so-called religious people.

Leraje

Mm-hmm.

Pastor Johnny

In terms of what theistic Satanism looks like versus what you might assume, I mean, we are very, very DIY. Uh, we have a bit of a punk rock sentiment. We have a lot of chaos magic influence. So to be quite frank, our theistic Satanism could look like fucking anything. Like, I've talked for a bit.

Let me let someone ask me a question to get me back on track, cuz I can really rattle on.

Ligeia

I, I think I have one that would nicely bridge this. Yeah, this is a simple, I think. So for me, it's interesting that you mentioned all these gods, demons, whatever.

Pastor Johnny

Mm-hmm.

Ligeia

So let's, let's say we choose Lucifer.

Pastor Johnny

Mm-hmm.

Ligeia

As, as an example. Okay. So your approach is you take what has been written, the imagery that is existing, or you create or co-create what you think Lucifer or the demon, whichever that is?

Pastor Johnny

Both.

Ligeia

Both?

Pastor Johnny

Very much both. Yeah.

Ligeia

How do you agree then?

Pastor Johnny

Well, Well, okay, every, every religion has to create a canon, right? You know, it's not like the Bible is just every single Jewish and Christian text ever written. It's absolutely not. That's why there's Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha and all these other texts. So, you know, some people will be like, oh, you can't cherry-pick.

Everyone cherry-picks because anyone can say anything. We're not pretending that anything written by humans is infallibly divinely inspired or channelled. So yes, absolutely, we can pick and choose. We can also, you know, choose by studying what's the oldest and finding things that kind of seem to agree with each other.

Lithos

Mm-hmm.

Ligeia

Mhm.

Pastor Johnny

You know, when I said every religion has to create a canon, I'm gonna walk that back. I believe we shouldn't have a canon.

Lithos

Mm.

Pastor Johnny

I believe we should be allowed to pick and choose and continue to have religious writings, continue to have revelation or prophecy, if you wanna use those kinds of terms, continue to have inspiration, and continue to have debate.

Leraje

That sounds very much like what you were saying earlier about the DIY approach that you take.

Pastor Johnny

Yes, yes, absolutely.

Ligeia

So what works for you and for—

Pastor Johnny

Yes.

Ligeia

What works for another, yeah.

Pastor Johnny

What works for you, but also we believe in research. I am very big on the history of ideas and I love reading up on, you know, where these various demons come from and looking into the history and, you know, tracing back as far as I can and seeing what feels like positive and usable, what doesn't.

Ligeia

Yeah. Thank you.

Lithos

There's certainly a lot of common ground I hear there between what you're doing and what we kind of do.

Leraje

Yeah.

Lithos

The only difference being is we're non-theistic, or we're specifically atheistic, because ours is a sort of DIY you know, we can make up our own religion kind of thing as well. And also you're mentioning on the theistic side that there wasn't a lot that wasn't far-right fascist.

Pastor Johnny

Yep.

Lithos

There are, you know, organisations like Order of the Nine Angles or whatever who claim to be theistic Satanists. They're the white supremacist dickheads that kind of like to commit violent crimes, and you're going well, if that's what you think

Satanism is, then you are literally living out the Christian idea of what Satan is, like the bad guy.

Pastor Johnny

Yes.

Lithos

That's not really Satanist because, you know, your figurehead should be the good guy, the one who does well. If you're just kind of going, we're doing evil, then you're going, well, you're just doing—

Leraje

you're just fulfilling the Bible.

Lithos

You're just doing bidding for the fucking Roman Catholic Church, aren't you?

Leraje

Yeah, exactly.

Pastor Johnny

Well, I mean, also, like, yes, absolutely. I always think that the most important division between Satanists is people who like Satan because they think Satan is good and people who like Satan because they think Satan is bad. You know, it's not the—I think the important division between Satanists is not theist versus atheist so much as it is people who like Satan because they think Satan is good and people who like Satan because they think Satan is bad.

Lithos

Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

I also think that ONA, I mean, is a fucking joke on so many levels. You know, they have the nerve to call themselves traditional Satanists and claim that they're doing the real Satanism, but when you actually look into their stupid fucking beliefs, it's like sort of Lovecraftian made-up crap, and they all, you know, care about their Space Nazi Jesus Windex or whatever his name is.

And, um, you know, it's just dumb. It's just stupid fucking bullshit from stupid fucking David Myatt. And, uh, fuck them.

Leraje

Yeah, absolutely.

Lithos

Yeah, absolutely. I could not agree more.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah. And I, I hate how much, um, I mean, I don't know if in the— even though it started in the UK, I don't know if you guys are having as much problems with ONA-inspired domestic terrorism as we are over here.

Pike

I don't think so.

Pastor Johnny

Oh God, yeah, we have so much, so much.

Lithos

Really? Wow.

Pastor Johnny

Oh, you haven't been following this? My goodness, I can send you, or I could talk about it now, either way.

Leraje

Definitely send us stuff. I mean, we'd like to hear about that.

Pastor Johnny

Well, in brief, so in sort of the Trump 1.0 era, there was this group called Atomwaffen Division.

Leraje

Yeah, I remember them.

Pastor Johnny

Which got— yeah, well, they got sort of taken over by an Order of Nine Angles influence.

Ligeia

Mhm.

Pastor Johnny

And then there's been some other ones, but the, the sort of major vaguely ONA-inspired thing happening over here now is, um, 764 and related groups.

Ligeia

Mhm.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah, yeah. So they're not— I think they're even more sort of loosely ONA-inspired, but, you know, they're hideous. And there's been a couple of sort of individual domestic terrorists as well who had ONA inspiration.

Leraje

I think that that sort of thing happens or seems to happen more in the US because I think religion as a whole is a lot more of a— like you were saying earlier, it's a very cultural thing. It's, it's in a way that it isn't really over here.

Pike

Um, yeah, very— What about the other very glaring reason?

Leraje

Donald.

Pike

Americans got guns.

Leraje

That too. Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

We do. We do indeed.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah.

Lithos

Yeah.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

Although Scandinavia gets a decent amount of, uh, sort of Satanist terrorism too. And I think their gun laws are, uh, pretty strict. Yeah.

Leraje

Yeah.

Lithos

Yeah. Let's not talk about Varg and, um, Burzum.

Leraje

Fuck Burzum.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah. Or, yeah, absolutely.

Leraje

Yeah. Can I ask a question about, um, how it's got to be, given that, you know, um, religion is such a big cultural thing in America, in the US, how tricky or problematic or difficult, whatever word suits the situation better, is it for a theistic Satanist organisation to currently sort of operate and exist?

Because you seem to be thriving.

Pastor Johnny

We are. So what we have done is we had aspirations to be, be a 501 tax-exempt religious nonprofit that we have basically dropped until after Trump is gone because he's been very explicit about wanting to go after nonprofits.

Leraje

Mm-hmm.

Pastor Johnny

You know, he, he says that he's going after, you know, terrorist groups or whatever, but actual underground groups are hard to find.

Ligeia

Mm-hmm.

Pastor Johnny

So instead, he's going after, like, registered nonprofits and trying to, like, portray them as whatever the list was, you know, anti-Christian, anti-American, communist, terrorist, etc. So we are— we're kind of letting our legal status lapse right now. Um, but that's kind of okay because we have no money. Like, seriously, we have no money.

To be—

Leraje

Yep.

Pastor Johnny

To be perfectly accurate, we have a bank account that has like \$500 in it that we use for things like web hosting. No one's getting paid. This is all volunteer. We

don't have any property. You know, being a tax-exempt religious nonprofit was kind of a, like it was more of a, like, legitimacy thing at this point for us, more of a, like, hey, look at us, we're official.

It doesn't really benefit or have any use for our organisation at the moment, you know.

Leraje

Apart from anything else, it can put a target on your back, I would think, at the moment.

Pastor Johnny

Exactly, exactly. Um, so at the moment, all it would do is put a target on our back and not really give us any benefits. Hopefully someday we'll, like, have a physical location and we'll be able to do all these things that we've dreamed of, like having a homeless shelter and, you know, various like things that we think churches should be doing that churches don't do very much anymore, essentially.

Lithos

Yeah, right.

Pastor Johnny

Um, yeah, but for now—

Pike

Sorry, didn't you mention that you had some kind of physical presence in California?

Pastor Johnny

We do. We do. But it's, it's, um, you know, in-person meetings and religious services that kind of happen wherever they can be had.

Lithos

Mm-hmm.

Pastor Johnny

Um, and I, I miss that. I'm in Rhode Island now, so I'm on the East Coast, and Providence, Rhode Island's a pretty cool city. We have some spooky qualities, you know, H.P. Lovecraft is from here. Fuck him, he's a racist, but he's fun and spooky. Uh, actually Necronomicon is going on right now, which is the every 2 years weird fiction convention in Providence.

But there hasn't been as much base for an in-person Satanic congregation in Providence as I was hoping when I moved here. So I basically run the online church and we started the online church, you know, during lockdown, essentially. And then it allowed us to grow like crazy because suddenly people from all over the US and even to some extent internationally can be here.

So that's how we got as big as we are, honestly. And I— sorry, go ahead.

Leraje

Go on, Lithos. Sorry, I'll wait for you.

Lithos

Oh, sorry. Yeah, I was just saying, yes, it is, I mean, the we've got no money thing. Yes, we're all doing this. We've got no money. We sell t-shirts and stuff online, and any profit we make from that goes to charities.

Pike

How much money do we have right now?

Leraje

In the bank account, about £27.

Pastor Johnny

Okay. Yeah.

Lithos

Because we tend to donate that to a charity of choice as soon as we get a certain amount. So we'll pick one, we'll do a campaign for one, and then the money goes out. So yeah, the podcast, everything else we finance. So, yeah, it's...

Pastor Johnny

Out of pocket, yeah. I mean, honestly, the only real reason that we have that much money sitting around is because we were raising money for the 501 application fee, which was like \$600.

Ligeia

Mm-hmm.

Pastor Johnny

And so we had that and a little bit more, and then we ended up spending some money on like web hosting and, you know, various other minimal expenses. So I'll probably go to the church and be like, hey, do we wanna like keep this sitting around for later? Do we wanna donate some of it?

Leraje

Mm-hmm.

Pastor Johnny

Honestly, I would love to have a mutual aid fund for our congregation at some point. Because what— who are our congregants? Poor trans people in the South and in Middle America.

Lithos

Mm.

Pastor Johnny

That's, that's what I got. That's who I'm ministering to at this point. Um, and there's a lot of people who get in real bad financial straits a lot of the time. Um, so before we start donating to other charities, I would prefer to have the mutual aid fund for our congregation more established.

Leraje

That makes a lot of sense, I think.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah, yeah.

Leraje

You can't help other people unless you're healthy yourselves.

Pastor Johnny

Mhm. Yeah, we are poor as a congregation. Yeah.

Leraje

Okay, just as a—

Lithos

It surprised me...

Leraje

Oh, sorry. No, you go, that's all right, go on.

Lithos

And it kind of surprised me when you said Trump was going after nonprofits, but then I'm thinking, oh Christ, of course, because he has no concept of not-for-profit, you know. And, you know, if you've got no money and you're not-for-profit, you're going to be in his target because, because you're probably a communist and a loser, and he has no concept of like not making money from something.

Leraje

No, he doesn't.

Pastor Johnny

Well, and also, also again, you know, essentially liberal nonprofits are above ground. He can find them. People have heard of them. Whereas, you know, like an anarchist cell, that's hard to find.

Ligeia

Mm.

Leraje

Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

You know, that's hard to prosecute. So, I mean, like, there's— most recently he's been trying to act like the Southern Poverty Law Centre actually, like, funded the entire Unite the Right rally, you know, the, the big, horrible, famous Nazi rally

during his first term. Because, because what was exposed is that SPLC had some paid informants in the far-right circles.

Pike

Right, right.

Pastor Johnny

Now, that is not the same as Unite the Right was an op created by the Southern Poverty Law Centre.

Leraje

Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

That's, you know, you suborned a couple Nazis to get some info from them.

Lithos

That's a bit like blaming undercover cops for creating crime.

Pastor Johnny

Exactly. Exactly. Which in some cases, it actually does kind of go that far. But, you know, like I talked about Atomwaffen Division, It turned out the main guy in Atomwaffen, I forget his fucking name at the moment, was on, like, the FBI bankroll, because he was an informant.

Leraje

Mm.

Pastor Johnny

So did they fund Atomwaffen Division? Not really!

Leraje

Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

Kinda, a little bit, but, you know, that's not what they meant to do.

Leraje

So, can I— I'm sort of really interested in how— so, at the moment you're kind of concentrating on mutual aid, which is completely understandable. As a collective, Helltraef have a particular way of going about things in terms of raising money, in terms of doing this and the other. What does that look like for— is there a particular— do you think there's a different approach that a theistic satanic organisation might take?

Pastor Johnny

So, so I think yes, I think that when we started, we expected to be doing kind of more advocacy of the type that like The Satanic Temple has a reputation for doing, however effective that actually is. I have many criticisms.

Leraje

Oh, yes.

Lithos

As do we.

Pastor Johnny

And as— good, thank you. As a theistic Satanist group, we found ourselves doing much more essentially like emotional care, which I think is what we as a theistic group might be arguably better positioned to concentrate on.

Leraje

Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

Now, I think, I think it's entirely possible to do atheistic pastoral care. And in fact, I know many atheists who went to my seminary and were trained in that.

Leraje

Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

But there are not as many atheists who have that training, and I do. So it's not, it's not therapy, obviously. I don't have that licence. It's, it's counselling.

Leraje

Mhm.

Pastor Johnny

Um, so that's one thing I do. And sort of providing the, the community and the emotional support and the, the comfort to, like I said, many of these people—I was about to call them kids. We don't have anyone under 18.

Leraje

Mm-hmm.

Pastor Johnny

But, you know, we have young adults and to me, they're, they're my kids, you know, who are, like I said, very isolated. They're in the Midwest, they're in the Deep South. Many of them are kind of millennials and zoomers who have failed to

launch because the economy is horrible. So they're stuck at home in some cases with horrible Christian conservative families.

Or even the family is so horrible and Christian and conservative that they're kind of being kept back, you know, as, as the daughter who's supposed to marry and isn't supposed to, you know, be outside of the home before that, in spite of the fact that many of the, the so-called daughters who are in that situation are transgender men.

Um, you know. who aren't able to come out and be the men that they are. It's—

Leraje

So you would—I think what you're saying is it's a lot of it at the moment is kind of like communal.

Pastor Johnny

It's community.

Leraje

Community-based.

Pastor Johnny

It's, it's like spiritual and emotional care.

Leraje

Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

And then mutual aid a lot of the time is, you know, just, you know, someone saying, hey, like, I'm in trouble. And then, you know, we kick in what we can and, you know, that kind of thing. And then the other thing that we do is education, or

we're trying to focus more on political education, you know, as well as religious, of course.

But when you talk about sort of advocacy and political activity, I would say that's the other thing that we really are focused on.

Lithos

That's really amazing. That's really fantastic. You know, doing that kind of work. Wow. Respect.

Pastor Johnny

Oh, thank you. But yeah, like, like I said, I was, I was expecting this to be a little more outward and we've ended up more sort of inward. And for now, that's okay.

Leraje

I think that's a natural response to sort of like, you know, it's protection. You have to protect your own community first, I think.

Lithos

Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

And then, you know, like another— it also provides this network where people can be like, Okay, I need to move.

Ligeia

Mm-hmm.

Pastor Johnny

And then they might actually know someone from the church, could be across the country, you know, someone could be fleeing a red state to a bluer state and be able to find like someone to move in with temporarily or, you know, get, get connected to community where they're going. And that's something that has started to happen.

I think that that will become more effective and more accessible as we grow more and more.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Leraje

Yeah. That's great. That's really good.

Lithos

Fantastic. Yes.

Pike

I just had a quick one going back a little bit to theistic Satanism. Would you say all of your members are polytheistic?

Pastor Johnny

Yes. Yeah, I would say that all of our members are either polytheistic or atheist agnostic, but sort of symbolically polytheistic, if that makes sense.

Ligeia

Yes.

Pastor Johnny

We don't really have anyone who's into a, like, the one true god is Satan, because that's not— that's actually kind of counter to our ethos.

Leraje

Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

Um, we don't like one true God, even if they're Satan, you know.

Lithos

That's sort of going back to Abrahamic faith, really, the one true God thing, you know. If you're gonna do a different thing, you know, you're gonna kind of stand against that, then polytheism makes more sense to me, at least.

Pastor Johnny

Oh, I agree. And When you, when you actually look back into the Bible and some of the passages that are the origins of certain demons, notably Astaroth and Baal, who becomes Beelzebub and Belphegor and various other demons, the struggle of monotheism against polytheism is the source of demonization.

Ligeia

Mm-hmm.

Pastor Johnny

You know, that's how it begins.

Lithos

Do not worship false gods kind of thing. And it is gods.

Pastor Johnny

Exactly. Exactly.

Pike

Because they're very bad. Very bad. You should only worship the really good ones.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah.

Lithos

I'm afraid a lot of them are a lot cooler than the one we're supposed to be following. He's a bit of a twat.

Pastor Johnny

You know, I mean, so Baal, it's funny, this— I mostly focus on Lucifer, but this is kind of turning into the Baal-room. Um, wow, I didn't mean that to be a pun. I have, I have this piece back here that's actually a Baal sigil on this like weird—

Ligeia

It is beautiful. I'm staring at it.

Pastor Johnny

I found this painting. You can't really see on the camera, but at the top it's like a fly. And I just found this on the street and I was like, I'm gonna put Beelzebub's sigil on it. And you know, anyway. He's interesting because Baal and Yahweh were such direct rivals that when you go and you look at the Baal Cycle, which is the— what's left of this ancient Canaanite epic, you will find things that are word for word in the Bible, but they say it's Yahweh instead of Baal doing them.

So if you look at the Baal Cycle, which is the ancient Canaanite poetry, about Baal, you will find phrases that are word for word also in the Bible, except they say it's Yahweh who did this, not Baal.

And it— we don't really know which text came first because they were such direct rivals. So, you know, like the Canaanites are saying, no, Baal is the rider on the clouds. Baal, you know, defeated this serpent. And then, no, like Yahweh is the rider on the clouds. Yahweh defeated the Leviathan. Like, it's the same shit.

Leraje

Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

So it's really fascinating.

Lithos

Mm.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah.

Lithos

And again, it goes to show—

Ligeia

If I may ask—

Lithos

Sorry, carry on Ligeia.

Ligeia

Yes, be sorry, please.

Pike

Tell him, Ligeia.

Ligeia

I will. Um, when you're talking about— this is, this is my— yeah. So, uh, if you could share maybe two things when you do your rituals or whatever, connections, whatever you call it. I don't know how you work with this demonology.

Pastor Johnny

Sure, sure.

Ligeia

Yeah, it can be either private, like for your own needs, or as you say, you're online. So do you, do you have online rituals or maybe in person?

Pastor Johnny

We sure do have online Mass. In fact, we have online Mass tonight.

Ligeia

Ooh.

Pastor Johnny

It is every other Saturday in the evening.

Ligeia

Mhm.

Pastor Johnny

Um, and then back in San Francisco, they have in-person Mass once a month. And what that consists of is really all over the place.

Pike

Mhm.

Pastor Johnny

Um, tonight we happen to be doing something that is very similar to what people would imagine for Satanism, because we're doing our Mass of Blasphemy. Which is what we call essentially the Black Mass that we created.

Ligeia

Okay.

Pastor Johnny

And, you know, there's gonna be— yeah, no, I mean—

Lithos

Blasphemy, Ligeia has lightened up immediately.

Ligeia

Yes, I can't sit anymore. Hi.

Pastor Johnny

Hi, yes. No, I mean, we're— there's going to be like a nude priestess sitting by the altar, and like we're gonna rip up a Bible.

Ligeia

Yay!

Pastor Johnny

Like a little bit of self-flagellation for me, spitting on and breaking the communion host and spitting out the wine and all that kind of stuff. Sometimes we go there.

Leraje

Mm-hmm.

Pastor Johnny

Okay. And then sometimes, sometimes we're doing chaos magic and it could be like, seem just like incredibly silly and non-threatening. At our first— our first mass ever, someone lit a candle in honour of Pikachu. So like, that could happen. Um, all of this coexists from the like very, you know, seemingly like very dark and serious and intense ritual magic to the most irreverent, silliest, you know, discordian or pop culture chaos magic.

Ligeia

Mhm. Mhm.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah, it's, it's really all over the place. We have sermons, which are often kind of, a lot of the time it'll be me kind of presenting my research when I preach. I'm not the only one who preaches. You know, talking about, here's this demon, here's the texts that they were drawn from and how they evolved over time.

And that'll be sort of like a, a religious studies kind of thing. And then often at the end of that, I'll be like, and here is the theistic storey or myth that we could construct out of this. Because we don't, we don't take any of our myths literally. We— I'm getting onto a tangent again.

You tried to ask me what mass was like.

Ligeia

Anything you want to share.

Pastor Johnny

Okay, okay. I have ADHD, can you tell? Hi!

Ligeia

Hi!

Pastor Johnny

Yeah, good. Yeah, very, very common among Satanists.

Lithos

You don't say.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah. So for example, the myth of the Garden of Eden. I actually basically became a Satanist through Genesis 3. When I was a kid, I was sent to Waldorf school, what I think you folks over there might call Steiner school. Is anyone familiar with this shit?

Lithos

Mm-hmm.

Pastor Johnny

It's, it's a cult. It's a cult. It sucks. It's a cult. Don't send your kid to it. Uh, one of the many weird culty things they would do is they would force us to watch these weird little religious pageants that would be put on by the teachers multiple times a

year. They had like a nativity one, they had a three Kings one, and they had the Paradise Play, which is the Garden of Eden story.

And I had to watch this shit so many times that I realised that the snake was right. You know, that's, that's it. That's it. And, you know, here I am in 6th grade going, the snake is right. God's misogynist and doesn't want you to eat fresh fruit or have knowledge. Fuck this. This story sucks on every level.

But I think that the Garden of Eden story, when you read it satanically, is actually so profound. And in a certain way, is true, not in a Adam and Eve literally existed and we're all descended from them and there was a talking snake in a garden, but in the sense that this is a story about growing up.

This is a story about you hit adolescence, you start asking hard questions, you rebel against your parents, your sex drive kicks in, and then eventually you gotta leave home and make it on your own in the harsh world.

Leraje

Hmm. Mm.

Lithos

Yes, very good. I like that.

Pastor Johnny

So that, that myth is not something that happened. It's something that happens all the fucking time. And to me, that's what a good myth is.

Leraje

Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

You know, a metaphor for something extremely real.

Leraje

Mhm.

Ligeia

I like that.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah.

Lithos

Yeah, so do I. That's really good.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah. And I can feel that these entities seem to exist on some level to me. With my chaos magic influence, I do kind of think that maybe we made them exist through the power of belief.

Ligeia

Does it matter to you?

Pastor Johnny

No, it doesn't really matter to me where they come from.

Ligeia

Right.

Pastor Johnny

Um, it matters to me that I experience them in certain ways. I check in with myself. I make sure I've been taking my meds correctly if I have an experience that's too weird. And most importantly, I ask myself, is this making me a better, happier, less asshole-ish person?

Leraje

Mhm.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

You know, right? If, if I, if I'm going to believe, is it going to actually benefit me and be adaptive? And can I, like, check myself before it gets weird in ways that, you know, have lost touch with consensus reality too much?

Pike

Yeah.

Ligeia

Mhm.

Leraje

Mm. Yeah.

Pike

That's a great angle to, to take on that, I think.

Pastor Johnny

And I feel, I feel like that's, that's the way we approach theism, you know? And sometimes we do things that might seem like totally wackadoodle to people.

Leraje

Mm.

Pastor Johnny

Like, we have, we have channelling.

Leraje

Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

Okay, but the way we cope with that is we're like, you can never be sure if someone's channelling. Just because they say they are doesn't mean they are. And even if they are channelling Satan, you know what, you don't have to do everything Satan says. So, you know, if the message is profound and it's good for you and you want to believe that it comes from there, sure.

If you don't want to believe that it comes from there and there's still something good in the message, take it. If it's not working for you on any level, be like, this is bullshit, disregard.

Pike

Do people ever get carried away in a way where it can become, I don't know, frightening or problematic in any way?

Pastor Johnny

No. Wait, let me, let me think about that actually, because I, I said no. No, uh, definitely not on the level of the church. Um, I think in people's private practise,

sometimes people will be like, hey, this thing happened, it was weird, I'm freaked out, and then we try and like figure out what's going on.

I will tell you that one thing that I experience with Lucifer is, um, I— when I believe that Lucifer's around, electronics get fucking weird. And this happens a lot, and I can't prove it has anything to do with anything.

Ligeia

Well, I think he lives in my house then.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah, all I'm saying is that— all I'm saying is that Leraje's shit was acting up in a way that it never does, apparently. And I was sitting here, I was sitting here being like, look, if this is you, I get it, you're around, can you stop please?

Leraje

I'll go get my supernatural duster and give it a good clean.

Lithos

Ah, fantastic.

Pike

Some people just don't have that thing with electronics, don't they? I know my grandma, for example, couldn't wear watches because they were— they would just, you know, digital watches, they would just die within a day or so.

Pastor Johnny

That's so funny. Yeah. Who knows? Who knows? And you know what? Like there could be an explanation for everything that I've experienced and that's fine.

Pike

Well, you know, we know that even if you look for scientific explanations, there is, I don't know, if you look at particle physics or something.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah, who knows?

Pike

Who knows?

Lithos

God, yeah. I mean, yes, yes. Physics gets fucking weird if you go into sort of into depth.

Leraje

Yeah. What did Einstein say? Spooky action at a distance. Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

I, I am interested in trying to actually understand quantum physics sometime soon because I have noticed it can be taken up by absolute wonks who—

Leraje

Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

Don't know what the fuck they're saying. Uh, any of you remember a movie called What the Bleep Do We Know?

Leraje

No. No.

Pastor Johnny

Good, good. It's probably more of a, like, American New Age idiot kind of a thing. Uh, the guy who made it ended up in NXIVM, if you've heard of that cult. Anyway, it was a very crappy movie about what New Age people think that quantum physics is.

Leraje

So, you know, the best quote I've heard about quantum physics, I think it was Feynman who said, if you think you understand quantum physics, you don't understand quantum physics. And that's about—

Pastor Johnny

yeah, yeah, that seems right.

Lithos

It was a couple of days ago, there was, um, up here there's a new Museum of the Supernatural that's opened. And because there's a lot in the northeast of England, there's a lot of old houses, castles that are the “most haunted”. And I went in there and the people who work there are actually supernatural investigators who take it quite seriously.

And I told them, I don't actually believe in the supernatural at all, but I know there's loads of things that haven't been explained and it'd be very interesting to look for explanations. That's what interests me. Um, you know, I can't— you know, there are loads of instances of things where there's no direct scientific explanation because science hasn't got there yet.

And part of science is trying to find out what it is. And that is why when, when people say science doesn't have all the answers, well, yes, science knows that. That's why it's science.

Leraje

Self-correcting.

Pastor Johnny

Thank you. Thank you. I, I go crazy when, um, you know, sometimes you get— maybe it's less bad in the UK, I don't know. Sometimes you get these movement atheists over here who are just like, well, science, you know, they, they, they don't believe in science, they believe in scientism.

Ligeia

Mhm.

Pastor Johnny

They don't understand that not knowing everything and maybe being wrong sometimes is fucking part of it.

Lithos

Mm-hmm.

Pastor Johnny

And, you know, you have to— science can give certainty about some things, and it may eventually give certainty about practically everything, but it hasn't yet.

Lithos

Hmm.

Leraje

I think, you know, everything that you've said about the way that you— your, um, organisation practises and sort of like does in a ritualistic way. It all sounds incredibly healthy and positive. And this kind of like DIY approach that you take to it and sort of like meeting the needs of what's happening in front of you at that moment just sounds really, really healthy and useful.

Pastor Johnny

Well, I think I— when I became theistic, I took many of my critiques of theism from my time as an atheist with me to the extent that I could, which obviously is not infinite. But where was I going with that? I guess that's it. That's the whole thing.

Leraje

It was perfect.

Lithos

Yeah. You're not the only one who's come from a radical atheist background. Not family background, but I used to be an atheist. I would have called myself a fundamentalist atheist in the style of people like Richard Dawkins that think, yeah, well, if you believe in anything like that, you're an idiot.

Pastor Johnny

I, I didn't want to bring up Dawkins by name because I was like, maybe someone here likes Dawkins and I don't want to be rude.

Lithos

Fuck no.

Leraje

Arsehole.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah.

Lithos

Arrogant, humourless tit. He's fucking—

Pastor Johnny

Yeah. Yes, absolutely.

Pike

I want to ask a frivolous question. So, yeah, I looked at the resources that you have on the website and it's all very— there's a lot of substance to your church, clearly.

Pastor Johnny

We try.

Pike

Satan is also, I think we can all agree, is also style. And I wanted to ask, I want to take some style notes from your church, from you personally. What do you like? What inspires you?

Pastor Johnny

Oh man. Oh man. I know, I love that. So, wow, there's so much to say. Yeah, I don't know if you saw the, uh, the artist collective page.

Pike

Yes.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah, um, yeah, that, that's cute. We have a few artists in the church. I do art myself. I don't consider myself an artist, but I create images you know, of demons. I create devotional artwork just for my own use. I think Satan is the god of rock and roll, for one thing, and arguably of— arguably of all secular music.

Lithos

Mm.

Pastor Johnny

Because when secular music started to become more popular, the, the church, you know, and this is like the Middle Ages, was initially very like, uh, no, that's devil shit. You can't do that. I'm very inspired by occult artists. I really love the work of Marjorie Cameron, Hilma Af Klint. My— I just deleted my entire brain. Who do I like? Goddamn it.

Leraje

Give us a list.

Pastor Johnny

Uh, Steffi Grant, uh, Kenneth Grant's wife. I don't have much use for him, but I think that her drawings were really amazing. Rosaleen Norton, um, the Witch of King's Cross from Australia. What the fuck is her name? Leonora Carrington. Um, I fucking love her. And there's so much— honestly, actually, I've been looking at art history of the devil recently.

I was just, uh, rewatching this BBC documentary called How the Devil Got His Horns. I don't know if any of you are familiar with it, but you can find it on YouTube.

Ligeia

Mm-hmm.

Pastor Johnny

That's great. Yeah, I mean, yeah, Satan is style. And beauty and pleasure.

Lithos

Oh, there are so many depictions of hot Satan in art.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah, there are. Well, and actually, my, my sermon today is about essentially hot Satan versus scary ugly Satan and the importance of also embracing scary ugly Satan. Yeah. Using the, the framework of Ghora and Aghora, which are Sanskrit words for fearsome and non-fearsome aspects of deities. And so I'm kind of talking about, you know, the example of these depictions of Shiva as, you know, the more familiar, beautiful, meditating, serene Shiva versus Bhairava, who is the tantric deity of the—

Ligeia

Mm-hmm.

Pastor Johnny

The charnel grounds, um, and then comparing, you know, like sexy hot Satan statue to these like grotesque images of Satan like chewing on humans in hell. And yeah, yeah, no, so it's on my mind. Yeah.

Pike

Maybe we can have some of these artists, um, names in the show notes.

Lithos

Yeah, that was what I was gonna ask. Yes, send me a list of the names.

Pastor Johnny

I'll send you all kinds of stuff for the show notes. Yeah.

Lithos

And I'll put them— yeah, I'll put them in the show notes and I'll put links in. Also help me spell the names correctly when I edit the transcription because AI is gonna mess them up.

Pastor Johnny

I'll try to remember everything that's come out of my mouth while I'm geeking out.

Leraje

Right.

Lithos

We're doing pretty well. We're doing pretty well. Any more questions from Pike, Ligia, Liraj?

Leraje

No, I'm done.

Lithos

Right. Anything you want to ask us, Pastor Johnny? I should mention this podcast is not affiliated to any org, as in we are self-financed, so it's not paid through any organisation. However, we are all members of Helltraef, which is our atheistic Satanist organisation. So when that's— when we mentioned, because we haven't mentioned it previously on the podcast, really, it's kind of been a non-affiliated Satanist podcast.

So if you have any questions about Helltraef or anything like that, then now's the time.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah, I guess, um, oh, I do have a question, but I feel like it's quite a complex one potentially. And it, it comes down to how's it going in the UK being a Satanist? Because I, you know, it's hard to keep track of what's going on over there with the shit show we have going on over here. But, um—

Leraje

I think a lot of it goes back to, um, what we, you and I were talking about earlier with this kind of like cultural, it's— Religion over here, it's not really that big a thing, culturally.

Pastor Johnny

Mm-hmm.

Leraje

I mean, people, some people go to church, a lot of people don't. Christianity is a minority. I mean, the non-Christians are in a majority in this country, so it's not really— So to be a Satanist has more— it's not something that you would necessarily tell the world, but it's also not something that you particularly need to keep too hidden.

Pastor Johnny

Right.

Ligeia

We don't talk about religion that much. No.

Pastor Johnny

Okay.

Lithos

No, it's not. I think according to the latest census, was it that agnosticism and sort of atheism now is kind of like almost half the population.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah. Well, I mean, it doesn't surprise me given the joke I told about Church of England earlier. You know, it's not particularly, you know, passionate or devout.

Lithos

No, no, it is— You know, even people who are in the COE kind of regard it as a bit of a sort of diet Catholicism.

Pike

But I think this could change because we're seeing a lot of, uh, sort of evangelist far-right Christian impetus getting exported from US. And I'm saying exported from US, uh, actual money moving in. Yeah.

Lithos

Well, they are all getting funding from sort of like the big money that's behind some evangelical American groups, you know, the likes of Tommy Robinson and, you know, Reform UK and parties like that that are fascist shitheads, basically.

Pastor Johnny

Well, it's so interesting.

Lithos

And they claim religion, that they are Christians, but it's just like, no, they're all about money and fascism.

Pastor Johnny

It's, it's so interesting trying to comprehend the culture of the UK from over here and how, how your conservatism works, because it's very, it's very unintuitive. I've actually been reading—

Leraje

Yeah, sort of, sort of rough— So the Democrats in the US would probably be the Conservatives over here. The Tory Party, the Conservative Party. Reform would—

Pike

Center-right, yeah.

Leraje

Yeah. Reform are probably— think of them as kind of like Trump-lite type thing.

Pastor Johnny

Sure, sure.

Leraje

And verging into full Trump as they get more power.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah.

Leraje

I think Europe on a whole largely leans a little bit more left than the US.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah, sure, sure, sure. But I think Britain leans a little Right. Compared to most of Europe.

Lithos

Yeah.

Leraje

Yeah.

Lithos

Yeah.

Leraje

That's definitely true.

Lithos

Yeah. Yes.

Pike

Depends what you take as a marker. If you take, for example, trans rights, uh, well, you compare US with UK, UK is doing quite badly.

Pastor Johnny

Well, yeah, I know.

Leraje

Yeah. Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah.

Leraje

Um, embarrassing.

Pastor Johnny

It's terrible. Yeah. Well, I mean, it's funny cuz I, I've actually been reading a book about the Spanner case in the UK. I don't know if you're familiar, but, you know, when essentially they just criminalised sadomasochism. And that was really kind of shocking to me because it was a conservatism that I feel is not often reflected. But apparently those laws are still all on the books over there, even if they're not enforced. So, you know, like, go figure.

Leraje

We've got loads of bullshit old laws from the 12th century still going on over here.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah.

Leraje

Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

Totally crazy.

Ligeia

Totally.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah. Well, okay. Thank you.

Lithos

Well, thank you. That was really, really— I mean, this is excellent. I've learned an awful lot about stuff I didn't know about. Yeah. You're obviously extremely well-informed and, well, you've done a lot of research on the subject. And, you know, I love what you've told us about what you've been doing. I don't know how everyone else feels about that.

Leraje

Yeah, absolutely. I'm really— it's really good.

Pastor Johnny

It's okay if you hate me too. I can handle it.

Ligeia

Okay.

Lithos

Absolutely the opposite. It's been fantastic having you on. And I hope our listeners get as much from it as well. Yeah, really, really excellent.

Pastor Johnny

Am I allowed to plug one thing?

Leraje

Go.

Lithos

Yes. You can plug however much you like.

Pastor Johnny

So we do have a book that we've put out. It's called This Is Church of the Morningstar. We've got hot Satan on the cover. Um, and it's basically, it's an anthology of our writings for the first— oh God, how many years have we existed? Seven? More than seven?

Ligeia

Seven.

Pastor Johnny

Seven. Yeah, yeah. Um, I can't do math, but it's— It's definitely, like, mainly intended for our membership, but if you're interested in some of the research that I was talking about, about, like, the history of specific demons, etc., there's stuff in there that you might enjoy. And just, you know, there's— we have fiction in there, poetry, um, not too much poetry.

Leraje

Send us links to where people can—

Pike

Does it ship to the UK?

Pastor Johnny

oh yeah, it should ship to the UK. It's also available as an ebook as well.

Ligeia

Okay.

Leraje

Can you send us the links to where people can buy it?

Pastor Johnny

I will. I will. Yeah.

Lithos

Yeah. It's all going to be in the show notes, listeners.

Leraje

Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

Lots in the show notes.

Ligeia

Next book club is done?

Lithos

Oh yeah, that's an idea. We could do some of the— It looks like quite, quite a tome.

Pastor Johnny

It's a tome. Yeah.

Lithos

But then, I mean, we have done, or certainly, Ligeia and Leraje have done sort of like collections of short stories and done short stories one at a time.

Leraje

Yeah, that's true. Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

And, you know, the other thing about this is you don't necessarily need to read it cover to cover. Yeah, it is a fucking tome, but many of the individual essays and segments and chapters are quite short. Um, and it's, it's meant to be read around in, you know, it's an anthology.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Pastor Johnny

And there's, you know, material like ritual scripts and things that might not be of use or interest to some people.

Ligeia

So, you know, I'm always interested.

Pastor Johnny

Body is skippable.

Leraje

Yeah, yeah, yeah, me too.

Ligeia

Yeah, good to know. Thank you.

Leraje

Fantastic.

Ligeia

I will get it.

Pastor Johnny

All right, thank you.

Lithos

Yes, I'm definitely going to get myself a copy. Yeah, probably ebook. It might be easier to ship, but I'll have a look.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah, I'll look into the UK international shipping situation after I get out of here.

Leraje

Okay. Ligeia only does real books, don't you?

Ligeia

I only want real stuff. Sorry. Lucifer lives here. I can't use ebooks. Come on. You just said that. Nothing works. Fucking hell! It would never work for me. I am surprised you can see me. What the fuck?

Pastor Johnny

I, you know, I'm right there with you. One thing I love about a real book is it's—there's not gonna be fucking notifications popping up on it.

Ligeia

Yeah.

Lithos

Yes, yes. Please update this book to OS version—

Leraje

Man, you guys really need to get into your alternative ROMs. Because you don't have to have that with any book if you don't want it. Ah, there are ways.

Lithos

Yes, anyway, we shall not talk about things like that on here.

Leraje

No, no, no, no.

Lithos

We're strictly law-abiding. Yeah, anyways, thank you for listening to this episode, and it's been a joy to have Pastor Johnny on to tell us—

Pastor Johnny

It's been so fun.

Lithos

Oh yes, it's like, it has been so informative, honestly. It's brilliant.

Leraje

It really is.

Lithos

This is the kind of thing we live for. So thank you everyone for listening. I've been Lithos. I know, I didn't say it at the beginning. I didn't introduce myself. Very poor etiquette.

Leraje

Shocking!

Lithos

I was too busy making up rhymes about sweaty bollocks.

Leraje

I mean, that should be the priority. Let's be honest.

Pastor Johnny

Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

Leraje

Yes.

Lithos

Okay. I've been Lithos. Hail Satan!

Lithos

Leraje—

Leraje

Hail Satan!

Lithos

Ligeia—

Ligeia

Hail Satan!

Lithos

Pike—

Pike

Hail Satan, symbolic and real!

Lithos

And our very special guest, Pastor Johnny.

Pastor Johnny

Let's see if I can do it again. Hail Satan!

Lithos

Yes, that's what we like.

Ligeia

Yes please!

Lithos

Excellent.