

I had a good chortle or two reading the "The Burning Man" by Thomas Horn (<http://www.worthynews.com/news-features/burning-man.html>).

I was especially amused by the typically myopic approach for religious folk to find one tiny element in something as big and world renowned as Burning Man (BM) and then mutilate the entire festival through a self-serving (and self-righteous) cracked lens of christian superstition. Frankly, to equate BM with the narrow concepts of paganism and christian notions of evil is a form of self-flattery through propaganda. Also, it makes me glad as such knee-jerk reactions drive us fans the more to the wonder and joy of BM!

CREATE

Paganism and satanism are pretty far from BM. So far as to be irrelevant in any literal sense. There are, no doubt, a number of folks attending BM who feel akin to pagan values. They are a minority as far as I can tell, at least, they are not the primary thrust of the event. I would challenge someone to find an actual practicing satanist there. It's just not about that kind of experience and few there would care anyhow.

To illustrate the absurdity, I would say burners would actually be interested in Hell if there was some home grown, duct-tape and EL wire way to build a solar powered megaphone directly to Satan's bathroom. Then, while allowing users to taunt Satan with rude comments or heinous trance music on his potty, the apparatus also erupts in balls of flame to the sky when viewers pet a furry control interface while viewing computer-generated devil-fractals through techno-caveman googles. Sadly, since there is no Satan or Hell to actually contact, such an interesting BM art project won't happen.

To spell it out, BM is about bizarre and freely creative "hordes" and poking playful fun at ourselves with irreverent creations, not about tired old mumbblings of biblical "evil" by those who fear the depths of our creative minds and bodies.

PLAY

BM is about "radical creative expression", irreverence, and play with our world's myths and icons and our notion of ourselves. It is associated with paganism in so far as pagans can be dressed up and poked fun at. Burners dabble in theatric expressions of satanism for the effect of holding it up for ridicule (and to look all bad-ass in crazy flaming red outfits elaborately built by them often at great personal expense with no expectation of monetary gain, only for the fun of art for art's sake!).

But, again, paganism and satanism as subjects of satire are tiny in comparison to other activities. The satire generally stops at nothing including corporate America, politics and politicians, war, "christian values" too, celebrities, sex, and most importantly, the burners themselves.

ANTI-"ISMS"

BM is not so serious as paganism or other "isms" suggest. That is a foolish attempt to encapsulate the overwrought values of dogmatic religion upon something else entirely. BM's participants stubbornly refused to adhere to labels, structure, or grandiose notions of "movements", even as the event exceeds 40,000 attendees. It's largely about burning down barriers for the purpose of literal and figurative renewal and regeneration, which includes itself as represented by creation and then burning an elaborate Man effigy.

In other words, burners are interested in theatrics, fun, and moving beyond for a moment from the dull facets of the staid and numbing control our society exerts daily upon us, including religious constructs, day-to-day jobs responsibilities, and the general malaise induced by the bland homogeny and lies of TV culture.

REINVENT

If BM is close to Paganism, then Mardi Gras and the Brazil and Venice Carnival are good comparisons. Such festivals offer the chance for people to shrug off the chains of generally quiet routine of daily life to break out and experience and BE something new and fantastical if only for a short time. One can reinvent oneself merely for the joy of fantasy and play. My favorite bumper sticker from BM says, "My inner child is an honor roll student at Black Rock City Elementary". BM offers adults the vital chance to play again as children naturally do in make believe, dress up, and building sand castles. This is known as "fun" for those who've forgotten how to play. It is a way to heal and remember happiness.

RELEASE

Now, I know that even the concepts of revelry, satire, and irreverence can be flown along the royal christian banners as evidence of evil. It's difficult for me to argue on grounds that religious folks often cannot accept. Yet, there seems to be little that is not considered evil by christians if it's not handed down from on high and officially sanctified as "good" by the ordained religious "leaders". It must be difficult to break the shackles of mind and body control after generations of spoon-fed teachings in fear and doom. I'd say try BM to remedy that chronic fatigue from fearing the bogeyman Satan and helpless subjugation to constraining dogma. It certainly is an antidote to the repression blues.

RENEWAL

Pointing to BM as a tell-tale sign of imminent doom, is like pointing to a dripping faucet and decrying the Armageddon of plumbing the world over. It's just a dripping faucet! The problem is in the pipes in the same sense that Satan's evil and apocalyptic doom is in the head. Perhaps christians should keep their evil inside instead of spreading that tiresome sickness around. Better yet, people can fix those nasty old decaying faucet washers and recharge with a little playful and irreverent fun once in a while. It's a wonderful and freeing step to take in a complicated world overrun in fear and denial of human needs and play. Burn down the inner fears and strife and renew for better things.

If nothing else, go to BM and feel the opposite for a while to aid appreciation of how properly restrained and narrow life can be in the default world. Still, I urge hardline christians not to get too interested in salve of BM. If it wasn't for angry christians, we couldn't be sure of how great BM is!

P.S. I hope my words have been read in sincerity and honesty. I would love a response should you find the time and reasoning not mired in nonsensical religious superstition. Just as I mention the impossibility of arguing revelry and irreverence to a crowd who cannot accept its validity, I can hardly understand the "logic" of arguing through Hell and "Satan's hordes" as these things make no literal sense to me. Give it a try though. I'd love to hear what you have to say.

Sincerely,
Cliff