

The unknown essay



On a winter's evening in 1967, I drove crosstown in San Francisco to hear Anton Szandor LaVey lecture at an open meeting of the Sexual Freedom League. I was attracted by newspaper articles describing him as "the Black Pope" of a Satanic church in which baptism, wedding, and funeral ceremonies were dedicated to the Devil. I was a free-lance magazine writer, and I felt there might be a story in LaVey and his contemporary pagans; for the Devil has always made "good copy," as they say on the city desk

It was not the practice of the black arts itself that I considered to be the story, because that is nothing new in the world. There were Devil-worshipping sects and voodoo cults before there were Christians. In eighteenth-century England a Hell-Fire Club, with connections to the American colonies through Benjamin Franklin, gained some brief notoriety. During the early part of the twentieth century, the press publicized Aleister Crowley as the "wickedest man in the world." And there were hints in the 1920s and 30s of a "black order" in Germany.

To this seemingly old story LaVey and his organization of contemporary Faustians offered two strikingly new chapters. First, they blasphemously represented themselves as a "church," a term previously confined to branches of Christianity, instead of the traditional coven of Satanism and witchcraft lore. Second, they practiced their black magic openly instead of underground.

Rather than arrange a preliminary interview with LaVey for discussion of his heretical innovations, my usual first step in research, I decided to watch and listen to him as an unidentified member of an audience. He was described in

some newspapers as a former circus and carnival lion tamer and trickster now representing himself as the Devil's representative on earth, and I wanted to determine first whether he was a true Satanist, a prankster, or a quack. I had already met people in the limelight of the occult business; in fact, Jeane Dixon was my landlady and I had a chance to write about her before Ruth Montgomery did. But I considered all the occultists phonies, hypocrites, or quacks, and I would never spend five minutes writing about their various forms of hocus-pocus.

All the occultists I had met or heard of were white-lighters:

alleged seers, prophesiers, and witches wrapping their supposedly mystic powers around God-based, spiritual communication. LaVey, seeming to laugh at them if not spit on them in con-tempt, emerged from between the lines of newspaper stories as a black magician basing his work on the dark side of nature and the carnal side of humanity. There seemed to be nothing spiritual about his " church."

As I listened to LaVey talk that first time, I realized at once there was nothing to connect him with the occult business. He could not even be described as metaphysical. The brutally frank talk he delivered was pragmatic, relativistic, and above all rational. It was unorthodox, to be sure: a blast at established religious worship, repression of humanity's carnal nature, phony pretense at piety in the course of an existence based on dog-eat-dog material pursuits. It was also full of sardonic satire on human folly. But most important of all, the talk was logical. It was not quack magic that LaVey offered his audience. It was common sense philosophy based on the realities of life.

After I became convinced of LaVey's sincerity, I had to convince him that I intended to do some serious research instead of adding to the accumulation of hack articles dealing with the Church of Satan as a new type of freak show. I boned up on Satanism, discussed its history and rationale with LaVey, and attended some midnight rituals in the famous Victorian manse once used as Church of Satan headquarters. Out of all that I produced a serious article, only to find that was not what the publishers of "respectable" magazines wanted. They were interested only in the freak show kind of article. Finally, it was a so-called "girlie" or "man's" magazine, *Knight* of September 1968, that published the first definitive article on LaVey, the Church of Satan, and LaVey's synthesis of the old Devil legends and black magic lore into the modern philosophy and practice of Satanism that all followers and imitators now use as their model, their guide, and even their Bible.

My magazine article was the beginning, not the end (as it has been with my other writing subjects), of a long and intimate association. Out of it came my biography of LaVey, *The Devil's Avenger*, published by Pyramid in 1974. After the book was published, I became a card-carrying member and, subsequently, a priest in the Church of Satan, a title I now proudly share with many celebrated persons. The postmidnight philosophical discussions I began with LaVey in 1967 continue today, a decade later, supplemented sometimes these days by a nifty witch or some of our own music, him on organ and me on drums, in a bizarre cabaret populated by superrealistic humanoids of LaVey's creation.

AH of LaVey's background seemed to prepare him for his role. He is the descendent of Georgian, Romanian, and Alsatian grandparents, including a gypsy grandmother who passed on to him the legends of vampires and witches in her native Transylvania. As early as the age of five, LaVey was reading Weird-Tales magazines and books such as Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and Bram Stoker's Dracula. Though he was different from other children, they appointed him as leader in marches and maneuvers in mock military orders.

In 1942, when LaVey was twelve, his fascination with toy soldiers led to concern over World War II. He delved into military manuals and discovered that arsenals for the equipment of armies and navies could be bought like groceries in a supermarket and used to conquer nations. The idea took shape in his head that contrary to what the Christian Bible said, the earth would not be inherited by the meek, but by the mighty.

In high school LaVey became something of an offbeat child prodigy. Reserving his most serious studies for outside the school, he delved into music, metaphysics, and secrets of the occult. At fifteen, he became second oboist in the San Francisco Ballet Symphony Orchestra. Bored with high school classes, LaVey dropped out in his junior year, left home, and joined the Clyde Beatty Circus as a cage boy, watering and feeding the lions and tigers. Animal trainer Bratty noticed that LaVey was comfortable working with the big cats and made him an assistant trainer.

Possessed since childhood by a passion for the arts, for culture, LaVey was not content merely with the excitement of training jungle beasts and working

them in the ring as a fill-in for Bratty. By age ten he had taught himself to play the piano by ear. This came in handy when the circus calliope player came drunk before a performance and was unable to go on; LaVey volunteered to replace him, confident he could handle the unfamiliar organ keyboard well enough to provide the necessary background music. It turned out he knew more music and played better than the regular calliopist, so Beatty cashiered the drunk and installed LaVey at the instrument. He accompanied the "Human Cannonball," Hugo Zachia, and the Wallendas' high-wire acts, among others.

When LaVey was eighteen he left the circus and joined a carnival. There he became assistant to a magician, learned hypnosis, and studied more about the occult. It was a curious combination. On the one side he was working in an atmosphere of life at its rawest level of earthy music; the smell of wild animals and sawdust; acts in which a second of missed timing meant accident or death; performances that demanded youth and strength, and shed those who grew old like last year's clothes; a world of physical excitement that had magical attractions. On the other side, he was working with magic in the dark side of the human brain. Perhaps the strange combination influenced the way he began to view humanity as he played organ for carnival sideshows.

"On Saturday night," LaVey recalled in one of our long talks, "I would see men lusting after half-naked girls dancing at the carnival, and on Sunday morning when I was playing organ for tent-show evangelists at the other end of the carnival lot, I would see these same men sitting in the pews with their wives and children, asking God to forgive them and purge them of carnal

desires. And the next Saturday night they'd be back at the carnival or some other place of indulgence. I knew then that the Christian church thrives on hypocrisy, and that man's human nature will out no matter how much it is purged or scourged by any white-light religion."

Though LaVey did not realize it then, he was on his way toward formulating a religion that would serve as the antithesis of Christianity and its Judaic heritage. It was an old religion, older than Christianity or Judaism. But it had never been formalized, arranged into a body of thought and ritual. That was to become LaVey's role in twentieth century civilization.

After LaVey became a married man himself in 1951, at age twenty-one, he abandoned the wondrous world of the carnival to settle into a career better suited for homemaking. He had been enrolled as a criminology major at the City College of San Francisco. That led to his first conformist job, photographer for the San Francisco Police Department. As it worked out, that job had as much to do as any other with his development of Satanism as a way of life.

"I saw the bloodiest, grimmest side of Human nature," LaVey recounted in a session dealing with his past life. "People shot by nuts, knifed by their friends; little kids splattered in the gutter by hit-and-run drivers. It was disgusting and depressing. I asked myself: Where is God?' I came to detest the sanctimonious attitude of people toward violence, always saying it's God's will.'

So he quit in disgust after three years of being a crime photographer and returned to playing organ, this time in night-clubs and theaters to earn a

living while he continued his studies into his life's passion: the black arts. Once a week he held classes on arcane topics: hauntings, E. S. P., dreams, vampires, werewolves, divination, ceremonial magic, etc. They attracted many people who were, or have since become, well known in the arts and sciences, and the business world. Eventually a " Magic Circle" evolved from this group.

The major purpose of the Circle was to meet for the performance of magical rituals LaVey had discovered or devised. He had accumulated a library of works that described the Black Mass and other infamous ceremonies conducted by groups such as the Knights Templar in fourteenth-century France, the Hell Fire Club and the Golden Dawn in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England. The intent of some of these secret orders was to blaspheme, lampoon the Christian church, and address themselves to the Devil as an anthropomorphic deity that represented the reverse of God. In LaVey's view, the Devil was not that, but rather a dark, hidden force in nature responsible for the workings of earthly affairs, a force for which neither science nor religion had any explanation. LaVey's Satan is " the spirit of progress, the inspirer of all great movements that contribute to the development of civilization and the advancement of mankind. He is the spirit of revolt that leads to freedom, the embodiment of all heresies that liberate:"

On the last night of April 1968, Walpurgisnacht, the most important festival in the lore of magic and witchcraft-LaVey

ritualistically shaved his head in accordance with magical tradition and announced the formation of the Church of Satan. For proper identification as its minister, he put on the clerical collar. Up to that collar he looked almost holy. But his Genghis Khanlike shaven head, his Mephistophelian beard, and his narrow eyes gave him the necessary demonic look for his priesthood of the Devil's church on earth.

"For one thing," LaVey explained himself, "calling it a church enabled me to follow the magic formula of one part outrage to nine parts social respectability that is needed for success. But the main purpose was to gather a group of like-minded individuals together for the use of their combined energies in calling up the dark force in nature that is called Satan."

As LaVey pointed out, all other churches are based on worship of the spirit and denial of the flesh and the intellect. He saw the need for a church that would recapture man's mind and casual desires as objects of celebration. Rational self-interest would be encouraged and a healthy ego championed.

He began to realize that the old concept of a Black Mass to satirize Christian services was outmoded or, as he put it, "beating a dead horse." In the Church of Satan, LaVey initiated some exhilarating psychodramas, in lieu of Christianity's self-debasing services, thereby exorcising repression's and irduptions fostered by white-light religions.

There was a revolution in the Christian church itself against orthodox rites and traditions. It had become popular to dare that "God is dead." So, the alternative rites that LaVey worked out, while still maintaining some of the trappings of ancient ceremonies, were changed from a negative mockery to

positive forms of celebrations and purges: Satanic weddings consecrating the joys of the flesh, funerals devoid of sanctimonious platitudes, lust rituals to help individuals attain their sex desires, destruction rituals to enable members of the Satanic church to triumph over enemies.

On special occasions such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals in the name of the Devil, press coverage, though unsolicited, was phenomenal. By 1967 the newspapers that were sending reporters to write about the Church of Satan extended from San Francisco across the Pacific to Tokyo and across the Atlantic to Paris. A photo of a nude woman, half covered by

a leopard skin, serving as an altar to Satan in a LaVey-conceived wedding ceremony, was transmitted by major wire services to daily newspapers everywhere; and it showed up on the front page of such bulwarks of the media as the Los Angeles Times. As the result of the publicity, grottos (LaVey's counterpart to covens) affiliated with the Church of Satan spread throughout the world, proving one of LaVey's cardinal maxims: the Devil is alive and highly popular with a great many people.

Of course LaVey pointed out to anyone who would listen that the Devil to him and his followers was not the stereotyped fellow cloaked in red garb, with horns, tail and pitchfork, but rather the dark forces in nature that human beings are just beginning to fathom. How did LaVey square that explanation with his own appearance at times in black cowl with horns? He replied. "People need ritual, with symbols such as those you find in baseball games or church services or wars, as vehicles for expending emotions they can't

release or even understand on their own.” Nevertheless, LaVey himself soon tired of the games.

There were setbacks. First, some of LaVey’s neighbors began complaining about the full-grown lion he was keeping as a house pet, and eventually the big cat was donated to the local zoo. Next, one of LaVey’s most devoted witches, Jayne Mansfield, died under a curse he had placed on the head of her suitor, lawyer Sam Brody, for a variety of reasons I have explained in *The Devil’s Avenger*; LaVey had persistently warned her away from Brody and felt depressed over her death. It was the second tragic death in the sixties of a Hollywood sex symbol with whom he had been intimately involved; the other was Marilyn Monroe, LaVey’s paramour for a brief but crucial period in 1948 when he had quit the carnival and was playing organ for strippers around the Los Angeles area.

On top of all that, LaVey was tired of organizing entertainment’s and purges for his church members. He had gotten in touch with the last living remnants of the prewar occult fraternities of Europe, was busily acquiring their philosophies and secret rituals left over from the pre-Hitler era, and needed time to study, write and work out new principles. He had long been experimenting with and applying the principles of geometric spatial concepts in what he terms “The Law of the

Trapezoid.” (He scoffs at current faddists who are “barking up the wrong pyramids.”) He was also becoming widely sought as speaker, guest on radio and television programs, and production and/or technical adviser to scores of television producers and moviemakers turning out satanic chillers.

Sometimes he was also an actor. As sociologist Clinton R. Sanders points out: ". . . no occultist has had as direct an impact upon formulaic cinematic presentations of Satanism as has Anton Szandor LaVey. Ritual and esoteric symbolism are central elements in LaVey's church and the films in which he has had a hand contain detailed portrayals of satanic rites and are filled with traditional occult symbols. The emphasis upon ritual in the Church of Satan is intended to focus the emotional power within each individual.' Similarly, the ornate ritualism that is central to LaVey's films may reasonably be seen as a mechanism to involve and focus the emotional experience of the cinema audience."

At last LaVey decided to transfer rituals and other organized activities to Church of Satan grottos around the world, and devote himself to writing, lecturing, teaching-and to his family:

wife Diane, the blonde beauty who serves as High Priestess of the Church; raven-haired daughter Karla, now in her early twenties, a criminology major like her father before, spending much of her time lecturing on Satanism at universities in many parts of the country; and finally, Zeena, remembered by people who saw the famous photo of the Satanic Church baptism as a tiny tot, but now a gorgeously developed teenager attracting a growing pack of wolves, human male variety.

Out of LaVey's relatively quiescent period came his widely read, pioneering books: First, *The Satanic Bible*, which at this writing is in its twelfth edition (and this is my second, revised introduction, after having written the original introduction to the first edition) - Second, *The Satanic Rituals*, which covers

more of the somber, complex material LaVey unearthed from his increasing sources. And third, *The Corn pleat Witch*, a bestseller in Italy but, sadly, allowed by its American publisher to go out of print with its potential unfulfilled.

LaVey's spreading Out from organized church activities to writing books for worldwide distribution has, of course, greatly expanded Church of Satan membership. Satanism's growing popularity has naturally been accompanied by scare stories from

religious groups complaining that *The Satanic Bible* now outsells the Christian Bible on college campuses and is a leading causative factor in youngsters' turning away from God. And certainly one suspects that Pope Paul had LaVey in mind when he issued his worldwide proclamation two years ago that the Devil is "alive" and "a person," a living, fire-breathing character spreading evil over the earth. LaVey, maintaining that "evil" is "live" spelled backward and should be indulged in and enjoyed, answers the pope and the religious sent groups this way:

"People, organizations, nations are making millions of dollars off us. What would they do without us? Without the Church of Satan, they wouldn't have anybody to rage at and to take the blame for all the terrible things happening in the world. If they really feel this way, they shouldn't have blown us out of proportion. What you really have to believe instead is that they are the charlatans, and they're really glad to have us around so they can exploit us. We're an extremely valuable commodity. We've helped business, lifted up the economy, and some of the millions of dollars we have

generated have in turn flowed into the Christian church. We have proved many times over the Ninth Satanic Statement that says the church-and countless individuals cannot exist without the Devil.”

For that the Christian church must pay a price. The events that LaVey predicted in the first edition of The Satanic Bible have come to pass. Repressed people have burst their bonds. Sex has exploded, the collective libido has been released, in movies and literature, on the streets, and in the home. People are dancing topless and bottomless. Nuns have thrown off their traditional habits, exposed their legs, and danced the “Missa Solemnis Rock” that LaVey thought he was conjuring up as a prank. There is a ceaseless universal quest for entertainment, gourmet foods and wines, adventure, enjoyment of the here and now. Humanity is no longer willing to wait for any afterlife that promises to reward the clean, pure - translate: ascetic, drab-spirit. There is a mood of neopaganism and hedonism, and from it there have emerged a wide variety of brilliant individuals: doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, writers, stockbrokers, real estate developers, actors and actresses, mass communications media people (to cite a few categories of Satanists)

who are interested in formalizing and perpetuating this all-pervading religion and way of life.

It is not an easy religion to adopt in a society ruled so long by Puritan ethics. There is no false altruism or mandatory love-thy-neighbor concept in this religion. Satanism is a blatantly selfish, brutal philosophy. It is based on the belief that Human beings are inherently selfish, violent creatures, that life is

a Darwinian struggle for survival of the fittest, that only the strong survive and the earth will be ruled by those who fight to win the ceaseless competition that exists in all jungles including those of urbanized society. Abhor this brutal outlook if you will; it is based, as it has been for centuries, on real conditions that exist in the world we inhabit rather than the mystical lands of milk and honey depicted in the Christian Bible.

In *The Satanic Bible*, Anton LaVey has explained the philosophy of Satanism more profoundly than any of his ancestors in the Kingdom of Darkness, while describing in detail the innovative rituals and trappings he has devised to create a church of realists. It has been clear from the first edition that many people want to read this book to learn how to start satanic groups and ritualize black magic. *The Satanic Bible* and *The Satanic Rituals* are the only books that have demonstrated, in a way that is authentic and true to relevant traditions, how all of that can be done. There have been many imitators, never attributing their source, and with good reason; because once the shabbiness and shallowness of the imitators have been compared to LaVey's pioneering work, there can no longer be any market for the rip-off artists.

The evidence is clear to any who are willing to view the record: Anton LaVey brought Satan out of the closet and the Church of Satan is the fountainhead of contemporary Satanism. This book summarizes the message both conveyed, and remains both challenge and inspiration, as timely today as when it was written.

SAN FRANCISCO December 25, 1976 (XI Anno Satanus)

The Satanic Bible

PREFACE

This book was written because, with very few exceptions, every tract and paper, every "secret" grimoire, all the "great works" on the subject of magic, are nothing more than sanctimonious fraud -guilt-ridden ramblings and esoteric gibberish by chroniclers of magical lore unable or unwilling to present an objective view of the subject. Writer after writer, in efforts to state the principles of "white and black magic," has succeeded instead in clouding the entire issue so badly that the would-be student of sorcery winds up stupidly pushing a planchette over a Ouija board, standing inside a pentagram waiting for a demon to present itself, limply tossing I. Ching yarrow stalks like so many stale pretzels, shuffling pasteboards to foretell a future which has lost any meaning, attending seminars guaranteed to flatten his ego - while doing the same to his wallet-and in general making a blithering fool of himself in the eyes of those who know!

The true magus knows that occult bookshelves abound with the brittle relics of frightened minds and sterile bodies, metaphysical journals of self-deceit, and constipated rule-books of Eastern mysticism. Far too long has the subject of Satanic magic and philosophy been written down by wild-eyed journalists of the right-hand path.

The old literature is the by-product of brains festering with fear and defeat, written unknowingly for the assistance of those who really rule the earth, and who, from their Hellish thrones, laugh with noisome mirth.

The flames of Hell burn brighter for the kindling supplied by these volumes of hoary misinformation and false prophecy.

Herein you will find truth-and fantasy. Each is necessary for the other to exist; but each must be recognized for

what it is. What you see may not always please you; but you will see!

Here is Satanic thought from a truly Satanic point of view.