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# So It Was Written: The History of The Satanic Bible by Anton Szandor LaVey

*by Magistra Peggy Nadramia, High Priestess of the Church of Satan*

Most religions don't begin with a book; those books come later. They begin with one or two people, who gather other people around them. As a group, they formulate some ideas about their beliefs and they decide what words they'll use to describe themselves and their deities. They collaborate on a liturgy, or maybe one guy goes off into the woods and comes back with some given wisdom. It's written down, or carved into a tree or painted on a cave wall. The big books come about years later, and they're translated and augmented. Different versions appear and different people interpret them differently.

*The Satanic Bible* didn't happen that way. It was born of both inspiration and necessity; it incorporated rituals already in use by a church, and a philosophy that was being expressed in published articles and via other media, but all from the same source: the mind of Anton LaVey. The ideas that were making up the philosophy of Satanism, and their expression through the rituals that had been created to exercise this philosophy, were brought together to write what would become the foundation of the Satanic religion and history's most influential book on Satanism.



LaVey had a very demanding and active congregation, always willing to discuss new ideas, and to exercise and experiment with them. Lectures were being held on an almost daily basis at the Black House on California Street, and Satanic rituals happened every Friday night. His Magic Circle of creative, powerful and intelligent friends was encouraging him to bring this all together in some way; the world was riding the crest of an occult revolution and Satanism was a unique form of this new self-empowerment. It was time to take it, as they say, to a whole other level.

[The Satanic Bible] was born of both inspiration and necessity; [incorporating] rituals already in use..."

Aside from the Satanic wisdom flowing to his Church members via his sermons and essays, Anton LaVey was not yet a writer, by his own admission. But he was a fascinating and eloquent man, and he attracted the friendship of writers, who were lavish in their support and encouragement of their friend Anton. They were eager to see him flex his muscles and get ahead of the wave of interest in Satanism and the "Black Arts." One of these writers was Fred Goerner, the author of *The Search for Amelia Earhart*. Fred was so enthusiastic about LaVey's ideas and so sure *The Satanic Bible* would be a runaway hit, that he talked it up to his own editor at Doubleday, Walter Bradbury:

"During a party I got into a discussion with Anton LaVey, the self-styled head of the Satanic Church of North America... Anton is not as wierd [sic] as he sounds. Along with being articulate and a hell of a salesman, he creates a solid presence... He holds classes several nights a week at his church for young women who want to be witches. Merla and I went one night, and damn if he didn't have forty gals there studying love potions and the like including a course in seducing a male through his own ego. Too much."



Luther Nichols, Doubleday's West Coast editor, called LaVey in February of 1968. Occult books were hot, hot, hot and every publisher wanted to bring out the next bestseller in that category. They had a long chat and that very day, Nichols sent LaVey a letter asking to see the manuscripts for both *The Satanic Bible* and *Practical Enchantment for Women*, a proto-version of *The Compleat Witch* that was based on LaVey's Witches Workshops. Fred Goerner received a letter with the same date from Walter Bradbury, his own editor at Doubleday, thanking Goerner for the referral of LaVey. So there was quite a buzz about *The Satanic Bible* over at one of America's biggest publishers, and I'm sure LaVey was walking on air — and starting to crack the whip over his own head for a change. He had to get to work.

Two weeks later, in March, LaVey received a letter from Mike Hamilburg, Fred Goerner's agent and the son of Mitchell Hamilburg, who had established a successful literary and film agency and was well-known in Hollywood. Mike had been referred to LaVey by Goerner, and had arranged a meeting with the LaVeys in the interim. He was interested in representing LaVey and handling any negotiations with Doubleday, should the need arise — he'd already been in touch with Luther Nichols, "who indicated Doubleday's strong interest in what you are doing." Well, that was encouraging. Knowing something of LaVey's background, Hamilburg included a copy of a book he'd represented, *The Cristianis*, about a famous circus family.

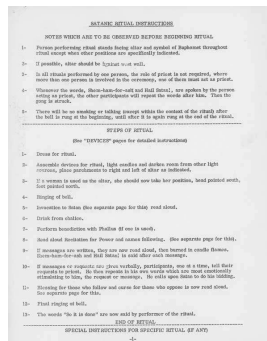
LaVey replied promptly and was completely charmed by this introduction and happy with the gift: "...[it] supplied me with some warm nostalgia in a realm that has grown far too cold." He went on to give a detailed description of the Four Books that he envisioned making up *The Satanic Bible*. This is heady stuff. *The Satanic Bible* has been analyzed by plenty of people over the years, scholars, detractors, Satanists, Christian evangelists, even Catholic doctrinaires. Here is Anton LaVey planning his own book for you, and describing what he hopes will take place in each section:

“The first book, *The Book of Satan*, is a diatribe done in an almost brutalizing way, and in the format of a true bible, with numbered chapters and verses. It is purposely done in an archaic style, and is guaranteed to outrage, from a religious, intellectual, or at least, literary point of view, at least to enough people to cause some wholesale tongue-clucking and fist pounding. Satan represents the fire element, so this section of the bible must scorch!

“The second book is called *The Book of Lucifer*, (the air element, enlightenment) and in rather sane language attempts to enlighten the reader to the truth concerning Satanism. The Satanic views on Heaven and Hell, life after death, God, sin and guilt, the ego, buying and selling of souls, sexual activity, human sacrifice, love and hate, and the evidence of a new Satanic age, are expounded in this section.

“The third book, *The Book of Belial*, (earth) is an instruction manual, written in concise terms, on the theory and practice of ritual magic. There has never been anything written which tells the reader the principles set forth with such blatant detail. The pussy-footing, righteous attitude of all works, both historical and modern, is not to be found here! This is a course in the practical application of *Black* magic, and gets into such tabooed ingredients in the performance of sorcery such as obscene imagery, utilization of repressed desire; how, properly, to hate; proper timing regarding: sleep patterns, accident-prone cycles, lunar phases, menstrual periods, the transmission of adrenal energy, the function of the orgasm in ritual magic, etc. — all described in no-nonsense, non-sanctimonious, language. Herein are to be found the ingredients of charms and spells, hexes and curses.

“The fourth and last section, *The Book of Leviathan*, (water, the roaring sea) contains the actual invocations and incantations used in the performance of Satanic ceremonies and rituals, for such purposes as love, sex, power, compassion, destruction, etc., and calling up names never before encouraged by the writers of puerile books on witchery.”



As confident as he sounds in the above, LaVey was not entirely sure he wasn't coming off as a publishing rube, and qualifies his fervor to his prospective agent thusly:



“I realize that I sound enthused, Mike, and I honestly am. I’ve been collecting every book on magic, sorcery, and witchcraft that I could lay my hands on (including some of the so-called forbidden books) for the better part of my life, and have been so disillusioned, insulted, and disappointed by what I’ve read that I have had to write my own, as a devil’s advocate! ... I have a lot that I wish to say, and having done everything from training lions and tigers, to playing Bach preludes on the organ while accompanying myself on the kazoo, but never having written in my life, I feel my present attack of literary diarrhea was inevitable.”

Anton LaVey was about to set off on a journey to write a book that has empowered Satanists for generations to follow. He was trepidatious, and had every reason to be, as he would find himself both writing and marketing *The Compleat Witch* almost simultaneously, while also putting together the essays that would eventually turn into *The Devil’s Notebook*. His postscript to this same letter was, well, optimistic:

“I expect to have the bible completed within the next month.”

A couple of weeks later, in mid-April 1968, LaVey heard from local pal Burton Wolfe, who was returning the copy of *Rosemary’s Baby* LaVey had loaned him. Wolfe was another of LaVey’s writer compatriots, sharing tips and information about publishing opportunities, after having interviewed the LaVeys at the Black House and covered a Satanic ritual in an article for *Knight Magazine*. LaVey happily reports, “Most of my spare time has been taken with writing the *Satanic Bible*, which Doubleday is very interested in publishing. I’ve got a good agent in L.A. — Michael Hamilburg. He was Fred Goerner’s agent for the Amelia Earhart book, and Fred was quite pleased with what he did for him.”

And indeed, LaVey had reason to be optimistic, as Luther Nichols followed up with the Hamilburg agency at length in a letter from late April:

“It has all sorts of possibilities as a hell-raiser... That Satanic manifesto as a first section for the book ought to start things off with the right kind of demoliton [sic] of orthodoxy before Mr. Levay [sic] moves on to the radical advice and enlightenment (endarkenment?) of the other sections. I like his ‘If a man smite you on one cheek, SMASH him on the other.’ Very realistic in our age of black militants, white Mace-wielders, Vietnam bomb-droppers, and the hired assassins alike.

“The ‘theory and practice’ material for the Book of Belial is interesting. It nicely mixes in existentialism and psychology, among other things, to form a more plausible argument for satanism and its applicability than one might expect. The cultural and scientific climate would seem to be coming to Mr. Levay’s [sic] aid more favorably than it did in the time of de Sade or Huysmans. Certainly the book promises to offer more psychologically sound, practical advice than most of the pietistic ‘right hand path’ stuff that’s fobbed off on the wishful every year. (Norman Vincent Peal, can you hear me?)

“...some improvements might be wrought in the style and organization.... though generally Mr. Levay’s [sic] power of language surprises me... At present it threatens to be a mite fragmented and cloudy — though perforce one might expect a certain amount of that in the realm of magic. Or life, for that matter.

“From what I’ve seen here, it’s my judgment that Doubleday would be very much interested in pursuing *The Satanic Bible*... If this book is sustainedly well-written, well designed (perhaps with appropriately satanic art) and well promoted, it could be a sensation.”

It was full steam ahead for LaVey at this point. A flurry of long-distance phone calls were taking place, but it must be remembered that the cost of such calls, even between cities on the same coast, was prohibitive. That’s a good thing, because we have these wonderful letters to give us insights into a thought process about which we’ve heretofore only guessed.

I’ve been collecting every book on magic, sorcery, and witchcraft that I could lay my hands on and have been so... disappointed, that I have had to write my  
OWN...”

In mid-May, LaVey wrote to his agent, Michael Hamilburg, to give him an update on where he was at with *The Satanic Bible*. He apologizes for not sending the promised enclosures sooner, "...but one thing led to another, and I just kept writing. That combined with the fact that one entire week was devoted to filming a documentary on the Satanic Church for U.C.L.A. is why this comes to you about a week and a half late." This refers to *Satanis*, the infamous documentary on the early Church of Satan with which we're all so familiar. Not everyone may be aware that the film was a student project, for Ray Laurent's Master's thesis in filmmaking.

LaVey was still in touch with Doubleday at this point, and informs Hamilburg: "I called [Luther Nichols] last week to tell him I would be on a local television show and would be reading parts from the Book of Satan on the program. It shook everyone up in the studio so much that the filming had to be done *three* times, which made it impossible for them to film another show that they planned to show the same night (Monday)... Obviously, this is the kind of promotion the Bible is going to need."

He speculates about whether or not any exposition about the Church of Satan itself would be appropriate. "I have purposely avoided reference to the Church of Satan except in my signature following the introduction. Do you think I should include a chapter on the Satanic Church and the whys and wherefores of it? This is a point I'm not too sure about — whether it will add or detract." He's confident that Satanism is the wave of the future, and tells Hamilburg, "the Church of Satan has really started something that is going to be impossible to stop... Knowing that we must strike while the iron is hot, I've been letting everything else go as much as possible, and devoting every minute I can to completing the Satanic Bible."

A few days later, LaVey received a response from Silva Romano, Hamilburg's assistant at the agency; she was writing in Mike's stead as he was handling his father Mitchell's illness. She encouraged LaVey to prepare a chapter on the Church of Satan, so that it would be ready in case the publishers thought it desirable. She also made suggestions about avoiding any topical references, and asked for some expansion on the Enochian language and the Satanic view of life after death. Other than that, she describes what he had already sent as, "just splendid."

LaVey found himself in complete accord with Romano's suggestions for improvement: "I completely agree that sections which are overly topical might detract, and purposely have avoided them when at all possible. Naturally, when dealing with a subject which is intended to criticize the current state of things it is not always easy to avoid reference to specific examples... Actually, when I wrote that short description [of Enochian] it was more of [sic] less just to clarify the reason for its inclusion..." As for life after death, he explains that "when one deals with a subject all the time it becomes second nature and I sometimes tend to over simplify the subject to avoid long winded explanations."

As for a chapter on the Church, which never made it into the Bible, LaVey was pro rather than con. "I am rather glad that you feel a chapter on the Church of Satan might be in order, as the existence of an organized religious body tends to add to the outrageousness of the religion, which is something that is necessary for the salability of it. Since most people who take the time to learn about Satanism usually think it makes sense, we find ourselves lacking controversy. Therefore, I sometimes outrage intentionally. (9 parts acceptability - 1 part outrageousness)."

As of this letter exchange with his agency, Doubleday was still considering the Bible but Romano informed LaVey that they were giving the publisher a two-week deadline before shopping it elsewhere. LaVey agrees: "I am most anxious to get the Bible out in general circulation and want to waste no time in doing so... Each day brings new queries as to the availability of the Bible — and my recent T.V. plugs on interview shows invariably are followed by scores of calls asking, 'when and where can we buy it?'"

He goes on to detail how he's asked a few friends he considers "laymen" and unfamiliar with Satanism, to read his manuscript and tell him whether they feel the information is clear and accessible. "They said that anyone who could read a newspaper would be able to understand the contents of the Bible. This is what I am aiming for, and I am avoiding being too esoteric throughout most of it, although I feel that a certain amount of 'the emperor's new clothes' is necessary to satisfy the hyper-intellectuals, so I've included some (but very little of this sort of thing). The hyper and pseudo-intellectuals do a lot of hair-splitting, but very little else — especially buying. Therefore, I have purposely not gauged the writing style of the Bible with them in mind, but have slanted it towards the layman, who is much more willing to part with his dollar."

On June 10th, Silva Romano again writes briefly and tells LaVey that they're giving Doubleday ten more days to decide, and at that point, will do a simultaneous submission to Random House [the publishers of *Rosemary's Baby*]. She thanks him for the "Pray For Anton LaVey" buttons and assures him that she IS praying for him.

...anyone who could read a newspaper would be able to understand the contents of the Bible. This is what I am aiming for..."

LaVey responds that he thinks Random House is a good choice thanks to the *Rosemary's Baby* connection, and asks her if she's seen the film yet. "I will go to the premiere here next Wed., and will have some of the members of my church there in black robes... I am sending a poster [the Satan Wants You "recruitment" poster] which is now being distributed to local dealers, and possibly will be handled by dealers in L.A. and New York." Romano writes again a couple of weeks later to say that Doubleday is still silent and the plan is to send the manuscript on to Random House. "Thank you for the poster," she tells him. "It's great, and you can be sure it's going up in our office. I'll let you know what comment it evokes."

Hijinks at the "Rosemary's Baby" film premiere ensued, including the aforementioned followers in robes and a midnight arrival in a hearse, but LaVey quickly returned to his typewriter and on July 13, 1968 he sent five more chapters to Silva Romano at the agency: On the Choice of a Human Sacrifice, Not All Vampires Suck Blood, Satanic Sex, The Balance Factor, and The Church of Satan. His descriptions of these chapters are fairly straightforward. It's noteworthy that he wrote the "Vampires" chapter, "to clarify what is meant by 'responsibility,' in the Satanic concept... [and] in which situations and towards which types of people we believe we should and should not be expected to feel responsible."

It was somewhat revelatory to read LaVey's questions, and the doubts he expresses, as he takes the first step toward becoming the famous and notorious author of a book that hasn't gone out of print in fifty years. We always associate the man with a stern sort of confidence, not pompous or arrogant, but certainly fired with conviction for the truth his philosophy represents. Hence, when you see him asking for advice, it's surprising but completely in keeping with his character — lacking expertise in this new area, he is humble enough to seek guidance from someone else:

“Since I have never written anything commercially, I am terribly ‘green’ concerning the writing and publishing field. I have absolutely no idea how long it usually takes to find a publisher, or what appeals to them. Does it normally take this long to obtain a publisher, or do you think there may be a reason or reasons we have been unable to interest one in the Bible. If you have had more trouble than usual in selling it, do you think it could be due to the rather controversial nature of the book, or does it leave something to be desired? Is the writing below par, or is the subject matter not handled as well as it might be? Could we be shooting too high regarding the publishers we have tried? Please be frank, and advise me of anything you feel might be changed to improve its salability.”

Regarding the interest from Doubleday, of which they’d had every reason to feel confident and were now beginning to doubt, LaVey speculates, “Perhaps [Luther Nichols] was only being polite... It has crossed my mind that a large publishing firm might be wary of handling the Bible for fear it might besmirch its respectable reputation. I’d like to know your thoughts on this... It seems as though every time I go in a bookstore I see more books on the black arts, Satanism, and religious cults. If these subjects are as popular as they appear to be, it would seem that, unless there is something that is technically lacking in the Bible, we shouldn’t have too much trouble getting it published. As I mentioned once before, I am rather concerned that someone might jump the gun on us, and write a Satanic Bible and have it published by some fly-by-night publisher. Even though the contents of such a book would undoubtedly be the same hackneyed drivel that has always been in books on Satanism, it would ruin it for us as far as the title is concerned.”

A couple of weeks later, toward the end of July, LaVey heard from his friend Burton Wolfe, who sent a copy of the issue of *Knight* that contained his article on LaVey and the Church. “I think it’s the best story that’s been done so far,” he told him in a response, “and I certainly appreciate your objective handling of it, and feel that the bit of sensationalism [he was referring to the lurid cover blurb] in it was necessary.”

LaVey goes on to inform Wolfe that “the manuscript for the *Satanic Bible* is now with Doubleday and Random House, and I’m waiting for word from my agent, as to their decision. It’s pretty strong stuff, and should not only shake up the religious world, but the so-called magical groups and followers of the occult as well, as it points out that most witchcraft groups are either just another offshoot of Christianity or sex clubs using Satanism for an excuse.”

August was quiet, and we can only suppose that while the publishing world, led by New York City, went into vacation mode, LaVey kept banging away at the keyboard. In September, he sent his Enochian Keys to Silva Romano, and asked again for any news from the publishers. He mentions his friend, Marcello Truzzi, who has volunteered to put in a good word anywhere they think it could be useful. Truzzi recommended they contact Prentice-Hall [the eventual publisher of *The Compleat Witch* hardcover] and had already spoken to an editor there, who seemed interested. LaVey is intrigued by this possibility, as “they just published Sybil Leek’s book, *Diary Of a Witch*, (another ‘white witchcraft book’ book filled with sanctimonious drivel. Ho hum!) but still in the vein of the supernatural and the occult.” At this time, Truzzi had a book in the works at Random House and offered to drop a line there, as well. LaVey mentions Truzzi’s proposal to him that they collaborate:

“A few months ago, Marcello approached me on the possibility of co-authoring a book called ‘Cauldron Cookery,’ a sort of recipe book for witches. I told him that until the *Satanic Bible* was published, I thought I should concentrate on things of a more serious nature, as something like ‘Cauldron Cookery’ might hamper the credibility of the Bible... At any rate, I thought I’d let you know about these possibilities, for whatever they’re worth.”

From the tone of LaVey’s letter, it’s clear that he’s beginning to be discouraged as well as impatient. “Originally, I was very intent upon obtaining a publisher with a rather ‘stuffy’ reputation, as I thought it would confound the public to see the *Satanic Bible* published by a house such as this, and as a matter of fact, I still feel this way. However, we may just be beating our heads against stone walls. What do you think about trying a publisher with a reputation for handling more confrontational works — such as Gove [sic] Press?”

He goes on to tell Romano that in between his sessions at the typewriter, he’s been working to record “The Satanic Mass” album, “which will have readings from the *Satanic Bible* on one side, and the Satanic ritual on the other.” He further speculates that it would be helpful to have *The Satanic Bible* out at the same time, which is scheduled to be

around Halloween, less than two months away. Again, this was more than optimistic — it was fairly naive as to the amount of time it would take to complete the book we now know as *The Satanic Bible*.

Another month went by, one in which LaVey's frustration only grew. As Halloween 1968 approached, he was probably deluged with media requests and had nothing to plug as he made the rounds of the local radio and TV stations. He addressed another letter to his agent, Mike Hamilburg:

"I don't know why we have not been able to interest a publisher, but whether it is because it's too hot an item and publishers are afraid to handle it, or because it just plain isn't good enough, we simply can't stall any longer. It is very frustrating to see all the Satanic literature coming out, not to mention the Satanic influence in other fields — music, movies, theatre, etc. — and know that I am responsible for the whole thing, and can't even get my book published.

"We have to get this book out before everyone thinks, when we finally do get it published, that we are just jumping on the bandwagon instead of leading the parade. There is every indication that 1969 will be the big year for witchcraft and Satanism, and so the sooner the Bible is in print, the better. Perhaps I am being naive, but I think the book is good, the only problem being that by the time it's in print everyone else will have said what's in it before me. Do you think we might be aiming too high, because there is so much inferior material on the subject being ground out by the reams by any number of publishers. They are even dredging up old material and reprinting it. It seems like anything with the label of Satanism or witchcraft will sell, so maybe if we try a smaller publisher we will get some results.

"Our recording, 'The Satanic Mass,' went to press about three days ago [October 6, 1968] and should be available to the public (we hope) right before Halloween...The notes on the back of the record jacket tells a little about the church and the *Satanic Bible*, and a brief background on myself. Of course, I'm quite enthused about this, since it will at least safeguard the title, the *Satanic Bible*, for us, and will do much to interest people in it.

"Still, it's rather embarrassing to be the founder and leader of the fastest growing, most controversial religion in the world, and not have so much as one book to give to my followers, much less the rest of the public. With this in mind, I think it my duty to make our philosophy available to people, and am seriously considering a Vanity Press publication of the Bible, unless we are able to interest a publisher — *any* publisher — within one more month. I have been talking to some of the members of the church about the feasibility of printing it ourselves, so if we can't get it published any other way in the near future, I will have the information needed if we plan to go ahead with it... I'm sorry if I sound a bit impatient, but I believe in practicing what I preach, which means not sitting back and hoping for something to happen, but acting in a positive way which will *make* it happen."

Well, that letter must have awakened Mike from his doldrums — or maybe it was just a combination of LaVey's mounting vexation going out into the ethers and an agent who had just seen a lucrative property slipping through his fingers. One week later, Hamilburg called LaVey with the good news that Avon Books had expressed an interest in *The Satanic Bible*, and the editor to contact was Peter Mayer.

A little bit about Peter Mayer: at the time of his encounter with Anton LaVey, he was in his early thirties but was already a top editor at Avon; a couple of years later, he founded the Overlook Press in Woodstock, NY, which is still in existence today. A bit of a whiz kid, he earned a Ford Foundation scholarship to Columbia, studied at Oxford, and received a Fulbright scholarship to study German literature at the Freie Universität Berlin. After Avon, he moved on to Penguin Books where he made waves by signing Salman Rushdie and *The Satanic Verses* — one editor, two famous Satanic books.

After hearing from Hamilburg (and, one imagines, dancing a devilish jig around his office), LaVey sent Peter Mayer the first of many letters to follow, introducing himself and suggesting that they meet in a few weeks when Mayer was supposed to be visiting the West Coast. A week or so later, LaVey followed up with his agent, having had no response from Mayer, but reporting that, at Hamilburg's suggestion, he'd sent the editor a "Satan Wants You" poster. He goes on to report that he'll be traveling to New York City, with a stopover in Cleveland, the first week of November and asking if there is anyone he should contact while there. As the publication of *The Satanic Bible* was still in the future, it can be assumed that this trip was promoting "The Satanic Mass" album.

...it's rather embarrassing to be the founder and leader of the fastest growing, most controversial religion in the world, and not have so much as one book to give to my followers..."

A series of telephone calls are suspected to have happened in the interim, but by December 19, 1968, Peter Mayer was writing directly to LaVey and requesting copies of the five-part series the *National Insider* had recently published on the Church of Satan. LaVey relayed the request on to Mike Resnick, the author of the series, and wrote back to Mayer, saying he'd heard from Carol Sturm Smith. Carol had been assigned to work directly with LaVey on the manuscript. "She writes a very cordial letter," LaVey observed, "and I am certain we will work well together." A new mother and a resident of New York's Lower East Side Alphabet City, Smith did indeed write to LaVey in late December 1968 on pretty stationery with a pale blue border, that belied the friendly-but-stern list of demands for the remainder of the manuscript and additional material as soon as possible. He wrote back right after the beginning of the year: "I think you will find me to be very agreeable to most suggestions, and ask only that the philosophy and actual ceremonies remain unchanged. I fully realize the value of professional advice and assistance with the continuity and polished presentation of the book, and therefore, am open to your expert recommendations."

Shortly afterward, LaVey sent off an updated outline as Smith had requested, and included a letter detailing his thought process and expressing some concerns:

"The section on the Black Mass is nearly completed and will be sent to you as soon as I finish it. It will be rather brief, as there has been much written on this subject in other books. I will cover a few little-known historical points and will include a description of a contemporary Black Mass as practiced in the Church of Satan. The reason I do not wish to dwell heavily on this subject, is that most people have the misconception that *all* Satanic rituals are Black Masses, and this, of course, is completely untrue. We practice the traditional Black Mass only occasionally, and on these occasions it is performed merely as a catharsis for a member who feels he needs it, or as an illustration of what has been done in the past.

"The Enochian Keys which went to my agent were, I am afraid, badly reproduced with many typographical errors. I had one of my members type it for me, as my secretary was extremely busy at the time, and I did not discover until after they had been sent that the young lady was not the typist she claimed to be. Therefore, I will have my secretary retype them and send them to you probably in a week or so. I am sure you haven't been able to make much sense out of them, but in their proper form they are really quite powerful."

He addresses his difficulty in writing the chapter on the Church of Satan. "It was rather difficult to write because in order to write it in the first person, it would sound terribly egotistic. Therefore, with the help of other members, it was written in the second person; but by so doing it simply does not fit into the continuity of the book. Do you feel it should be included in the body of the book under its existing chapter heading?... I am in a bit of a quandary regarding this chapter, and only wrote it to cooperate with my agent's suggestion..."

In mid-January, LaVey wrote to Silva Romano at the Hamilburg Agency to prod them about his contract. "Before we progress much farther, I would like to have the contract taken care of." Romano's letter with the contracts crossed this letter in the mail, and arrived immediately, but there was a slight concern. "Until now, I assumed the title, 'The Satanic Bible,' was acceptable to Peter, but the contract states a tentative title of 'Bible of the Church of Satan.' I can see the reasons for either title being appropriate, but I feel very strongly about stressing the *bible* image. Is it possible that if I sign the contract Avon might be able to put any title they choose on it, because I have not specified a certain title in the contract? I merely want to safeguard myself against the possibility of them selecting a title such as, (I'm giving ludicrous examples) 'Inside The Church of Satan', or 'A Handbook for Satanists'."

In February, editor Carol Sturm Smith's response to LaVey's updated outline arrived along with the excuse for the delay: her entire family, herself, her husband and her baby, had the Hong Kong Flu. As a New York City resident at the time, I vividly remember this bit of medical history, only the third pandemic flu to reach the United States in the 20th century. While not particularly deadly, it was extremely contagious.

Smith agrees that the chapter on the Church of Satan doesn't work in the book at all, "because the section remains basically a first-person look at the Church of Satan." She suggests that it would simply be better to have someone else expand it as a mini-biography of the author "because it is exactly this information — which is probably well-enough

known and therefore deemed ‘unimportant’ to the members of the Church — that the general public you hope will buy the Bible is interested in... and it is this information which will help humanize the Church for those who are either unaware of its existence or who would write it off as a conglomeration of ‘nuts.’”

[The Satanic Bible should be packaged] in a plain, stark black jacket with the lettering and symbol of Baphomet in silver as the only ornamentation.”

In analyzing the structure of the Bible, its division into four “books,” she stresses that as a whole it “will serve the dual purpose of providing the liturgy for the Church members and an explanation for the public.” She suggests that LaVey take a look at Timothy Leary’s new book, *High Priest*, as it has title pages for each section that might serve as a model for how each Book would be presented. It was also important to Smith that whatever “house literature” the Church of Satan was using amongst its members, and which was to be incorporated into the Bible, be completely consistent in spelling and punctuation, and so at this time she requested copies of the mimeos the members had been receiving as part of their membership materials.

To add to his writing burden at this time, and increase his sense of urgency, LaVey received an interesting proposition from Michael Resnick, the editor of *National Insider*. Resnick had recently completed a five-part series on the Church of Satan. Would LaVey like to write a WEEKLY column for the paper, answering letters from his constituents? Money was involved, and the offer was accepted, turning into the column we all know now as “Letters From the Devil.”

After a few weeks back at his typewriter, LaVey answered Carol Sturm Smith in late February with a solution to the problem of the Church of Satan chapter. After reading her last letter to his friend Burton Wolfe, Burton offered to write it, and so the LaVey biographical details ultimately became part of the Introduction, penned by Wolfe, and LaVey’s own Introduction became the Preface. The Church of Satan chapter itself was scrapped.

[In listing Wolfe’s many publishing credits for Smith, LaVey also mentions that for a time, Wolfe was the ghost writer for Hugh Hefner’s “The Playboy Philosophy” column. If you’ve ever marveled at how “Satanic” Playboy’s principles of sexual freedom and indulgence seem, well, this may be a clue.]

The Enochian Keys continued to evolve, and in this same letter, LaVey gives us some fascinating insight into how they did:

“I am revising the English translation of the [Enochian] Keys considerably... as they were translated during a period when the Satanist was far more of an underground soul than he need be now. So, naturally, they have a rather defeatist tone. I am eliminating this feeling and returning them to the original meaning as expressed in the camouflage provided by the Enochian. This will be a freely translated version, rather than a word-for-word one, as the Keys are very esoteric and tend to be a bit rambling because of that esotericism. The new unexpurgated version I will be sending makes far more sense, will be easily understood by most, and, therefore, will serve the purpose for which they were intended...emotionally stimulating and diabolically correct incantations for various purposes. I will also add notations on each indicating the situations for which they are to be employed. I would like it to be clearly stated that this translation is, ‘the unexpurgated version, translated by Anton LaVey.’ I have two reasons for this: first, I want my followers to be aware that these, and only these, are truly Satanic and give the original meaning of the Keys, instead of the shrouded, white-light, sterilized meaning which has been given by those few conscience-stricken, and fear-ridden interpreters who have offered them to scholars of the occult, in the past. Secondly, I will take fiendish delight in envisioning the reaction of so-called magicians and witches when they find that I have had the ‘audacity’ to present their ‘forbidden’ odes in their original, blasphemous form. Not even the ‘evilest’ of their messiahs has dared that! I would find this most amusing.”

At around the same time, LaVey wrote to Peter Mayer, as he’d been instructed to keep him up-to-date on his media appearances. LaVey informs him that the March 1969 issue of *Playboy* has an article, “Cultsville USA,” which is, in part, on the Church of Satan. “It’s a snidely-written piece throughout, and lumps us in with all the white-light, mystical groups, but it does reach a vast market and they spell the name right... Caravel Films, an Italian film company that did ‘Mondo Cane’ just completed a film segment on us that will be part of a documentary on magic. It will be released in Europe in Sept. under the name ‘Magic Report’, and here in the States in Dec. possibly under the title of ‘The Power of

Magic.’” The title for this film evolved to “Angeli Bianchi... Angeli Neri,” or “White Angel, Black Angel,” and then “Witchcraft ‘70.” The director, Luigi Scattini, lost control of the film before it was released and it was edited into a sensational, snarkily-narrated piece of shock-schlock you may purchase today on DVD.

LaVey goes on to again express his concern over the title of the book; apparently, Carol Sturm Smith didn’t like either *The Satanic Bible* OR *The Bible of the Church of Satan* as titles. He goes to bat once more for *The Satanic Bible*, “...for several reasons. First, I think it is more outrageous than the other title, and secondly, it is the name we established for the book. For example: the record refers to it as ‘The Satanic Bible’, as have innumerable articles. Many people in the media are waiting and watching for my ‘Satanic Bible’, also all the members have been hearing of the prospective text on Satanism for some time under that title... Also... the dignified presentation would be accomplished best by packaging the book in a plain, stark black jacket with the lettering and symbol of Baphomet in silver as the only ornamentation.”

On March 6, 1969, LaVey wrote to Carol Sturm Smith to inform her that he’d sent the Enochian Keys and “The Black Mass” via air mail under separate cover, and was working on copy for the title pages of all four Books. He also instructs her to change the word “Shamad” to “Saitan” in the section on the Infernal Names. And he asks, one more time, if anyone can confirm his fervent hope, that his book will be titled, “The Satanic Bible.”

LaVey wrote to Peter Mayer a couple of weeks later, with the news that Murgenstrumm Records was planning national distribution of “The Satanic Mass” album to coincide with the release of the book. He wondered if it would be possible for the two items to be cross-promoted — would Avon be willing to include a mention of the album somewhere in *The Satanic Bible*? He also informed Mayer that *Playboy* had solicited two response letters from LaVey, one as a follow-up to the “Cultsville U.S.A.” article mentioned above, and another to a piece by ex-Reverend Harvey Cox, “Religion and Morality.”

Mayer sent a letter on March 24th, telling LaVey not to worry about the book’s title: “We’ll work it out together... As for the publication date, it can’t possibly be until the fall. For us to have managed April 1 would have meant having the completed manuscript by January 15. Sorry, but the date you would have liked was an outside shot on the order of an impossibility.” On April 11th, Mayer again wrote to LaVey, telling him it wouldn’t be appropriate to promote “The Satanic Mass” in the pages of the *Bible*: “...it sounds hucksterish. Please do send me all mentions of the Church of Satan for our file. Carol says that the book is coming along all right, but not as fast as she or you or I would like.”

In fact, Carol also wrote to LaVey at this time, nudging him for the answers to a series of queries she’d sent, plus the Church of Satan chapter and the title pages for the Books. She makes reference to a recent earthquake in California: “We in the east are all relieved that California is still firmly attached to the rest of the mainland,” and this must have been the Borrego Mountain Earthquake of April 8th, 1969.

LaVey wrote back immediately and assured her that he’d get the Church of Satan chapter in the mail that night. “Let me know what you think of it — I like it.” He also assures her he’ll get to work on the title pages and will try to have them in the mail in a week. The query pages she mentions, however, are a mystery — he never received them. “I don’t know if it’s the San Francisco P.O. or New York’s, but I hope you have copies so you won’t have to go to the trouble of composing them a second time.”

Two weeks later, he wrote to Smith again, responding to some corrections he’d received. The references are rather tantalizing, as he doesn’t specify what the corrections were. “I think for the most part the corrections you’ve made are in order and even the ones I’ve asked you to leave as I have them are reasonable suggestions. I can see your reasons for suggesting they be changed, but have definite purposes for wanting them left as they are.” He tells her he is enclosing the “introduction by Burton Wolfe.” It’s unclear if this is now how he’s referring to “the chapter on the Church of Satan.” He also sends along the title page copy for one of the four Books and promises the other three “sometime this week.” At this point, Carol Sturm Smith must have been accustomed to taking these promises with a grain of salt.

It took LaVey three more weeks to write to Smith again, sending more of the promised material. He mentions getting “side-tracked by other things.” Well, one of those other things was a letter from Thomas Lipscomb of Prentice-Hall, expressing interest in publishing LaVey’s next book as a hardcover. In the middle of trying to get his last writing done on *The Satanic Bible*, LaVey was starting to put together the book we now know as *The Satanic Witch*. He wrote to his agent, Mike Hamilburg, right away with concern over the exclusivity clause in his contract with Avon — did this pertain to hardcovers as well? “Any future books I do I would rather have in hardcover, first.” He goes on to ask Hamilburg if he knows of any lecture bureaus he could approach about the many requests he is receiving for public talks about Satanism. “From the many letters I receive from colleges, there seems to be a great deal of interest for me to speak at various universities and colleges around the country. For some time now I have put off looking into this matter, but every time I receive another inquiry concerning my lecture fees and booking dates, it brings it to mind again.”



Around the same time, LaVey was approached by William Targ, an editor at Putnam's who had been referred to LaVey by Burton Wolfe. He was interested in publishing a book on "any aspects of occultism in which you are concerned." LaVey responded cordially, sending a copy of "The Satanic Mass" and the "Satan Wants You" poster. He referred him on to Avon Books about possibly producing a hardcover edition of *The Satanic Bible*, as Avon was a paperback publisher. Targ was happy to receive the album and promised he would "...play the album when I get home tonight and am sure I will enjoy it. When my friend Ira Levin visits me next, I will of course play it for him too!"

Back at *The Satanic Bible*, it's amusing to see him employ a little Lesser Magic with his apology to Smith, observing that this delay gave her a chance to spend more time with her baby. "Children can certainly be a wonderful buffer for a fast-paced existence — my five year old is a constant source of entertainment for me!"

His letter goes on to talk about the appearance of the book itself. "Concerning illustrations, the only things available are the much-used old engravings of demons, etc. Avon has appeared to me to use artwork far superior to other paperback houses for their covers. In this case I would *rather* the cover be almost frightening in its formality — black background with silver cloister text and silver or possibly scarlet symbol of Baphomet (the inverted pentagram held by the dragon on this letterhead) directly under text in center of cover. Using this cover format might allow for art costs normally expended on cover design to be diverted to the inside black and white artwork, which definitely would set the Bible apart from other paperbacks. Nymphs, satyrs, demons, bat-winged figures, flames hovering over and/or surrounding pages would, I'm sure, pay off in the long run." Ultimately, all that were used were several images from the Church of Satan stationery, which we believe were sketched by LaVey himself.

He finished up by instructing Smith about other items: "At the beginning of the entire Bible I want a solitary page reading: For Diane. At the end of the Bible I want one final page empty except for the words, 'Yankee Rose'." For those who were hoping for one, I regret to inform you that there was no explanation provided.

In mid-June, LaVey sent off another copy of "The Satanic Mass" album to Avon; they would use the graphic of the Baphomet symbol on the jacket for the cover of *The Satanic Bible*.

As the editing went forward on the *Bible*, LaVey's agents were in contact with other publishers about bringing the book out in hardcover. Silva Romano wrote to LaVey to confirm for him that Peter Mayer at Avon was amenable to the idea and thought that Putnam's might be a good place for the book. Unfortunately, before the end of June, Putnam's gave *The Satanic Bible* a quick and hard pass, with William Targ citing "house policy" about not bringing out a hardcover after a paperback edition has already been released. As we all know, this is exactly what eventually happened, and it was just one more way LaVey's little black book was breaking every mold.

[The Satanic Bible] is the only *published* work on the subject of Satanism, by a Satanist."

When July came, LaVey felt compelled to again bring up the subject of the title with his editor, Peter Mayer. It becomes quite clear that the Avon team had been putting off answering LaVey in any final context on this issue, and one can easily sense and share his frustration. "Since Burton Wolfe's book, *The Satanists*, is now going into final editing and mentions my book in its context, I would like to clear up the indecision concerning the title for my Bible. As you know, I still prefer my original title, the *Satanic Bible*, for several reasons. First, because it has become 'popular knowledge' that that will be the name of it... Also, I simply think it is more phonetic and hard-hitting than any other alternative that has been suggested. You haven't specifically said that you are opposed to that title, but since there has been some discrepancy about it, I would assume you have some reservations... If you feel strongly about your proposed title, *The Bible of the Church of Satan*, I could only go along with it if the cover format stressed 'The Bible' (perhaps three times larger than the rest of the title)."

Perhaps it was the lack of feedback of any kind on this issue that frustrated LaVey the most, but we may all thank the infernal deity of our choice, that the right decision was made. It's impossible to imagine this book with any other title, and it could be argued that LaVey had the future in mind when he chose it — I believe much of *The Satanic Bible's* longevity can be attributed to the strong, essential message conveyed by that title.

As an aside, it's somewhat ironic that Wolfe's book, *The Satanists*, was being held up for confirmation of LaVey's title — ultimately, *The Satanists* became *The Devil's Avenger*.

LaVey goes on. “I have one small change I’d like to make to my acknowledgement page if I can. Directly under the name, Mark Twain, I’d like George Bernard Shaw inserted — with brackets between Twain and Shaw and instead of ‘a very brave man’ after Twain, ‘very brave men’ following the brackets — in other words, one statement for both men.” They never made this correction. However, Avon did manage to correct Bernardino “Logaro” to “Nogaro” — with the 7th printing. Better late than never?

LaVey then asks Mayer about the possibility of a few unbound copies of the book to be sent to him for special binding, for himself and some select Church members. Keeping current with reports of the latest publicity, LaVey mentions the review of “The Satanic Mass” album in the July 1969 issue of *Playboy*, and the four-page article on the Church in the *Detroit Free Press* Sunday supplement for June 15th.

At this time LaVey also wrote to Nancy Coffey, a Managing Editor at Avon, who had been requesting an author’s photo. LaVey had conducted a photo session for professional photographer John Hendricks, who, in lieu of payment, had offered LaVey his choice of photos to be used as he wished. “I thought this one would be best, as it shows me in the clerical collar. However, I have one other I considered, which shows me with my lion. The composition is excellent and the picture is good of both the lion and myself.” Nancy was happy and assured him, “the photo will reproduce very well and we’ll return it to you when we have finished with it.” She was able to confirm that the book would be out in December and that the Church would be receiving 500 copies directly from the bindery, but that Avon would not be able to provide any unbound copies.

In August 1969, LaVey heard directly from Avon’s publicity department for the first time. Judy Weber sent him a questionnaire asking for the standard biographical details. Under “Past Occupations,” he reports the same list of jobs with which we’re all familiar: “symphony oboist (age 16), carnival worker: (sideshows, ‘girlie’ shows, fortune teller, ‘spook’ show), circus wild animal trainer, concert organist, calliope player, music teacher, pianist for burlesque houses, clinical hypnotist, psychical researcher or ‘ghost hunter’, architectural designer, criminologist, painter (oils), lecturer.” His interests and hobbies are also consistent with what LaVey has always spoken of, with some interesting details: “...magic and the occult, obviously — classical music and wild animals fondest loves. Owned and kept a 500 lb., male African lion in San Francisco townhouse for over three years. Lion’s name: ‘Togare.’ Lion now at S.F. Zoo, and father of four male cubs named: Satan, Lucifer, Belial, Leviathan. Announcement of my name and the Church of Satan is given in reference to donator of lion, on all Zoo tours.”

Unfortunately, this questionnaire had arrived with his name and the book’s title already filled out: “The Bible of the Church of Satan.” LaVey headed to his typewriter and doggedly pounded out yet-another letter to Avon, this one addressed to Managing Editor Nancy Coffey, informing her of all the sales inquiries they were receiving at Central, and presenting his case one more time:

“I was under the assumption that the question of title had been resolved and that it was to be the *Satanic Bible*, but when I received my ‘author questionnaire’, the title was given as: *Bible of the Church of Satan*. Was this because the publicity department had not yet been notified of the correct name, or is there still some discrepancy? I definitely want it published under my original title, and feel it would be foolhardy to negate the advance publicity I’ve been doing, by throwing prospective buyers off the track with a different title.”

In mid-September, LaVey heard from Silva Romano at the Hamilburg agency, informing him that galleys would be sent in around three weeks, and that she and Peter Mayer hoped to have them at that year’s Frankfurt Book Fair, one of the publishing world’s biggest events. Shortly afterward, a piece of mail arrived that must have had LaVey twitching his barbed tail in joy and satisfaction: Nancy Coffey sent a cover proof, replete with its title glowing ominously from its all-black cover: *The Satanic Bible*. This was no dream; this was really happening.

In October, he wrote back to Coffey expressing his delight in the cover and passing on how impressed everyone is when he shows it off. He was planning a Halloween press tour to Detroit, Michigan and then on to New York, and explained with devilish glee what he planned to do with the cover proof he’d received:

“The Lou Gordon Show in Detroit has asked me several times in the past six months to appear... I told [the producer] I wouldn’t have the Bible before Dec. 1st, but would have the proof of the cover... I couldn’t see any reason why I couldn’t just put the cover on another paperback and use the tried and true formula of magic — misdirection — and go ahead and promote the book.”

He was always trying to pass on any new publicity, so he reported that the November 1969 issue of *Confidential* was carrying a new article about Sharon Tate that included his quotes, and he mentioned Hans Holzer: “The Truth About Witchcraft, by Hans Holzer — published by Doubleday has close to a chapter on myself and the Church, which is fairly good if you can overlook the glaring inaccuracies in spelling and other areas.”

After receiving an inquiry from Judy Weber, his publicity representative at Avon, he wrote confirming the dates he'd be in New York City and expressing his eagerness to meet her and his other contacts at Avon. While in New York, he stayed at the Barbizon Plaza Hotel, a venerable old place that was built only a month after Anton LaVey was born. It was across the street from Central Park, and close to Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. If Guy Woodhouse was around, he might have observed that he could walk to all the theaters from there.

The publicity trip went well, and the LaVeys were able to meet with Coffey and Weber while they were in New York. Judy Weber tried to put LaVey in touch with a reporter from a large news service, who made the mistake of calling at 9:00 a.m. on a Sunday morning after LaVey had been working all night, and getting a mite pushy and entitled about needing an interview. He probably never made that mistake again.

What was LaVey working on, now that *The Satanic Bible* had “gone to bed?” Why, *The Compleat Witch*, of course. Negotiations with Tom Lipscomb at Prentice-Hall had been completed and contracts were being sent. But that's a story for another day.

In late November, LaVey updated his agency again, and said he was waiting for his shipment of promotional copies of the Bible to arrive so he could start promoting it. “I realize that normally paperback books are more difficult to get reviewed than are hardcover books, but I have more opportunities to reach the public than most writers.” Silva Romano responded a couple of weeks later assuring him that Avon had confirmed that the shipment of 500 copies had just gone out, and enclosing the remainder of his advance from Avon minus commission: a check for \$1,012.50.

Sometime during the last week of November, 1969 (right in time for Thanksgiving), the first Satanic Bibles arrived at the Black House. Personalized autographed copies dated November 27, 1969 and November 29, 1969 have been identified for our records.

There's no direct evidence or observations of Anton LaVey's reaction to receiving his first copy of *The Satanic Bible*. We can work from the supposition that it was very, very satisfying. I see him holding it, passing his hand over the cover, sitting down to flip through it at length — then walking into his ritual chamber and placing it on the altar. Perhaps a joyful dinner with friends was quickly arranged; certainly, I expect a few bottles were uncorked.

One of the questions on the author survey from Avon was, “What sort of reaction to your book do you anticipate?” He answered:

“None other than what would be expected in presenting the most blasphemous and controversial religion in the ‘civilized’ world... My book is a bible written by a self-admitted Satanist for Satanists (or would-be Satanists), and those seeking the *truth* about same. It's the only volume of its kind in the history of religion. This is the only *published* work on the subject of Satanism, by a Satanist.”

In the preceding article, I've detailed weeks and months, of the deadlines he pushed him; the marketplace pushed manuscript into being. He listened, but have tried to tell you that he always p in this very room — to assure us that

To fifty years of *The Satanic Bible*! He

Read Magistra Nadramia's [Addendum](#)

of the book, piece by piece, over would not accept. The editors of Satan pushed him to get that ted to write. There are those who nough evidence here — and tonight,

[Satanic Bible](#)”

**Peggy Nadramia**

High Priestess of the Church of Satan

We Are Legion

Warlock Corvis Nocturnum on T...



SUGGESTED READING

[Addendum to "So It Was Written: The History of The Satanic Bible"](#)

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[The Satanic Mass — A Shot Heard Round the World](#)

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[The History of the Origin of the Sigil of Baphomet](#)

A Moment In Time



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