



# Temple of Set

Post Office Box 470307  
San Francisco, CA 94147

Michael A. Aquino, Ph.D.  
High Priest of Set

## COMMENTS CONCERNING “PRETENDERS TO THE THRONE” BY “PETER GILMORE” July 5, 1990 (updated)

*The essay “Pretenders to the Throne” first appeared in a 1990 issue of the British occult newsletter Dark Lily as an unsigned article. The original version of these “Comments” was published by the Temple of Set in Britain in July 1990 by way of response.*

*Years later an Anton LaVey disciple, Peter Gilmore, claimed credit for the unsigned “Pretenders”. However Gilmore, who had nothing to do with either LaVey or his “Church of Satan” business until the mid-1980s, had no personal knowledge concerning any of the historical topics discussed in “Pretenders”. Nor would any of Anton’s other 1980s fans. Clearly the essay was written by Anton LaVey personally, sent to Dark Lily anonymously, and then later publicly assigned to “Gilmore” to avoid (greater) embarrassment to Anton.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Anton LaVey commences “Pretenders” with the claim that the Church of Satan (C/S) has continued as a viable organization for the past 25 years. In fact the Church functioned for only 10 years - from its founding in 1966 to its collapse in 1975, when Anton announced a policy to prostitute it for his personal financial gain.<sup>1</sup>

After June 1975 Anton continued to use its name as a front for his personal business<sup>2</sup>, but the former network of a nationwide Priesthood, functioning local Grottos, and Regional Agents, publications, and Conclaves was nonexistent.

---

<sup>1</sup> Anton LaVey, enclosure to letter, Diane LaVey to M.A. Aquino, 5/20/75.

<sup>2</sup> Anton LaVey, declaration under oath, Chapter 11 bankruptcy, 4/22/92

From time to time since 1975, Anton, who continued to be a colorful and charismatic character, attracted a few personal fans. These generally hovered for awhile, made dramatic statements of loyalty & enthusiasm, and occasionally even tried to start a Grotto in imitation of the original pre-1975 Church. But sooner or later such persons either faded away or were jettisoned, for the simple reason that there was no actual organization underlying Anton's continued use of the Church's name. Moreover the more anyone discovered about the actual history of the Church and Anton's 1975 betrayal of it, the more unwelcome he became at court.

Anton's identification of the "short-lived spinoffs" is only partially correct. The Church of Satanic Brotherhood was in fact started by a disgruntled expellee from the C/S, John DeHaven, in imitation of the C/S. What Anton conveniently forgets to mention is that, after first expelling and then scorning DeHaven for years, he suddenly became receptive to DeHaven's overtures in 1976 - a time when he was looking for any way possible to preserve the image of a still-functioning C/S.<sup>3</sup>

The Ordo Templi Satanus was the creation of another ex-C/S member, Joseph Daniels, whom I later invited to rejoin the C/S if he would apologize to Anton for unjust comments he had made concerning him. Daniels publicly apologized - then continued to be rejected for readmission by Anton.

The Order of the Black Ram was an "Aryan supremacist" group in Michigan and Canada, run by one "Seth Typhon". Far from discouraging it, Anton in January 1975 instructed Magister John Ferro to write him "wishing him success in his endeavors".<sup>4</sup>

No "Church of Lucifer" came into contact with the Church of Satan during the 1966-75 period.

Thee Orthodox Satanic Church of the Nephelim Rite was a short-lived, independent group in Chicago in the early 1970s, headed by one Terry Taylor. Outside of its having the word "Satanic" in its title, there was no evidence that it attempted to imitate the C/S in any way.

Hence Anton's current posture that all of these groups were imitators of the C/S with which he was unconcerned and which he did not court is not accurate.

---

<sup>3</sup> Letter, John Makeig to M.A. Aquino, 10/21/76.

<sup>4</sup> Letter, John Ferro to "Seth Typhon", 1/7/75.

We come now to Anton's direct attack on the Temple of Set (which is scarcely "short-lived", since it has existed over three times longer than the original C/S).

Anton asserts that the Grotto system of the C/S was "recognized as obsolete in 1974". The truth is quite the contrary. The Grotto (local group of C/S members) system was begun in 1970 to enable Satanists outside of San Francisco to develop the same sort of friendships and cooperative magical programs which the original San Francisco C/S - thereafter known as the "Central Grotto" - had enjoyed.

The Grotto system was a huge success, with Grottos springing up across the United States under the leadership of the Priesthood III<sup>o</sup> and senior Witches & Warlocks II<sup>o</sup>. They developed elaborate programs of ritual & nonritual activities, conducted public relations & community service, encouraged contacts with other Grottos & individual Satanists, and periodically came together in a series of Western & Eastern Regional Conclaves.

Far from revealing an inadequacy in the Grotto concept, 1974 became known as the "Year of the Grottos" because of the explosion of extraordinary and successful activities of the Lilith, Typhon, Phoenix, Asmodeus, Amon, Karnak, Bubastis, and Yuggoth Grottos during that year.

What bothered Anton about the Grottos, as it developed, was not that they weren't productive nor active enough, but rather that they were freely talking and interacting with one another outside of his personal control of communication. This was gradually presenting a realistic picture of the C/S as an actual organization, rather than as Anton's preferred image of a gigantic and mysterious fantasy to awe both the public and individual members. The fictional image obviously wouldn't work in an atmosphere where everyone knew everyone else.

Hence in his 1974 "Phase IV" Announcement, Anton acted to restore his personal control by cutting off member communications in every way possible, to include:

- No more admissions through Grottos - only through Anton personally.
- No more automatic introductions to the nearest Grotto.

- No more Regional Conclaves except by Anton's authority (never thereafter given).
- No new member to be placed in contact with any other new member.
- No new member to be placed in contact with the nearest Regional Agent.
- No more Grottos to be chartered.<sup>5</sup>

The effect of Anton's Phase IV edict was essentially nothing. By that point in time, the vast majority of persons entering the C/S were doing so through personal acquaintances in the Grotto network, and everyone in that network already knew everyone else anyway. So the edict was given a pro forma nod by the C/S, then cheerfully disregarded as Satanists around the country continued to enjoy contacts with one another.

In "Pretenders" Anton attempts to justify the 1974 program of enforced "isolation" as a positive development for the C/S' own good. In actuality it was merely his attempt to recapture the "Oz the Great & Terrible" image he had previously enjoyed but which had gradually dissipated as he was no longer in a position to tell tall stories about the Church. Did this mean loss of respect for him among the membership? Not at all: He was simply revered as the founder & leader of a new and exciting religious movement, not as a fantasy icon. Evidently he was uncomfortable with this change, and unsure of his ability to sustain it.

After the crisis of 1975 Anton applied the "no communications" rule with a vengeance. No one foolish enough to pay \$100 for a "C/S" membership card was henceforth introduced to anyone else, nor were there meetings, newsletters, or group activities of any sort. Anton's fictitious image was pushed in every publication (such as his personally dictated "biography" *Secret Life of a Satanist*).

Anton continues "Pretenders" with the remarkable complaint that I was "injecting a strongly supernaturalist bent to the *Cloven Hoof's* articles". Considering Anton's authorship of the *Satanic Bible* and *Rituals*, with their

---

<sup>5</sup> Anton LaVey, Phase IV Message, 9/27/74.

invocations and rituals to scores of supernatural entities (including one called “Satan”), this is rather the limit.

Actually, after each of the *CH* issues which I edited 1971-75, I received continuous compliments from Anton & Diane LaVey. Moreover each issue was approved by them before it went to press, so if there were something either of them didn't like, it could easily be amended.

As for the existence of Satan, which Anton adamantly denied after his 1975 betrayal of that entity as his High Priest, permit me to recall his own words in 1970:

They (pseudo-occultists) play at the games which caused our forebears to be slaughtered and tortured as agents of Satan. And what do they do, now that it is safe to use His Great Infernal Name? **They deny him!** They have the very opportunity to cast the very creed of defamation, which killed their brothers and sisters of the past - cast that creed before the world in triumphant mockery of its age of unreason! But no! They do not thrust the bifid barb of Satan aloft and shout: “He has triumphed!” His Art and Works which brought men to the rack and thumbscrew can now be learned in safety. But no! He is **denied!** Denied by those who cry up His Art and ply His Work!

Satan's Name will not be denied! Let no man shun or mock His Name who plays His winning game - or Despair, Depletion, and Destruction await!<sup>6</sup>

It would appear that after 1975 Anton LaVey managed quite successfully to fulfill his own prophecy.

During my tenure in the Church of Satan, I undertook only two Greater Black Magical Workings resulting in statements by dæmonic intelligences: the *Diabolicon* (1970) and the *Ninth Solstice Message* (1974). Neither text referred to me in any way, nor did I advance any claims concerning them. In my opinion they were simply the results of a certain type of magical Working, to be significant to others as they might determine.

Anton LaVey, as it happens, had a rather high opinion of both documents. Concerning the *Diabolicon*, which I sent him during an Army tour in Vietnam, he said:

I received *The Diabolicon* safely. It is indeed a work which will have a lasting impact. It is done in an ageless manner and with complete awareness. So impressed am I that I have selected passages from it for my own personal reading in this evening's ceremony, which pays homage to the writings of the

---

<sup>6</sup> Anton LaVey, *Cloven Hoof*, 3/70.

Satanic Masters of the past, such as Machiavelli, Nietzsche, Twain, Hobbes, etc., who will be portrayed by members of my Council reading their respective works. This will be the first exposure to your work, outside of my wife and Reverend Ferro, and I am certain the reaction will be as I expect it to be.

You have my sincere gratitude for the fine gift you have so graciously bestowed upon us, and you may be assured that it will assume a meaningful place in the Order.

When you return to San Francisco in June, I look forward to spending as much time as possible with you, as there is much I have to impart concerning your future role in the Church of Satan.<sup>7</sup>

Two days later a letter arrived from John Ferro, the senior Magister Caverni IV<sup>o</sup> of the Church:

The High Priest has graciously decided to comply with your expressed desire and will ordain you to the Satanic Priesthood this next June. However, it is his wish that you be elevated to that office in a private ritual prior to your presentation to the members of the Council of the Order of the Trapezoid. The reasons for this decision will be made known to you in due time. We do wish you to complete the usual test for aspirants to the Priesthood, but merely as a formality. The nature, execution, and mode of delivery of your manuscript so exemplified every quality to be desired in a Priest of Satan that it has been decreed that there be no further delay in your ordination save that necessitated by the time that must elapse before you may present yourself to the High Priest. This too fits well into the magical plans and workings of the High Priest, and it will afford you an opportunity to prepare yourself for the event and to experience that intensity which only elated anticipation can produce. The ceremony will be as awesome as any public ordination, indeed more so by the nature of its exclusiveness and secrecy.<sup>8</sup>

Concerning the 1974 *Ninth Solstice Message* Anton sent me a handwritten letter:

The follow-up to the *Diabolicon* was cybernetic in its timing and content. It pleases me that you perceive that which you do. All titles aside, you have entered a new realm of comprehension, and truly deserve the name of "Satanist".<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Letter, Anton LaVey to M.A. Aquino, 3/27/70.

<sup>8</sup> Letter, John Ferro to M.A. Aquino, 3/29/70.

<sup>9</sup> Letter, Anton LaVey to M.A. Aquino, 8/22/74.

“Pretenders” continues with Anton’s latest attempt to justify his catastrophic 5/75 decision to sell the Satanic Priesthood and all other initiatory degrees in the C/S - the action by him which caused mass resignations from the Church and the end of its authentic existence. This latest word-dance - that “the Church would honor values given to it in kind” - is exposed for the lie it is when compared to the actual text of the announcement which Anton made in the 5-6/75 *Cloven Hoof*:

Despite inaccurate reports and misquotes, the Church of Satan not only accepts material contributions, but returns recognition for those acts commensurate with their magnitude. To operate in any other fashion would be ungrateful, hypocritical, and just plain foolish. Therefore professional services, funds, real estate, objects of value, etc., which contribute to the tangible, worldly success of the Church of Satan are qualification for elevation to both II° and III°. The churches of the godly may not have lived by bread alone, but they've grabbed more than their share of dough over the years. The frankly materialistic concept of Satanism can always use a little bread or its equivalent.

It would be not only unSatanic but contradictory to the teachings of our leader not to mention the act of “pleasing the boss” as an opportunity for advancement to **any** higher degree within the Organization. Anton LaVey is notoriously Diabolical (to those who know him) in his response to and recognition of his more pleasing advocates. Nuff said.<sup>10</sup>

Anton’s next contention, that I “did not protest when this policy was outlined to me in person”, is untrue in that, while he had indeed read portions of his draft of the entire article to me a short time previously, this section was not included. There is no better proof of this than the letter I wrote to him upon his insistence that this article be published verbatim:

I know that you have good reason for your decisions. Otherwise I would not have devoted the last six years to the Church of Satan. Yet, if you told me to blow your head off with a shotgun, I wouldn’t do it. And that original *Hoof* article of yours would undermine the entire substance of the Church. Any advisor of yours who says that it will not is either a fool or a “yes-man” afraid to speak frankly in your presence.

The people who will establish the Church of Satan as a great and lasting institution are those who believe in it and in the philosophy behind it. They have understood for years that the degrees all signify personal intelligence,

---

<sup>10</sup> Anton LaVey, enclosure to letter, Diane LaVey to M.A. Aquino, 5/20/75.

dedication, and accomplishment. If you now state that material contributions “are qualification for elevation to both II° and III°”, they will feel betrayed. Those with a strong sense of self-respect could not retain their degrees or membership under such circumstances. Any persons who remained would be boot-lickers who care nothing for the ideals of Satanism as long as they can curry your personal favor ...

As for the comment about “pleasing the boss”, our people believe that they are doing precisely that by living and promoting the philosophy you have authored and championed. It is slow, hard, and occasionally dangerous work. You live behind a protective fence in San Francisco, but announced Satanic officials around the country can’t take such precautions. Yet even so they are pleased and proud if you gain additional fame and fortune at least partly through their efforts. These efforts are forthcoming because you are respected as a man of principle who has taken a final stand against hypocrisy.

So if you show favoritism to courtiers and personality-cult fans, you will not have a true Church of Satan. Instead you will have an Anton LaVey Fan Club composed of the most superficial sort of people. The people who will build the Church of Satan into a great institution will never be found sitting at your feet. They will be too busy putting your ideas to work out in the world ...

It would have been very easy for me to say none of these things, put that original article in the *Hoof*, and make consoling noises while the Church of Satan blew itself to bits. But I have a higher regard for you than that, and if that means being the only one to tell you things you don't want to hear, I guess I have to do it. That doesn't mean I enjoy it.<sup>11</sup>

When Anton remained adamant about this policy, I did not “write letters to a handful of pen-pal cronies and fellow mystics”. Rather, as *Cloven Hoof* Editor, I sent out a letter to **all** members of the C/S informing them of Anton’s decision:

Over my objections an article is scheduled to appear in the May-June X/1975 *Hoof* announcing that financial and material contributions to the Central Grotto will henceforth be considered “qualification for elevation to the II° and III°” ...

It is my firm conviction that the Satanic degrees cannot and should not be sold, no matter how helpful the cash contribution involved may be to the Church of Satan. Since the founding of the Church, elevation to all the degrees has been only through personal intelligence, dedication, and accomplishment. I believe those to be the proper criteria.

---

<sup>11</sup> Letter, M.A. Aquino to Anton LaVey, 5/31/75.



Effective prior to the May-June issue I resign the Editorship of the *Cloven Hoof*. I further sever my connections with the Church of Satan as an organization, since it no longer carries the true sanction of the Prince of Darkness.<sup>12</sup>

The “handful” of Church members who also resigned amounted to approximately half the Church’s entire regular membership at the time - and, more significantly, included virtually all of the Priesthood, Grotto Leaders, Regional Agents, and other actively-involved individuals.

When the dust cleared, the only names left on the C/S roster were those of the “silent subscribers” at the I° level, two Masters IV° (not counting the LaVey family chauffeur), and 6 Priests & Priestesses III°. The two IV°s - John Ferro and Charles Steenbarger - were both LaVey family friends, and of the 6 III° Initiates only one - Stuart Levine - tried for awhile to function as an actual official. The Church of Satan was dead.

“Mysticism” was not at all an issue in this mass-resignation, of course. It was purely and simply an ethical issue, as the above quotations evidence.

Those of us who resigned indeed considered carrying on with some kind of a “Second Church of Satan”, and would not have been prevented from doing so by any copyright laws - any more than the Catholic Church can copyright the term “Christian Church”.

Then, however, the *Book of Coming Forth by Night* was written as the result of a GBM Working of mine on the North Solstice X, and the Temple of Set was [re]born.

*The Book of Coming Forth by Night* needs neither excuse nor apology. To me, and as it turned out to many others over the next 15 years, it placed the catastrophic events of 1975 in context, and offered a constructive program for the future. In *The Temple of Set I* I have said:

When I made my decision to accept, it was in a deliberate, reflective way - with a resolve to undertake the creation and care of the Temple of Set proper, and to patiently allow history to validate or disprove any metaphysical principles that the Temple might propose. This has remained my attitude ever since that serene and sublime experience.

As for the *Book of Coming Forth by Night*, I am content to comment upon it as best I can, then let others judge it as they will. For me it is now, as then, a simple, beautiful, and purposeful statement from the sentient being

---

<sup>12</sup> Letter, M.A. Aquino to all C/S members, 6/10/75.

whom mankind has loved, hated, worshipped, cursed, praised, and reviled as the Prince of Darkness.

To echo the words of G.B. Shaw in *The Devil's Disciple*: "I promised him my soul, and swore an oath that I would stand up for him in this world and stand by him in the next."

In sneering at the *Book of Coming Forth by Night*, which includes praise for his many great achievements and compassion for his 1975 actions, Anton LaVey abandoned what remained of his dignity as former High Priest of Satan. Thereafter he was simply High Priest of Himself - a role satisfying to his sycophants, but not to the founders of the Temple of Set.

Anton proceeds to claim that "there were many underground members of the Church of Satan, including priests and higher, of whom Aquino had no knowledge". That is absurd, since among my responsibilities as *Hoof* Editor was the controlling and updating of the entire membership, honorary, and nonmember subscriber mailing lists.

The *Cloven Hoof* was the only publication in the C/S which was sent to all members. For many who were not affiliated with local Grottos, it was their **only** contact with the Church.

In addition to the Church membership, the *Hoof* was sent to nonmember subscribers, honorary members, and various personal friends & relations of the LaVeys. Such included jet-setters the LaVeys were courting, such as actresses Sally Struthers & Elke Sommer, and ex-Howard Hughes aide Noah Dietrich. Also included were LaVey chums from his pre-C/S days, such as circus performers Milo Brandon & Roger Coker and UFOlogist Jacques Vallee. All in all there were about 100 names on the *Hoof* database in addition to the actual membership of the Church (which at its 1975 height numbered around 250 individuals).

Anton's tirade against the internal design of the Temple of Set is all the more ironic since the Temple simply took the best and more useful design features of the original C/S and carried them forward, refining them further over the years. For example:

- Our degree system was developed from that originated by Anton LaVey personally (modified from prior Western initiatory models) in 1970.

- Our governing Council of Nine is a legal, functioning reality - the Temple's board of directors - in contrast to the *ad hoc*, toothless "Council" Anton had created for the C/S.
- We have an international network of fully-functioning Pylons, carrying forward the Grotto tradition.
- We have held scores of annual regional, national, and international Conclaves since 1975.
- We operate a Temple-wide InterCommunication Roster on a constantly-updated computer database - a much-expanded version of the original C/S ICR of the late 1960s.
- We maintain a constantly-updated, multi-category reading list (which includes the last reading-list data from the C/S).
- We publish a main newsletter - the *Scroll of Set* - as well as scores of Order, Element, and Pylon newsletters. All back-issues of the *Scroll* are both electronically & printed-available to all Setians.
- We have a system of specialized Orders, each of which, like a university department, offers Setians specialized areas of magical & philosophical exploration. Among these is the Order of the Trapezoid, also founded by Anton during the original C/S, which has itself flourished into a fully-functioning Order with its own newsletter, archive of research papers, and periodic national & regional meetings & symposia.

The post-1975 "Church of Satan" has and does none of these things. Even the last vestige of its former organization, the *Cloven Hoof* newsletter, was finally discontinued in 1988 when Sharon "Blanche Barton" Densley got tired of trying to pump it up with monotonous social/nostalgic harangues from an increasingly reality-detached Anton.

Nor is there anything the least "militaristic" about the Temple's degree system, as there is no "chain of command" attached to it. It is a means of personal initiatory recognition exclusively.

Anton's recommendation that Gini Graham Scott's *The Magicians* be consulted for a picture of the Temple of Set is merely self-serving. Scott was a sociologist who joined the Temple ca. 1979, simply to secretly collect personal & private feelings of Setians whom she might meet and who trusted her as an authentic friend.

At a Temple Conclave Scott's notes were accidentally discovered, whereupon she was expelled in disgrace and put on a bus back to San Francisco. A letter was sent to her graduate school committee expressing repugnance for such underhanded "research" behavior.

Scott's book omits mention of her own deviousness and exploitation of those she met, and [unsurprisingly] glosses over the humiliating events of her exposure and expulsion.

Persons interested in finding out what the Temple of Set is **really** like may do so in the easiest way possible: by reading my *The Temple of Set* book and/or asking the Temple for information and, if desired, by applying for admission. Thousands have done so over the past quarter-century. Some have stayed for a long time, others for a brief time, depending upon their interests and aptitudes. But I think it is fair to say that everyone who has approached the Temple honestly and positively has had a pretty good time with it.

Except, of course, for Anton LaVey and his post-1975 kennel of "spaniels who roll over on their backs when kicked". For him, like Amfortas, it was a constant reproach: a reminder of what he did in 1975 and a living example of what the Church of Satan itself could have evolved into under his own leadership. The Temple is also a storehouse of knowledge not only concerning its own curricula of magical arts and sciences, but concerning those of the 1966-75 Church. This was also inconvenient for Anton, who obviously preferred that the true history of the Church be suppressed and forgotten.

If a final comment is needed concerning "Pretenders to the Throne", it is this: Find out for **yourself** where the truth lies. After all, the only value of any magical or philosophical organization is the extent to which it facilitates an individual's quest for self-improvement, education, and enlightenment. The Temple of Set stands ready for the test. As for the Kennel of Satan, you may either learn from the experiences of those who have gone before - or find out the hard way.



## Temple of Set

Post Office Box 470307  
San Francisco, CA 94147

Michael A. Aquino, Ph.D.  
High Priest of Set

October 18, 1993

Mr. Peter H. Gilmore  
Post Office Box 499, Radio City Station  
New York, NY 10101

Dear Mr. Gilmore:

A copy of your revised "Pretenders to the Throne" has been brought to my attention - not directly by you, of course, but I suppose credit should be given that you at least have summoned up enough courage to sign your name to it, as you did not when you sent the original to *Dark Lily*.

I'm not sure what you expected to accomplish with the first "PT", but if it was to discredit the present-day "Church of Satan" before British audiences, you succeeded very well. Why? Because it was no effort at all for the Temple of Set to publish a documented rebuttal to it, showing it to be false from head to toe. We keep very complete and detailed records, you see, all the way back to the mid-1960s. [If you try to put over a lie, it is always an uphill fight, because you have to worry about all sorts of incidental, conflicting facts - some of which you may not know about. But if you're recounting truth, then it's easy because any peripheral details will simply dovetail into your account.]

I had supposed the first "PT" to be written furtively by Anton LaVey himself, simply because it made reference to so many things before Blanche Barton's time. If you wrote it - or just signed your name to something that Anton authored - it just makes you come across all the more as a good-soldier stooge wandering around in a blindfold. You weren't there. You either haven't reviewed the relevant evidence first-hand or are simply a

care-nothing-for-it liar. Either characteristic does not particularly enhance your reputation, or that of your newsletter.

Since I have exposed the bulk of your allegations in my original "PT" response, only a few supplementary observations come to mind after a reading of your update.

Anton's two "underground priests": Well, the proof ought to be in the pudding, right? So why not tell your readers what the two gentlemen in question - Wilm-Artur Meilen and J.P. Hoff - ever did to advance the cause of Satanism? Meilen was right there in the Drama Department of the University of Alberta when Pazder was attacking the Church of Satan in *Michelle Remembers*, right? Did he do anything to defend it, or to unmask Pazder for the fraud he is?

As for J.P. Hoff, he was one of those who joined the Temple of Set after its founding. Not as a Priest, but as a Setian I°. [During the time of his "underground C/S priesthood", he too hadn't done anything to promote or defend the name or cause of the Church.

But let us bring the issue forward in time. You are now at least somewhat public in representing yourself as a C/S official. You have appeared in T.V. clips, publish your newsletter, and so forth. In doing so you expose yourself and your family to a certain degree of danger, just as we did and do. Does it bother you that you are considered expendable while Anton talks "inner-Church" old-boyisms with old friends such as Jacques Vallee or Donald Werbe whom he very obviously does **not** consider expendable? Perhaps you should take an arm's-length look at yourself and decide just who's being played for the sucker here.

If an **entire** group of people are putting their "lives, fortunes, and sacred honor" on the line for an idea - as we of the original Priesthood did, along with Anton and Diane LaVey themselves - then everyone knows the score, the risks, and the reasons for decisions concerning the future of the group and the idea. But if the leader divides the group into "protected" and "expendable" sections, obviously the agenda is compromised accordingly. As recounted in my *Church of Satan*, little attention was paid to Meilen & Hoff in 1972 simply because (a) they did nothing and (b) Anton neither

made any additional “underground priests” nor changed any C/S policies because of them. After May 1975 it became an entirely different ball game: Anton keeping to his small, private circle of old friends while pragmatically accepting the devotions of latter-day expendables as long as they were useful [a “grotto leader” in L.A. who managed to get a photo of her altar into the papers with a baby lying on it with a knife held over it (!), Maarten Lamers and his ill-fated “C/S” sex club, Stuart Levine, Nikolas Schreck, and now you]. Screw up or become disillusioned and you are a slip of paper for the memory hole.

I have already discussed Anton’s authentic reactions to the *Diabolicon* and Ninth Solstice Message in my previous “PT” response, so will append here only that in addition to his original letter to me accepting and endorsing the *Diabolicon*, he thought enough of it to take the initiative to try to get it published through Peter Mayer of Avon Books (editor for the *Satanic Bible*). Mayer thought it too complex and oriented towards a within-C/S audience, hence declined - which seemed reasonable to me when the LaVeys wrote me about it. And Anton’s endorsement of the Ninth Solstice Message remains in my files, as quoted in my original “PT” response. [And it would appear that the *Diabolicon* means enough to Peter Gilmore for him to appropriate its original concept of the Black Flame for his newsletter.]

Again the numbers of the original C/S membership are a matter of record, as are the names of those who did or did not leave to form the Temple of Set. We have those records in our files, “underground/complimentary” and regular. Diane and I updated the whole list once a month. You, of course, weren’t there and didn’t see any of that. Today you are fed claims by Anton and Blanche Barton, and you just gobble them down like a good doggie, right?

Gini Scott made two mistakes. The first was joining the Temple of Set under false pretenses, which compromises her reliability as an author who can be depended upon to tell the truth about anything. The second was in omitting from her book the very embarrassing-to-her circumstances of her exposure at the Set-II National Conclave and her humiliating public expulsion from the Temple at that same event. A true historian or scholar does not lie her way into a situation to be studied, nor omit key historical

information that bears upon her possible bias in recounting the story. We of course point these factors out, as well as Scott's limited exposure as a brief-I° in a single San Francisco Pylon to the Temple, when we are questioned concerning her book. But it is nothing which bothers us very much, and in some ways the book was interesting as critical feedback from a cynical/skeptical perspective.

Happily the Temple of Set does not "ride upon my private funds". Its dues have always covered its bills, and just about exactly from year to year. We are that rarity: a non-profit corporation which is indeed non-profit.

But as long as you have raised the subject of finances, let's take a look at the "Church of Satan". According to your article it is a "large and highly stratified organization with many discreet individuals placed in positions of power", right? So then why is it broke and receiving no income whatever from any members - as Anton LaVey testified in court under penalty of perjury (bankruptcy Chapter 11 disclosure statement, Chapter 11 case #91-34251, 1/31/92)? In fact, as a result of his and the Church's filing for and conclusion of a Chapter 7 (dissolution) bankruptcy, the Church of Satan is not supposed to be legally in existence at this time. But you as its official spokesman are now insisting that it is & continues to do business. How interesting.

The bankruptcy court records brought out all sorts of interesting details. For example, from a creditor document filed 4/29/92:

"The debtor's petition indicates that no income is forthcoming from the Church of Satan when this is the very entity which seeks bankruptcy protection ... I am informed and believe that debtor has failed to report income which is derived from his business as the Church of Satan. A recent issue of *The Black Flame*, the International Forum of the Church of Satan, indicates that memberships are sold for \$100, franchises are available for \$150,000, and that posters, mugs, jewelry, and other memorabilia are also available for sale. It does not appear that the proceeds from any of these articles were included in debtor's petition."

In a sworn statement, again under penalty of perjury, on 5/5/92, Anton declared that he derived no income whatever from any of the *BF*-advertised items.



So we are left with two alternatives: (1) Either Anton has committed perjury at least twice in Federal Court, or (2) Peter Gilmore is happily making all sorts of money off Anton's image, creations, and artwork for his personal bank account, while Anton himself doesn't get a dime and indeed goes through the humiliation of bankruptcy for himself and the Church of Satan.

Perhaps you would be so kind as to tell us which one of these two alternatives is correct, as we wouldn't want to misrepresent the situation.

At any rate, when you write these things, kindly bear in mind that the people who read them generally ask us for our comments, and we are always pleased to provide them. If you want that kind of magnifying-glass applied to the post-1975 "Church of Satan" and the Temple of Set, we don't mind it in the least.

I cannot close without shaking my head over George "Nemo" Smith's "Who's There?" article in this same issue. So after all this time, and after all of his & your bluster that the Prince of Darkness doesn't exist and that it was all just symbolic and so on, here he is standing in a ritual chamber and saying, well geez, maybe he **does** exist after all. Will you people please make up your minds?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael A. S. LaVey". The signature is highly stylized with large loops and a long, sweeping underline.

cc- Anton Szandor LaVey  
Interested enquirers



## Temple of Set

Post Office Box 470307  
San Francisco, CA 94147

Michael A. Aquino, Ph.D.  
High Priest of Set

November 2, 1993

Mr. Peter H. Gilmore  
Post Office Box 499, Radio City Station  
New York, NY 10101

Dear Mr. Gilmore:

Thank you for your 10/27 letter. I appreciate your interest in the history of the Church of Satan, and am pleased to comment accordingly.

Indeed I was not a member of the Church prior to April (not March) 1969, nor of course in any of Anton LaVey's pre-1966 occult activities. Nor during 1969-1975 did I consider this particularly relevant to my work within the Church. During its first couple of years the Church was a pretty raunchy enterprise, attracting San Francisco's attention more by Topless Witches Reviews and the sort of rituals depicted in *Satanis: The Devil's Mass* than by serious Satanic philosophy. Indeed when ca. 1973 I finally discovered a copy of the long-lost *Satanis* for rental from Budget Films in Los Angeles, Anton asked me not to publicize it in the *Cloven Hoof*. "I've passed beyond the 'red T-shirt' stage," he observed.

Interestingly: A couple of years ago I happened to meet the same Mr. Edward Webber mentioned in *Satanis*. A fascinating fellow with lots to say about the circumstances surrounding the creation of the Church. Also how Anton almost Yankee Rosed the whole thing by insisting on doing the Topless Witches bit when Webber and other San Francisco power-brokers were on the verge of moving the C/S into the social mainstream. Bouncing boobies on Broadway was the end of that. You might enjoy reading what

Webber had to say, which his cited acquaintances were quite willing to back up. Copy of my updated *Church of Satan* chapter enclosed.

The intellectual and philosophical climate within the Church developed fairly steadily during the 69-75 period, with a certain amount of amateur soap opera along the way, to be sure. I think that *COS* documents this progress objectively, and I should like to point out that Anton and Diane LaVey were in the forefront of this effort - as *COS* also documents. Some of the pre-68s, like John Ferro and Charles Steenbarger, made increasingly sophisticated contributions as well. One need only compare their earliest writings in the first few issues of the *Hoof* with their output in the mid-70s to see that.

As for the white-socks-with-suit, whip-&-chains, pre-68 members profiled in *The Devil's Avenger*, they were indeed gone; and neither the LaVeys nor I shed any tears about that. We all had great visions for the Church, Anton certainly not the least. I don't even have to argue this; his many statements on the subject in *COS* speak for themselves.

Similarly Anton's current regression to a pre-68 Deviled Ham of the *Devil's Avenger* sort is scarcely something I have had to go out of my way to be aware of. He has trumpeted it from the pages of an assortment of commercial pornographic & crank magazines, Blanche Barton's *Hoof*, and of course the memorable *Secret Life of a Satanist*. Indeed the primary impact of all this on my life has been a parade of people, including not a few Setians, asking me how I could so revere such a kook. - To which I simply point to *COS* and say, over and over, "This is what he was like when I knew him."

And yes, that 1969-75 Anton LaVey is very important to me, to us. He was a great artist and a brilliant philosopher. History deserves to appreciate that, and this too is a reason why *COS* was written. The proof of the pudding is in the letters I regularly receive from readers, who after perusing the book invariably express their surprise and respect for Anton's significance accordingly - particularly after exposure to a burlesque show like *SLOAS*.

Anton and Diane were also “family”, which made the crisis of 1975 all the more grievous to me and, I honestly think, to them. Again this contributed to my resolve that he should not go down in history as a “junkyard intellectual” - a mere Mardi Gras clown for the amusement of the masses, or a meal-ticket for financial parasites such as yourself and Barton. And *COS* immortalizes Diane as well, as the success and maturing of the Church were due **every bit as much to her** as to him.

So I and many other 1969-75 Satanists learned a lot from Anton during those six years, and *COS* details what we learned, how we put such knowledge to use, and how we contributed to it in our turn.

But of course you have now spent **eleven** years with the post-75 Anton, as you so rightly point out, and I do agree that this certainly shows too.

Was I the “#2 man” in the Church? Even in the mid-70s I never styled myself thus, referring to myself simply and directly by my degree as Magister Templi. On the other hand I was indeed the **only** member of the Priesthood to hold that second level of the IV<sup>o</sup>, as all of the other Masters had been raised to the first level of Magister Caverni. There was no one senior to me in degree other than Anton as a Magus V<sup>o</sup>. So I guess that did make me the “#2 man” at the time in terms of degree, if not tenure. Those, of course, were the days when the C/S degrees actually meant something.

After my departure did the Church cease to exist? As an authentic “Church of Satan” of course it perished, since Anton himself immediately proclaimed (“Hoisted by his Own Patois” 6/20/75) that he didn’t believe in an actual Satan anymore and that all of his titles were “symbolic, not literal”. Once “Satan” and “Satanism” became mere metaphors for Anton’s lifestyle, it would have been absurd to consider it an authentic church, if there is any meaning to the English language.

But I have indeed acknowledged, regularly and with a decided wince, the existence of the “Church of Satan” as Anton’s post-1975 business front. The wince comes when people who know nothing of the 1969-75 Church ask me how I could ever have been associated with anything like the Barton-caricature they see today.

You can sulk about the superior court and bankruptcy court documents all you want, but the fact remains that for an outside researcher they are the only reliable way to get an accurate picture of the post-75 Church of Satan - its [nonexistent] membership and its [\$zero] income - as well as of Anton LaVey personally. Reason: These two public records consist of a massive amount of sworn testimony, extending over several years, by Anton, Diane, and others such as Zeena and Nikolas Schreck. Also extensive exhibits in the form of tax records, financial statements, letters, etc. Anton is famous for creative and colorful lies, but it seems reasonable to assume that under penalty of perjury he would be as reliable as he could ever be. Otherwise he would risk prison, wouldn't he?

Filing for bankruptcy under Chapter 7 (to which Anton's initial Chapter 11 was ordered converted) legally mandates that the business in question, in this case the Church of Satan, be dissolved and its assets distributed to its creditors. [Under a Chapter 11 judgment it would be allowed to "reorganize" and continue business.]

Anton accordingly operates a post-7 Church of Satan at his peril. Should anyone send the Church money now, and then complain about fraud, Anton could find himself in a very unpleasant legal situation. Do some reading on Chapter 7 bankruptcy law, and you'll see what I mean.

Whether or not Magda Graham saw a name signed to "Pretenders to the Throne" she didn't indicate at the time. Nor, as I observed in my response to it, would a name other than Anton's personally have meant much of anything at this stage, as no one post-75 other than Diane, Karla, and Zeena can be certain of anything that issues from Anton. Certainly **you** can't be; you just eat what you're fed - and indeed are now quite famous for this attribute. [Congratulations, I guess.]

Was my response to "PT" a "tiresome" attempt to "smear"? I think not, as to me it reads like a detailed and rather straightforward refutation of "PT". Graham never quite got round to printing it, despite my invitation, but I haven't heard much about *Dark Lily* blowing your horn since then. Maybe it dawned on her that you set her up.

But, as always, I am quite willing for readers to judge for themselves. Why not print my response to "PT" in your newsletter so that your readers can all laugh at it? While you're at it, print my 10/18 letter, your 10/27 letter, this 11/2 letter, and any response you wish to make to it - all in their uncensored entirety - in your newsletter. The dialogue should be of interest to all Satanists interested in the truth, methinks.

David Austen has certainly created no "disaster" for the Temple of Set. Quite the contrary, he has worked hard and effectively to defend and promote the Setian philosophy in the U.K. and various other northern European countries. He weathered the worst of Britain's version of the "Satanic scare", taking some hits from the London tabloids for some of his past "Satanic antics" along the way, but has dealt with all of this forcefully and with good humor. He has won, and retains, admiration throughout the Temple worldwide for his integrity and courage. As I write this letter he has just given a very well-received lecture at Oxford to Britain's most prestigious occult research society.

Kerry Bolton was getting along fine as an Adept II° of the Temple of Set until, as a Pylon Sentinel and thus an official of the Temple, he began publishing advertisements for a self-proclaimed pedophile - James Martin/"Ordo Templi Baphe-Metis" - in his non-Temple Satanic newsletter. Austen wrote to warn him about Martin. Bolton decided this was censorship, resigned from the Temple, denounced Austen and myself in a huff, and not only continued the pedophile ad but framed it with street-gang "Satanism". In a few short months he managed to obliterate his previously-good reputation in southwestern Pacific occult circles. Now I see that you are running the **same** pedophile ad in **your own** newsletter as the Church of Satan's "International Forum". Also taking a stand for non-censorship, are you?

Where in the world am I supposed to have claimed that I "wrote material for *The Devil's Rain*"? Absurd. My *Church of Satan* account makes it quite clear that I had no involvement with that film whatever, save that Ernest Borgnine spoke lines from my "Ceremony of the Nine Angles" while turning William Shatner into a zombie. I took a bit of personal pleasure from this "signature", just as in Umberto Eco's use of the closing line from my "Call to Cthulhu" in his best-seller *Foucault's Pendulum* [with which I

didn't have anything to do either]. Unlike the post-75 Anton, I don't spend a great deal of time whining about all of the recognition I'm "supposed" to have.

Well, I'm glad that George Smith finally got to be a priest of something. Now all he has to do is figure out what a "priesthood" means. I expect his ritual-chamber work in your most recent issue is a step in the right direction, since if he looks hard enough for something to worship, some god will doubtless show up to accommodate him. Guess Anton wasn't it after all.

Indeed I did query Smith on his personal attitude concerning the Priesthood on 10/1/88, as you quote. Why not? He had written many excellent papers and become well-respected throughout the Temple as an Adept. In a subsequent personal discussion with him during a visit to Seattle, I suggested that he ask any Master of the Temple for a Priesthood evaluation if he felt it appropriate.

On 10/17 I sent Smith a summary of the criteria for the Priesthood of Set. On 10/20 he sent the enclosed letter to Magister Robert Moffatt, the evaluator he selected for himself. I think it is fair to say that this is a "passionate and insistent" call for Recognition, since he went ahead and proclaimed (page #2) that he already **was** a Priest of Set.

Moffatt decided that a Recognition was not timely; only thereafter, on 12/31, did Smith decide that his "deliberate, serious expectation of remaining with the Temple's Priesthood" wasn't quite so deliberate or serious after all, and resigned from the Temple. In the interim I received no letter(s) whatever from him concerning a visit to Church of Satan members in New York or elsewhere - nor would I have cared if he met Anton LaVey personally. Don't tell me he is so embarrassed about that 10/20 letter that he has resorted to forging fake followups!

I guess the fact that Anton didn't toss you after we exposed your behind-his-back overtures to us does indeed evidence how readily and earnestly a spaniel can roll over. Good doggie. To be sure, you have since made yourself very useful to him, since you give him a free newsletter after Blanche Barton [to my sentimental relief as a former Editor] allowed the

pathetic ghost of the *Cloven Hoof* to return to its tomb - “because circulation was too overwhelming”, to be sure.

Which reminds me: Since you brought up the issue of not responding to important points - I didn't notice in your letter the clarification as to whether Anton perjured himself twice in federal court, or whether you are in fact enriching yourself personally from his creations, artwork, and name & image of the Church without sending him or it so much as a dime. If the latter is the case, then may I congratulate you upon learning your lessons of the past eleven years better than the teacher.

Congratulations too on your getting to be a Magister of the Church of Satan. Too bad it came after Anton made such a fuss about all titles being meaningless, including his own - after his little plan to sell them blew up in his face. [Although I see he is now styling himself a “Dr.” again, absence of a doctorate notwithstanding.] And, similarly, congratulations to Peggy on being a Magistra. What colors of Baphomet medallions go best with your tastes in wardrobe?

Did Anton LaVey “manipulate” me during my C/S affiliation? I suppose he did, in the way that any teacher guides a student with a view to his education and experience. But - and this is the point you miss - he never once deceived me. That was because he was a decent, honorable man who took both his office and our friendship seriously.

Now we see an Anton LaVey who considers his “High Priesthood” a mere convenience, and allows as how he prefers the company of the sex-dolls in his basement to human friends. Congratulations yet again on being a current human friend of his.

Actually I believe the term “black flame” in fantasy fiction goes back even farther than 1938, which is not surprising as it is a sinister and evocative image. But that is not relevant to the Church of Satan, as the term was **never** used therein prior to the *Diabolicon*. It made its next appearance in the Oath of C/S membership that I wrote for the Nineveh Grotto in late 1970, which then spread to other Grottos and was eventually used for the “adult baptism” rite in *The Satanic Rituals* in 1972. It also



appeared in my “Ceremony of the Nine Angles” on page #191, and in my “Call to Cthulhu” on page #197.

So I think I am correct in asserting that the presence, concept, and use of the Black Flame within the Church of Satan derive clearly from the *Diabolisticon*. Your newsletter, may I add, shames the name - if not its Essence, which you have yet to grasp.

O.K., so George Smith is a Priest, and you & Peggy are a Magister and Magistra. Happy is the Church of Satan that has a priesthood. But is that it? Is that the whole bit? What happened to John Ferro, Charles Steenbarger, Tony Fazzini, Maarten Lamers, and so on? And getting a bit more down to brass tacks, Peggy apparently does not make any public appearances [at least that we have heard about], and Smith surfaces only in your newsletter under an assumed name. Zeena finally had enough of being “High Priestess” and left. So who is the “their” in “their media presence”?

By contrast all members of the Priesthood of Set are known to our entire membership and accessible by correspondence, through Pylons, and via our Orders. They regularly interact with the media in many countries, and since the Temple’s founding every Priest and Priestess has been empowered to represent the Temple officially without having to “check” beforehand with any senior official. That is essential to the very nature of a true Priesthood, as I daresay you would know if you held one.

How would I hold up to “the kind of scrutiny to which I have subjected Anton”? May I observe that I have had a great many spotlights in my face these last few years, and by no means all of them disposed to be fair or friendly. I have been willing to deal with that, as must anyone in a controversial office. I have made my share of honest mistakes over the years. But if you’re asking me if I have any skeletons in the closet to be ashamed of, I’m sorry to disappoint you. What you see is pretty much what you get.

The account of Janet’s and my [amicable] divorce is absent from *COS* for the simple reason that it was irrelevant, just as intimate LaVey family and nonfamily romantic relationships are similarly irrelevant and absent from the book. The final Anton/Diane lawsuits are, I think, relevant

because of his and her unique functions as High Priest/High Priestess and legal business partners in that institution, and further because of the many key organizational facts brought out in the arguments and documentation.

And, since you're curious, I read your newsletter when someone sends me a copy and says there's something in it about the Temple of Set. I pay attention to all misinformation published about the Temple. It sure would make my job easier if you would spend more time discussing what great things all of those millions of Magisters, Priests, and members of the Church of Satan are doing, instead of spending so much newsprint complaining about the, ahem, surly little Temple of Set.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Aquino". The signature is highly stylized and cursive, with large loops and flourishes. It is written over a faint, circular watermark or stamp that is partially obscured by the ink.

cc-Anton Szandor LaVey  
Interested enquirers