

The official organ of the U.S. Grand Lodge of O.T.O.

# ΑΓΓΑΡÉ



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Mystera Mystica Maxima

Ordo Templi Orientis, U.S.A.



E.G.C.

# Agapé

The official organ of the U.S. Grand Lodge of O.T.O.

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## FROM THE EDITOR

*Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.*

As we continue working on streamlining *Agapé*, we've run into some efficiency issues that we've been working on resolving. One of those is creating an easier to accomplish deadline for submissions. In order to make it easy for everyone, our submission deadlines now fall upon the same date as Electoral College meetings. Here then, are the upcoming deadlines:

Deadline for *Agapé* XIX, 1: April 20, 2019 EV

Deadline for *Agapé* XIX, 2: August 2, 2019 EV

As we get closer to the Autumn and winter dates, we'll let everyone know both here, the US Grand Lodge website, and in social media.

If you miss the deadline, just remember that there's a good chance that we'll publish your article in a future copy of *Agapé*.

If you have an article to submit, please email them (preferably in either Word or Text) to [agape@oto-usa.org](mailto:agape@oto-usa.org). Artwork should be submitted in as high a resolution as possible, and please consider that we'll be converting the artwork to grayscale for printing.

This issue's cover is by Frater Enatheleme. The title of the piece is "Antiqua Vesicae":

"This photograph, taken in 2017, depicts the union of sun and earth in life and in photosynthesis. Facilitated by solar energy, algae build silica frustules which eventually sink to the sea floor, becoming the chalky substance which traces out the vesica piscis shape found in this image."

*Love is the law, love under will.*

Andrew  
Editor, *Agapé*

## FROM THE GRAND MASTER

*Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.*

### **E.G.C. Conference**

U.S.G.L. held its first-ever conference devoted entirely to Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica over the weekend of August 10-12, 2018 EV in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Many thanks and congratulations to Sister Nessa M. and the Conference Committee, to Soror Ixel Balamke, Soror Harper Feist, Sister Kat S., and the members of Leaping Laughter for planning, organizing, managing, and hosting the event, and to all the presenters, the six mass teams, and my fellow panelists for coming together to manifest another successful event.

### **Order of the Eagle and Order of the Lion**

At its meeting on August 10, 2018 EV, the Supreme Grand Council inducted Phyllis Seckler into the Order of the Eagle, and James Branch Cabell into the Order of the Lion, based on essays submitted by Soror Harper Feist and Brother M. Dionysius Rogers, respectively. Essays will be posted at the U.S.G.L. website after final editing and formatting.

### **The Invisible Basilica Has Moved**

I have long operated a site titled The Invisible Basilica of Sabazius which collects my essays, keynote speeches, ritual commentaries, and other material. Until recently, the site has been hosted at the Hermetic Library, but has recently been moved to a new home at [sabazius.oto-usa.org](http://sabazius.oto-usa.org). Many thanks to Brother J.B., Librarian at [Hermetic.com](http://Hermetic.com), for graciously providing us with a home on the web for many years, to Brother Jim L. in Seattle for site design, to Sister Lucy D. for revised Sb seal graphics, and to Brothers J.T. and B.S. for initial transcription work.

### **Changes to Role of Deacon in EGC**

I have updated the ritual for Ordination of a Deacon in E.G.C. within U.S.G.L. The updated ritual can be found on the new Invisible Basilica site ([sabazius.oto-usa.org](http://sabazius.oto-usa.org)) and is now in effect. The substance of

the update is to elevate the status of the diaconate by placing it under the direct supervision of the episcopate rather than under that delegated to the priesthood. Henceforth, all deacon ordinations within U.S.G.L. will need to be performed by a bishop, rather than being delegated to a priest or priestess. I am no longer inclined to consider the role of deacon to be inherently subsidiary to that of the priestess and priest. Consider the attribution of the triad of Priestess/Priest/Deacon to that of the three Alchemical Principles, Salt/Sulfur/Mercury. I am considering further policies to advance this idea, including the granting of privileges similar to those currently held in E.G.C. by ordained priests and priestesses to ordained deacons who have also attained the rank of K.E.W. in M.:M.:M.:.

The current version of the E.G.C. manual includes a recommendation that candidates for ordination to the priesthood should, ideally, have already been ordained to the diaconate. This has always been a recommendation, and not a requirement; and it is currently under review for possible removal from the Manual.

Note: these changes apply only to E.G.C. within U.S.G.L. Other national sections have their own policies on these matters.

*Love is the law, love under will.*

Sb



## UPDATES FROM THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

*Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.*

Fall 2018 <sup>EV</sup> Host: Alombrados Oasis, New Orleans, LA.

The US Grand Lodge Electoral College, at its Fall meeting held on October 20, 2018 <sup>EV</sup>, took the following actions concerning duties in its charge:

### Committee Activity

The Master Selection Process Committee was created. Br. Scott Wilde, chair.

The Master Development Committee was created. Sr. Hattie Quinn, chair.

### Changes in Local Bodies

Passed the Mastership of Coph Nia Lodge from Sr. Kate J. to Sr. Darla S.

Rechartered Azul Nox Camp as Azul Nox Oasis under Fr. Sin Rabe.

Closed Lifted Lance Camp at the request of the Master.

Confirmed Sr. Nena C. as Master of Khonsu Camp. Passed the Mastership of Horizon Lodge from Br. Noah O. to Br. Kellen B.

### Other Business

The Electoral College has added a second day to future Fall meetings devoted to discussing our role in the U.S.G.L. Strategic Plan.

We thank Alombrados Oasis for hosting the regular Fall meeting of the Electoral College.

### Of Note

All local masters who are up for tenure review beginning in January 2019 <sup>EV</sup> at the Winter Meeting should have received notification from the Tenure Limit Secretary, Br. Mike E.

The Electoral College's Weapon of the Master was consecrated in a private ritual occurring before the meeting, performed by past and current Electors and attendant Sovereign Grand Inspectors General.

### Upcoming Meetings

The Winter Meeting will be held online on January 26, 2019 <sup>EV</sup>.

Deadline for submission of agenda items: December

15, 2018 <sup>EV</sup>.

The Spring Meeting and Annual Policy and Procedure Meeting will be held April 20-21, 2019 <sup>EV</sup> at Crux Ansata Oasis in Denver, CO.

Deadline for submission of agenda items: March 1, 2019 <sup>EV</sup>.

*Love is the law, love under will.*

Fraternally yours,

Hattie Quinn

President

U.S.G.L. Electoral College

### About the Electoral College

#### Appeals

Those wishing to appeal decisions of the Electoral College may do so in writing to the Supreme Grand Council through the Grand Secretary General ([gsg@oto-usa.org](mailto:gsg@oto-usa.org)).

Those wishing to appeal verdicts of the Grand Tribunal to the Areopagus may do so with the sponsorship of a seated Elector. See our website for contact details of individual electors (<http://ec.oto-usa.org/electors.html>).

While there is no appeal process for Notice of Pending Bad Report at a Local Body, if an initiate feels the notice they have received did not follow the process as outlined in the COLMH for issuing notice, believes that there was inappropriate motivation behind the notice, or can prove the notice is patently false (through disputation of facts), they may contact the Secretary of the College outlining the manner in which the Notice was deficient or false.

#### Attending Meetings

Dues Current Members in Good Standing of V<sup>o</sup> are invited to attend regular meetings of the Electoral College. We request that those planning to attend contact the Master of the hosting body to R.S.V.P. Online regular meetings may be observed by being physically present with a willing Elector. There is a standing invitation to all Lovers to attend this meeting in Dallas-Fort Worth. Contact [hattie.quinn@oto-usa.org](mailto:hattie.quinn@oto-usa.org) for more information.

### Communications

In addition to hosting email lists for masters and mentors and for communication with Grand Lodge, we also maintain a blog of College Updates, News, and Transmissions on our website (<http://ec.oto-usa.org/wp>) and are slowly experimenting with a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ECUSGLOTO/>).

Initiates with specific concerns or questions regarding the operation of the Electoral College are invited to write to either the President or Secretary. See the included U.S.G.L. Officers Directory for contact details.

### Revolutionary

Members in Good Standing of the Sovereign Sanctuary of the IX<sup>o</sup> living within the United States but not currently serving as Officer or Voting Member of any Governing Body of U.S.G.L. are heartily encouraged to volunteer to fill the vacant second post of Revolutionary by contacting the President or Secretary of the Electoral College. Thus may progress be effected.

### Website

The official website of the Electoral College can be found at <http://ec.oto-usa.org>.

In addition to the aforementioned resources, one may find information on volunteering to host a meeting or organize a study group in new areas, and other services provided by the College or expected of local bodies within U.S. Grand Lodge.

## GRAND LODGE UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Sister2Sister

It is with much excitement and pride that we announce the U.S.G.L. sanctioned mentoring group Sister2Sister. Historically, women were not given a chance to enter into formal, professional mentorships in our culture. However, we have been informally supporting, mentoring, and educating each other in our lives since the beginning of time.

In the Order our family is far-flung and busy at the work, but we recognize the need to foster the growth

and development of our female membership, and the need for intimate one-on-one relationships with similarly minded peers and role models.

To that end, Sr. Eliza McBride (Kaaba) and Sr. Hattie Quinn (Electoral College) have come together to provide a venue and mechanism to enable the formation of these relationships, especially for female-identifying members of the Man of Earth. These sisters who would like to engage in a mentor relationship should contact Sister Hattie at [hattie.quinn@oto-usa.org](mailto:hattie.quinn@oto-usa.org). Please use Sister2Sister as the subject line.



**U.S. ORDO TEMPLI ORIENTIS  
XII<sup>TH</sup> NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

Have you registered for NOTOCON XII? This year it will be held in the Valley of Cleveland, OH on August 2-4. Please visit [xii.notocon.org](http://xii.notocon.org) to register and reserve your hotel room today!

## Further Explanation of the Man of Earth Delegate Program

*“In order that the feelings of the body may be represented, the Men of Earth choose four persons, two men and two women, from among themselves, to stand continually before the face of the Supreme and Holy King, serving him day and night.”*

Liber 194: An Intimation with Reference to the Constitution of the Order.

Though “[t]he Man of Earth takes no share in the Government of the Order,” the Man of Earth Triad does have representation to the King in the form of Delegates. Local bodies have the opportunity for representation in the form of the Panelists.

Though the Delegate program is a constitutional part of our Order, it is unique to U.S.G.L. The Man of Earth Delegates serve two functions: representing the needs, sentiments, concerns, and ideas of the Man of Earth Triad (Minerval through P.I.) to the Supreme and Holy King, and serving as a direct channel to the King for any member of the Man of Earth.

The Delegates are elected every six months for a one year term. One man and one woman are selected by the Nominating Panel every June and December. Applicants for Delegate enter the pool for 1 year (2 election cycles). Only II<sup>o</sup> initiates may apply.

The Panel nominates applicants for the Delegate position by vote. Each local body seats one Panelist (I<sup>o</sup> - IV<sup>o</sup>/P.I.) for a three year term. Panelists also solicit Delegate applications from their local bodies.

Though a Minerval may not volunteer to serve, they are still recognized and represented as a Man of Earth. Siblings from I<sup>o</sup> up to IV<sup>o</sup>/P.I. can join the Panel for a three year term. At II<sup>o</sup>, one can volunteer as a Delegate to serve for a one year term if not currently a Panelist. They can join the Panel if they are not currently serving as a Delegate. Delegates must remain II<sup>o</sup> for the duration of the term. For those in either III<sup>o</sup> or IV<sup>o</sup>/P.I., they can join the Panel. If they served as a Delegate, their time spent as a Delegate is credited toward the three year Panelist

term. Panelists must remain in the Man of Earth Triad for the duration of the term.

Whereas, it is important that initiates follow the Path of Mediation, there are some instances where that may not be possible. Examples would include, and are by no means limited to, cases that surround an officer in an initiate’s local body or Chapter. In those instances, the Delegate can present the issue to the Supreme and Holy King. Any and all concerns will be given due consideration. Additionally, Man of Earth initiates are encouraged to provide their unique perspectives regarding their experience in the Order to foster a supportive atmosphere for all initiates. For more information, visit <http://admin.otousa.org/man-of-earth-delegates>

Sister Amy Harmon,  
Secretary,  
Man of Earth Delegate Nominating Panel

## Book Review

*The Visions of the Pylons* by J. Daniel Gunther, Ibis Press, 2018 EV.

*Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.*

*The Vision of the Pylons* is a work I looked forward to for over a year when I first heard mention of it at a lecture given by the author in Indianapolis, Indiana. I was a great admirer of his previous two books, finding them to be very thorough examinations of the corpus of Thelemic work, particularly of the Holy Books and *The Vision & The Voice* in contrast with older antecedent traditions. Those works gave the reader a glimpse at what separates Thelema from the old Aeon religion of the Osirian Age. The works also gave us an idea of what was still valid in the New Aeon. His second book, *The Angel & The Abyss*, was a courageous work going into more depth and exploring areas no other author besides Crowley and Gunther's own instructor, Marcelo Ramos Motta, would explore and it was refreshing. Considering most Thelemic authors have chosen to write beginners manuals and memoirs, Gunther showed meat and gave us something to bite into, for better or worse, depending on your stance.

How does this apply to *The Visions of the Pylons*? What is it?

This book is unlike Gunther's other works. Here is a record of a series of workings that Gunther engaged in with his close friend and student Richard "Gurney" Gernon. In the text Gunther relates that he was the primary operant and seer while Gurney acted as the Scribe, writing down what Gunther described and also having some experiences of his own. The record was originally scheduled for an issue of Motta's *Equinox vol. 5* but Gunther and Gernon would both have a falling out with their rapidly deteriorating Instructor and the record failed to appear. Gunther set the records aside and they collected dust until one of his own students found them and convinced him that they had value to the world.

We open with a portrait of the author flanked by Ma'at and Thoth. This beautifully executed work

by Robert Burrati of the Australian O.T.O. is to be expected for those who know of his work with Collective 777, the Art Guild of O.T.O. Australia.

In the introduction Gunther lays out the philosophy behind the book, which is based on the Egyptian *Book of the Gates*, a funerary text with cosmopolitan implications and originating in the period of Akhenaten. He explains in some small detail how he and Gernon worked through the Pylons and tells the story of his presenting the record to Motta. Some have found Gunther's Egyptology in the two or three paragraphs covering the topic to be questionable, but I won't be addressing that topic as I am not an Egyptologist. The introduction paints a clear picture of the intent in publishing this book and it isn't because of the Egyptology.

The record itself is a fascinating read. It reminds me of Motta's "*Liber 231: A Personal Research*" in the *Equinox vol. 5 no. 2*, but more competent. Motta's explorations of the Genii of *Liber 231* show an aspirant unsure of his footing and struggling to maintain the visions. In contrast Gunther shows competence in visionary working and describing scenes and dictating the words of the Angels he encounters in each of the Pylons he explores. He presents the first seven Pylons, having set the work aside after Motta's mental deterioration led to a deep paranoia seen in Motta's later works such as *Magick Without Tears Commented* and *Thelemic Magick*. Originally Gunther had thought that the first four Pylons were attributed to the lower four Sephiroth, and when presented with the work shortly after scrying the fourth Pylon, Motta accurately pointed out how the visions related to the elemental quadrants of Malkuth. This is similar to the old Golden Dawn style Initiation ceremonies where the candidate is initiated into the four elements in the  $1^{\circ}=10^{\square}$  through  $4^{\circ}=7^{\square}$  grades, but they all really corresponded to Malkuth as the Adept Minor subgrades corresponded to the actual Sephiroth.

The Visions themselves are very interesting and when reading the first four you can see where Gunther's expectations weren't being met and he tried to force the Vision to conform to his expectations. The speeches of the Angels he communicated with are beautiful and insightful, not just on a doctrinal level but also as insight into the seer's character at the

time. Gunther's footnotes act as a sort of commentary on these visions that he first experienced some 40 years ago and are often very humorous and self-deprecating. He gives one speech in particular, and the rebuff of the angel is equal to Gunther's own chiding footnote to his younger self!

In the appendices Gunther provides instructions for how one can open the Pylons for exploration. Aspirants to the A.:A.: in Australia and other parts of the world have been working with this material with just that in mind, and I think it would be a worthy venture for any O.T.O. member to pursue. The requirements are not complicated, though one of the ingredients used in the eucharistic cake is saffron, an ingredient that is high in price. It is all laid out in the appendices how to make the talismans, the colors, etc. for one to use on their own. Gunther does though provide a warning to would-be practitioners, that these visions should not be pursued lightly, or alone. It is a two-person process, a seer and a scribe, Ma'at and Thoth.

The one major criticism I can express is editorial mistakes. The most grievous example is a footnote that should have extended to the next page but is cut off in the print version while being complete in the Kindle edition. Outside of that do not go into this expecting a continuation of the Inward Journey series. This is a stand-alone text and fulfills a different purpose from Gunther's other two volumes. This is a record of visionary experiences, and that is the most important part of the book.

*The Visions of the Pylons* is an official publication of the A.:A.: in Class C and it is a worthy addition to the body of work presented authoritatively by the Order. It is a true modern grimoire.

*Love is the law, love under will.*

Frater Parzival

## Theology Is the Enemy of Ecstasy

An exhortation by T Polyphilus, *Ep. Gn.*  
first given at a synaxis for E.G.C. clergy in Indian Hills, Colorado, and subsequently at the U.S. E.G.C. conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 2018 EV.



*Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.*

Our Prophet once declared:

A Protestant is one to whom all things sacred are profane, whose mind being all filth can see nothing in the sexual act but a crime or a jest, whose only facial gestures are the sneer and the leer. Protestantism is the excrement of human thought, and accordingly in Protestant countries art, if it exists at all, only exists to revolt.<sup>1</sup>

And he should know! He was himself, after all, raised among the ultra-Protestant Plymouth Brethren.

For better or for worse, though, the intellectual and institutional consequences of the Protestant Reformation have served for centuries to condition the sense of the word **religion**, and it may well have been just this consideration which later caused Crowley to remark that "a great deal of misunderstanding, and ... a rather stupid kind of mischief" might follow from calling Thelema "a new religion."<sup>2</sup> It is a strange twist of history that even Buddhism has taken its modern form in response to influences from Protestantism, chiefly through the avenue of the Buddhist catechism constructed in the nineteenth century by Theosophical Society founder Henry Steele Olcott. Much of the nascent science of cultural anthropology in that same period

was based on data from Protestant missionaries, and their biases have infected not only that discipline, but the entire scholarly enterprise of comparative religion from its root.<sup>3</sup>

Our Saint Friedrich Nietzsche called Protestantism the “original sin” that contaminates German philosophy, and he further wrote for his “Definition of Protestantism: the partial paralysis of Christianity—and of reason.”<sup>4</sup> The confessional conflicts occasioned by the Protestant Reformation elevated theology to the defining attribute of religious identity. Orthodoxy, or “right belief,” was prized and contested, to the frequent neglect of *orthopraxy*, or “right practice.” The Protestant derogation of “works” was certainly to blame in part for this emphasis, but it was complemented by the Catholic policing of consciences, and the tendency of both religious and secular academies to reduce religion to a psychological epiphenomenon of a series of texts.

In the early years of the New Æon, the classicist Jane Ellen Harrison cut to the heart of the matter, when she wrote:

Until recent times definitions of religion have usually included some notion of a relation of the human soul to a god; they have been in some sense theological. ... [I]t is important to note that theology is in all ... religions not essential and integral, but rather a phase, a stage in marking a particular moment in development.<sup>5</sup>

Note that Harrison came to this understanding in the course of her efforts to clarify the popular religious life of ancient Greece, prior to and apart from Christianity, and that she also marks out magic as a necessary prerequisite for religion, far more essential than the later accretions of theology.<sup>6</sup> In these positions, she was influenced by the sociological concepts of Émile Durkheim, who also viewed theology as a late and superficial accretion to basic religious functions. I strongly concur with these views about the contingency of the theological enterprise.

Further, I assert that the religious manifestations characteristic of Thelema are properly *post-theological*. In particular, I wish to identify two

general forms of theology that will be rightly spurned and discarded by individual Thelemites, and more importantly, by our Church: these forms are superstitious faith on the one hand and systematic theology on the other.

As adherents in a Thelemic religious body, we are sometimes confronted with the difficulty that American civic discourse has adopted “faith” as a synonym for “religion.” This equation is a natural outcome of the rational Enlightenment background of political discourse in this country, asserting *freedom of religion* as identical with *liberty of conscience*. It is also consistent with the Deistic contempt for “revealed religion” asserted by many of the founders of American national polity.<sup>7</sup>

But our church cannot accurately be described as “faith-based.” In our effort to implement scientific religion, we do not demand uniformity of belief, and certainly not on the basis of ancient superstitions. As a theological operation, superstitious faith places supreme metaphysical authority in the hands of religious professionals, or—perhaps just as frequently—in the unexamined, inherited prejudices of the individual “believer.” As Nietzsche says, “Faith means not *wanting* to know the truth.”<sup>8</sup> This fact is confirmed even by the ancient Christian proponents of faith, such as Irenaeus and Tertullian.<sup>9</sup>

But our Past Patriarch remarked,

I slept with Faith, and found a corpse in my arms on awaking;

I drank and danced all night with Doubt, and found her a virgin in the morning.<sup>10</sup>

Some theologians and commentators have contrasted faith with knowledge, often using the Greek terms *pistis* and *gnosis*. Consistent with our professed identity as “gnostics,” we must favor the latter. We should assist adherents to come to know the sources of belief, rather than to believe that they have found the sources of knowledge. While our clergy may know things worth teaching, we should value and encourage skepticism rather than credulity among those who seek our knowledge. To quote Nietzsche once more:

I wage war on this theologian instinct: I have found traces of it everywhere. Anyone with theologian blood in his veins will approach things with a warped and deceitful attitude. This gives rise to a pathos that calls itself *faith*: turning a blind eye to yourself for once and for all, so that you do not have to stomach the sight of incurable mendacity.<sup>11</sup>

The fact that our church uses a creed does not implicate us in this “theologian instinct.” The Gnostic Mass creed’s primary function is *liturgical*, and its extra-liturgical role for the individual adherent is, as I have often remarked, to indicate those subjects which we find it spiritually profitable to think *about*, not to circumscribe that which we are allowed to think. We do not and should not catechize our laity with any “correct” way to understand the words of our Creed, which is a text both numinous and multiply mysterious.

The second theological project with which Thelemites should find ourselves at odds is “systematic theology.” Although this phrase can refer more specifically to certain theological schools and tools, I use it here as a designator for the general project of creating a coherent body of religious teaching derived by rational intellectual enterprise on the basis of a specified set of scriptures and religious traditions. In its more advanced forms, systematic theology claims to discriminate those elements of “true” religious belief that are axiomatic and indispensable, from those which are peripheral and derivative. Well-meaning E.G.C. clergy have indeed from time to time suggested that this sort of enterprise ought to be undertaken on behalf of the Gnostic Catholic Church, or even for Thelema as a whole, with a goal of creating clarity about our supposedly shared gods and the divine prescriptions for Thelemites. Indeed, Crowley’s sanction for “an enthusiastic putting-together of a series of doctrines, no one of which must in any way clash with Science or Magick”<sup>12</sup> seems nearly to be an exhortation to such work.

And yet the Tunis Comment to *Liber Legis* demonstrates the barriers to systematic theology for Thelemites. Crowley declared that “Short Comment” to be “the really inspired message, cutting as it does all the difficulties with a single keen stroke.”<sup>13</sup> The

*Book of the Law* is indisputably the cornerstone of Thelema, and yet to cite that book for theological justification is to invite shunning and contempt, by virtue of its most clearly authorized comment.

Furthermore, there is ample room for doubt that the “Great Ones of *Liber Legis*” (as Crowley calls them) are even “gods” in any customarily theological sense. The names Hadit and Ra-hoor-khuit are not even voiced in the Gnostic Mass; Nuit is named in an address to the Queen of Space where the Priest beseeches, “let them speak not of thee at all.” And this silence is consistent with what the Prophet elsewhere cautions:

There are to be no regular temples of Nuit and Hadit, for They are incommensurables and absolutes. Our religion therefore, for the People, is the Cult of the Sun, who is our particular star of the Body of Nuit, from whom in the strictest scientific sense, come this earth, a chilled spark of Him, and all our Light and Life.<sup>14</sup>

The incommensurability and absoluteness of Nuit and Hadit are shown in the operations of “Liber Had” and “Liber Nu,”<sup>15</sup> which are severely magical in character, far from any conventional procedure of the religious sort, and rigorously solitary. They are not at all consistent with the abilities and aspirations of *theologians*, those whom Ludwig Feuerbach categorically scorns as hypocrites, fantasists, and speculative theorizers.<sup>16</sup> Feuerbach’s writings are of special value to us, as he is concerned to demonstrate in every particular how man creates god in his own image, while still affirming the value of that creation.<sup>17</sup> As we say, “There is no god but man.” Feuerbach wrote, “In religion man does not satisfy *other beings*; he satisfies his own nature.”<sup>18</sup>

Consider also the paper in which Crowley theorizes most explicitly regarding “that energized enthusiasm which is the lever that moves God.” In “Energized Enthusiasm,” it almost seems as if a theology is being presented through its triad of Greek deities. But Crowley is not concerned with divine personalities named Dionysus, Apollo, and Aphrodite, nor does he want to establish the canonical mandates of these gods, the “proper” ways to show them reverence, or the rewards of service to them. On the contrary, it is in this paper that he remarks, “Easier I find it ...

to extend my connotation of ‘man’ than to invent ‘God.’”<sup>19</sup> Crowley has taken these three gods from Plato’s dialogue *Phaedrus* (and its later mutations in esoteric tradition), but in a characteristically modern and Thelemic way he reduces the gods to indices, convenient signifiers for the three chief methods of inducing ecstasy in order to power human creativity.<sup>20</sup> His use of the ancient Greek god-names is to give us a sense of both the depth of the occult traditions on which he draws, and the sanctity of the human genius into which he inquires.

Sigmund Freud’s most confrontationally critical work on religion is *The Future of an Illusion*. In one of his devil’s-advocate passages there he remarks, “If you want to expel religion from our European civilization, you can only do it by means of another system of doctrines,” which would itself engender a functional religion, with all of the concomitant drawbacks.<sup>21</sup> In replying to his own objection, Freud emphasizes the desired differences in his post-religious system: it is to be non-delusive and more capable of being corrected. It will be science, not religion. But Freudian psychoanalysis, for all of its scientific trappings, is already at some remove from the positivist territory of the physical sciences. It is no closer to, say, biology, than the monotheism of Moses was to the Canaanite religions of antiquity. In effect, Freud’s proposal is that the superstitious religion of traditions focused on God should be replaced with a scientific religion trained on the soul.

This agenda is a match for Feuerbach’s intentions, when he writes:

that man, who is always unconsciously governed and determined by his own essence alone, may in future take his own, human essence as the law and determining ground, the aim and measure, of his ethical and political life. And this will inevitably come to pass. Whereas hitherto, misunderstood religion, religious obscurantism, has been the supreme principle of politics and ethics, from now on, or at some future date, religion properly understood, religion seen in terms of man, will determine the destinies of mankind.<sup>22</sup>

*Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.*

Rather than the theological understanding of human souls as accessories of God, Feuerbach’s philosophy, Freud’s psychology, and Crowley’s magick alike see gods as accessories of the soul. And for Thelemites, the most important of these accessories, the “god of one’s personal universe,” is the *augoeides*, the personal genius or Holy Guardian Angel. As tempting as it might be to have a theology setting out the nature and attributes of such a being for the benefit of any curious aspirant, it would be false and counter-productive. Such knowledge and conversation can come only through practice and attainment, not through speculation, and not through the hearsay of bookish authority. Crowley writes that he prefers the title “Holy Guardian Angel” to its synonyms because of its absurdity, its ability “to mortify the metaphysical man,” and thus to impede the theological impulse.<sup>23</sup>

Note that in a key letter of *Magick Without Tears* Crowley adamantly refuses to theologize. After blasting his correspondent’s sloppy use of the word “god,” he remarks that when he uses the word, he relies “on context to crystallize this most fluid—or gaseous—of expressions.”<sup>24</sup> That is to say, he uses his occasional god-talk *rhetorically and heuristically*, not metaphysically, not morally, and not theologically. And he rebukes what he calls “the game of sanctimonious magniloquence,” in which rhetorical effusions create theological mirages.<sup>25</sup>

Thelema encompasses a world-view demanding *initiation*, and thus we recognize that any particular theological position can itself only be contingent, subject to overturning as the initiate advances in light, wisdom, and understanding. As we read in “*Liber Porta Lucis*”:

To the adept, seeing all these things from above, there seems nothing to choose between Buddha and Mohammed, between Atheism and Theism.<sup>26</sup>

Ultimately, the metaphysical consequences of Thelema include demonstrations of the non-exclusivity of idolatry and iconoclasm, monotheism and polytheism, theism and atheism, tradition and innovation. Initiation itself can be considered as a motion among these poles, tending toward the ultimate transcendence of them. In the words of the

fourteenth-century Sufi poet Mahmud Shabestari Elegua:

If the moslem understood Islam he would become an idol-worshipper.<sup>27</sup>

Systematic theology is not only inadequate to the esoteric ambitions of initiation; it is also counterproductive with respect to the exoteric agenda of a mass movement. Theological training of clergy has time and again worked against the aims of propagating a religious message. Rodney Stark and other sociologists of religion have demonstrated that the scholarly professionalization developed through seminaries creates destructive rifts between clerical and lay communities.<sup>28</sup> People come to a church for experience of the sacred and for social engagement, not for secondhand theological 'schooling.' Theological sophistication of seminarians and clergy is a primary cause for the decline of "mainstream" Protestantism as contrasted with its Evangelical and Fundamentalist competitors.

At the acknowledged risk of offending some present, I would like to call out a certain form of speculative theology that is, in my opinion, commonly and counter-productively employed among contemporary Thelemites. The dependence of Thelemic writers and teachers on theories from so-called "depth psychology" is a bit dismaying to me. While I will happily admit the overlap in subject matter between that discipline and magick, I believe it is the proper role of initiates to explain profane theories in terms of esoteric principles, not the other way around. Too often in my experience we can see magicians emphasizing Jungian explanations of occult phenomena and doctrines. For all that Jung styled his work as "psychological" and insisted that he avoided theological claims—he certainly had no doctrinal authority in any traditional religious context—nevertheless his writings very commonly occupy a theological discursive register.

Jung's concerns do intersect with ours to a significant extent, and a case can easily be made that he was a crypto-occultist, albeit perhaps one in denial about the essential character of his work. In any case, Jungian psychology is certainly not a positive empirical science. "Archetypes of the

collective unconscious" *may or may not exist* just like sephiroth, paths, spirits, conjurations, gods, spheres, planes, and so forth, and I *earnestly warn you against attributing objective reality or philosophical validity to any of them.*<sup>29</sup>

Now, our central ceremony is professedly for the purpose of "the satisfaction of the religious instinct ... by ceremonial means ... through which people might enter into ecstasy."<sup>30</sup> We therefore exclude any sermonizing from the Gnostic Mass itself, and this exclusion is a signal of the remoteness of theology from our chief objectives. Our mission as clergy is to organize sacramental ceremony for our communities, and to provide just such teachings as will facilitate the ecstatic experience, while remaining consistent with the "series of doctrines" that emanate from the Sanctuary of the Gnosis and its sacred science.

Our Past Patriarch Baphomet was very explicit in his teaching that the mystical experience is not dependent on theology. In *The Gospel According to St. Bernard Shaw* he wrote:

The mystic attainment may be defined as the Union of the Soul with God, or as the realization of itself, or – there are fifty phrases for the same experience. The same, for whether you are a Christian or a Buddhist, a Theist or (as I am myself, thank God!) an Atheist, the attainment of this one state is as open to you as is nightmare, or madness, or intoxication.<sup>31</sup>

Intellectual positions in the metaphysical sphere, particularly when weighted with notions of theological *rectitude*, serve to create social division and to constrain mental freedom. Efforts to officially define and delimit the objects of popular devotion have served as engines of authority for superstitious religions, but they are not consistent with a ministry of Light, Life, Love and Liberty. To the extent that Gnostic Catholic clergy have any input to the theological views of the laity, our best contributions will help to keep such views *unsystematic, unsettled, and diverse*. "Convictions cause convicts."<sup>32</sup>

Let's examine one of the oldest theological dilemmas, what Egyptologist Jan Assmann calls the *Mosaic distinction*, a concept that lies at the root

of the broad tradition comprehending Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This distinction severs monotheism not from “polytheism” (a late modern back-construction), but from *idolatry*.<sup>33</sup> The reality of Yahoo-Wahoo is supposedly confirmed by the refusal to depict him, while the inert and perishable materiality of idols shows the impotence of the gods they represent and their remove from the true divinity. As with so many of the founding distinctions of Western religion, Thelema reverses this one. “Set up my image in the East: ... The other images group around me to support me: let all be worshipped, for they shall cluster to exalt me.”<sup>34</sup> Little children understand representation! They understand projective participation with dolls. The refusal to understand and countenance the ways in which external images assist the spiritual imagination and the ways in which acts of worship ensoul material works, this refusal is a product of minds diseased with theology.<sup>35</sup>

Consider also the theological doctrine that is perhaps the most central to traditional Christianity, and the source of the greatest theological contentions in Christian history: the Trinity. The relevant surviving documents—the Didache and the writings of the so-called New Testament—seem to indicate that the Trinity was not a teaching of the earliest Christianity, and yet Christians for many long centuries have persecuted one another in the public sphere over the questions whether and how this concept was to be accepted. Crowley wrote that “Considerations of the Christian Trinity are of a nature suited only to initiates of the IX° of O.T.O., as they enclose the final secret of all practical Magick.”<sup>36</sup> So such theological ideas which have been sources of dispute and discord should be reserved, *quarantined* among those who have sufficient knowledge, will, and courage to use them silently as intellectual instruments of Magick.

We must be on our guard against the suppositions of the profane that would demand a theological basis for our scientific religion! The troglodytes of Abrahamic cults insist that their worships were designed by the historically discrete will of the God of the ancient Hebrews: graven on tablets for Moses, enacted in the person of Jesus, or delivered angelically to Muhammad. These then become the grounds for theological explanations of religious origins. Aleister Crowley, on the other hand,

boasted his restoration of “solar-phallic worship,” citing such authorities as “General Forlong, Sir Richard Burton, Sir R. Payne Knight, Mssrs. Hargrave Jennings, Godfrey Higgins, [and] Gerald Massey.”<sup>37</sup> All of these seminal theorists of solar-phallic religion rejected the customary forms of theology, instead identifying the root of religion in the human capacity for communal ecstasy, awe, and reverence toward “the eternal miracle of abounding life, ever self-restored, triumphant over death, the return of the Sun and the resurrection of the Seed.”<sup>38</sup>

And so I call upon you to join me in rejecting the superstition of individual faith along with the tyranny of exoteric theology.

*Love is the law, love under will.*

#### Notes

1. Crowley, “Energized Enthusiasm,” *The Equinox* I:9, p. 24.
2. Crowley, *Magick Without Tears*, p. 219.
3. See discussion in J.Z. Smith’s *Drudgery Divine*, and a more hopeful continuation of the topic in the “Comparative Mystics” chapter of J. Kripal, *The Serpent’s Gift*.
4. *The Anti-Christ*, trans. J. Norman, aphorism 10.
5. Jane Ellen Harrison, *Themis*, p. 488.
6. *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 215-6.
7. See, for instance, *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers* by D.L. Holmes.
8. Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, aphorism 51.
9. See K. Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* (1987), p. 373.
10. Crowley, *The Book of Lies*, ch. 45, “Chinese Music.”
11. Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, aphorism 9.
12. Crowley, *Magick Without Tears*, p. 219.
13. Crowley, *The Equinox of the Gods*, p. 126 n.
14. Crowley, *The Law Is for All*, p. 163 (commentary to CCXX III:22).
15. *The Equinox* I:7, pp. 11-20 & 83-91.
16. *Lectures on the Essence of Religion*, 8th Lecture, p. 62.
17. See J. Kripal, *The Serpent’s Gift*, ch. 2.
18. Feuerbach, *Lectures on the Essence of Religion*, 9th lecture, p. 76.
19. “Energized Enthusiasm,” *Equinox* I(9).
20. M.D. Rogers, “The Frenzied Beast,” in *Aleister Crowley and Western Esotericism*.
21. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (Norton 1989), pp. 55-6.
22. Feuerbach, *Lectures on the Essence of Religion*, 3rd lecture, pp. 22-3.
23. Crowley, in “The Temple of Solomon the King,” *Equinox* I(1), p. 159.
24. *Magick Without Tears*, p. 206.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
26. “Liber Porta Lucis,” v. 19 (in *The Holy Books of Thelema*, pp. 40-1).
27. Quoted by Peter Lamborn Wilson in *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*, p. 10.
28. See, for example, Stark & Finke, *The Churching of America 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*.
29. Paraphrasing “Liber O,” *The Equinox*, I.2.
30. Crowley, *Confessions*, p. 714.
31. *Crowley on Christ*, p. 116.
32. *Principia Discordia*.
33. Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, p. 7 ff.
34. CCXX III:21-22.
35. See in this connection Crowley, *The Book of Lies*, ch. 21, as a rebuttal of the biblical Acts 17:24-30.
36. Crowley, *Magick: Book Four*, p. 138 n.
37. *Crowley on Christ*, p. 189.
38. *Op.cit.*



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