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From the Grand Master

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

Initiation in occult societies, religious orders, and Masonic fraternities often involves the taking of an oath or pledge of secrecy. Usually, this oath is intended to protect the privacy of the members and the sanctity of the secret rites and mysteries of the society.

The development of the internet over the last few years has radically improved communication between individuals and groups worldwide. This revolution in communications has led to considerable discussion of the desirability and practicality of such oaths of secrecy. The “freedom of information” has been touted by some as a human right, semantically equivalent to the freedom of speech, but functionally equivalent to the abolition of privacy.

In such an atmosphere, it is inevitable that secrets will eventually leak out. Sometimes the genuine secrets are dragged naked and screaming from their sanctuaries into the public arena; other times only simulacra consisting of scraps of truth patched together with threads of speculation are held up to the public for sale as the Real Thing. The only way the public will know the difference is if it obtains verification from those who know the difference; i.e., from the initiates.

There has always been considerable controversy over the need, advisability, and practicality of oaths of secrecy. Whether or not the secrets being protected have any real need to be protected, the oath of secrecy serves other, less obvious, functions. For example, it is one of the most fundamental aspects of the fraternal yoga that binds the members of an esoteric society. It is something they all hold in common, and it is the foundation of the fraternal trust they place in each other. By agreeing to keep something (anything) secret, a group sets that thing apart from the mundane world as a sacred mystery for the initiates. An oath of secrecy also serves as a very basic and practical exercise in self-discipline, especially in a society such as ours which places little value on the distinction between sacred and profane. Proficiency in keeping an oath of secrecy, even if it is a seemingly trivial or widely-known “secret” that is being kept, will further the ability of the practitioner to adhere to the terms of more difficult magical oaths as she progresses in her magical career. Thus, the oath of secrecy is a very important aspect of the fraternal bond between magicians, and of the development of the individual magician’s powers.

Magical oaths are nearly always phrased in absolute terms. They do not contain clauses like “I shall keep this oath as long as everybody else keeps it,” or “...as long as it doesn’t interfere with my ability to make money,” or “...as long as I am an active

member, and approve of all of the Society’s policies and activities,” or “...as long as it seems to make sense to me to do this.” Magical oaths cannot be lifted, exempted, conditioned, waived or relieved by any power, event or circumstance; they can only be kept or broken.

The dreadful traditional penalties sworn under by the members of many societies are usually symbolic (in modern times), and have, at the worst, only psychological and magical repercussions to the breaker of oaths. The society wronged by the oath breaker may rightly exclude him from further participation in its mysteries; but the principal casualty of a broken oath is not the society to which the oath was sworn, but the integrity of the initiate who swore the oath. He who breaks an oath has cheapened the value of his solemn word; and has abandoned the privileges of being considered a trustworthy person.

Love is the law, love under will

Sabazius



From the Electoral College

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law

At our bi-annual meeting this winter, the US Electoral College closed the following Camps:

- Aiwass Lodge in California
- Chango Camp in Lewisville, Texas
- Adonis Apophis Camp in Beaverton, Oregon

Opened Gasparilla Camp in Tampa, Florida

Status of IAO-Abraxas was changed from Oasis to Camp, and change of master approved. The new master of IAO-Abraxas Camp is David Melton. Our congratulations go out to David, and our thanks to Anita Kraft for her many years of service to the Order in her role of Master of IAO-Abraxas Oasis.

Approved two invitations to the V^o

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(Continued)



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We are often asked questions about policy and procedures, and we thought that we would try to answer them in this forum in order to reach as many of you as possible:

Q: What does the College look for when considering a Camp.

A: *We apply something we affectionately refer to as “The Duck Test.” This means that we expect you to be quacking like a duck when you apply.*

Q: What the hell is the Duck Test?

A: *It is a form of shamanic magic involving the consultation of the Great Duck Totem and assumption of the Astral Duck Form.*

Just kidding. We believe that our job is to recognize individuals for the work that they already do, and to empower them by providing the tools necessary to officially represent the Order. If you quack like a duck, then you must be a duck. If you are functioning like a local body, then you must be one.

Q: Do you often turn down applications for Local Bodies?

A: *Not often, but we have. One of the main reasons we turn down an application is when we are promised to see Camp-like activities AFTER a Charter has been issued. Remember “The Duck Test.” Try to be quacking as loudly as possible before you apply. Perform the activities associated with the local body you are applying for as though you were already chartered, so that we will look at you and see a Camp that only needs official recognition.*

Q: Have you ever closed established bodies?

A: *Yes. Remember that once chartered, you will be representing the OTO. We expect to be represented accurately, professionally and in a business way. Also, keep in mind that local body master is a position of service to the Order:*

Here are some tips that will help you avoid most problems:

- 1. Send your annual reports. This is important.*
- 2. If you move, you must notify us. If you change your phone number, you must notify us. If you can no longer remain in the position of Master, you must notify us. You may recommend a successor to us, but we must make the actual appointment.*
- 3. Don't engage in illegal activity or in any other conduct that will bring shame to the OTO and its members. Remember: for many people, your Local Body will set the tone for how the individuals affiliated in your valley judge the rest of the organization.*
- 4. Read and understand the USGL Body Master Handbook.*
- 5. Play nice with other local bodies. Don't compete: cooperate.*
- 6. Make your local body a place where your members can grow by offering them opportunity to assist in activities.*
- 7. If you perform initiation rituals or the Gnostic Mass, follow the script. When you perform these rituals, you are representing the Order, not just your local body.*

Q: What is the number one reason that you would not recommend an applicant's request for a Charter to Initiate?

A: *Again, these positions are service oriented. Also, we do not issue Charters to Initiate. Our Grand Master does this upon our recommendation, and just because we recommend some one, it does not mean that he will issue the Charter. You shouldn't take it personally if you are ever turned down, it often means that there is no need for an additional Charter in your area.*

Before applying for a Charter to Initiate, please make sure that you have assisted in all of the initiations from Minerval to Third Degree. Failure to have assisted in these initiations is the single most frequent reason for not recommending a Charter.

Love is the law, love under will.

Book Review

By John Lawrence

Children in New Religions

edited by Susan J. Palmer and Charlotte E. Hardman
Rutgers University Press, 1999

Responsible academic study of new religious movements (NRMs for short, what the media usually label ‘cults’) is still in its early stages. This book is important as addressing the serious issues surrounding children born into such movements. One would naturally expect that someone raised in a specific faith will have very different perceptions from those of an adult convert, especially when that faith is fundamentally at odds with mainstream society. The parents of these children, as well as the movements to which they belong, must deal with just this in their daily lives, even if they decide to make no special effort to pass on their beliefs and lifestyles to their second generation. If they do make such an effort, and historically this is usually the key to a movement's continued existence, they must then decide how to go about it. The resulting systems will reflect the movement's ideals and its concept of the family and the nature of childhood. The various articles herein deal with exactly these points in a wide variety of case studies ranging from Wicca to the Krishna Consciousness to communal Christian sects, both in the United States and abroad. The reader thus gets a comprehensive look at the various (and varying) strategies different movements have developed. The fact that most of these reports are the product of extensive participant-observer studies adds to their value. Several articles make the point that children cannot be considered as passive receptacles of doctrine but are active creators of meaning.

Several articles deal with the relations between NRMs and society at large. As one would expect from prevalent stereotypes in the media and from anti-cult activists, not to mention recent history, this can be explosive. It becomes clear from the several cases cited that accusations of child abuse have become the standard weapon against NRMs, often using child custody battles as their basis. Simply put, “the safety of our children” is a very easy button for a manipulator to push, especially since many NRMs have very different ideas of what constitutes a child's best interests. Most of the articles in this section are written by legal scholars and they are actually somewhat heartening in showing how NRM parents have often fared well in the courts despite the extreme stress and expense involved. It would seem that a willingness to fight injustice and bring in all the expert testimony one can get pays off in the end.

As far as I'm aware this is the first book of its kind and one could hardly ask for a better. Well-researched, equipped with plenty of references, and reasonably objective, this is excellent reading for any parent involved in a non-mainstream religion. I would also recommend this to any officer of any new religious movement even if they personally do not have children: probably at least some of the members in your group do and you will find it helpful to understand their situations.



U.S.G.L. FAQ

No. 1: E.G.C.

- Q) How many confirmed members of EGC are there?**
A) The EGC does not keep a central membership roll at this time. It does record the ordination and current status of deacons, priestesses, priests, and bishops.
- Q) I recently was ordained a deacon. Who is responsible for reporting this info to Grand Lodge?**
A) Your ordaining officer, who is supposed to submit ordination reports to the GSG and the EGC Secy. He or she will, undoubtedly, greatly appreciate any assistance you can provide in assembling the required information; and such assistance will often expedite the process.
- Q) I was recently ordained a priestess. How do I apply for credentials to perform weddings and other services in my state of residence?**
A) Different states have different requirements for registration of clergy, and some states do not require registration. If you seek registration in your state, you must first contact the office of the Secretary of State (or whatever office in your state handles such matters), and find out what the requirements are. If you need a signature of a Church official, contact your supervising bishop or ordaining bishop. Grand Lodge's policy is to provide formal, direct state registration assistance only to bishops who have applied for and received recognized ministerial status within OTO. Bishops are qualified to apply to Grand Lodge for ministerial status if they regularly provide public performances of the Gnostic Mass in accordance with O.T.O. policies, and provide religious services to their congregation on a weekly basis. Your supervising bishop may, at his or her discretion, provide you with assistance in obtaining registration in your state.
- Q) Is training a pre-requisite to ordination? And, if so, could you describe the training the Church offers?**
A) The Church hopes to provide formal, centralized clerical training in the future; but currently, all such training is left to the discretion of the bishops. Typically, a record of active participation in the Gnostic Mass is expected as a minimum. Many areas offer workshops and seminars on the Gnostic Mass; and the Grand Master has included much material intended to be of benefit to novice clergy on his website at <<http://www.hermetic.com/sabazius/>>, including a recommended reading list. An EGC Manual, with Grand Lodge's official policies regarding EGC matters, is available from the Initiation Secretary: initiation@oto-usa.org. Some priests and priestesses have been authorized by their bishops to provide training to novices on their behalf.
- Q) I live in a remote area. There is no local body, and I have not had the opportunity to participate in a Gnostic Mass as an officer. How can I obtain training and ordination?**
A) Ordination is for those who are in a position to serve a congregation. Work towards getting a group together in your area, and start studying and practicing Liber XV. Obtain a copy of the EGC Manual. Get in touch with local body officers and EGC clergy in your general area for assistance.
- Q) I am a KEW. Do I have a right to ordination as a priest, even though I have had no training and have not officered as a priest in the Gnostic Mass?**
A) Again, ordination is for those who are in a position to serve a congregation; it is not for those who desire an empty title. If you have no intention of serving a congregation as a priest or priestess, then you should not seek formal ordination. If you do wish to serve

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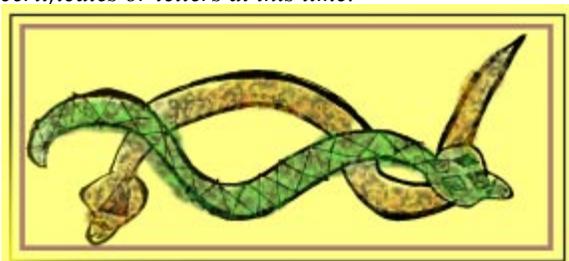
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a congregation in the future, but have not had an opportunity to serve as an officer, then continue your studies and request ordination when the time is right.

- Q) I am an ordained priestess. There is no bishop in my geographical area. Do I have the right or ability to ordain deacons and confirm members of EGC?**
- A) Only if a bishop delegates authority to you to do these things under his or her supervision. Your ordaining bishop may be willing to give you this authority, even if he or she does not live in your area. If this is the case, you should report to your bishop on a regular basis by letter, telephone or email.*
- Q) I am an ordained Priest, and a member of a local body where Mass is performed. Can I have Mass at my house, on my own schedule, without informing or involving the local body? What if it's a private Mass, for invited guests only?**
- A) Local bodies are responsible for scheduling public Gnostic Masses. You may schedule your own private Gnostic Mass, for invited guests only. Such services should not be announced officially.*
- Q) I am a I^o member of a Camp that would like to start doing Mass. None of us are even confirmed. Are we allowed to start practicing the Mass?**
- A) Yes, you are encouraged to practice the Gnostic Mass, but you are advised to obtain a copy of the EGC Manual and to seek assistance and advice from an ordained, experienced officer. The general rule is that you may not perform public Gnostic Mass unless at least one of the three principal celebrating officers is a recognized priest, priestess or bishop. The exception to this rule is that, in developing areas, the Grand Master may grant special permission to novices who are under the direct or indirect supervision of a bishop to perform public Gnostic Mass*
- Q) I have been practicing the Mass at my local body. I would like to receive advice from someone who is more instructed and experienced and than I am. How can I apply to be "under the supervision" of a bishop? Who are the bishops?**
- A) You may request the assignment of a bishop by contacting Grand Lodge. There are, at this time, not enough bishops in the U.S. to provide direct training and supervision of clergy in every region of the country, but some bishops are willing to offer indirect training and supervision by mail, telephone and email contact, as well as occasional long-distance travel. Typically, every member of VII^o and higher is an EGC bishop, and there are several recognized bishops of V^o and VI^o whose episcopal consecration occurred before August, 1996ev.*
- Q) I have recently been ordained. Will I receive a certificate or letter?**
- A) Some bishops, at their pleasure, issue certificates and/or letters commemorating baptism, confirmation and ordination within EGC. Grand Lodge does not issue such certificates or letters at this time.*



graphic by Ayah Dabhi

Thelemic Parenting Group

The Thelemic Parenting Group currently consists of an e-list of Order members who are interested in issues related to raising children within the thelemic tradition. We are discussing a variety of topics pertinent to the different aspects of thelema and parenting, and are in the process of creating events, activities and materials for those who are raising children, as well as for children themselves.

Some feel that by attempting to teach we are in fact imposing our beliefs onto our children. Raising a child thelemically (which is what tends to happen when you are a Thelemite and have a child) and raising a child to be thelemic seem very different, but they do go hand in hand. By living according to the Law of Thelema ourselves, we are teaching by inference. Thelema itself can be embracing and tolerant of other philosophies, religions, and beliefs. We are already imparting to them, by our own example, valuable experiential knowledge of what it means to be a Thelemite.

As adults, we sometimes feel isolated going about our daily lives surrounded by a mostly Judeo-Christian culture. As members of the O.T.O., we are joined together in the bonds of fraternity. Local thelemic communities provide us with a sense of belonging and fellowship we don't often find within society in general. It is reasonable to assume that our children may also experience this type of alienation from time to time. Other religious organizations have groups that are designed to help their children to better understand what their parents are involved in. While our communities are still too small to support local organizations of this magnitude, an annual retreat for our children is within our capabilities. A thelemic summer camp will give them the opportunity to socialize with other children from various types of thelemic families and to learn more about our culture in general. It will also provide them with an opportunity to identify and discuss problems that relate directly to being raised in a thelemic household.

By offering events aimed towards children, we hope to make them feel welcome within our community.

Crowley recognized the value of not excluding children from the Law of Thelema. Though he seemed to realize the importance of taking responsibility for our children, defining the child of a member as a child of the entire Order, he did not set up a precedent for an organization to specifically deal with this dynamic. As time has passed and our Order has increased in size, so has its resources and organizational skills. Perhaps now is the time to create a distinct place within in the structure of our Order to nurture this particular aspect of community.

The TPG is in the process of organizing a National Thelemic Parenting Conference, which will be open to O.T.O. members and their children. It will include lectures, classes, informational materials, and round table discussions that will specifically address issues relating to thelema, child raising, and inclusion of our children within our community. There will be special events scheduled for both adults and children. We currently have some very talented individuals putting together a publication that will include articles, essays, rituals, and other related pieces.

Members who are interested in participating in the Thelemic Parenting e-Group, summer camp project, or Parenting Conference may contact Sister Heather at (916)451-0706 or Anaitis156@aol.com.