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## From the Grand Master

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

The relationship between science and religion is an important theme in Crowley's writings. He constantly referred to the system of the A.:A.: as *Scientific Illuminism*, and the motto he chose for his journal *The Equinox* was "The method of science — the aim of religion."

Crowley frequently referred to Thelema as a religion (for numerous examples, see Bill Heidrick's article "From the Outbasket" in the *Thelema Lodge Calendar*; November 1992 e.v.). He was also clear about the fundamentally religious nature of the O.T.O. system when, in his editorial in the *Equinox* III:1, he described O.T.O. as "the first of the great religious Societies to accept the Law." However, in Chapter 31 of *Magick Without Tears*, he was equally clear that he had serious reservations regarding the generally anti-scientific and anti-magical character of most traditional religious systems, to the point where he doubted the usefulness of the term 'religion' in reference to Thelema, at least without some kind of qualifier. He said, "our system is a religion just so far as a religion means an enthusiastic putting-together of a series of doctrines, no one of which must in any way clash with Science or Magick." In his *Constitutions of the Order of Thelemites*, he provided us with the terminology we need, by declaring opposition to all *superstitious religions*, as obstacles to the establishment of *scientific religion*.

Crowley's emphasis on science is often understood as referring to an application of the techniques of scientific inquiry to one's personal spiritual practices. However, his notion of scientific religion means more than this. Referring back to *Magick Without Tears*, we can infer that scientific religion is to be defined as "an enthusiastic putting-together of a series of doctrines, no one of which must in any way clash with Science or Magick." We find a concrete example of this in Chapter 73 of Crowley's *Confessions*, where he describes his considerations in composing our Gnostic Mass:

"Human nature demands (in the case of most people) the satisfaction of the religious instinct, and, to very many, this may best be done by ceremonial means. I wished therefore to construct a ritual through which people might enter into ecstasy as they have always done under the influence of appropriate ritual. In recent years, there has been an increasing failure to attain this object, because the established cults shock their intellectual convictions and outrage their common sense. Thus their minds criticize their enthusiasm; they are unable to consummate the union of their individual

souls with the universal soul as a bridegroom would be to consummate his marriage if his love were constantly reminded that its assumptions were intellectually absurd.

I resolved that my Ritual should celebrate the sublimity of the operation of universal forces without introducing disputable metaphysical theories. I would neither make nor imply any statement about nature which would not be endorsed by the most materialistic man of science."

If we are to realize the principles of Crowley's concept of scientific religion, we must be capable of critically evaluating our own opinions, assumptions, doctrines, and paradigms regarding the natural world, in accordance with the practical principles of logic, and in the light of the best and most current scientific knowledge.

This does not necessarily require the outright rejection of the value of revelation, of sacred writings, or of traditional rituals, practices, and symbol systems. It *does* require maintaining an open mind as to how we interpret these things, how we contextualize them, and what conclusions we draw from them. If a passage in a holy book appears to contradict a demonstrated fact of nature, then the passage may be false; but it may also have simply been incorrectly interpreted. If a religious or magical doctrine cannot be reconciled with the best and most current scientific knowledge, then it may be time for the basis of that doctrine to be reinterpreted. If a historically important interpretive document presents views that are no longer scientifically sound, then we need to ensure that the document is understood within its historical context.

Matters of the Spirit lie generally outside the bounds of real scientific inquiry. The Holy Guardian Angel cannot be reliably photographed. We do not know the exact height and weight of the god Anubis, or of the demon IZNR. The visions of an entranced skryer are not necessarily repeatable by subsequent investigators. The psychologist and the physicist can give us no more certain data about gnosis than can the historian, or the mystic. Nevertheless, the mystic, the magician, and the priest have much to learn from the scientist.

The doctrines of science can influence our understanding of spiritual phenomena, and if we are to realize the principles of *scientific religion*, this influence is to be greatly desired. However, one of the fundamental axioms of the scientific viewpoint is that

## Contents

From the Grand Master .....	1
From the Electoral College .....	3

our understanding of nature is *never absolute*. Scientific knowledge is constantly changing, refining itself, occasionally reversing itself, as it grows. New ideas and doctrines replace old ideas and doctrines, as the overall database of knowledge grows larger and more accurate. The scientific explanation of a given phenomenon offered in 1920 can be as obsolete today as the theory of phlogiston was then. A single experiment can completely overturn a scientific doctrine.

If we offer a scientific or natural explanation for a spiritual phenomenon, we must realize that such an explanation may need to be revised in the future. A high spiritual truth may be timeless and constant, but its explanation, interpretation, and application in the mundane world may require adjustment from time to time as more information comes available.

For example, as noted by many authors on anthropology, religion, mythology, and occultism, the *phallus* has been worshipped in various cultures at various times as an emblem of the generative process — and thus of earthly life and death, generation and regeneration, as well as an emblem of the pleasure and joy derived from the procreative act that forms such a fundamental aspect of our wills as incarnate beings. The epithet “Lord of Life and Joy” is an apt one for this image.

But the *image* is not necessarily the *thing itself*. Korzybski put it best, “the map is not the territory.” The phallic image is a graphic depiction of the penis, the male organ of reproduction. The *thing itself*, though, in this case, is the concept of the *Essence of Life*, i.e., that which is truly at the core of the sexual generative process. Can we honestly say that the penis, that tube of flesh appended to the male physique, is *itself* the very Essence of Life and Death? The penis is merely a vehicle for the transmission of the semen, which (we have learned) is merely a vehicle for transmission of spermatozoa, which (we have learned quite recently) are merely vehicles for transmission of DNA — which contains, in its nucleotide sequence, the coded *information* necessary for generation and regeneration — the information that lies at the essential and irreducible core of the sexual generative process, and, therefore, represents the very *Essence of Life* itself.

But there is the sperm, and there is also the egg; and both the sperm and the egg contain this essential coded information, that which is aptly *symbolized* by the image of the phallus. In fact, the essential information contained in both the sperm and the egg is incomplete, and thus somewhat less than truly essential, without the other.

The DNA in human cells is contained in the nuclei of the cells, within a number of rod-like structures called chromosomes. The majority of the cells of the human body contain two complete sets of 23 chromosomes, one set from the father and one set from the mother. When these cells divide, the chromosomes of the parent cell replicate themselves and are distributed evenly between the two new *daughter cells* through a process called *mitosis*. Each daughter cell receives a full complement of 46 chromosomes.

However (as everyone who has passed high school biology since the early 20th century should know), the sperm and the egg are produced through a *different* process, known as *meiosis*. In meiosis, there are four daughter cells rather than two, and each daughter cell receives only 23 chromosomes, half the normal complement — one chromosome from each original pair of chromosomes. These four daughter cells are the *gametes*, the sperm and egg cells, which are incapable of further division because their chromosomes are unpaired. Their chromosomes must be

paired with chromosomes from another gamete, in order to initiate the process of cell division that is the creation of a new incarnate being. If these cells do not unite with their complement within a relatively short period of time, they simply die.

Before the processes of mitosis and meiosis were fully understood, there was a great deal of speculation and contention about which sex was responsible for carrying the true *Essence of Life*, and the various hypotheses proposed were influenced by religious, cultural, and even political concerns.

The thinking on these matters from ancient times through the Renaissance (in Europe) fell generally into two major camps. One held that it was the male who carried the True Essence, the Seed of Life, and who “planted” this seed in the fertile soil of the womb of the female, where it was nourished and protected as it developed, on its own, into new Life. For these *phallicists*, only men possessed this Divine Spark of Life, and women did not. The *ovists*, for lack of a better term, held the opposite; that it was women who possessed the Seed of Life within their bodies, and that the function of men in the reproductive process was one of enabling or *fertilization*; of “watering the soil” so that the seed that resided therein might sprout and grow.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, these primitive doctrines were refined into a scientific school of thought called *preformationism*, which held that living beings were essentially fully-formed prior to conception. This school of thought was divided into the two classical factions, the *spermists* and the *ovists*. The doctrine of spermist preformation is exemplified by the famous *Homunculus* image, drawn by Nicholas Hartsoecker in 1694, and supposedly based on an observation of Anton van Leeuwenhoek. The image shows a spermatozoon containing, within its head, a tiny, but fully-formed, human being, and the implication is that the sperm contains the complete, preformed essence of the unborn person; whereas the egg is merely an inert, nutritive, sheltering matrix. Crowley reproduced Hartsoecker’s *Homunculus* on the Hermit Trump of the Thoth Tarot Deck. Opposed to the spermist preformationists were the ovist preformationists of the 18th century, led by Regnier de Graaf, who believed that it was the egg that contained the complete essence of the human being, and that the sperm was merely a triggering mechanism for development. The entire doctrine of preformationism, however, was completely discredited by the embryological observations of Caspar Wolff in the late 18th century. Any remaining controversy over whether the sperm or the egg was more important was finally settled in 1875 by Wilhelm Oskar Hertwig, who demonstrated that the fertilization process required the fusion of the nuclei of both cells. The processes of mitosis and meiosis were fairly well understood in a mechanical sense by the late 1890s (mitosis was understood first), but the structure and mode of replication of the DNA molecule was not understood until the 1950s.

The extent of Crowley’s understanding of these developments is uncertain, except, of course, that he died before the discovery of DNA. The Devil Trump of the Thoth Tarot deck contains an image that appears to be a diagram of either mitosis or meiosis, in the context of a larger, clearly phallic motif. The pattern of lines in the two orbs that form the testes of the phallic image closely resemble a textbook diagram of what is either the middle stage of mitosis in two adjacent cells, or a later stage of meiosis, where the two initial daughter cells are about to divide to form the four gametes. Crowley says nothing particularly enlightening about this diagram in the Book of Thoth, or in his notes on the Thoth

deck, or in his correspondence with Frieda Harris.

Whether the ovist doctrine or the spermist/phallicist doctrine came first really doesn't matter to this discussion, nor does the question of whether Crowley subscribed to either doctrine; since both doctrines have been proven wrong. However, it should be noted that the phallicist doctrine has had much more of an impact on the underlying paradigms of our culture — residue, Crowley might say, of the Aeon of Osiris. Note, for example, that the very word 'sperm' means seed. Cultural paradigms, like spiritual traditions, can arise from, or be justified by, the scientific doctrines of a particular time period. Unfortunately, they can often persist long after those scientific doctrines have been discredited. Disputable metaphysical theories regarding the "soul" or "divine spark" aside, there is simply no longer a shred of scientific support for the doctrine that one sex or the other is the sole custodian of the Essence of Life. Or, that one sex possesses the Power of Generation while the other does not. And yet, even today, there are those (even some professed Thelemites) who persist in espousing this superstitious view.

As advocates of Crowley's concept of scientific religion, we need to be prepared to discard scientific doctrines when they are rendered obsolete, even when such doctrines support our spiritual and social paradigms. We may continue to enjoy and revere our holy books, our historical writings, and our customary rites, because these things have historical, symbolic, spiritual, and even talismanic value to us. But we must not allow ourselves to be bound to interpretations, explanations, and applications of our symbols that are based on outmoded and discredited ideas about nature. The true significance of our great and living symbols extends much deeper than such shallow and transient notions. As I have said before, a true symbol is not merely a cipher. If we actively listen to them, our symbols will continue to speak to us the truth, to the extent that we have the capacity to comprehend it.

*Love is the law, love under will.*

Sabazius



## From the Electoral College

Most Dear Brothers and Sisters,

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

Herewith is a summary of the Winter 2001 e.v. meeting of the Electoral College.

First, let me note that I will be stepping down as President of the Electoral College at our Spring Meeting, in April. Br. Doug Blake will be succeeding me in the hot seat...er...President's chair, and I trust you will all join me in welcoming him to that position.

By now the Annual Reports for 2001 e.v. have all been received, and the College wishes to especially thank Br. Gerald del Campo and Sr. Elizabeth McBryde for their hard work in preparing the report form for this year. We also wish to congratulate the local Bodies and their Masters for their efforts in delivering the reports on time. Almost every Body submitted a timely report this year. Thanks, kinfolk. The contents of the Annual Reports are being analyzed now and more information will be forthcoming as we collate this data.

The College wishes to congratulate Fr. Hunahpu on his appointment as Grand Secretary General, and to thank Br. Doug

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James for his years of outstanding service to the Order in that position.

Regarding changes affecting local Bodies in the US:

The College approved a change of mastership for Black Sun Oasis, in the Valley of Akron, OH. Fr. Demogorgon steps down as Master, and is succeeded by Br. J.O.. Since Brother J.O. is not the required degree for a Lodge Master, the Body has been changed to Black Sun Oasis.

The College approved a change of mastership for Knights Templar Camp, in the Valley of Boston, MA. The College accepted the resignation of Br. J.N. as Master, since he is leaving the Boston area, and appointed Br. S.L. as Master. Since the College is concerned that the Body, which has undergone several changes of Master in recent years, is not presently able to perform all the functions expected of an Oasis, it has been changed to Knights Templar Camp.

The College approved a change of mastership for Aum Ha Camp, in the Valley of Chicago, IL. Br. W.B. is succeeded by Br. H.A.. The College appointed Br. H.A. as acting Master at this time, pending the fulfillment of certain deficiencies in the paperwork requesting the change of master.

The College accepted the resignation of Fr. Hunahpu as a co-Master of Sekhet-Bast-Ra Lodge in the Valley of Oklahoma City, OK, which was submitted upon his appointment as Grand Secretary General. It confirms the other co-Master, Sr. Ixel Balamke, as sole Master of the Lodge.

The next meeting of the Electoral College will be in the Washington, DC area, on April 27, 2002 e.v..

*Love is the law, love under will.*

Paul Hume  
President, Electoral College



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

When considering the state of the O.T.O., it must be clearly understood that *the growth and health of the Order is primarily dependent upon the growth and health of the local Bodies*. This Order would be little more than a piece of paper without them, as they provide the foundation for *all* our work. The various governing Bodies, including the Electoral College, can facilitate and direct growth, but they cannot create it.

Consider for a moment what the O.T.O. would be without its strong local Bodies. They're where Gnostic masses and initiations are held, where first and *lasting* impressions of our Order are formed in the minds and hearts of initiates, where the next King or Queen will take Minerval initiation, where temples will manifest. Our first Grand Lodge building will likely be an office for our Executive. Temples of gold and ivory and marble are the purview of the local Bodies.

The question of what it means to be a Lodge is one of the most pressing issues facing the College today. Because of the pioneering efforts of so many of you, the new standards for Bodies will be much higher than we could have imagined even five years ago. The name "Lodge" will mean something substantial indeed, something we can all take pride in, wherever we live. Lodges will offer O.T.O. activity in a meaningful and professional way in independent facilities. They will be a product of the combined efforts of many members, lasting well beyond the tenure of a

particular Master, and no longer depending on the generosity of a few who open their homes and shoulder most of the burden.

We're asking all Bodies to strive to become Lodges, which need to provide some concrete services, such as initiation through Fourth and P.I., regular celebrations of the Gnostic Mass, publishing and teaching, conducting Order affairs in a business like way, and operating dedicated temples, among other things. We need to ensure that Lodges fulfill these criteria, not because the EC likes it that way, or because bodies have to "pay" for the privilege of being Lodges, but because this is what it will take to move *all* of us to where we want to be. We are all in this together, and we're counting on every local representative to help.

It serves no purpose for anyone to have a "name only" or vanity Body. They make for a rather pathetic organization, and who wants to be part of that? The adversarial attitude we've seen between some local and governing Bodies has got to go, or this process will be slowed. Committed O.T.O. members should be more than willing to help the Order as a whole by making sure their Body reflects current standards and is the best the local membership can build.

Moving Order activity away from homes is the most important challenge facing our current generation today. We encourage everyone to visit a non-residential O.T.O. temple to fully appreciate what it means to the community it serves. That sense of ownership simply cannot exist in a home. Separate facilities draw more members, make many of our tough policy questions vanish, and lend an air of seriousness to the Order.

This is a hard step, and in some areas, it may not be feasible... yet. Bodies in some parts of the country may not have a sufficient ratio of member population to property costs, though they have been doing wonderful, contributive work for years. Bodies in this situation can help the Order by moving as soon as realistically possible, and in the interim, ensuring that their current status is reflective of our overall direction.

The work of building this Order is done in communities all over the country by hard working, dedicated members who make sure that initiations and masses are preformed regularly and beautifully, and that we are well represented in their Valley. The Order we see today was built on the local level, and the Order we'll see in the future will be built there as well.

We're counting on you to continue this work. Take a look at your Body. Strive to move up to the next level by helping your Camp start to look like an Oasis. Why not aim to build the best Lodge in the country? Your Body depends on your efforts just as the Order depends on local Bodies for its health and growth.

No matter what our degree or office, Man of Earth activity should remain a substantial part of our Order involvement. Members of the Lover and Hermit Triads can make enormous contributions by simply continuing to participate on the local level.

If we are serious about the O.T.O., we need to make our corner the best it can be. Our rites should be awe-inspiring. The depth of our commitment to Thelema and the Order should manifest to its fullest potential. We want to be recognized as the serious, dedicated Thelemites we are, and the best place, perhaps the *only* place, to begin is within our local Body.

*Love is the law, love under will*

Elizabeth McBryde  
Electoral College