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

In our Holy Books and instructions, Thelemities are often exhorted to take joy in difficulties.

"Thou then who hast trials and troubles, rejoice because of them, for in them is Strength, and by their means is a pathway opened unto that Light." — Liber Librae

"Thou shalt have danger & trouble. Ra-Hoor-Khu is with thee."

— Liber AL vel Legis

"... to me come ye through tribulation of ordeal, which is bliss."

— Liber AL vel Legis

Well, siblings, let me just say that we here on the production team at Agapé have been simply filled to the brim with joy and bliss! As anyone who has been paying attention is surely aware, the production of Agapé has suffered many difficulties and tribulations over the last few years. We can only offer our humble and sincere apologies that we have stumbled in our obligation to bring you issues of Agapé on a regular and up-to-date schedule. I can now state with the confidence of a sea-capitan that the storms have been weathered, and the most substantial impediments to publication have been removed. With this issue, which was scheduled to be released in August of last year before a recondite series of problems with the U.S. Postal Service intervened, we are nearly caught up on old business, and should be ready to resume regular publishing once each quarter in the coming year.

Ra-Hoor-Khu is with us!

Love is the law, love under will.

Fraternally,

Fr. Ron Labhart
Assistant Editor, Agapé
FROM THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

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

Ninth Degree Revolutionary
Members in good standing of the Sovereign Sanctuary of the IX° in the United States (who are not serving as an officer or voting member of any Governing or Administrative Body under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Grand Lodge) wishing to stand for election to the office of Revolutionary by the Electoral College are encouraged to write the President of the E.C.—see p. 14 for contact information.

Sanction for Appeal
Brothers or Sisters of our Order who wish to pursue appeal to a verdict of the Grand Tribunal may write to individual members of the Electoral College to request sanction be given to take their case to the Areopagus of the Eighth Degree (per Liber CXCIV, section 16) via e-mail links found at http://ec.oto-usa.org/ECelectors.html.

Hosting E.C. Meetings
Local bodies that are interested in hosting meetings of the Electoral College are encouraged to write the President of the E.C.—see p. 14 for contact information.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Electoral College, to thank the Master and members of Circle of Stars Camp (Raleigh, NC) for hosting our Spring meeting. It is no small task for a camp to host the Electoral College, and we would like to extend our gratitude for facilitating the meeting and providing wonderful hospitality.

Upcoming E.C. Meetings
The Summer 2017 E.C. meeting is to be held in conjunction with NOTOCON on August 11, 2017, hosted by Hidden Spring Oasis (Orlando, FL).

The Fall 2017 E.C. meeting is to be held on Saturday, October 21, 2017 at Thelesis Oasis (Philadelphia, PA).

The deadline for submission of items to be considered for the Summer 2017 E.C. meeting is July 15, 2017.

Please mail submissions to the Secretary of the Electoral College—see p. x for contact information.

Attending E.C. Meetings
Dues-current members in good standing of V° and above are welcome to attend and observe the in-person Electoral College Meetings. We request that those planning to attend contact the Master of the hosting body so that adequate arrangements can be made.

Website
The official E.C. website can be found at: http://ec.oto-usa.org

Of note, we are adding a blog to the website that will include regular updates from the College. Please check the website to receive the latest information from the Electoral College.

Forms
Masters seeking up-to-date forms for the Annual Report, Change of Mastership Application, Application for Oasis Status, Application for Lodge Status, or Closure forms will find them by contacting the Document Control Officer at doc_control@oto-usa.org.

Communication with the E.C.
I would like to invite any initiates with specific concerns or questions regarding the operation of the Electoral College, to write to either the President or Secretary of the E.C. For contact information, please see p. 14. All postal mail correspondence with the Electoral College Secretary should be sent to the address listed on p. 14.

The Electoral College, at its Winter 2016 meeting, took the following actions concerning duties in its charge:

Local Body Closures
None.

Change of Body Status
None.

Changes of Mestership
Mastership of Horus Oasis (Salt Lake City, UT) effective April 22, 2017.
**Agapé IN ACTION**

Interview of Soror Lori Lent of Black Sun Lodge by Soror Adrasteia of Golden Thread Camp

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

Sr. Lori Lent, Deputy Master for Black Sun Lodge in the Valley of Cleveland Ohio, has developed a new community outreach program called “Agapé in Action.” She kindly sat down for an interview with me to discuss this truly heartfelt and inspirational cause.

Q: Could you explain a little bit about your purpose and mission of your community outreach program?

A: Black Sun Lodge as a community is and has been very conscious of the need for more community outreach in our valley. We felt called to work toward doing positive things in our community. We bounced many ideas around, but in the end, it was a virtual food drive for the Cleveland Food Bank last December that truly inspired us. We were able to raise almost $1,000 for that organization, and I think that the entire effort lit the fire within us to look for providing assistance when and where we could. Shortly thereafter, we formed a volunteer committee to discuss and organize our community outreach goals. It was actually in preparation for one of the meetings that I came up with the idea for “Agapé in Action,” which I am really excited to start rolling out in the next few months.

Q: What does “Agapé in Action” mean to you?

A: “Agapé” is defined as the highest form of love, an unconditional love, which includes charity. It is a love that is not reserved exclusively for our brothers and sisters, but a love that transcends those bonds. I feel that a program that attends to the most basic needs of those in the community is really a perfect expression of agapé. I developed this program with that thought in mind. “Agapé in Action” provides basic hygiene products–such as shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, soap, toothpaste, toilet paper, and the like–to those who do not have the means to purchase these items for themselves. Having been in a position of extreme poverty in my younger days, I know what it’s like to not be able to afford these basic necessities. I know how devastating it is to run out of one of these products, and have no way to replenishing it. There are many resources in our community for food, help with utilities, and housing—but there is a conspicuous lack of resources for personal care items. So our endeavor is a unique resource in our community, one that is desperately needed, and most importantly, a program I feel very connected to helping to initiate.

Q: What populations are you reaching out to?

A: We will be reaching out mainly to those already in the system for other resources, so we will be posting information on the distribution of these items at welfare offices, clinics, and WIC (Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Program) offices within walking distance of the Lodge at first. I’d eventually like to see us added to resource lists in the community, but seeing as the need is so great in the community, I think we need to start small and do what we can in our immediate area first, and then see where things take us from there.

Q: How are you organizing the donations?

A: The plan is to use a back room in the temple, which is not currently being used, as a depository for donated items. I started out by bringing all of the unused diapers and wipes that I bought for my granddaughter (that she has since outgrown) and bringing them down to the Lodge to add to the collection. I am also encouraging the brethren in the Lodge to “pick up an extra” if possible when they are out shopping for personal care products for their homes, so we can add to the collection. We plan on reaching out to people we know who are outside of the Lodge, but who are interested in helping in the community, and asking for donations from them as well. As the program grows, we even have plans to reach out to manufacturers to donate items as well. I will also be donating shelving and bins to the lodge, for organization purposes, to facilitate efficient distribution once we get to that point.

Q: Do you have a timeframe or schedule for distribution?

A: I don’t really want to make the process a laborious one. For those in need, they simply need to show up on the day we are distributing, fill out a form with their name and the number of people in their household, and be one of the first fifty to get here—it’s that simple. Each form will have a checklist of the items we have available. All we are going to ask is that they don’t check off any items they don’t actually need.

Q: What makes community outreach “Thelemic?”

A: The Law is for all, and every man and every woman is a star. Every man and woman—not just the people we share fraternal bonds with. We are encouraged to help each other when there is a need, and I think that is a very Thelemic idea. The word agapé implies a higher love that is universal and charitable, and that specific form of love is one of our cornerstones. All of these things say to me that we should be engaging in charitable works in balance with doing our own will.

Q: If other members of the Order want to help Black Sun, how can they do so?

A: Those interested in donating funds toward the purchase of distribution items, or in donating the items themselves, can contact me at dm@blacksun93.org. I will provide them with a list of items we are accepting and/or instructions on how to donate funds.

Q: Alternately, if other members of the Order are interested in starting a similar program in their city, how can they do so?

A: If other bodies are interested in more detailed information on “Agapé in Action,” including how they can start the program in their own community, they can reach out to me at dm@blacksun93.org. I’ll gladly send our plan of action, in addition to updates on how things are working in a practical sense as we go along.

Love is the law, love under will.
Pranayama
by Fr. Lani Milbus

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

[Ed: This article is from the yet-to-be-published book Effing the Ineffable, © 2017 by Lani Milbus.]

The reason for this chapter is the dangerous prevalence of various interpretations stem from pictures that have been published alongside the instructions in Crowley’s books. They show him forcing air out by bending over and generally straining. But note that these pictures are of Crowley in postures atypical of those described, by him, as being ideally suited for pranayama. I venture to guess that these pictures are of him doing a much more intense, and usually brief in duration, breathing exercise, such as “Breath of Fire.” While I do not doubt that they can invoke a desired result, techniques such as those of Aleister Crowley, in this one exercise only, are extremely dangerous without a thorough knowledge of anatomy and physiology. I wish to share my findings, as well as the insights I gained through parallel exercises in Chinese internal arts, in order to help the aspirant to Crowley’s system avoid serious injury or discouragement.

First it will be necessary to master his third limb of yoga, asana. Crowley’s prescription for this, as printed in Liber E vel Exercitium Sub Figura IX and elsewhere, is perfect and concise. I cannot improve upon it, so I will leave the reader to work through his instructions in that preliminary work. Reading Raja Yoga by Swami Vivekananda will also reward the student and save a great deal of frustration.

When approaching the section on pranayama, I advise to almost disregard Crowley entirely, but only at first. Under adequate experience with controlled breathing and know what you are doing, do not start with 20-second exhalations and 10-second inhalations. This will be much too long for most beginning practitioners; though to attain to what is expected from this exercise, one must eventually work up to Crowley’s prescribed breath-counts. If you are new to the practice, a gradual increase of capacity will help you to avoid damage that may lead to dropping the practice of pranayama altogether. Patience is a virtue here. This is not like getting ripped at the gym. Any progress must be gradual, so as to feel mostly natural. I understand the feeling of excitement of some of us feel and the zeal of wanting to advance on this path, but shortcuts do not exist. We must put in both the time and effort to avoid the common failures.

The lungs are susceptible to damage and must never be forced to take air beyond a comfortable capacity. For all of his experience and mastery of nearly every concept on which he wrote, Crowley seemed to know little or nothing about correct practice of pranayama as it pertains to the physiology of mere mortals. He obviously understood the methods of controlling prana, but he was very abusive to his body in this other aspect of the pranayama. I recommend a starting exercise of exhalations for 6 seconds and inhaling for 3 seconds if you have no experience at all. This should be done for at least 30 minutes as long as there isn’t any pain.

The exhalation should always be the first step counted in the cycle. The exhalation should also be approximately double the length of the inhalation. Even if it is not exactly double, the exhalation should be longer. The reasons for this are:

1. The longer exhalation expels all toxins, which would otherwise be forced into the blood stream, if compressed in the lung throughout the next inhalation.

2. The exhalation should be to the bottom of the lung (not forcing air out but emptying), so that the inhalation can be smooth and natural without “packing” any air into the lung. The longer exhalation creates a vacuum, which practically automates inhalation.

3. Allowing a slow release of the air from the lung improves oxygenation and maximizes every breath. Blood is still circulating while exhaling and the held air is being stripped of oxygen.

I practiced and had success with Crowley’s method of pranayama before I attempted any other breathing exercise. I also incurred various injuries. When, later, I studied the internal martial art called Hou Tien Chi, within the training of a local Shao-

Lin school, I learned an improved method that achieved the same results. I will here give my own adapted method from that school, which will help the student build up to Crowley’s practice without strain or injury.

Sit in your asana, with the spine erect throughout all phases of the pranayama. Practice breathing in a very quiet and controlled manner, always exhaling longer than you inhale. Start to imagine that the breathing receptacle, your torso, is divided into three sections. The first begins at your Dan Tien, which is a few inches below your navel, and transitions into a second section at the point where your diaphragm is located. The second section begins there and ends just below the pectoral muscles. The third and final section is your upper chest.

To begin, breathe in fully. Then exhale slowly and gently, first the top section of your torso, then the middle, and finally the bottom. Divide your exhalation into evenly distributed stages, between the three sections, to begin with. If you use my simple 6-second inhalation, you should exhale from each of the three sections for two seconds. This will change when the duration increases. For example, when I exhale for 30 seconds, it is not 10 seconds for each section. In that case, I also change from where I start my cycle, which the practitioners of kung fu do as well to achieve different manifestations of chi (qi) accumulation. For a cycle that long, I begin at the Dan Tien and exhale the longest from that bottom section, usually 15 seconds or more. I then divide what is left in decreasing duration from the middle, usually around 8 seconds, to the top section, 5-7 seconds or whatever is remaining of the 30.

For now, if you do not already have a sense of mastery over this, use small increments in even-numbered counts. I cannot stress enough how important it is to be patient here. If you are forcing air or feeling out of breath, you are doing it wrong. The exhalation may require a little push, but it should not be strenuous. The inhalation should not be a push at all, but performed rather as if you are the released valves in a filled bicycle tire, letting the air out as evenly as possible. The contraindicated tendency is to take a fast, gulping breath. In order to do pranayama, we slow the rate at which the breath is allowed to enter. When your lungs are emptied, they are in a vacuum state. Unless they are collapsed, they should not require much help filling up. One way to assure that the pace is even and restrained is to practice inhaling in a manner that you can barely feel in your nostril and that you certainly cannot hear from across the room. Sometimes the nose will be uncooperative and may wheeze or make noise, but this should be minimized to the extent that is comfortable in order to achieve success.

When this 6-out and 3-in count is perfectly comfortable, only increase the count by 2 seconds on the exhalation cycle and 1 second on the inhalation cycle. I recommend always waiting until the cycle is so easy that there is a danger of falling asleep before progressing. If the mind wanders lazily, you know your body is ready for more. Always only increase the count by 2 seconds out and 1 second in. When you get to the point that you are working with much higher numbers, the reason for this will become apparent. Sometimes you cannot divide the numbers evenly by three, to evenly distribute attention to each of the sections. Any system that feels right for your body, however you divide the seconds into sections of the torso, will work. I always put the most air in the bottom section. That is what proves safest and most comfortable for me, so feel free to try that at first.

I am not saying that this exercise is perfectly safe for everyone and you should definitely consult a doctor if you have any health related concerns of any kind. This is not a medical book and should not be consulted over the advice of a medical professional. But for me, this technique made the practice of pranayama into one that I actually enjoyed and from which I receive great benefit. When I was doing pranayama by throwing my body around in order to force air into it, as Crowley appeared to do in those few pictures, it was painful and left me with an agitated feeling, which only served to stifle my advancement in the Great Work.

Once you have mastered the three sections of the breathing receptacle, the longer intervals will be much easier to endure. They will also feel somewhat pleasant, if you have moved along at the 2/1 second-at-a-time pace that I have recommended. This is an important caution to observe that may allow your lungs ample time to expand in a manner that is naturally enabling
to their physiology. I fear, and have had medical confirmation, that Crowley’s quicker method can actually cause a person to burst and/or permanently damage a lung, crack ribs, strain the diaphragm, and all other sorts of malady. The slower method is endorsed by the Shao-Lin monks for its very real and natural, even permanent, growth that makes the practitioner much stronger and carries great health benefits including improved oxygenation, if not chi accumulation and purification. Please forgive my mixing of Hindu and Chinese terminology if you feel the context is somehow different. I feel as though they are relatively synonymous.

Once you get to the point where you are comfortably moving into the 20-second exhalation and 10-second inhalation of Crowley’s Liber E, you should begin stopping the nostrils as he prescribes. At this point, but not before the body is prepared for them, his instructions are the best I have found. His is the way to achieving the effect of the work for the purposes for which Crowley taught it. It would be improper to comment further on an official ritual and all breathe a little easier now.

In this interview, Courtney Padrutt from Golden Thread Camp talks with Terry Murdock, who currently serves as U.S.G.L. Historian, having been appointed to the office in 2013 EV. Contact him at historian@oto-usa.org.

Terry: I was initiated into O.T.O in early 1998 EV in Pittsburgh, PA—where I still reside. In addition to serving as the U.S.G.L. Historian, I am also the Master of Golden Thread Camp and a member of the Committee of Four of Ouarda Chapter. I have presented original rituals and lectured on various topics both around the Midwest region and at National events. I am in constant awe of the transformative and informative capabilities of our initiatory system, so in addition to my designated duties I just generally try to help out wherever I can.

Q: What does a historian do?

A: The historian researches and archives information on local bodies, committees and initiatives with U.S.G.L. without providing commentary thereupon. The historian also ensures that this data is organized in a useful and accessible manner, and preserved for future generations. One thing I’d like to make clear is that having the title of Historian doesn’t make me an expert on every facet of O.T.O. history. Rather, this is an active hands-on job. There are many more qualified people, and we are lucky enough to still have some people around who are Order history. For instance, one of my focuses is gathering together materials significant to the Order’s history that may be sitting in people’s basements and garages, and sorting and indexing this important information and ephemera before it’s lost.

Q: What are some of your current projects?

A: Over the past year I have explored a few options to organize and maintain U.S.G.L. archives. My aim was twofold: (1) to establish processes to record and archive material from the present onward, and (2) to digitize the enormous backlog of material that is scattered around the Kingdom. Document Management companies proved to be cost-prohibitive and incompatible with our privacy policies. Similar issues make transporting the materials to a single location problematic.

Considering our current resources, a reasonable solution is to leave all of the physical material where it is and simply scan it and upload it to an online archive. To do this will require volunteers spread across the kingdom. To this end, I am developing a new secondary officer position for U.S.G.L. bodies: the Local Body Historian. The Local Body Historian’s duties would encompass two objectives: (1) gathering and archiving important information pertaining to their local body, and (2) assisting in the digital archiving of the backlog of U.S.G.L. material. A more detailed description of these duties will be circulated soon.

Q: How can people get involved?

Volunteers for the position of Local Body Historian should be of at least 1° and a dues current member of both U.S.G.L. and the local body they wish to serve. They should have access to a scanner capable of at least 300 dpi full page images (B&W and color). Experience with OCR software, Trello (a project management app), Google Groups, and Google Drive would be ideal. A background in library sciences, archival studies, database management, or any similar training would be greatly helpful, but
is in no way required.

I'm also looking for volunteers to work on the local body database. Of primary need is a developer with experience in custom web application development. Drupal experience is most desired, but anyone who has developed with at least one CMS framework would be welcome. An understanding of HTML5, CSS3, PHP, jQuery, and JavaScript is also desired.

Anyone interested can contact me at historian@oto-usa.org

Q: Anything else would you like members to know?

Two Things:
1. I have heard a lot of encouragement towards including the Order in your Will, i.e., bequeathing some of your assets to the Order. In addition to this, members need to include specific instructions as to what to do with papers and materials of potential historic interest. Understandably, friends and family members may not recognize the value of these materials and important archival items end up lost. It is easy to imagine how a few file boxes full of papers might end up in the garbage in such a situation—particularly now when so much important material is still in people's homes. So, please take a few minutes and leave some instructions. This can be as simple as stating that you wish any Order related material to be examined by the office of the Historian or officers of a nearby local body. This does not necessarily mean that you are bequeathing this material to the Order, but simply allowing the Order's officers to examine and possibly make copies of important documents.

2. If you do happen to have a box of important ephemera in your garage, basement, or attic, and you don't know what to do with it, please contact me. In most cases shipping boxes of papers is cost prohibitive, but exceptions can be made for items of particular historic interest. I wish I could provide a list of things that would fall into this category, but I really don't know what is out there. So, shipping reimbursement will be on a case by case basis. On the other hand, if you just want the stuff out of your house and are willing to ship it to me, I will happily receive it!

Q: What are some future projects?

For the foreseeable future I will be focused on making the Local Body Database an accessible, open repository for all information on U.S.G.L. local bodies, past and present.

Looking a little further down the road, I would like to obtain long term, off-site storage for important documents and ephemera that will serve U.S.G.L. as a permanent, safe, and accessible home for artifacts and documents for years to come.

Q: Finally, what attracted you to this type of work?

A: My interest in the history of O.T.O. started shortly after my Minerval initiation. I was extremely curious about the people who set out to form O.T.O. bodies before the internet age, before the ubiquity of Crowley material, and before the guiding hand of structured organization. While doing some personal research on this, I became fascinated by the emergent symbolism that becomes apparent when observing the development of our system through time. In addition, I began to deeply appreciate our current place in the history of Thelema. We are still the pilgrims of this movement, laying the groundwork for the generations upon generations that are yet to come. It is a simple fact, but for me it was a profound realization. And the more I dug and the more research I did, the more I realized that we exist in a continuum of initiation. Many of our rituals have remained relatively unchanged since 1918 EV, and when we undergo an initiation or participate in a Gnostic Mass, we are also communing with all those initiates and congregants that have come before us and the countless generations yet to come.

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To realize our unique place in history is to realize our unique responsibility to history: to accurately continue this knowledge and to be as strong of a link on the human chain as possible.
and that it has to be removed if one wishes to walk any further on the path. As these lesser motives are scraped away from the candidate, the pyramid goes upward and is refined.

If one is to find their true will, there are going to be hurdles. It’s once these difficulties are removed that one turns their attention to the One Star in Sight that is purely spiritual in nature. Aspirants to the A O.T.O. have jointly issued the journal The Equinox since 1912 e.v., now in its fourth volume. Although they are distinctly separate organizations, neither including nor subordinate to the other, O.T.O. “does not include the A:·A::, which first proclaimed the Law of Thelema to the world. The A:·A:: is a teaching, testing and initiatory system dedicated to the personal spiritual advancement of its individual members. Within A:·A:: all services are rendered free of charge, and no social activities are held. O.T.O. and A:·A:: have jointly issued the journal The Equinox since 1912 e.v., now in its fourth volume. Although they are distinctly separate organizations, neither including nor subordinate to the other, O.T.O. has long worked in close alliance with the A:·A::, with which august body it is, however, in close alliance.” — Liber LII

— Liber AL 14:2-43

Love is the law, love under will.

In hopes that your path may be one of Will, Soror Eve NY, NY

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O.T.O. has historically assisted A O.T.O. in its accomplishnent of their true will. In closing, it is the Fools who have directed the human species towards enlightenment after reaching the pinnacle of the Capstone wherein is the only thing they can do as a Star in its orbit.