

Agapé

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



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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.

In our Holy Books and instructions, Thelemites 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-captain 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 GRAND MASTER

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

Where is Truth?

*"The sin which is unpardonable is knowingly and wilfully to reject truth, to fear knowledge lest that knowledge pander not to thy prejudices."
—Liber Librae*

It's difficult enough to get *accurate* information about world events—how do we make sure that we aren't actually being deceived? All information sources proffering information to the public have an agenda of one sort or another. At minimum, it is to maintain the interest of their readership and thus the viability of their contributor base or advertising and data-mining businesses. Some, though, clearly have an explicit bent towards promoting a particular point-of-view. But why? Is it because they are controlled by special interests intent on promulgating self-serving propaganda? In some cases, probably. In other cases, it's simply that they have cultivated a readership with a particular set of expectations and prejudices, who expect to have their views validated. Such media outlets are not really to blame for this—it's a competitive market and they need to maintain their edge if they are to survive. But the question of trust remains. Even further, though—trust for what? Do we really want the truth, or do we want our prejudices pandered to? Are we being deceived—willingly?

How do we avoid the trap—the “unpardonable sin”—of *Liber Librae*?

Here, I think the ancient adage *Gnothi seauton* [Gk: “Know thyself.”] must be brought into play. How did our prejudices, biases, values, and motivations come to be as they are? How valid are they? What role have the five parts of the Soul played in their development? What role has been played by our material needs, our personal history, our emotions (particularly fear), our reason, our illnesses, our family, cultural and political affiliations, and our ultimate aspirations? With such knowledge, we can develop a better grasp on what is truly important to us, and what we feel is important only because we have been repeatedly told that it is important. The

traditional Hermetic methods are, of course, useful in this—but improving one's knowledge of history, sociology, psychology, logic, and semantics can also be quite helpful.

With deeper self-knowledge comes an ability to navigate the nuances, uncertainties, schools of thought, value judgments, philosophies, “-isms,” and varying interpretations and points of view that trouble the waters of every topic of significance. Without self-knowledge, or at least a sincere aspiration to obtain it, we will be at risk of becoming an adherent to someone else's doctrines—which may or may not bring us closer to fulfilling our True Will.

What is a Magician?

Definition: “Magick is the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will.”—*Book 4*

Simply put, a Magician is a person who studies and practices that Science and Art. Note that the definition of Magick is not the *process* of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will, but the *Science and Art* thereof. By this definition then, a Magician is to be distinguished from any other person by their active engagement in the systematic study and creative application of that process—not merely by their passive involvement in it.

The *Book 4* definition of Magick is supplemented by a postulate and 28 theorems. Theorem 23 actually provides a refinement of the definition, as follows: “Magick is the Science of understanding oneself and one's conditions. It is the Art of applying that understanding in action.” Therefore, on the basis of the Definition and Theorem 23, we can construct the following definition of a Magician:

A Magician is a person who systematically studies and seeks to understand themselves and their conditions, and creatively applies that understanding in the action of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will.

Love is the law, love under will.

Sb



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/ECelectedors.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^{EV} Electoral College meeting is to be held in conjunction with NOTOCON on August 11, 2017^{EV}, hosted by Hidden Spring Oasis (Orlando, FL).

The Fall 2017^{EV} Electoral College meeting is to be held on Saturday, October 21, 2017^{EV} at Thelesis Oasis (Philadelphia, PA).

The deadline for submission of items to be considered for the Summer 2017^{EV} meeting is July 15, 2017

^{EV}. 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^{EV} meeting, held on January 21, 2017^{EV}, took the following actions concerning duties in its charge:

Local Body Closures

Pelican Camp (Baton Rouge, LA) was closed for cause effective January 21, 2017^{EV}.

Change of Body Status

None.

Changes of Mastership

David Shoemaker was confirmed as Master of 418 Lodge (Sacramento, CA) effective January 21, 2017^{EV}. Br. Shoemaker had previously been appointed as Acting Master.

Mastership of Crux Ansata Oasis (Denver, CO) has passed from Derek Bakes to Dian Ericksen effective January 21, 2017^{EV}.

Mastership of Mithras Oasis (Windham, CT) has passed from Jason Phelps to Robert (Brett) Sherry effective January 21, 2017^{EV}.

Mastership of Sword and Serpent Oasis (Dayton, OH) has passed from Carrie May Atchison to David Campbell effective January 21, 2017^{EV}.

Mastership of Seven Gates Camp (Louisville, KY) has passed from Gypsy Dawn Rose Antra to Soror Phoenix effective January 21, 2017^{EV}.

New Local Body Charters

None.

The Electoral College, at its Spring 2017^{EV} meeting, held on April 22, 2017^{EV}, took the following actions concerning duties in its charge:

Local Body Closures

None.

Change of Body Status

None.

Changes of Mastership

Holly Stuart was confirmed as Master of Horus Oasis (Salt Lake City, UT) effective April 22, 2017^{EV}. Sr. Stuart had previously been appointed as Acting Master.

Noah Ober was appointed Acting Master of Horizon Lodge (Seattle, WA) effective April 22, 2017^{EV}.

Mastership of Circle of Stars Camp (Lafayette, IN) was passed from Marion Rose to James L. Wright II effective April 22, 2017^{EV}.

Leaping Laughter Lodge (Minneapolis, MN) was rechartered as Leaping Laughter Oasis and Mastership was passed from Ixel Balamke to Harper Feist effective April 22, 2017^{EV}.

Mastership of Aum. Ha. Lodge (Chicago, IL) was passed from Derek Schulze to Vivian Meretrix effective April 22, 2017^{EV}.

Mastership of Blue Equinox Oasis (Detroit, MI) was passed from Kevin Saari to Charlie Basso effective April 22, 2017^{EV}.

New Local Body Charters

Sapphire Current Camp (Memphis, TN) was chartered with Rachel Renee Maitland as Master effective April 22, 2017^{EV}.

The College wishes to express its appreciation to the past and present Masters of each of these Bodies. We wish each of them the best in their new offices and endeavors.

Love is the law, love under will.

In the Bonds of the Order,

DVD HLL
President, Electoral College
OTO USA

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 of 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: The program is still in its infancy, so we don’t have our first distribution scheduled as of yet. We are shooting toward having enough items in hand to facilitate distributing products to fifty families, which I am hoping will happen in the next few months, for the first distribution day. If all goes well, we can then start a new collection and repeat that process. It would be wonderful to get to a point when we can turn it around on a monthly basis, but it’s too soon to know whether that will be possible or not. It’s a good goal, though.

Q: What is your inspiration for developing this service?

A: As I mentioned earlier, I was in very difficult circumstances back in the mid-nineties. I was pregnant, and my husband at the time wasn’t interested in working. My doctor recommended that I stop working due to the stress I was under and how it was affecting my pregnancy. I applied for welfare. We got food stamps, WIC, and a check for \$380 a month. My rent at the time was \$385 a month, so I just signed the check over to the landlord, which left me with no extra money. I signed up for every assistance program I could find any information on, and those resources were helpful. However, there were certain items that no one would help with—necessary items like soap, toothpaste, deodorant, toilet paper, diapers, condoms, razors, etc.—and there were zero resources for these items in the area at that time. It is hard to describe the utter helplessness you feel when you don’t have these things. How do you go on a job interview when you aren’t able to clean up? How do you take your baby to day care or a sitter with no diapers? How do you dig yourself out of that hole? When we started discussing community outreach through Black Sun, I found that twenty years later, there are still no resources out there for these things. So, personal experience really inspired me to work toward making this program a reality.

Q: Do you have any requirements for the populations that you are helping?

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—that’s it. 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 on the part of previous magical teachers in the techniques of this practice. Many of these 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 Exercitiorum 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. Unless you have 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 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 exhaling 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 is 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 about 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, deflating 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 valve on a filled bicycle tire, letting the airflow at an even pace. 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 even become 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

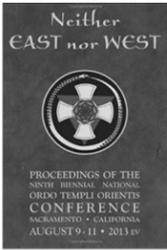
to their physiology. I fear, and have had medical confirmation, that Crowley's quicker method can actually cause a person to burst and/or permanently damage a lung, crack ribs, strain the diaphragm, and all other sorts of malady. The slower method is endorsed by the Shao-Lin monks for its very real and 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 of A.:A.:, but a thorough review of Crowley and Swami Vivekananda's writings should be sufficient to define success for those purposes. I hope we can all breathe a little easier now.

Love is the law, love under will.

**PUBLICATIONS FROM
U.S. GRAND LODGE**

***NEITHER EAST NOR WEST
PROCEEDINGS OF THE NINTH
BIENNIAL NATIONAL ORDO TEMPLI
ORIENTIS CONFERENCE:
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA
AUGUST 9-11, 2013 EV***



***MANIFEST THY GLORY:
PROCEEDINGS OF THE EIGHTH
BIENNIAL NATIONAL ORDO TEMPLI
ORIENTIS CONFERENCE:
DETROIT, MICHIGAN
AUGUST 5-7, 2011 EV***



***UNITY UTTERMOST SHOWED!
PROCEEDINGS OF THE SEVENTH
BIENNIAL NATIONAL ORDO TEMPLI
ORIENTIS CONFERENCE:
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON,
AUGUST 7-9, 2009 EV***



***AND STRENGTH
PROCEEDINGS OF THE SIXTH
BIENNIAL NATIONAL ORDO TEMPLI
ORIENTIS CONFERENCE: SALEM,
MASSACHUSETTS,
AUGUST 10-12, 2007 EV***



***WORDS OF POWER:
AN ANTHOLOGY OF WRITINGS
FROM O.T.O. LOCAL BODY
PUBLICATIONS***



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AN INTERVIEW WITH THE U.S.G.L HISTORIAN, TERRY MURDOCK

by Courtney Padrutt

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

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.

Courtney: Tell us a little about yourself.

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.

If we could get even 50% participation on this across U.S. local bodies, then the state of our recordkeeping would be vastly improved. I am currently establishing protocols as to what materials should be archived and how to store them. We have a database that will serve as the repository for local body information both past and present. There is a separate digital archive for information pertaining only to U.S.G.L. There will be some crossover in cases such as Thelema Lodge, but dividing the material in this way will make the project much more manageable. Any physical material of value can be sent to a central location.

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. 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.

THE PYRAMID OF TRUE WILL

by Soror Eve

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

Greetings All,

The Egyptian pyramid is an inconceivable feat of human engineering, and would be a difficult task even with today's technology. It's obvious that Thelema and every other occult order is riddled with Egyptian symbolism. The main point of this article is to illustrate the pyramid in relation to initiation under the Thelemic view of attaining single pointedness of the true will by refining the character of the candidate through ordeals.

The human spinal column is made up of 33 bones: 7 vertebrae in the cervical region, 12 in the thoracic region, 5 in the lumbar region, 5 in the sacral region, and 4 in the coccygeal region; rather synonymous with qabalistic zodiac, planetary, and Penta/Tetragrammaton symbolism. This is important because the pathworking of qabalah and layers of the pyramid correspond to initiation. Actually, the symbol of the pyramid is comprised of 32 levels with a missing or non-material capstone containing the Eye in the Triangle, giving the pyramid 33 levels of refinement. The Eye is representative of the pineal gland where the Neschamah and Chiah unite to form the Yechidah at the "smooth point" (*Liber LXV Cap. 1.*).

Initiation is building the Pyramid where the God will dwell. If one practices magick through ceremony, perhaps they spend one to five hours a day in ritual. That still leaves a max of 19 hours a day where one is not in ritual. Though initiation is designed to effect a permanent change in the candidate, it is obvious that the true initiation caused by the ceremony takes place outside of the ritual itself. In *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*, the Prophet writes extensively about what phenomena were happening in his daily life after any type of magick was performed.

If each initiation in the Aeon of the Child is synonymous with building the pyramid, it becomes clear how this all fits together. The formula of the Aeon is comprised of two significant milestones: the attainment of Knowledge and Conversation with the Holy Guardian Angel, and the Crossing of the

Abyss to the City of the Pyramids. We know from Crowley's writing that in 1904 EV at the reception of the *Book of the Law*, Crowley was confronted by a preternatural being that identified itself as Aiwass, Crowley's Holy Guardian Angel. Crowley was given a text stating his true will: that it was his duty as To Mega Therion to usher in the new Aeon with the word of the Law. "The word of the Law is Θελημα." (*Liber AL I:39*) It is at this moment that Crowley completed the task of the Adeptus Minor by attaining K. & C. of the H.G.A. Thus in 1904 EV, half of Crowley's pyramid was erected. But even an adept can deviate from their will with calamity ensuing. Crowley writes extensively about his rebelliousness against *Liber AL*, and though constricted to an extent by his initiations, he had the wiggle room to make a mess as he deviated from the Great Work; and inevitably accepting his course, he arrived at single pointedness.

But what about the rest of us? How does one man's initiatory journey relate to our own individual ones? This must be discerned by the individual for himself, but I can lend my own experience. Many times on the journey I have been confronted with ideas that if acted upon promise stimulation, pseudo-success, or pure pleasure, but usually just cause pain. In some cases it is obvious that these are not my will but merely wants of the mind to deviate from the Work. In mistaking wants with the true will, I have set myself up for emotional damage or as Crowley writes, "the worst that can happen is a temporary loss of balance, which is instantly adjusted, as soon as it is noticed" (*Magick Without Tears*, Ch. XII). This is a general guideline for ordeals of initiation. Either the candidate will pluck out obscurities that distract one from the Great Work, or they're doomed to repeat until the time comes when they conquer the ordeal and progress onward. Mistakes will happen, but don't let the past ruin your future.

The pyramid is synonymous with the aforementioned theories. As one goes through life with the ever clearer lens of initiations, the only way one can surpass their vices is to remove them. Sometimes this requires going through a lot of pain blindly until it becomes clear what the thorn in the foot is

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 the accomplishment 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.

“Let it be that state of manyhood bound and loathing. So with thy all; thou hast no right but to do thy will. Do that, and no other shall say nay.”
—*Liber AL 1:42-43*

Love is the law, love under will.

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

M.:M.:M.:



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O.T.O. "does not include the A.:A.:, with which august body it is, however, in close alliance."
— Liber LII

O.T.O. has long worked in close alliance with 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 historically assisted A.:A.: with practical matters that lie outside the latter's primary mission, which is purely spiritual in nature. Aspirants to the A.:A.: may write to:

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