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From the Grand Master

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

The relationships between O.T.O., M.:M.:M.:, and E.G.C. have undergone a number of twists and turns over the years, and can be confusing. I've received a lot of questions on this topic, even from relatively senior members, so here's a summary.

Ordo Templi Orientis was originally established around the turn of the century as an Order that would unify a variety of pre-existing Masonic and esoteric organizations. The degrees of O.T.O. proper have always consisted of the "Inner Circle" degrees, VII° and above. The degrees below VII° were originally Masonic in nature, and were subject to considerable variation depending on the local jurisdiction. Crowley's British section of O.T.O. was called *Mysteria Mystica Maxima*, or M.:M.:M.:. Crowley's jurisdiction as X° extended over all the degrees up to and including VII°. For use within M.:M.:M.:, Crowley prepared his own, non-Masonic, rituals for these degrees. When Crowley later assumed the duties of O.H.O., his M.:M.:M.: degrees became the international standard. So, today, M.:M.:M.: no longer refers to a specific national section of the Order, but to the current system of degrees from Minerval through Seventh. The Seventh Degree is both the crown of the M.:M.:M.: and the beginning of O.T.O. proper (which is also known internally as the *Fraternitas Lucis Hermeticae*). In the U.S., it is these M.:M.:M.: degrees that are currently under the administrative jurisdiction of U.S. Grand Lodge; the degrees beyond VII° are administered by International headquarters (as is Associate Membership, by the way). The name O.T.O. refers not only to the "Inner Circle" degrees of VII° and above, but also to the overall system which includes both M.:M.:M.: and E.G.C.

Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica, E.G.C., or the Gnostic Catholic Church, was one of the pre-existing non-Masonic organizations that Reuss incorporated into the O.T.O. scheme. Originally, it was a spin-off of a French esoteric Christian/Gnostic church, but it began its reorientation towards Thelema when Crowley wrote *Liber XV*, the Gnostic Mass, for it in 1913. Reuss, then Patriarch of the E.G.C., published a variant (but still decidedly Thelemic) version of Crowley's Gnostic Mass under E.G.C. auspices in 1917. Crowley, as O.H.O., conceptually integrated E.G.C. and O.T.O. by declaring that *Liber XV*, the Mass of the Gnostic Catholic Church, was also the central ceremony of O.T.O. This is why such pains have been taken in recent years to integrate the administrative structures of E.G.C. and O.T.O. However, E.G.C. has developed in its own right as a church by the inclusion of a selection of auxiliary rituals mentioned at the end of *Liber XV*, including rituals for baptism, confirmation, ordination, weddings, etc. Despite his references to them, Crowley never actually got around to composing these rituals, so they have been developed (based on Crowley's notes, where possible) during recent years. The E.G.C. is also O.T.O.'s principal interface with the public, as most

newcomers first meet the Order face-to-face at a Gnostic Mass, and may even join the E.G.C. as lay members before taking the first of the M.:M.:M.: initiations.

At this time, E.G.C. can be defined as that part of O.T.O. that administers the Gnostic Mass and its associated rituals, and M.:M.:M.: can be defined as that part of O.T.O. that administers the degrees of the Man of Earth and Lover Triads. Whereas the degrees of M.:M.:M.: are private to the initiates of those degrees, the rites of E.G.C. are of a more general and public nature. However, each system informs the other – the Gnostic Mass will illuminate the special studies of the Initiate of every degree of M.:M.:M.: and O.T.O., from Minerval to X°; but the Initiate of the Fifth Degree will have a very different perspective on the Gnostic Mass than will the Minerval; the Initiate of the Sixth Degree will have her own unique, initiated insights on the Mass, and so on. From a strictly E.G.C. perspective, the M.:M.:M.: degrees can be seen to function as a staged course of instruction for the ceremonial and administrative officers of the E.G.C.

Miscellaneous Announcements:

Congratulations and many thanks to Brother Steve A., who has completed eleven years of distinguished service on the U.S. Electoral College. Steve will be doubly missed, as he is now residing in Europe. Our best wishes go out to him and to Sister Judy.

Kudos also to our Midwestern members, on the tenth anniversary of the chartering of their first official bodies, Aleister Crowley Camp and IAO Camp. May their long traditions of regional fellowship and impeccable Latin be examples to us all.

In an experimental departure from my previous policy, I have decided to accept the recent offers of Brothers Erik F. II° of Los Angeles and Nathan B. II° of Berkeley to represent the Man of Earth Triad to my office as prescribed in Liber 194. I hope they enjoy pulling weeds. If you are a member of the Man of Earth Triad, and you would like to communicate with your representatives, you may e-mail Brother Erik at heirx11@aol.com or Brother Nathan at balaam93@hotmail.com.

Attention Local Body Officers:

A new, revised *Camp, Oasis and Lodge Master's Handbook* is now available in PDF format from the U.S. Initiation Secretary.

Love is the law, love under will.

Sabazius

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Personal Power

*Shedona Chevalier (Rynne M. Cowham),
Soror M.P.B., Living Flame Camp*

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

Recently a situation arose online which gave me pause to consider the nature, importance, and true meaning of personal power. It involved a list subscriber who took offense at an initiate's impassioned and sometimes inflammatory manner of posting on a Thelemic e-mail list. The offended party believed that the other O.T.O. initiates on the list should openly censure this brother for his manner of self-expression. Unless and until we did, he determined to assume that all of us individually condoned this brother's behavior and collectively accepted it as "representative of what O.T.O. considers a good product" of our initiatory system and confraternity.

I suggested he find a different route to reconcile himself with reality, and I was not alone in offering this suggestion.

Apparently the disgruntled party failed to grasp one simple fact. There is a wide range of potential reasons why other O.T.O. members may opt not to censure a brother for his behavior, none of which necessarily have to do with condoning it. To assume there can be only one reason is to limit oneself and to restrict others. It constitutes a subtle way of saying "punish this person, or else I will punish *you* by lumping you all together and thinking ill of you collectively." What is this but a subtle attempt to manipulate the free wills of others to dance to the naysayer's tune?

"Prove to me that I'm wrong when I say you are all just like person X from your group!" This is the cry of the bigot, the paranoiac, the pigeonholer, the witchhunter. Why need we prove what is self-evident?

The self-evident reality is that each member of O.T.O. is a Thelemite and an individual. Each feels his own feelings, thinks his own thoughts, holds his own opinions and perspective. Each is unique, whether within the role he takes – member, body master, initiator, administrator – or outside those roles. No single member of O.T.O. can ever be representative of *all* O.T.O. members, plain and simple. This is the beauty of our Thelemic collective. No two initiates are alike, nor should they be.

When an initiate speaks his piece, he does not necessarily speak in any official capacity to represent the Order collectively. He speaks as an individual from his own heart and mind. The contents of said heart and mind are purely his responsibility, not that of the Order nor its constituency. There is a reason for the standard disclaimer language included in all local body publications, and it is to acknowledge this reality and enjoy the freedom it brings.

At its best, I believe — and have seen — that our initiatory system assists in the growth and development of individual members, our progressive self-discovery and refinement of personal Will. True, we have certain policies established as functional guidelines for working as an organization composed of diverse wills when conducting "official O.T.O." business. Beyond that, I am *glad* there is no effort to censor individual expression or attempt to conform it to some arbitrary guideline so that all members will "properly" represent O.T.O. twenty-four hours per day. O.T.O. is not the "Thelemic Witnesses." Should we become like some old aeon institutions, requiring our members to "smile at all times and never let 'em see you sweat, fall or exhibit human foibles, for you represent HORRRR-USSS wherever you go?" Thelema would be thrown out the window at that point!

If I choose to permit one person's diatribes to dictate my thinking about everyone and everything associated with that

person, I make another party responsible for my perceptions and feelings. What hand holds power, if not the hand that holds responsibility? If I issue an ultimatum stating that I will assume View X concerning persons of class Y unless or until they perform required exercise Z, I thereby push responsibility for View X onto said persons of class Y rather than accepting responsibility for my own views. In other words, I relinquish my personal power to others. Moreover, I insist they accept responsibility for realigning *my* internal reality-tunnel. Is that not *my* exclusive right, privilege, responsibility, and dare I say ... duty?

I was, and am, a natural born Thelemite in terms of doing my will and not permitting another to say nay. This was my native tongue in childhood which has never changed. Concerning personal responsibility, however, I took longer to make my peace. I chose to commit myself to what I understand to be the principles of Thelema as a philosophy and a way of life. I chose to include the word "Thelemite" as a key component of my self-description. Within these choices, the need for further personal commitments confronted me.

As a Thelemite I committed myself to the quest for personal responsibility as a necessary condition of personal freedom. Part of this internal commitment has meant, and continues to mean, re-evaluation of *my* perspective in interactions with others, particularly when others are rude, uncaring, abrasive, intrusive, or otherwise seek to interfere with my Will. Can I expect them to modify themselves to suit my needs or wants? Absolutely not. What if I ask them to do so? They might say "no," or more to the point, "get a life; quit whining." What if I try to subtly coerce them into believing they should? If successful, I may reap some short-term satisfaction from that effort. Yet in the long run, I would set myself up for false expectations, disappointment, and a lot of unhappy fallout when the delusion crumbles. Perhaps they would see through the attempt and simply refuse to play along. Worse, they might take it as a cue to retaliate with further abusiveness.

Then where does my real power, my greatest power to affect a situation lie? Within myself. I have more power to change my own feelings, thoughts and perspectives than I will ever have to persuade another to change theirs. When I go to work on myself, I strip others of their power over me: their power to hurt me, to anger me, and most importantly, to compel me toward erroneous assumptions and comfortable, self-protective deceptions. Suddenly the limitations fall away. No longer am I confined to merely licking my wounds or lashing out in reactionary defensiveness. No longer am I restricted to externally-directed options for perception, perspective, emotion, reaction and response. A boundless range of possibilities becomes open to me.

This is the glory of self-government at its best! Taste but a few serendipitous sips of success from it, and they are sufficient to keep anyone returning again and again to search out that spot within himself. No triumph of emotionally trouncing the adversary, no *schadenfreude* in stinging rancor disguised as wit, piercing its mark, can begin to compare to *this* joy. It is the joy of true, unconquerable freedom.

This freedom is that of writing one's own life script from within. It is the ability to approach others as individuals and form clear personal assessments based on the genuine merits or flaws of the individual rather than assumptions based on associations. Freedom is grasping the limitless potential of real change from within the self, the highest power and pinnacle of mastery in life, the ability to craft and edit oneself in accordance with one's *own* will. This freedom alone can no other take from you.

Love is the law, love under will.

Book Reviews

by JD Lawrence

The Shambhala Guide to Sufism

by Carl W. Ernst

Shambhala, 1997 (264 pp., \$15.00 pbk.)

The title is somewhat misleading since it made me expect some kind of directory of Sufi groups and teachers. Actually this is an excellent and helpful summary of historical and contemporary Sufism. Ernst starts right out discussing the nature and history of Sufism and explains its mystical dimensions, the concept of Sufi "sainthood," the functions of Sufi orders, as well as the place of poetry, music and dance. He also discusses the place of Sufism in the contemporary world, including why many Muslims say Sufism has nothing to do with Islam and why some Sufis prefer it that way. Naturally, this book is far too short to cover all aspect of Sufism in detail, and the author is very aware of his own limitations. I would highly recommend this book as a first step in the study of Sufism from both a practical and historical perspective.

Daily Life of the Egyptian Gods

by Dmitri Meeks and Christine Favard-Meeks, translated by G.M. Goshgarian.

Cornell University Press, 1996 (249 pp., \$17.95 pbk.)

This book uses an interesting methodology: it treats the Egyptian Gods as an ethnic group subject to anthropological study, much as one might have studied the Egyptians themselves. The authors apparently decided on this approach after noting that most scholarship on Egyptian religion shed more light on the scholars' biases than on the supposed subject, a phenomenon nicely described in the Introduction. The Meeks have therefore relied on surviving texts and inscriptions (one presumes a full participant-observer approach was beyond their means!) to describe the Gods, their origins, customs, and mode of life, as well as the human afterlife. Extensive reconstructions of Egyptian ritual are also included. This book thus forms an excellent detailed resource for students of Egyptian mythology and religion.

Comparative Mythology

by Jaan Puhvel.

Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987 (302 pp., \$18.95 pbk.)

This book focuses primarily on the Indo-European cultures with some reference to the ancient Near-East. The author (whose somewhat irreverent style will delight most Thelemites) displays a comprehensive grasp of his subject as he traces common themes from Ireland to India. Using a combination of historical linguistics (some knowledge of the subject will help the reader here) and comparison of myths and epics he provides what might almost be a genealogy of archetypes in the Indo-European psyche, archetypes that are still very much alive. I was particularly struck by a kind of reverse-Euhemerism Puhvel often uses: rather than saying that the gods are simply mythologized mortals, he frequently reveals the mortals in various epics to be "humanized" gods. This pattern extends even to historical figures and makes one wonder how much of history, even modern history, is in fact a re-enactment of primal myth. I will note that Puhvel does not try to reduce everything to one pet theory, however. Due to the extensive cross-referencing of material between traditions the reader may wish to go through the book twice in order to catch all the connections. If you want to know more than the usual generalization that "the Indo-Europeans worshipped a patriarchal sky-god," or want to flesh out 777, then this is definitely the book for you.

ΑΓΑΠΗ

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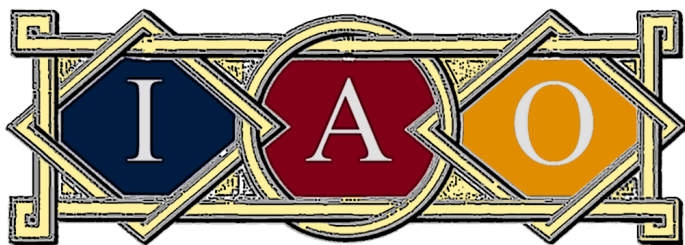
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Announcements

U.S. Grand Lodge has made available a limited supply of collectors edition volumes of *The Equinox of the Gods* from New Falcon publications available at discounted rates for Order members. Proceeds will go to benefit U.S. Grand Lodge. These special hardback limited collector's editions are beautifully bound in marbled paper with quarter leather; released as Equinox III No. 3 they will make a wonderful addition to any Thelemic library. \$22.50 each (+ shipping), for dues current initiate members. For more information and to confirm supply, please e-mail Frater Hrumachis at: Hermit@LVXoasis.org. Supplies are limited.



The second National O.T.O. Conference will be held on the weekend of August 6-8, 1999 e.v. in Portland, Oregon. The theme of the conference is Fraternity; it will feature lectures, panels, and workshops by prominent Thelemic scholars, researchers, and practitioners. Please contact your local Body Masters after mid February to obtain details and registration information. If you have additional questions, contact hank@europa.com



Local Body Reports

Serpent In Balance Oasis, Orlando, FL

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

Serpent In Balance Oasis was chartered on September 28th of 1996 e.v. We have been very busy with monthly Gnostic Masses, Enochian workings, Goetic workings, and Elemental Eucharist Rituals. In addition, we publish a semi-annual newsletter, The Scales, and of course, provide O.T.O. initiation. I am pleased to note that 31 initiations have been performed so far, from Minerval through II°. Our next set of initiations is scheduled in Spring of 1999e.v. We wish to thank Soror Sulis and Frater Sharash for presiding at the first two Orlando initiation round-ups.

The membership of Serpent In Balance Oasis comes from all over Florida. Our initiates hail from Miami, Lakeland, Ormond Beach, Naples, Clermont and Tampa. Initiates that reside in Miami have communicated to me their intent to apply for a Camp Charter and I hope to see a new Body there by Spring Equinox. I wholeheartedly support them and know that relations between the two bodies will continue to flourish with this new growth. I have recently relocated to Austin, Tx. So that the Oasis will continue in the Work, Soror Airel has been chosen as my successor pending approval by the Electoral College. She is working under my supervision in this transition and I have great confidence that Serpent in Balance will continue to grow under her guidance and care.

The Oasis has had the opportunity to offer hospitality to several visiting Brothers and Sisters and delights in doing so. If you plan to be in the Central Florida area, please email us at Sri3m@hotmail.com or Insanvs@hotmail.com.

Love is the law, love under will.

Frater Insanvs, Master

L.V.X. Lodge, Los Angeles, CA

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law

A happy Solstice greeting to all. We have been extensively busy with the myriad of transitions which are occurring here at L.V.X. in Los Angeles. As of the Autumnal Equinox meeting of the U.S. Electoral College, L.V.X. has been officially raised to Lodge status. Many thanks and congratulations go out to all our membership for their continued efforts and participation in the growth of the body. Remember the Lodge is not a building, not a structure made with hands, not the Master or the officers, but all of the membership collectively working together. May we forge ever onward with Strength and Beauty bearing the banner of Thelema ever before us.

With the departure of Past Master, Frater S.L.Q., to points south of the "Orange Curtain," our Temple has moved and is now located in the North Hollywood/Studio City area. It is very well equipped and will serve as both initiation space and Mass temple, or for any particular Rites. Thank you again, my brother, for the years of devoted service to the establishment of L.V.X. and to the Order as a whole. Meanwhile, Soror Akasha and I, along with our Frater K.A., are currently in rehearsal for the Gnostic Mass, which we are hoping to get started early in the New Year. Keep your eyes on our on-line calendar of events for upcoming dates. Speaking of which....if you haven't seen it yet, our new website is up and is generating a lot of response on the internet. Praises to our webmaster Frater A.N., and to Frater L.A. for helping us to establish the site at <http://www.LVXLodge.org/>. We encourage all of our brothers and sisters in cyberspace to come and visit, as well as contribute any art, rituals, scholarly works or other pertinent work that you feel would enhance the site. We are also pleased to welcome our new Lodge Treasurer, Soror Pelagia, who has already done an amazing job updating our financial procedures.

A lot has happened through the Spring, Summer & Fall quarters. Our public classes and workshops continue to grow in popularity and attendance. The past two semesters have seen presentations by Soror SA RA, Lon Milo Duquette and Donald Michael Kraig as well as our own officers and initiates, and Thelemic Ritual workshops on the Star Ruby, Star Sapphire, Liber Reguli and The Mass of the Phoenix. We also saw the successful one year completion of an 11 operation series of the pathworkings of the Aurum Solis. Our Thelemic celebrations continued as well. The Second Annual So. Cal. OTO Night at Hollywood's "Magic Castle" was another huge hit. The Rite of Sol performed Raven's Flight in North Hollywood drew a large crowd and was very well received. "First Night" and Crowley's feasts were incredibly sumptuous and well attended and our Autumnal Equinox celebration was our largest to date with over 70 people in attendance. We also just completed celebrating "The Greater Feast of the Great Beast" and "Rite of Divine Birth" where Soror Akasha and I announced our engagement to be married. Next year holds much in store as well, as L.V.X. hosts a Thelemic Book Study night. This roundtable discussion group will be geared toward delving deeper into specific Thelemic and magical texts, with group discussions focused on methodology and content, and will start with Magick In Theory and Practice. Besides this public venue, the Lodge will also be sponsoring an "initiates only" practical ceremonial working group. This special functioning group will meet once a month to discuss, plan and execute a series of magical operations for the advancement of both the individual members and the Lodge in the Magick of L.V.X.

Well, that about wraps it up. I look forward to continued contact with all our Brothers and Sisters throughout the country and around the globe and wish you all many blessings for the Solstice holidays and vulgar New Year.

Love is the law, love under will.

Yours in L.V.X.,

Frater Hrumachis, Master