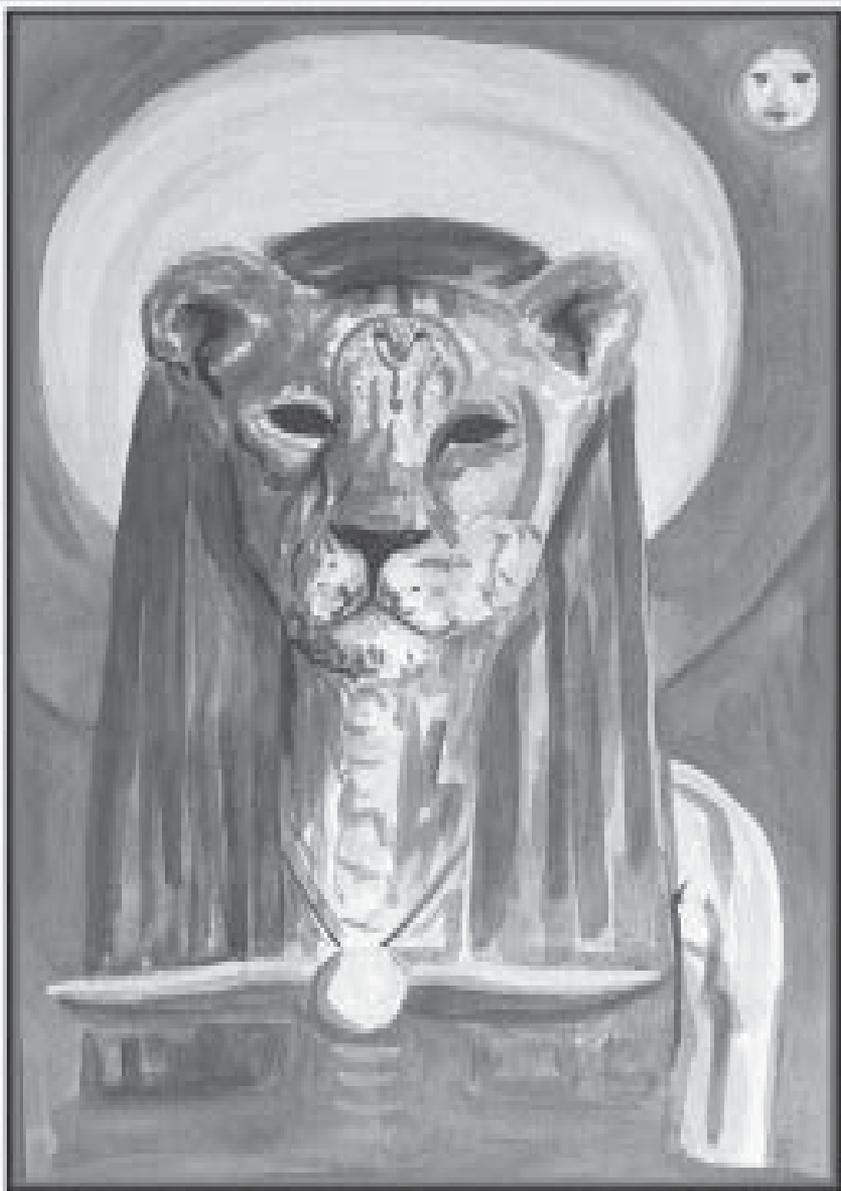


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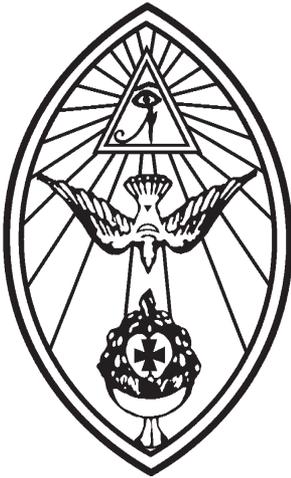
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The First Page

Frater HydraLVX

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

We are in the thick of summer now, and Sekhet-Maat Lodge has blossomed along with the flowers.

In addition to our regular quarterly offering of initiation opportunities through III°, we scheduled an extra round of Minervals and Thirds with the Sun moving from Cancer to Leo, to accommodate locals that wanted to take initiations before the National OTO Conference. It has been an exciting and rewarding time for all of us who love to participate in the mysteries of initiation.

It is appropriate that we would have initiations so close to NOTOCON, as the theme of this year's conference is "Initiation." The preparation work for this has saturated the local membership as well as many members from our sister bodies in the Pacific Northwest. It's amazing we can get anything else done, really, but we've also got an art show and reception planned for the night before the conference really gets going! I think we are all thankful it is coming to a head, and looking forward to the education, the joy and the fraternity we will experience that weekend.

Even with our noses between a rock and the deep blue sea, we have kept apace on our class schedule with Yoga on Mondays, and Thelemic forum and classes on Tuesdays. This summer also marks the completion of a new series of Knowledge Lectures by initiators on topics related to each Man of Earth degree, once per month. When done, we will start up again at the beginning, with new topics for each degree. Another series of classes also finished earlier this summer: *Pagan Themes in Classical Music*. Facilitated by Sr. C., this series offered a look at, and a listen to, a variety of composers and their works, which had intentional pagan, elemental, and seasonal themes. Fr. G. has begun a series entitled *World Religions from a Magickal Perspective*, bringing his considerable academic experience to bear on the local community, to our excitement and delight!

Jason Augustus Newcomb, author of *21st Century Mage*, did a workshop for us while the Sun was in Cancer, on Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel. By all accounts, it was inspiring to the max. Many participants (including myself) said that they truly felt closer to their HGA by doing the simple exercises in the workshop. Jason was a joy to have as a guest in our Lodge. At the reception following, he signed copies of his books and captivated us with his wit and intelligence.

This summer has also been a time of improvement at the Lodge. Some friendly elves commissioned a new Stélé and a stained glass OTO Lamen, which are both beautiful. The Stélé is much larger and the colors brighter, and the stained glass is stunning in the window above our main door. We are also in the midst of receiving

“The Devil’s Advocate”

Extending the Light of Laughter into the Deepening Darkness of an
Infinite Abyss of Idiocy

Frater Aleph Ben Ali

Dear ABA,

What exactly is the Adeptus Exemptus exempt from?

Frater Zero

Dear Frater Zero,

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

A most excellent question. One which certainly requires a profound answer, which I would be happy to elucidate upon. Well, I’ll give it my best shot anyway.....

Briefly, the Adeptus Exemptus, having attained to the most perfected phase of adepthood by attaining to the Sephira of Chesed (Mercy), is said to have attained to ultimate “freedom or liberation” from egoic consciousness. This means many things. The A.E. has certainly gained exemption from the illusion of the duality of matter. To some it may mean that they have freed themselves from the “karmic debt” of present and past incarnations. In other words they have become exempt from the Wheel of Death & Rebirth. The A.E. has risen above and freed themselves from the complexes of the intellectual Ruach and has subsequently been prepared to take the Oath of the Babe of the Abyss by attaining to that level of perfection. For certainly above the level of Chesed one’s “personal karma” is what is left behind as one ascends to the supernals.

I hope this provides a deeper insight for you and some “Food for Thoth” on this issue.. Please be advised, however, that the one thing the Exempt Adept is definitely not exempt from, at least in the U.S., is federal income taxes. Unless, of course, he is subscribing to the Book of the In-laws, or happens to have a really good accountant. In which case, I’d like his number.

Love is the law, love under will.

ABA

The System of Enochian Magick, Part VI: The System of the Tablet of Nalvage

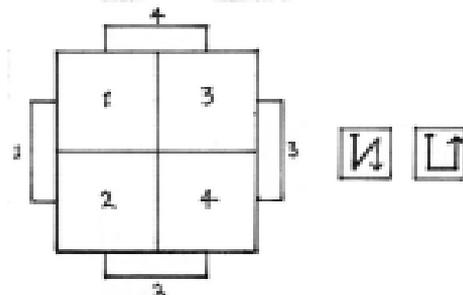
Frater David R. Jones

The Godhead in his secret judgement keeping in his Almighty bosom, the image and form of all things, universally, looked down upon the Earth; for he said, Let us now go down among the sons of men: He saw that all things grew contrary to their creation and nature; either keeping their dignities and secret virtues shut up in obscurity, or else riotously perishing, through the imbecility and forwardness of ignorance: So that it was said, Behold, I delight not in the World: The Elements are defiled, the sons of men wicked, their bodies become dunghills, and the inward parts (the secret chambers of their hearts) the dens and dungeons of the damned: Therefore I will draw my spirit away from amongst them, and they shall be more drunken, and their ignorance such as never was: Not since the fall of the Heavens.

- Nalvage, *A True & Faithful Relation*

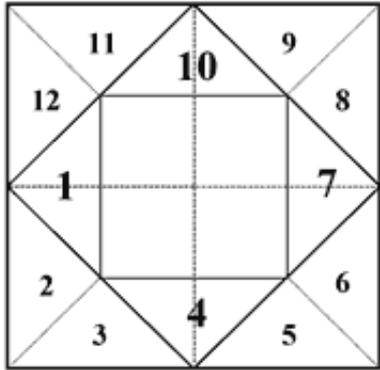
What does the Tablet of Nalvage represent in the larger scheme of Enochian magick? To answer that question, we must first examine its correlation to the elements and how this correlation relates to the attribution of the elements in the other structures of the system, particularly the 12 tribes as attributed to the Aires and the 4 Great Watchtowers of the Universe.

Although not explicitly stated, both the names of the Angelic Choirs associated with the continents of this Tablet and the dialogue of Nalvage¹ clearly imply that the order here is that of the traditional assignation to the Tetragrammaton or יהוה (YHVH) of the Golden Dawn and its descendants². That is Fire – Water – Air – Earth. This order represents the natural order of precession (Aries to Pisces to Aquarius, etc.) among other important relationships. As the ordering of Nalvage is twofold, within the core square and without the border, the orderings themselves can be seen as follows, where the progression of the elements within the tablet is applied counterclockwise to the border:



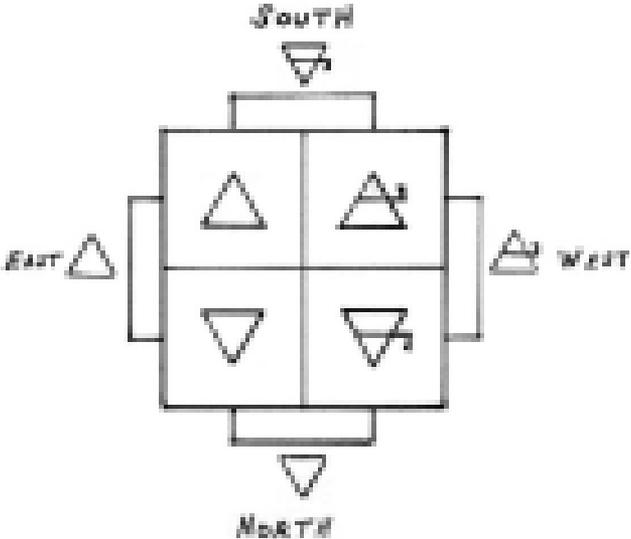
The ordering of Nalvage's Tablet

If this hypothesis is adopted, the formula applied yields the values for a typical Renaissance square horoscope or geomantic figure.



A typical Traditional Horoscope

The orientation of the elements to the directions would then be Fire in the East, Earth in the South, Air in the West and Water in the North.



The orientation of the elements on Nalvage’s Tablet.

And this relationship matches exactly the arrangement given in the Ordo Dispersi³ (Geoffrey James *The Enochian Magic of Dr. John Dee*. St Paul MN: Llewellyn, 1994, p.103), though in the Ordo Dispersi the assignment is mapwise⁴ (East = right) as opposed to horoscopic (East = left). This arrangement is a typical Hermetic celestial alignment, predicated on a solar orientation with a vernal equinoctial node of 0° Aries, cf. the Lesser Hexagram Ritual⁵ of the Golden Dawn, Agrippa (Agrippa pp. 257 *et passim*) and elsewhere.

Interestingly, this arrangement embodies the geophysical reality of Egypt (Aire I: LIL: 1, James 104). Where the greatest heat = Fire (the Saudi peninsula/Arabia Felix and the Sinai desert) are to the East; the largest proximate landmass = Earth (the African continent) is to the South; the prevailing winds = Air (the Saharan winds) come from the West; and the largest proximate body of Water (the Mediterranean sea) is to the North. This can clearly be seen in Ptolemy's maps (Ptolemy, *The Geography*. NY: Dover, 1991. Africa, maps 3 & 4⁶) of the region, which know we Dee used for reference⁷.



Ptolemy

The biblical verses and the context of reception clearly indicate that the orientation of the elements to the directions is a result of applying the astrological attributions of the Tribes to the directions. The variation of the values for the elements that correspond to the directions in the various arrangements is a reflection of not only the movements of the tribes but their symbolic correspondence to the precession of the signs relative to the equinoxes. This is a recurring theme and appears in traditional Hebrew Qabalah⁸.

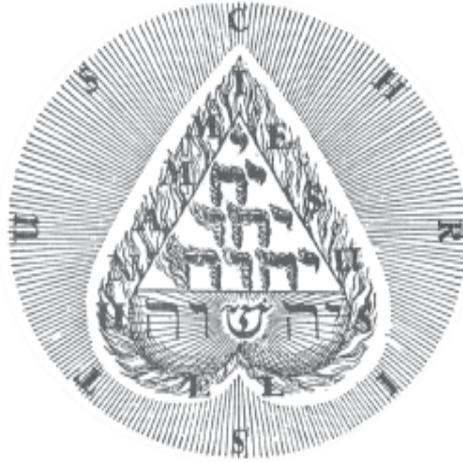
The entire structure requires familiarity with Dee's *Book of Earthly Knowledge, Aid & Victory* (James 103 *et passim*) where the tribes and their Angelic rulers are correlated to dispersion of all peoples in the postdiluvian world⁹. The entire process will be elucidated in due course regarding the reception and reformation of the Watchtowers and the Great Table, but this much needs, here, to be said: the

movement is that of the Tribes: from Egypt to the Wilderness; about the Tabernacle in the Holy Land; around the Temple in the settlement during rule of King Solomon¹⁰ and ultimately to the New Jerusalem spoken of in Ezekiel and Revelation. The pattern shown above with Egypt will serve as a model, and by tracking the movement and settlement patterns of the Israelites as given in both the mythohistoric and prophetic contexts of biblical scriptures, the various geographical and geophysical phenomena can be seen as clear markers of elemental correspondences.

Suffice it to say, Nalvage and the Ordo Dispersi are Egypt and the Exodus there from (Gen.-Exod.). The order of the reception of the Watchtowers (*AT&FR* 25 June 1584, pp. 172-181), the 12 Banners of the Great Circle of the Quarters (James 119) and Fundamental Obeisance (*ibid* 120) correspond to the marching order of the tribes in the Wilderness (Exodus). The Ordo Biblicus (James 103) and the orthodox order of the 24 Seniors *et al* (*ibid* 121-177) are the camping arrangements around the Tabernacle (Lev.-II Sam.). The Reformed or corrected Great Table (James 118) and the arrangement commemorated in the Golden Talisman (*AT&FR* 20 June 1584, leaf preceding p. 1 & pp. 168-171; James pp. xi & 187-8) are the settlement assignments around the Temple of Jerusalem.

From Nalvage to the fundamental arrangement of the 12 Banners, Fire and Air switch positions, moving Air to the East. From this arrangement to orthodox arrangement of the 24 Seniors, Fire moves to the North, putting Water in the West. From the orthodox arrangement to the Reformed arrangement, Fire moves to the South, putting Earth in the North. This leaves the familiar terrestrial arrangement of the elements, which typifies the Golden Dawn and its descendants; as found in the Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram, Crowley's Liber Chanock, the opening by Watchtower, and even in Gardner's application of the elements to Wicca; with Air in the East, Fire in the South, Water in the West and Earth in the North. Compare too the arrangement of the furniture in the Holy Place (before the Holy of Holies) in both the Tabernacle and King Solomon's temple where the incense is in the East, the Candlestick in the South, the laver of water in the West and the Table of Shewbread in the North.

Notice that Fire is the essential element in all of these changes¹¹. Notice too that the whole of the astrological symbolism is shifting towards an airy *ayanamsa*¹², which would correlate exactly to the process of precession toward the Age of Aquarius upon whose cusp we now reside¹³. These facts correlate with both the inferences and descriptions of the future Temple found in Ezekiel, the Dead Sea Scrolls¹⁴ and Revelation, that the New Jerusalem and the Temple therein will be aligned to this "future" celestial condition. By the process outlined above, one further switch of Fire (back to the West) leads precisely to this future Aquarian arrangement; where Air is in the East, Water in the South, Fire in the West and Earth in the North. Thus, symbolically correlating the movements of the Children of Israel through time with the process of equinoctial precession, this would seem natural, considering that the assignment of the elements to the Tetragrammaton is derived there from.



The Elements being far from their accustomed places, the homogeneous parts are dislocated, and this a man learns by experiment, for it is along the straight lines that they return naturally and effectually to these same places. Therefore, it will not be absurd to represent the mystery of the four Elements, in which it is possible to resolve each one into elementary form, by four straight lines running in four contrary directions from one common and indivisible point. Here you will notice particularly that the geometricians teach that a line is produced by the displacement of a point: we give notice that it must be the same here, and for a similar reason, because our elementary lines are produced by a continual cascade of droplets as a flux in the mechanism of our magic.

- *The Hieroglyphic Monad, Theorem VII*⁵

Notes:

1 Compare particularly John Dee, *A True & Faithful Relation*, ed. Meric Casaubon. NY: Magickal Childe, 1992 (hereafter *AT&FR*) pp. 64, 76, 102-4 & 140.

2 Crowley *Book 4, pt III cap III*, i.e. *Magick in Theory and Practice*: “The Formula of Tetragrammaton.”

3 The attribution of the 12 tribes in the diagrams here is based on that of Agrippa (Cornelius Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, ed. Donald Tyson. St. Paul MN: Llewellyn, 1997) Bk II: Cap XIV, pp. 292-8. This can be seen by applying the astrological attributions of the 12 Tribes to the diagram and comparing how the elements are assigned to the directions, as will be explained later. For the theory behind this kind of attribution and its praxis, see Aryeh Kaplan *The Sefer Yetzirah*. York Beach ME: Weiser, 1997. Cap 5 pp. 197-228.

4 Dee uses various attributions of directions to his diagrams but they are usually clearly oriented.

5 *Liber O*

6 http://www.thesahara.net/old_sahara.htm

7 J. Roberts & A. G. Watson, ed., *John Dee's Library Catalogue*, Clarendon UK: Oxford University, 1992. “After half an hour and lesse, he came speedily out of his Study,

and brought in his hand one Volume of *Cornelius Agrippa* his works, and in one Chapter of the that Book he read the names of the countries and Provinces collected out of *Ptolomeus* (as the Author there noteth)" AT&FR p. 158 The reference to Agrippa is Bk I Cap XXXI *op cit* p. 97.

8 *Op cit* Kaplan et cap 6 and the discussion of Theli as the celestial serpent clearly related to the celestial horizon diagramed on the border of the Sigillum Dei Æmeth.

9 This is probably why the numeration of the Governors begins in the Water Table.

10 The study of the symbolism of the Temple of Solomon and the biblical narratives related to it and the preceding and subsequent historical events that fashioned its mythos are the principal mysteries of the various rites of Freemasonry.

11 Compare the *Chaldean Oracles* for interesting parallels to this situation.

12 Fred Gettings, *A Dictionary of Astrology*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985)

13 We have just passed through an age ruled by the watery *ayanamsa* of Pisces; hence the *Piscis* of Jesus. It is curious to note that the Governors of the Aires begin and end on the Water Table and even the Abyss of ZAX has its beginning there. One wonders if the conflicts between the modern Israelis and Palestinians, who anciently as the Philistines worshiped Dagon another Fish God, are prophetically implied in this schema.

14 Compare the Temple Diagrams found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (Herschel Shanks, *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls*. NY: Vintage Books, 1992.)

15 Dr. John Dee, *The Hieroglyphic Monad*, trans. J. H. Jones. York Beach ME: Weiser, 2000.

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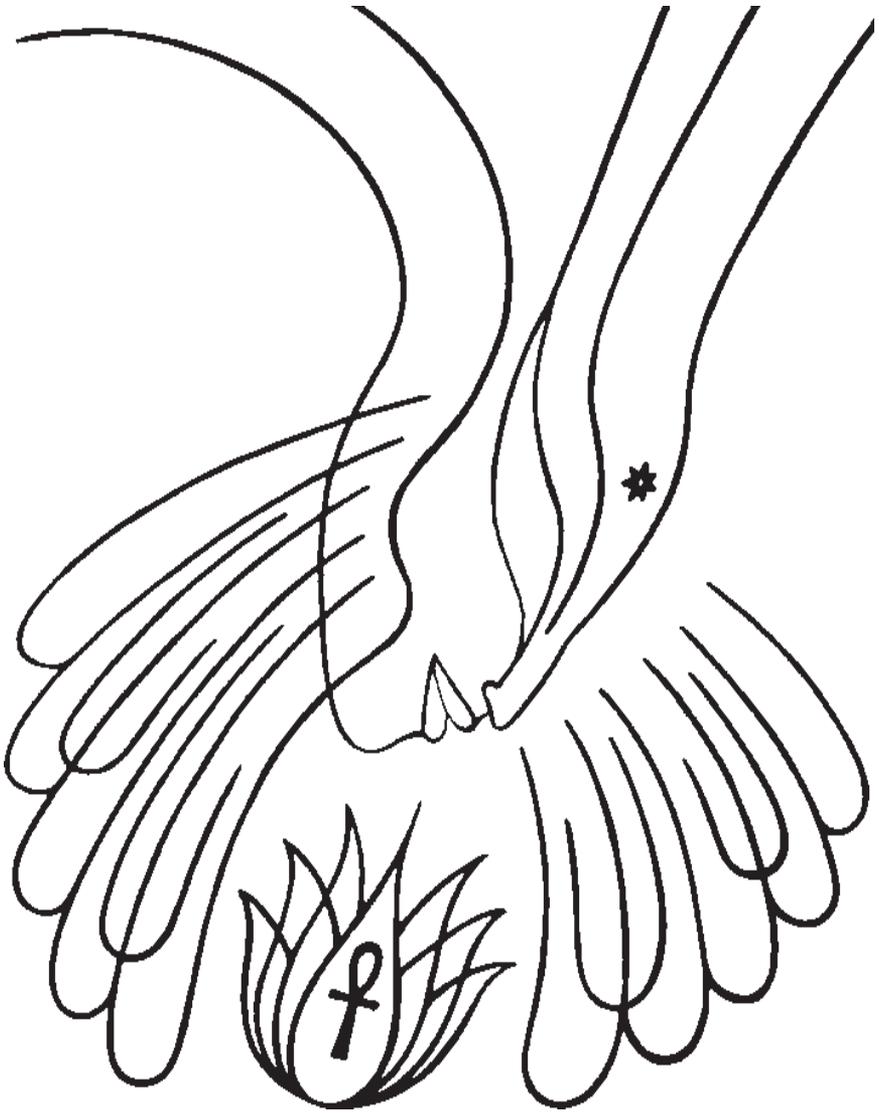
all new temple equipment for the Mass, thanks to the hard and loving work of Fr. R.W. & Sr. D., and the donation of funds needed for the project. This includes a full dais that supports the altar and veil, a new base altar at "regulation" height of 44 inches, a beautiful new tomb, a taller and wider veil structure and a new veil to fit it. We will soon also see a new super-altar as well. But that's not all! Watch for the newly acquired Yorke Collection and OTO Archive microfilm reels to become available for reference to the public at Sekhet-Maat Lodge!

Our new Stélé needed to be aligned to the Thelemic current that emanates from our *kiblah*, Boleskine. To do so, we placed it in the correct direction during a performance of *Liber V vel Reguli* on Summer Solstice, and followed that ritual with a feast appropriate to the holiday. We also celebrated a Feast for Fire – an infrequent and treasured occurrence – to honor the dawn of adolescence for our young friend C.

Congratulations are in order for Sr. K., who was ordained Priestess of Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica. We are all blessed by her hard work and ritual expertise.

Finally Ave! to Fr. J. and Sr. C., who have recently moved here from Minneapolis / St. Paul, and have already contributed greatly to our endeavors. Welcome!

Love is the law, love under will.



Untitled
Frater ZyGoat

The Function and Operant Terms of the Creed of the Gnostic Mass

Frater I. P.

Foreword:

I wish to begin by stating (not in apology) that I expect very little of what I write in this essay to be original. The Creed, being simple, straightforward, and based on rudimentary and easily observable scientific concepts, lends itself primarily to three particular approaches in writing about it: the first being elaborate paraphrases of what is already explicit, the second being illustrations of personal epiphanies which may or may not be relevant to the experience of those outside the area of effect of said epiphanies (and which we must accept as possessing varying degrees of comprehensibility and/or sanity), and the third being practical examinations regarding the function and utility of the Creed as serving and advancing the formula of the Mass in general.

Of the three aforementioned approaches, the second is the only one that is likely to contain much original thought or material. Since it is not my purpose here (nor is it my interest) to impose or proliferate my personal interpretations of any portion of the Mass, I am going to make a conscious effort to refrain entirely from employing the second approach, avoid somewhat (although not entirely) the first approach, and focus primarily on the third.

In the final analysis, it is much better that explanations of things be useful than that they be original or even interesting. While I hope that the reader will find this essay interesting, it is my utmost aspiration that they will find it useful.

Part 1: The Functions of the Creed inside the Mass:

1.1: To Synchronize the Conceptual Component of the People

In my limited experience of EGC communities, it is customary for the Deacon to give a short speech or preamble to the People prior to admitting them into the Mass temple. This speech consists of a number of instructions regarding temple decorum and verbal/gestural participation, which the People are expected to follow as a courtesy to the rest of the participants, and to the officers of the Mass.

Participation on this level is understood to be involuntary and required for admission into the temple, and does not assume or require any understanding of the necessity or function of the instructions. Furthermore, it is accepted that understanding of the specific import of these instructions (steps, signs, attitudes, etc.) is not a necessary requirement for understanding the formula of the Mass itself. For this reason, it is possible to regard participation on this level to be passive

in nature, and to be concerned primarily with synchronizing the behavioral component of the People.

Similar to the Deacon's speech before admittance, the Creed is also a preamble to subsequent events. However, rather than being designed to enforce involuntary uniformity on a verbal and gestural level, its purpose is to illustrate the fundamental principles which make possible the fulfillment of the formula of the Mass and to verbally confirm the Peoples' active belief in them.

Understanding or agreement with these principles is not explicitly required for one to be admitted into the temple, but sincere and informed agreement with the principles of the Creed is a prerequisite to understanding or benefiting from the formula of the Mass. For this reason, it is possible to regard the recitation of the Creed (as one eventually comes to understand its principles) as being active in nature and to be concerned primarily with synchronizing the conceptual component of the People.

1.2: To Amplify Harmonious Thought/Intent; To Isolate and Banish Disharmonious Thought/Intent

In any group ritual it is important that the thoughts and intent of the participants be synchronized and amplified within the confines of the temple and that disharmonious thoughts and intent be isolated and/or banished from the same confines.

The Mass is designed to be a public ritual, open to all, and as such its participants and officers cannot be assured at all times that everyone in attendance has a sufficient grasp of (or sufficient agreement with) the formula communicated through it, nor can they allow that to be a necessary requirement for the success of the ritual. The recitation of the Creed, aloud and in unison, provides the participants and officers with a necessary, primary, and effective safeguard against disharmony, distraction, and disruption of the current of energy that is being channeled through this formula, and of the success of the Mass itself.

In order to understand the importance of the recitation of the Creed in providing this amplification/isolation, it is useful once again to contrast the recitation of the Creed with the reception of the preliminary speech before entering the temple.

The reception of the speech does not rely on active contributions from the People in order to be successful. In order to fulfill the purpose of this speech, it is only necessary that they listen to what is being said to them, and follow the appropriate instructions at the appropriate times once inside the temple. While they are certainly welcome to ask any questions that may enhance their understanding of the details before entering the Temple, they are not required to do so.

The recitation of the Creed, on the other hand, engages the People in an active, public, and decisive (at least within the temple) statement of Belief and Confession. For all practical intents and purposes, we can assume that any questions they may have about any of the principles they are affirming through this recitation have been (or will be) settled elsewhere.

The Creed is recited aloud and in unison. Admittedly, this is the most common mode of public recitation for any kind of group affirmation, but it is more than simple convenience that makes this mode of public recitation useful in a magickal sense, as will be examined in the following paragraphs.

In magickal ritual, as in other arenas of communication and interaction, the spoken word is one of the most powerful forms of invocation (second only to the written word in the public arena). We can think about things as much as we like, and perform any number or variety of thought experiments in connection with any number or variety of subjects, and never have to commit to them anything other than whatever time or energy it took to entertain the thoughts in the first place. It is not necessary to engage any critical portion of one's personal integrity or identity in the subject of the unspoken theoretical construct in order to treat it in a satisfactory fashion.

With the spoken word, however, especially in a public arena, the very act of speaking engages the personal integrity of the speaker and binds them--to a degree commensurate with their level of personal integrity--to a personal identification with the subjects of the statements in accordance with their grammatical structure.

Reciting aloud also fulfills completely the function of isolating disharmonious thoughts or intents from the confines of the temple. Since the act of speaking engages the speaker on the grounds of their integrity and identity, the act of speaking also creates a condition where the other participants need not be concerned with any disharmonious thoughts (that remain unspoken) within the mind of the speaker. Therefore, the verbal buffer created by such recitation effectively absorbs these disharmonious elements and is sufficient to insulate any single participant from the possibly wandering or conflicted thoughts of any other participant. The operant supposition here is: if it wasn't spoken, it does not operate within the confines of the temple, and is thus irrelevant or nonexistent.

Likewise, recitation in unison forms an instant synergetic relationship with all other participants in the temple in that it serves to synchronize and amplify the thoughts and intent projected through the recitation. If reciting aloud is sufficient to project a thought or intent and establish its dominion in the temple, reciting aloud and in unison is sufficient to effectively amplify the intensity of the thought projection and its dominion in the temple by a factor equal to the number of participants in the temple and to channel this projection into the fulfillment of the formula of the Mass through the concentration of the individual (and group) will, in accordance with the principles affirmed in the Creed.

Part 2: The Operant Terms in the Creed: Belief and Confession

The next questions that naturally arise in the course of this analysis are: What exactly are these principles? What are the operant terms in these statements of affirmation, and how do they serve to affirm the various principles in the Creed, in accordance with the grammatical structure of the statements?

Other essays have been written regarding the former, and they are far more eloquent and informative than I would expect anything that I have to say on the subject to be. Furthermore, since it is not my intent in this essay to explore that question, I will leave that labor to the writers of those other essays and concentrate my energies upon the latter.

There are eight statements of affirmation in the Creed. Six of them are qualified by the operant term of Belief, and two of them are qualified by the operant term of Confession. In order to determine how these operant terms serve to affirm the various principles of the Creed, we must examine the meanings of these words, and how they relate to the various classes of phenomena identified in the statements themselves.

Definitions (excerpted from dictionary.com) are as follows:

Believe: \Be*lieve"\, v. t. [imp. & p. p. Believed; p. pr. & vb. n. Believing.]

1. To exercise belief in; to credit upon the authority or testimony of another.
2. To be persuaded of the truth of, upon evidence furnished by reasons, arguments, and deductions of the mind, or by circumstances other than personal knowledge.
3. To regard or accept as true; to place confidence in; to think.

Confess: \Con*fess"\, v. t. [imp. & p. p. Confessed; p. pr. & vb. n. Confessing.]

1. To make acknowledgment or avowal in a matter pertaining to one's self;

Now that we have our definitions, it is possible to examine how these terms operate in validating the various statements of affirmation in the Creed.

The first six statements refer to occult representations of generally accepted phenomena such as certain natural processes and the existence and function of certain heavenly bodies. Since we do not have direct experience of any of these things, it is necessary for us to accept them on the faith that they exist and function as described according to the best and most current scientific knowledge.

Belief in this capacity engages all three of the listed definitions of the term. We credit these things upon the testimony of others (i.e., we are not all astronomers, so we have not all done the necessary work to satisfy ourselves independently of the existence of the sun; we are not all biologists, so we have not done the necessary work to likewise satisfy ourselves of the microscopic appearance and behavior of spermatozoa, etc.) because as a society we have accumulated a body of scientific knowledge that is sufficient to bear out these postulates. The existence of this body of scientific knowledge empowers us to persuade ourselves of the truth of these statements through informed reasons, arguments, and deductions of the mind. The fact that all of the subjects dealt with in these six statements (if considered outside of their occult trappings) are accepted by all educated people to be rudimentary and fairly self-evident (in light of the current state of scientific

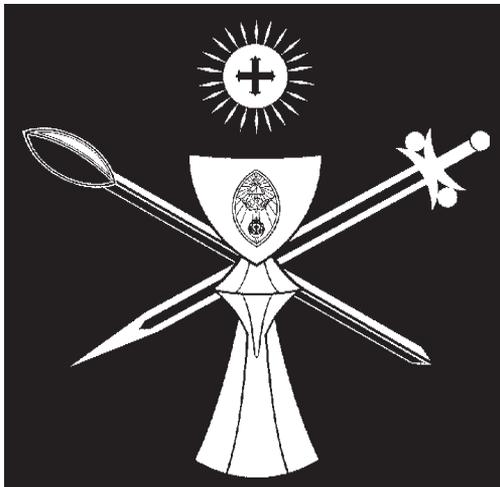
research) allows us to regard and accept them as true with little or no conscious effort.

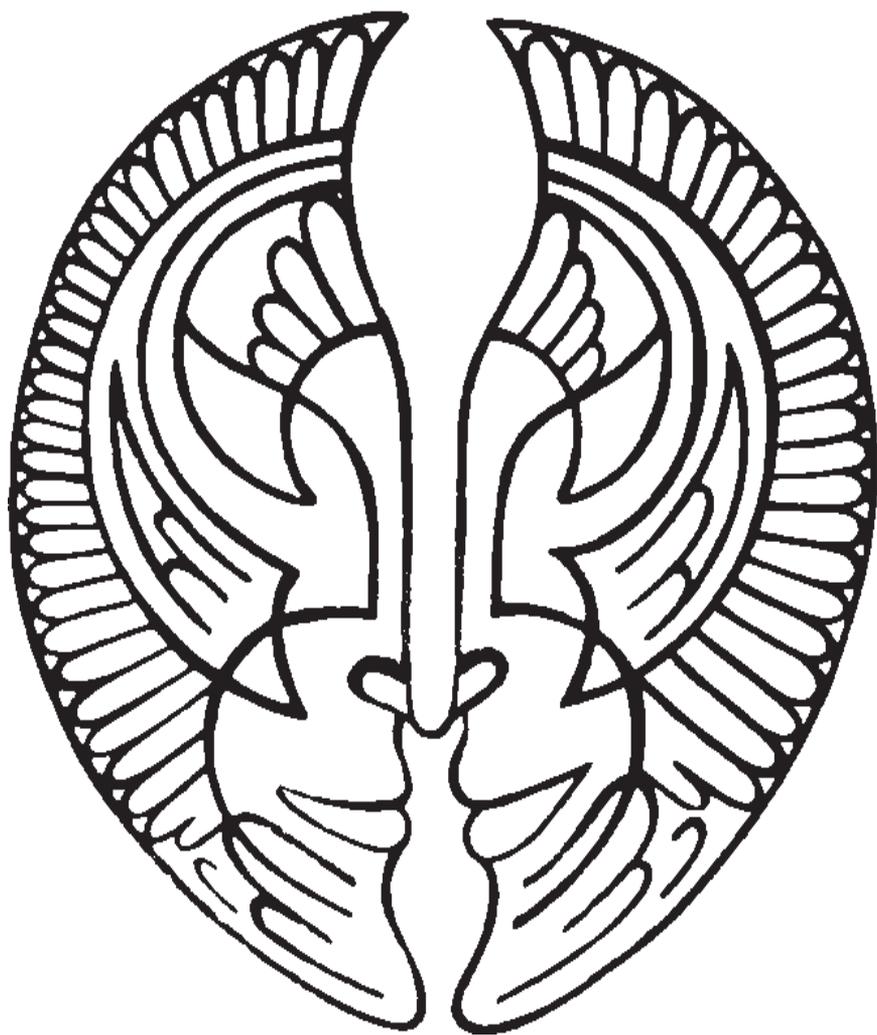
Since it is impossible even for scientists with highly specialized training to have direct knowledge and experience of the subjects they analyze and study, the best orientation that they (or we) can truthfully claim toward any of them is that of informed belief. The first six statements of affirmation in the Creed, being statements on subjects of this order, thus could not be truthfully qualified by any other operant term than that of Belief, which makes it ideal as an operant term, and validates indisputably the statements in which it operates.

The final two statements in the Creed refer respectively to the phenomena of Birth and Life. Since these are phenomena that every living being has a direct and (to a greater or lesser degree) intimate connection with through direct experience, it is not necessary to qualify them through a term such as Belief. Even without a vast corpus of scientific knowledge to bear it out, one can easily and confidently acknowledge that they were born and that they are indeed alive at the moment of acknowledgment. Acknowledgment in this fashion engages the listed definition of the term "Confess."

In Closing

In any magickal operation, it is necessary to have one's postulates and observations readily at hand, so that one may rally them to one's use effortlessly and seamlessly. The Creed is organized in such a way as to not only facilitate that purpose, but to facilitate it in an essentially uncontrolled group setting. The ordering of the statements, the operant terms within, and the manner of recitation are all necessary elements for the fulfillment of that purpose, and thus to the fulfillment of the formula of the Mass. By studying the function and architecture of the Creed on this level, it is possible for the practitioner to gain a greater understanding and appreciation for the self-contained beauty and splendor of the cosmic model that expresses itself through the formula of our central rite.





Untitled
Frater ZyGoat

Masters of the Names, Masters of the Numbers

A Very Concise History of the Jewish Qabalah

Part I

Frater Brian Keck

[This essay will be presented over six issues. The bibliography will appear in the final installment. –Ed.]

Introduction

The purpose of this essay is to map out the historical march of Jewish mysticism, providing a framework in which to better understand the relationships between the different schools of thought and the various understandings of Jewish mysticism in different periods. I construct this framework by emphasizing the important characters of each school or period and noting the relevant written works. In this way, I try to provide the reader with a context for understanding how Qabalah has evolved over time.

This is intended to be an historical rather than a doctrinal outline; and it is an outline, not a detailed discussion of the issues. I only touch on doctrine when it is particularly interesting or relevant to understanding the history of the traditions. I try to focus on chronological and geographical differences rather than constructing a consistent or even evolutionary snapshot of Jewish Qabalah. I hope emphasizing the differing philosophical schools makes understanding the Qabalah a slightly less formidable task.

That being said, there were, of course, consistencies throughout much of the tradition, one of which I consider important enough to address here — the bifurcation of the tradition into two general philosophical paths: the “Ecstatic Qabalah” and the “Theosophic Qabalah” (to use the terms of modern scholarship). The qabalists themselves referred to the practitioners of these two paths as *ba`alê šemot* and *ba`alê sefirot* respectively. The Hebrew phrase *ba`alê šemot* means “masters of the names” and refers to a type of mystical thinking where praxis outweighs knowledge and the divine names are used in meditation, to gain altered states of consciousness, and to summon angels and spirit-guides.

The phrase *ba`alê sefirot* means “masters of the Numbers” and refers to a type of broad thinking that places heavy emphasis on knowledge and its attainment through theological and cosmological speculation. Praxis in this way of thinking tends to be relegated to the standard Jewish practices of prayer, scriptural recitations, dietary laws, etc., but these are always performed with a consideration of the esoteric interpretations underlying the rites.

Hebrew Transliteration	
א	= ' (Aleph)
ב	= <u>h</u> (Beth)
ו	= t (Vav)
י	= ' (Yod)
ז	= <u>z</u> (Zayin)
ש	= š (Shin)
ס	= š (Samekh)

There was always an uneasy relationship between the practitioners of the two paths, often degenerating into animosity and name-calling. This manifested itself mostly in the accusations of the Theosophic qabalists that the *ba'alê šemot* practiced "Practical Qabalah" (i.e., base Jewish magic; more on this later), although the Ecstatic Qabalists were not above ridiculing the ways of their Theosophic counterparts. In spite of this, the line separating these two paths was never very clear; elements of each path are found within the other (depending on the school and the period). A few qabalists mastered both traditions, but they were always in the minority.

The outline that you will see presented here and in the next few issues is admittedly simplistic and lays no claim to being the exclusive map of qabalistic territory. Other outlines could be created depending on how one slices the timeline and what criteria one uses to separate the philosophic streams. This outline is my construct based on my own readings and understanding of the doctrines and traditions now; I hope it is useful.

Origins

The orthodox qabalistic position on the origins of the tradition states that the Qabalah was first given to Adam in the Garden of Eden. Adam possessed that gnosis until he lost it by his fall and banishment from paradise. The Qabalah was later revealed to the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), but was not available to humanity in general until Moses received it anew at Sinai at the same time he was given the Ten Commandments. From that time on, the tradition was available to ordinary humans but was only actually disseminated to the select few.

This is, of course, mythology. The actual development of the Qabalah can be historically traced and is much more complicated and much more interesting than the mythology.

The deepest roots of the Qabalah lie in both the Assyrian mysticism of the 1st Millennium e.v., and the Semitic magic underlying the ancient Hebrew culture. The mystical speculations of the Assyrian priests of the Royal Cult resulted in the Tree of Life glyph whose nodes explained the relations between the Assyrian god Aššur and humanity. In this developing monotheistic system, the older Babylonian pantheon was adopted and eventually came to be interpreted as aspects of Aššur filling the void between the Divinity and the Assyrian King, who was a reflection of Aššur on earth and embodied the position the Jewish mystics later called *mal'kût*, "Kingdom," or "Kingship." Aššur's symbol, the winged disk, consistently appeared above the Assyrian tree and was interpreted in a manner very similar to the later Jewish concept of the *'en sof* (Parpola 1993: 205-208).

The destruction of the Temple in 586 e.v., at the hands of the Babylonians, and the Hebrew people's subsequent deportation to Mesopotamia was the crisis that destroyed the old Hebrew religion and gave birth to the Jewish religion as we know it today. This theological cataclysm took place in a Mesopotamian context. The mystical traditions were also forged at this time, and within this Babylonian/Assyrian crucible. Mesopotamian influence can occasionally be glimpsed in later

writings, especially in the names of the Sefirot and in the practices of gematria and related word and letter permutations (Parpola 1993).

The period of time between the end of the Babylonian Exile and the so-called *Hekalot* period (see below) was one of formation; few mystical writings have been preserved, the best known being some of the Dead Sea Scroll texts from Qumran. Some of the Jewish magical texts may have been written during this period and it is very possible that the traditions found in the *sefer yezirah* were formulated during this time and were only written down later.

The *Hekalot* Period (c. 100 e.v. - 1000 e.v.)

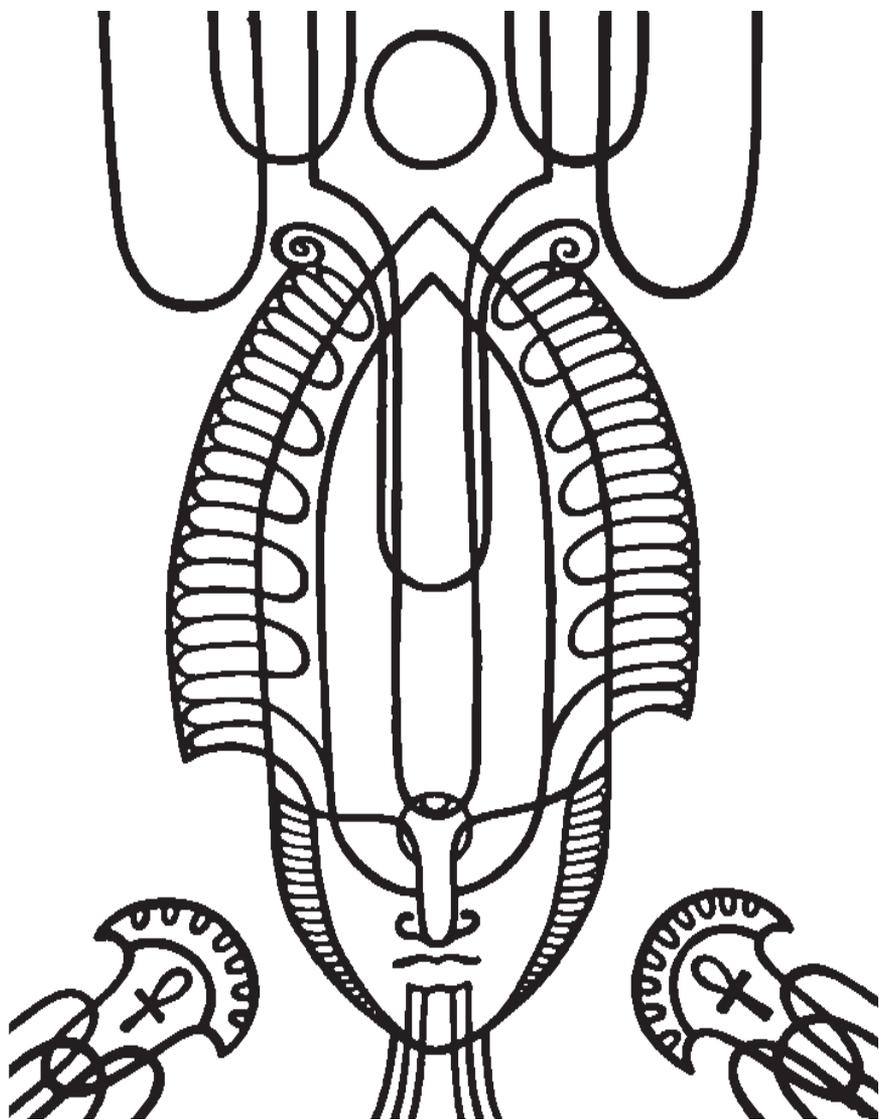
The mysticism of this period is not qabalistic as we understand the term from later periods, nevertheless the mystical writings originating during this time were very influential on later qabalistic ideas. This era in Jewish conceptual history is also known as the Merkavah Period. The Hebrew term *merkavah* refers to the Divine chariot depicted in the form of a throne, an image which is drawn from the first chapters of Ezekiel and which pervades the texts of this period. The writings of this period were also greatly influenced by the Gnosticism of the Hellenistic world.

The main texts of this period are the *hekalot zutrâti* (The Lesser Palaces), the *hekalot rabbâti* (The Greater Palaces), and the *šî'ur qomah* (The Measuring of The Stature of God). Also written during this period (6th century e.v.) was the influential cosmological treatise, *sefer ha-yezirah*, which includes some elements consistent with the *hekalot* texts but develops a terminology very different from those writings (but still not quite “qabalistic” in nature). There is a debate over when this text was actually written. I believe it was about the 6th century, but it could well have been composed much earlier and have circulated orally for quite some time.

The *hekalot* tradition focused on the divine journey to the Seven Heavens. The methods for attaining this experience are not explicit in the texts but almost certainly included word permutation of some sort. The traditional position for this work is described as sitting with “one’s head between one’s legs.” During the mystical experience the adept was required to pass various guardians and gatekeepers along the way to the throne room of God (the goal of this type of mysticism) and had to know the secret passwords and sigils that would admit him and protect him from the malevolent forces trying to block his way.

The schools that produced the *hekalot* texts were centered in southern Mesopotamian and in the land of Palestine, one of the centers there being the town of Emmaus. We do not know who specifically wrote the above-mentioned texts, but traditionally they are associated with some of the early Palestinian Talmudic scholars such as Yochanan ben Zakai, Yehoshua ben Chananya, and Rabbi Akiba. Traditionally the *sefer ha-yezirah* is associated with the patriarch Abraham.

Next issue: The Early Qabalah, German Hasidism, The Zohar, Abulafia and Gikatilla.



Untitled
Frater ZyGoat

Spring Equinox Ritual

Frater Balise d'Anubus & Soror S.D.M.

Setup

Props (General):

- three types of incense, one appropriate to each goddess archetype invoked [1: galbanum, opium; 2: lily, narcissus; 3: sandalwood, rose, myrtle, clover]
- blood-red girdle
- lantern
- blood-red rose (same color as girdle), made out of flash paper and matches
- cauldron with clean-burning substance in it (rubbing alcohol works)
- censer, preferably one that can be placed inside or on top of the cauldron
- enough fruit for all participants
- a single candle for each participant
- starter-items for altar as desired
- 3 red ribbons with loops to go over hands at the ends; two are as long as the center to the outside square perimeter of the Kali-Yantra (see diagram)

Props (Participants):

- offering for Queen of Underworld
- offering for Queen of Crossroads
- offering for Queen of Beauty
- any items/magicks/ritual stuffs/items for charging/etc. that the big goddess ju-ju raised will be charged with – participants should be encouraged to make their own private ritual within the context of the public ritual¹

Temple:

Draw, tape, paint, etc. as large a Kali Yantra as possible in the ritual space. In the central circle of the Yantra is a circular altar, big enough to hold the estimated amount of items from the participants. Small tables or other furniture may be set up around the room's periphery to provide a safe place for lit candles if a large number of participants are anticipated.



Preparation:

Before the ritual, put all “starter items” on the altar. Also put the candles, girdle, lantern (unlit), rose, and ribbons on altar. Hide the fruit under or at the base of the altar. Place the censer in, on, or as close as possible to, the cauldron. Light the charcoal. Be sure all participants have been told well in advance that they should be bringing their own personal magicks to this rite.

Officers

Priestess1 (Persephone): clothed in white

Priestess2 (Hekate): clothed in black

Priestess3 (Demeter): clothed in red

Priest (Fool): clothed in yellow, sky blue, and green, with his own set of offerings for each of the goddesses

Ritual

I Opening

Participants are led in by the **Priest** to stand in a square around the square perimeter of the Kali-Yantra. Lights in the space are on. The 3 **Priestesses** are in a triangle opposite to the triangle of the Yantra and equal in dimension; that is, the triangle formed by the Priestesses and the triangle formed by the Yantra together create a hexagram. **Priest** stands with the participants.

-GONG-

The three **Priestesses** perform a Star Ruby together (blocking may want to encourage the concept of the three as both 3 and 1).

At the end of the Star Ruby, the three **Priestesses** gather around the central circle of the Kali Yantra, together, facing in, in a close triangular formation, perhaps holding hands. **P1** is behind the altar.

-BELL x3-

II Statement of Intent

The three **Priestesses** take the ribbons from the altar, and loop the ends over their hands so that they are joined in a triangular shape. The backs of the priestesses should be to the flat sides of the Kali-Yantra's triangle. The two very long ribbons must both be attached to **P3's** hands.

Priestesses in a round: *Sister, what is the time?*

Priestesses together: *Now [P1 puts on girdle]*

Priestesses in a round: *Sister, what is the place?*

Priestesses together: *Everywhere [P2 lights lantern and turns it on low]*

Priestesses in a round: *Sister, what is the work?*

Priestesses together: *Conception* [P3 picks up rose]

All lights go OUT.

III Queen of the Underworld

The temple is in complete darkness except for P2's lantern, which is turned down so it is dim. There should be either no music or very low-key drone-like music (a consistent rattle, a quiet drone, atmospheric, etc.).

The three **Priestesses** grab each other's hands around the altar.

Priestesses (quietly): *Invoke me under my stars...*²

This invocation is given slowly, tonelessly, with a cold, creepy, but very balanced inflection. During the invocation, the **Priest** dances a slow spiral inward toward the altar.

Priestesses: *we three are one
the darkness which shields the sun*

P1: *we three are me
Persephone Autothonos*³

Priestesses drop each other's hands and **P1** tosses her incense on the coals.

P2, P3: *queen of the underworld
queen of the scales*

P1: *blooded virgin
girdled in red*

P2, P3(chant and continue): *queen of the underworld
queen of the scales...*

P1: *a wolf in sheep's clothing
dirty from the wood
enthroned in my tomb
of menstrual blood
and stolen maidens
needed madness
taken so deeply
here in the shadows
I am war; I am sleep
in the grave
in the ground
I rule while above
even stones and trees weep
I am the fulcrum
I am vast I am deep
it hurts you
and adjusts you
these lessons
I teach*

Priestesses: *queen of the underworld*

P2, P3: *queen of the scales*

P2, P3, Participants (chant until energy is raised):
Autothonos, Autothonos, Autothonos...

P1 (when the time feels right):
*lie with me under
with riches untold
while you are sleeping
my balance will hold*

At this point, the **Priest** has reached the altar. **P1** raises her hands in the air while **P2** and **P3** get on the ground, forming an upward triangle with the ribbons, as depicted:



Priestesses (loud): *Autothonos! Autothonos! Autothonos!*

Participants STOP chanting.

The **Priest** approaches the altar and places his offering on it.

Priest: *To the universe belongs the dancer. He who does not dance does not know what happens.*

Now if you follow my dance, see yourself in me.⁴

Then he steps through the triangle, ducking through the ribbon. **P2** and **P3** rise, **P1** drops her hands, so that they are in the same configuration they were in after the opening.

Priestesses: *Wisdom says:*

Priest, Participants: *be strong! Then canst thou bear more joy.⁵*

-BELL x3-

IV Queen of the Crossroads

Priestesses rotate two sides of the triangle clockwise. **P2** turns up her lantern, raising the level of light in the room considerably. A soft heartbeat of drumming and music begins; the music is strange and mysterious traveling music. During the invocation, the **Priest** dances a serpentine dance that ends up at the altar.

The three **Priestesses** grab each other's hands around the altar.

Priestesses (mysteriously): *Invoke me under my stars.*

This invocation is done with a bit of a decisiveness and push behind it; it is in motion.

Priestesses: *we three are one
the darkness which shields the sun*

P2: *we three are me
Hekate Enodia⁶*

The **Priestesses** unclasp their hands. **P2** tosses her incense on the coals.

P1, P3: *queen of the crossroads
mistress of moon*

P2: *I hold the lantern
as it floats through the gloom*

P1, P3 (chant and continue): *queen of the cross roads
mistress of moon...*

P2: *I guide the travelers
from dusk until dawn
I hide mysteries
and riddles unsaid
I am the doorway
to which I lead and am led
I am a phase
a hound
witness to my sister, entombed in the ground
I told her mother,
my sister, my self,
with gusts of night breezes and words on the air
along ley lines and nodes
dancing on tides
I know the way there
sometimes I'm hidden but
my treasure shines bare*

Priestesses: *queen of the crossroads*

P1, P3: *mistress of moon!*

P1, P3, Participants: (chant again until energy is raised)
Enodia, Enodia, Enodia...

P2 (when it feels appropriate):
*follow me further
I go down I go up
I am tidal;
it is the sacred flame in my cup*

P2 raises her hands while **P1** and **P3** drop to the ground to form the gateway as in the previous section.

Priestesses (loud): *Enodia! Enodia! Enodia!*

Participants STOP chanting.

The **Priest** approaches the altar and leaves his offering on it. He picks up an unlit candle.

Priest: *To the universe belongs the dancer. He who does not dance does not know what happens.*

Now if you follow my dance, see yourself in me.

Priest steps through the ribbon gateway. **P1** and **P3** rise, **P2** drops her hands so that they are in the same configuration that they were in at the start of the invocation.

Priestesses: *Wisdom says:*

Priest, Participants: *be strong! Then canst thou bear more joy.*

-BELL x3-

V Queen of Beauty

Priestesses rotate two sides clockwise. The music becomes very beautiful and full of life. During the invocation the **Priest** dances free form, ending up at the altar.

The three **Priestesses** grab each other's hands around the altar.

Priestesses (triumphantly): *Invoke me under my stars!*

Priestesses: *we three are one
the darkness which shields the sun*

P3: *we three are me
Demeter Mitera⁷*

Unclasping their hands, **P3** tosses her incense on the coals.

P1, P2: *queen of beauty
keeper of corn*

P3: *I am the rose
both stem and bloom*

P1, P2 (chant and continue): *queen of beauty
keeper of corn*

P3: *a swan on the sea
the molten core of the earth
I smolder and catch
the stars on fire
I am the widow, the wife,
the saint of the heart break
the mother mourning
when daughters returned
and winter is ended
my heart is both broken and mended
in the flame of passion
large as the sun and*

*no smaller than the core of the earth
more vital
and ever present
than the light of the moon
she is just a reflection
burn to me letters and
locks of your hair
what is left then is joy
all sorrow's repaired*

Priestesses: *queen of beauty*

P1, P3: *keeper of corn!*

P1, P3, Participants: (chant as before until energy raised)
Mitera, Mitera, Mitera...

P3 (when appropriate): *dance through my doorway
breath my perfume
the flesh of my rose
burns incarnation's bloom*

Priestesses arrange themselves as in first section to form the gateway, with the exception that **P3** does not raise her hands immediately.

Priestesses (loud): *Mitera! Mitera! Mitera!*

Participants STOP chanting.

P3 lights her rose on fire from **P2's** lantern, sticks it in the cauldron, and the cauldron bursts into flames.

-GONG-

She raises her hands in triumph to form the apex of the gateway triangle with the ribbons.

The **Priest** lights his candle from the cauldron and raises it up.

Priest: *To the universe belongs the dancer. He who does not dance does not know what happens.*

Now if you follow my dance, see yourself in me.

Priest places his candle on the altar and curls up into a little ball around the fruit, within the gateway, at the base of the triangle.

P3: *Come unto me!*⁸

VI Mother of the World

All (Priestesses and Participants) chant: *I am above you and in you. My ecstasy is in yours. My joy is to see your joy.*⁹

While chanting, the **Participants** come in from the square to form a thick column that extends from the perimeter of the Kali-Yantra's square to the base of the ribbon triangle. Chanting continues until sufficient energy is raised. Music increases.

When the energy has reached its peak, **P1** and **P2** stand up and rush down either side of the column to make a triangle around the **Participants**, encompassing them within the ribbon gateway. At the same time, the **Priest** grows up while this happens until he stands ecstatic w/the fruit.

Priest: *Come forth, o children, under the stars, & take your fill of love!*¹⁰

The **Participants** rush through the triangle around them, wildly grab the fruit from the Priest, and consume it.

The music swells into a full ecstatic dance, joyous spring music with a strong beat. The participants can now, on the other side, approach the altar, leave their offerings, light their candle, and eat their fruit. Everyone dances madly. **Priestesses** dance with **Participants**. Now is the time for people to do whatever goddess ju-ju they want to. Priestesses can lead Participants in dance steps and ju-ju, as needed.

VII Closing

As things wind down, people can eat, party, and meditate. The altar is transferred to its home for the next year in a devotional manner by the Priestesses. Encourage participants to publicly note their rituals/experiences so they can be used and published for future use. Encourage the active use of the altar, leaving of offerings, etc. throughout the year following its creation. At the end of the year the altar can either be disassembled as people see fit, or continue to be used, depending on what is decided by consensus.

Notes:

1 Offerings will be left on the altar for a total of at least one year, during which time their safety cannot be guaranteed.

2 Liber AL, I.57

3 Greek, noun form of "chthonic" – of the earth

4 Gnostic Gospel, Acts of John

5 AL, II.70

6 Greek, from enode - "to untie a knot or solve a riddle"; this is one of the names of Hekate

7 Greek, "mother"

8 AL, I.61

9 AL, I.13

10 AL, I.12



Untitled
Soror River Soma

Book Reviews

Mary Doria Russell. *The Sparrow*, Fawcett, 1997.

Although not necessarily pagan in theme, this religious and spiritually oriented book held me rapt at every page and I feel that its frankness will be of interest to all seekers of a spiritual bent. The plot consists of four Jesuit Priests, an agnostic, a Sephardic Jew, a young Catholic man, and an atheist, who travel to another planet for a first contact mission. The tale is told through a series of flash-backs and personal recounts by the only survivor, Father Emilio Sandoz, who has returned to earth crippled and nearly dead from scurvy. The book opens grimly, and within the first few pages information is carefully leaked (this careful leakage continues throughout the book) to the reader that the mission has failed, and that the survivor has several inflammatory accusations against him. Despite its overly Christian appearance, the book is an intelligent exploration of faith, religion, and god's place within lives of eight very different people.

Though most of the characters are Christian, the book is not bogged down in dogma. The novel is true to its purpose of exploring fundamental spiritual questions and truths of existence on a societal and individual level. Catholic in content, it remains on a mostly intellectual and anecdotal scale that is constantly questioned at every corner by the pragmatism and pride of the Jewish crew member. The characters are made real, vital, and likeable by highly detailed and precise individual and group character development. Discussions of celibacy, homosexuality, and masturbation with the clergy create several touching and humorous scenes. Many of those fundamental questions you would like to ask a celibate may be answered for you.

Russell, an ex-academic and technical writer, quotes her many sources for her realistic portrayals of the Jesuits. With the historical accuracy of an academic, she weaves an incredibly detailed and plausible environment for exploring past contact missions on our own planet and how the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Russell has created a compelling and vital world that is as entertaining to read as it is challenging and deep. As one of the characters says in the novel, "You are asking a question that Job didn't even get a decent answer for!"

- *Frater Balise d'Anubis*

Tim Powers. *Last Call*, Avon, 1993.

*With reference to the formula of the Dying God as expressed in Aleister Crowley's *The Ship*.

Joseph Campbell wrote in *Hero with a thousand faces* that, "The latest incarnation of Oedipus, the continued romance of Beauty and the Beast, stand this afternoon on the corner of Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue, waiting for the light to change." The ancient myths are all around us – we live them daily.

The formula of the Dying God has been expressed in many guises (see *Liber ABA*, part 3, chapter 5) in such myths as those of Osiris, Jonah, Jesus, Adonis, Baldur, etc. I will assume that readers are broadly familiar with the formula. Tim Powers takes Campbell's words literally, and in *Last Call* sets the myth of the Dying God in modern day California and Nevada.

It is useful, however, to contrast the action in *Last Call* with that in Crowley's short play, *The Ship*. This play expresses in dramatic form the formula of the Dying God as found in the mythology of Freemasonry (see Crowley's explanation in *The Confessions*, p.714.) Where *The Ship* expresses the pure formula, *Last Call* represents the perversion thereof.

The first scene in *The Ship* takes place at the shrine of the deified Sun, within which is John, and his two attendees, high guards, and two devotees. Although John is described initially as the High Priest of the Sun, he is also a King (dressed in gorgeous robes of scarlet and gold, with a crown upon his head, and holding an orb and sceptre.) Indeed, he is the very personification of the Sun, as well as its chosen Priest.

It is evening, the sun is setting in the west, and John is closing the shrine. And the tenure of John's reign as High Priest is also setting, for he is described as "of mature age" and is about to be challenged for the crown. For soon three strangers approach, declaring that they "are come from north and south and east... to build your god a new and nobler shrine." They prove themselves by possessing the correct Signs and Words for the first two warders, but when confronted by John himself are found to be ignorant of the Word of the Master.

It is apparent that these men are usurpers, that their intention is to take the Shrine for themselves and to depose the old King. For rather than retreat when proven imposters, they slay John, who will not surrender the secret of the shrine. In the language of *Last Call*, they are Jacks, gunning to 'assume *the Flamingo*' and take over the Kingship.

Yet, not possessing the necessary knowledge, the Jacks cannot assume the Kingship and are sent fleeing blindly after a blazing light drives them from the Shrine. Eventually, they meet their end at the hands of John's guards, dying in despair and misery. John's body is wrapped in a shroud and taken to sea in a ship.¹

This ship is the scene of the second part of the play. Tended by his two devotees, John symbolically journeys through the underworld, a prerequisite for the rebirth of the new King.² Finally, dawn breaks, and through the tender ministrations of the two female devotees, John is born anew as a young man, "dressed in the crown and robes of his father." In glory, he proclaims himself King, speaking those glorious verses now best known as the anthem of the Gnostic Mass.

Last Call, on the other hand, tells the story of a corrupt King, tragic and pathetic. All the elements of the formula of the dying King from *The Ship* are present, but with characters that are both perverse and all too human. It is a novel of a King who vainly resists passing on his throne to his Son, preferring the arid land of the Nevada desert to the lush lands of corn and wine.

George Leon starts the novel as a Jack, a pretender to the King's throne, held at that time by the mobster Benjamin (Bugsy) Siegel. The latter's Shrine is the fabulous casino, *The Flamingo*, in the city of Las Vegas.³ Leon studies Siegel over a period of years before preparing a magical attack against him. Seeking to "build... a new and nobler shrine" and assume the throne, Leon's painstakingly planned attack results in Siegel's death. He "assumes *The Flamingo*," has it rebuilt, and becomes the new King.

Leon knows that a necessary part of the formula is the King's death, but seeks to cheat this fate. He marries and begets two sons. He causes his first son, Richard, to become a mindless idiot, squatting day and night on the roof of his Las Vegas home to watch for attack. He has a similar fate in mind for his second son, Scott, but is foiled by his wife on the night of the magical operation.⁴ In a dramatic scene in which Leon is blasted by a shotgun, and young Scott loses an eye, Leon's wife manages to steal the boy away to safety. Scott is later found and adopted by Ozzie Smith, a professional gambler.

The shot has blasted away Leon's genitalia, making him incapable of physical reproduction. Even had he wished, he could now no longer say with *The Ship's* John, "He begot me in my season, I must such a Son beget." Yet he tenaciously clings to both life and the Kingship: instead of producing an heir by the appropriate time honored formula, he perverts it by devising another method of begetting "children." This is his poker variant "Assumption," a complicated game in which he, by assuming the hands of other players, gains the authority to assume their bodies at an appropriate time in the future. In one such game, he assumes the body of his own son, Scott. (By this stage Leon is in a different body, and neither player recognizes the other for who they are.)

Fast forward to 1987. Scott is now approaching middle age, and living in a suburb of Los Angeles. Time is running out for him: he is almost ripe for Leon to assume his body, and this is beginning to take a toll on his life. A kind of chaotic zone forms around him – his wife dies of a cancer that is perhaps a result of his physical presence, and he succumbs to alcoholism. This is recognized by his neighbor, Archimedes (Arky) Mavranos, who sees in this zone of chaos a chance to heal his own cancer of the throat, and he eventually becomes a devoted knight to this fledgling King Arthur.

Other fascinating characters make an appearance: Scott's foster father Ozzie; his foster sister Diana (who is destined to become Queen); Dondi Snayheever, whose father, misunderstanding Skinner, forces him to spend his childhood in a large box surrounded by poker cards; Ray-Joe Pogue, who aims to take the Kingship for himself by wedding his Vietnamese half-sister Bernadette Dinh; Al Funo, the homophobic and insecure assassin; and there are many more.⁵

Gradually Scott pieces together what has happened and realizes that his only salvation lies in journeying to Las Vegas to battle his father. This struggle and accompanying sub-plots forms the bulk of the book and cannot be easily summarized here. Suffice it to say that, after working through a tangled web of

threats to his life, Scott finally comes to a place in which he can challenge his father for his arid kingdom.

Like *The Ship*, the final action takes place on a vessel on the water. Yet here too, Leon's perversion of the Kingship shows: rather than the open and natural salt sea, the boat is on the artificially created Lake Mead. Rather than being cared for by devotees, the King is surrounded by poker players who are to be the victims of his Assumption game. No smells of oil and roses either – the boat is sickeningly permeated by the stench of shit and piss from the original body of George Leon, now old, decrepit, and strapped in a wheelchair.

Readers can perhaps guess that Scott Crane succeeds in taking his rightful place as King in the end, but I will not give away the manner in which he defeats his father. With Scott's assumption of the Kingship, the natural formula of the Dying God again prevails.

"And the old truck sped on up the highway in the morning sun. And in the desert all around, the Joshua trees were heavy with cream-colored blossoms..."

Last Call is the first book in a trilogy of sorts. The second, *Expiration Date*, has nothing to do with *Last Call*, but follows the adventures of the young Koot Hoomie Parganas, bred by his Theosophical parents to be the next World Teacher. It takes place in Los Angeles, and centers around strange folk magic and the consumption of ghosts as a gourmet drug. *Earthquake Weather* is a sequel to both of the previous two books. Here Scott "suffers too the triple treason", as Powers weaves together the various story-lines into a coherent whole.

- Frater Mick

Notes:

1 The ship, though initially battered and leaky, miraculously becomes sturdy once more – a suitable vessel for the body of the King. This is echoed in *Earthquake Weather*, in which Arky's blue Chevy Suburban becomes a royal red when carrying the body of the dead King. However, we focus here on the events of *Last Call*.

2 So too did Jesus travel to hell after his death at Golgotha. And there are many other parallels in the legends of 'Dying Gods.'

3 As in all Powers' books, the historical details given are correct.

4 This operation consists of exposing his sons to the mind bending horror of the (mythical) Lombardy Zeroth tarot deck.

5 One should also include here George Leon in the form of the many bodies that he has assumed through his perverse poker game. He keeps their original names, and something of their characters, while possessing them. The names themselves are of interest, for they point symbolically to his Kingship. Thus in 'George Leon' – Leon is the lion, symbolic of Tiphareth and the Sun (see *Liber 777*). Other names include Ricky Leroy, (which as Richard Le Roi shows similar symbolism – Richard is reminiscent of Richard the Lion-Hearted, and Le Roi is 'The King' in French) and Art Hanari (which sounds like the Indian God Ardhanari.)

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