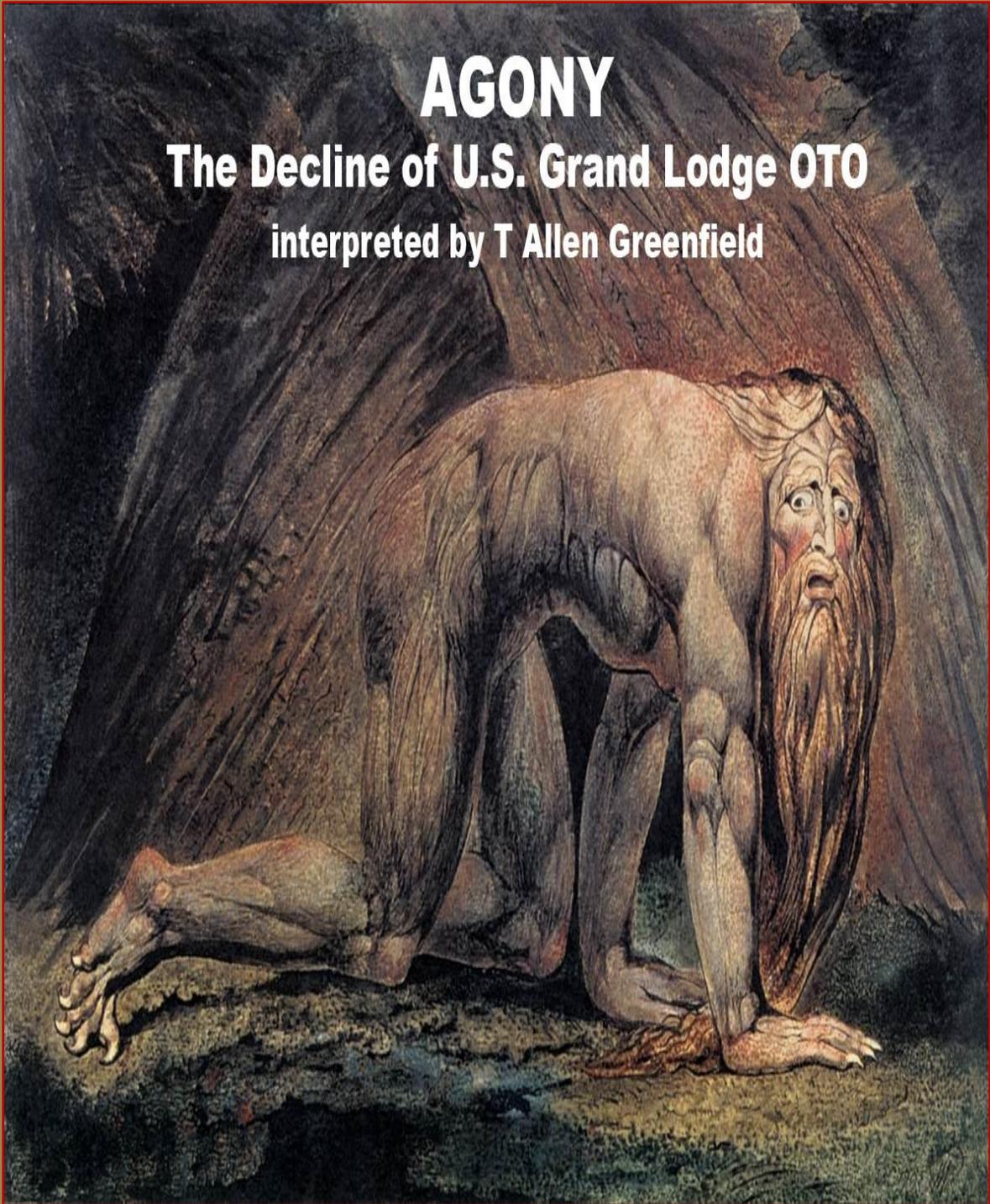


AGONY

The Decline of U.S. Grand Lodge OTO

interpreted by T Allen Greenfield



THE FAILURE OF THE OTO AFTER THE DEATH OF GRADY McMURTRY AND THE APPOINTMENT OF WILLIAM G.K. BREEZE

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“The governing body within the consistory is therefore supposed to be selected from those who stand highest and have achieved the most as Masters...

“The Grand Master in such a body assumes the role of guide, instructor and proficient, in every lesson taught, every obligation assumed, from first to last.

“The Grand Master who usurps power or prerogative, or fails to take every opportunity for counsel and co-operation, will find honors in the end but an empty show, and himself monumented in execration as a pretender, recreant to the plainest duty and the grandest opportunity.”

J.D. Buck, 1907

Aleister Crowley, Grand Master Baphomet XI^o died in 1947, having preserved the Masonic character of the Order to the end of his life.¹ and was succeeded by Karl Germer, the Treasurer General of the Order. Germer acted more as a conservator of OTO than an active Grand Master, being a refugee from Nazi Germany resident in America. The Crowley rituals continued to be carried on by Agape Lodge in California until the early 1950s, but was minimally nurtured by Germer, who died without naming a successor.

With more foresight than is always credited, Crowley, not an outstanding organizer as such, at the end of his life had anticipated a development of this sort, and had cultivated several students who might carry on his various efforts, including the MMM OTO rituals. Among these was Grady McMurtry, initiated in the primary OTO degrees at Agape Lodge and,

¹ The author has a letter from Crowley, on OTO business, dated September 21, 1947, which he signs “Baphomet 33^o 90^o 97^o XI^o. This indicates his continued use of Masonic Dignities as OTO titles within less than three months of his death. Crowley disclaimed unjust encroachment upon the just privileges of the English Grand Lodge, but not just claims on being the academia masonica (school of freemasonry’s true wisdom) that was a founding principle of OTO.

during his military service in World War II, was brought up to the highest degrees directly by Crowley.²

Upon Major McMurtry's return to America, he was invested with certain emergency authority, which McMurtry activated some time after Germer's death, when it became obvious to him that the Order had fallen into schism and decay. As Acting Outer Head of the OTO, McMurtry restored the Order and the Crowley rituals from the remnant of Agape Lodge. In the heady occult revival of the 1960s and 70s, McMurtry grew the Order from a mere handful to some hundreds of people by the time of his death in 1985, mostly in America³. Rather than name a successor, McMurtry asked that a college of (temporary, so called "battlefield") IXth Degree members elect a new acting Frater Superior. This was done, and, as McMurtry had been designated Hymenaeus Alpha, his successor, William Breeze, a member of modest degree, took the name Hymenaeus Beta.

As Acting Frater Superior, McMurtry had acted primarily to preserve and revivify the MMM rituals, avoiding much in the way of innovation. Perhaps the most notable change of emphasis during his tenure was the great prominence placed upon the Templar-ecclesiastic aspect of OTO embodied in Crowley's Gnostic Mass. This reflects an emphasis on the Masonic-Templar tradition of an "internal church" but was seen, in the McMurtry era, largely in a much more symbolic sense, or even merely as a legal convenience that gradually became more literal under his successor.

Crowley in his late years had warned a student that his system "...is a religion just so far as a religion means an enthusiastic putting-together of a series of doctrines...Call it a new religion, then, if it so please your Gracious Majesty; **but I confess that I fail to see what you will have gained by so doing, and I feel bound to add that you might easily cause a great deal**

² Others included Bishop W.B. Crow, Gerald Gardner and Kenneth Grant.

³ McMurtry grew the Order from roughly five to 500 members, elevating a group of "temporary" Ninth Degree members, to secure continuity of the Order in the event of his own death.

of misunderstanding, and work a rather stupid kind of mischief.”
(emphasis added, but accurate)

Hymenaeus Beta is understood to have entered office under pledge to implement the program as laid out by Crowley in the **Equinox III:1**.⁴ Unavoidably, being *the first acting chief not directly schooled by Crowley*, Beta’s attempts to implement (and more than occasionally, alter) the Crowley “paper program” was controversial and appears self-serving, and various challenges to his methods, means and motivations arose. He has even changed the OTO initiation rituals in key places, blurring their ritual function, in the III, IV, PI, and KEW Degrees, to site specific examples. Some of the legal claims were settled in civil courts in the U.S. and Great Britain. By the middle 1990s, the Acting Frater Superior appointed a National Grand Master General for the United States, termed Sabazius Xth Degree.⁵ This move was generally regarded favorably, and, by the end of the Twentieth Century, the organization had grown laconically to several thousand members over time. However, **it had failed to advance more than a literal handful to formal working knowledge of the central gnosis of the Order**, and had incurred the disfavor of many detractors, both internal and external, to various of its policies.

Early in the new century, and under debatable circumstances, a National Grand Lodge for the United Kingdom was Chartered.⁶ But the overall membership since McMurtry had shown much attrition and a net growth

⁴ The “Intimation” was published when Crowley was still answerable to Reuss. An example of how Crowley “softened” the absolute authority of the OHO (Outer Head of the Order) is the contrast between the absolute authority given in the 1917 Constitution (Articles IV, V, XVII), and provisions 16 and 27 of the Intimation, published two years later, which provide means for both accountability and removal of the OHO.

⁵ However, note that the corporate rules under HB follow the Constitution of 1917 and the Intimation of 1919 very selectively, and arguably are protectionist towards HB’s own authority. For example, the Grand Tribunal is explicitly given authority over all members of the Order in the Intimation, but under HB, it is seen as an internal function of national grand lodges subject to superior review. The guilds are clearly intended to be autonomous trade-based self-organized bodies of OTO members that represent themselves to the OTO as they see fit. However, they have been more like committees under HB, and must be approved by upper management.

⁶ Book 101 indicates that a ‘district’ normalizes its rules when a thousand members in its territory exist. The USA had reached this goal at the time of the establishment of U.S. Grand Lodge. UK Grand Lodge was chartered with a small fraction of this number.

that was *statistically flat*, even for beginning initiates, and **approached zero growth** at the highest level. Undeterred, the increasingly isolated leadership seemed to be unaware that *the failure to initiate was a fundamental failure of management*, though initiation was a primary – in fact, *the* primary purpose of the Order.

ORDER OR DISORDER?

I joined OTO late, at nearly forty, well over ten years into a formal magical career, but having joined no other organized body of manifestation. This was over twenty years ago, and it was, by anyone’s account, a very different body of manifestation in 1982.

For one thing, it was effectively decentralized, almost feudal in its structure. The local body master set the tone and was likely to be the only ranking OTO member one knew, and “ranking” at that time could be a III^o “Master Magician” with a Camp Charter and a primary charter to initiate. The EGC ecclesiastical arm was a connected but distinct body of manifestation, and seemed for a time headed towards becoming more so. If you did not live in New York or San Francisco, the ambiance of the body was largely determined by the local body master. In the case of Eulis Camp, which was my affiliation, it was **very** ‘Masonic’ and mystical, intellectual and rather nakedly sexual in its tone. I liked it, but had reservations about the “top heavy” management structure, and found myself doing EGC work for years before taking initiation. I had, as mentioned, significant doubts about the “top heavy” structure of the organization, and still do. I saw it as a fraternal and spiritual body of manifestation, with an emphasis on initiatory personal growth towards the central secret gnosis.

“God would prefer to suffer the government to exist no matter how evil, rather than allow the rabble to riot, no matter how justified they are in doing so.”

Martin Luther

“They intoxicate themselves with work so they won’t see how they really are.”

Aldous Huxley

For ten years Eulis Lodge No.10 OTO, Inc. was, as far as I was concerned, the OTO, period. Raucous, bawdy, intense, experimental, irreverent, it attracted the worst and best minds in occultism. At its peak, circa 1987-1992 it was exactly what the OTO should be – the Gnostic Mass was worked (by the standards of the day) with excellence, always seeking greater excellence. The initiations were performed as written, with little regard for the folk-folly of the outside world. The social order was that of an unofficial “profess house”. The Acting Frater Superior later – much later – told me he had never chartered Eulis, or *any* profess houses, but the members were given to understand that it was such ; a residential facility for accelerated magical growth under house rules based in “Thelemic ideas”. The members were so individual that all they held in common were these rituals, and a kind of polymorphous perverse palpable sexuality that became legendary.

During the decline and fall period that followed, the then-Lodge Master began to delegate responsibilities, cancel events, and rail against the legalist and fundamentalist tendencies that he saw lurking in the foreshadows of the future. In decline, at the beginning of my Watch as Lodge Master, he once told me behind closed doors that there were, really, no rules in OTO. Then he told me something about his own work with the Lodge by way of illustration that made my jaw drop. He had initiated without authority to do so. I thought, “sour grapes” and vowed to myself to play strictly by the rules, and that on my watch no event would ever be cancelled. Eventually, the Past Master turned his back on me forever for trying to continue the *very program* he had inculcated in me. He was disillusioned, I was – illusioned.

On one occasion, we had scheduled a Mass and we ran out of luck; many people there, but not a single person qualified to be – I forget which office, but something essential. “Well!” I said to my trusty and long-suffering Tyler,

the Exorcist James Baker, “let’s put something together, a kind of communing, we’ll pass bread and wine, read verses from the Holy Books, sing songs, we’ll get through this—we don’t cancel events.” He looked at me enigmatically, but said nothing.

James often looked at me enigmatically—it was part of his job. Undeterred, we proceeded just as I had decreed, sitting in a circle below the steps in front of the altar, its candles lit for a Gnostic Mass that was not held.

Afterwards, I was pretty pleased with myself. It went well, everybody seemed happy and, in a manner of speaking, spiritually bonded. “You know what that was?” James asked, answering himself, “the first meeting of the Gnostic Protestant Church.” He seemed somewhere between amused and disdainful. I thought about what I knew about Protestant Churches, from snake handling holy rollers to high middle church TV ministries – Billy Graham on TV, stuff like that. I had been in a fundamentalist church – once, for a wedding, my then sister-in-law’s somewhere out in North Jesus Georgia. The preacher had made the couple apologize for “living in sin” (something to do with sex, I gathered; for the most part Christianity seemed to be about enjoying feeling guilty about sex stuff) before the wedding, which I thought truly bizarre and ugly. I knew the historical stuff very well, but mine has been an odd life—from the other side of the ghetto wall, if you count the gilded ghetto of Northwest Atlanta as a ghetto. Anyhow, I could quote John Wesley, Luther, Calvin, Knox, or the New Testament chapter and verse, had been to the Vatican, to Greek Orthodox monastic communities, I can sing maybe a hundred traditional black spirituals, but my knowledge was in stone and print and folklore and song, not much in practice.

However, I grasped what James had said, and I felt a bit odd. Not – guilty – not even bad, just novel. Yeah, songs and readings and bread and wine or better still grape juice. Eucharist without soul, but a certain fraternal sense. It made a certain kind of decentralist sense – even without the draw of a naked priestess. On Planet Druidia (as Mel Brooks would have it), where I came from, Druish people would find this a bit – out to lunch - but, then, this was Eulis Lodge No. 10 OTO, and I did not cancel events.

It hadn't really been the Gnostic Protestant Church, but I sometimes think the ghost of John Calvin must be smiling on the humorless crowd presently in power, and the more humorless crowd of Thelemo-Rotarians who dream of replacing them; who pile bureaucracy on bureaucracy, rule upon rule, exhort us to work, work, work. They drone on and on and on about "being serious" and the "serious people" versus the alleged sweaty throng of lazy underclassmen who Don't Really Understand the Work, though I see no especial spiritual or magical or even charismatic quality in their ranks – perhaps a bit of ambition, but not really much difference from the current crop of regulators and managerial types who top the chart. Their fantasy is the "do it yourself godhood" not unlike the "works righteousness" approach of the Book of James in the New Testament – a veritable anomalous approach to the Pauline "salvation by faith alone" that came to be Christianity.

The early Protestants were, curiously, embarrassed by The Book of James. They debated throwing it out of the canon with the apocrypha, but then the Calvinist-Puritanical element began to find its place in the world with the dreaded "work ethic" and wound up pretty much in the boat with James. You are saved by believing, but, having said so, work your ass off, bud.

How odd. The "managerial model" of the OTO is said to be in line with Crowley's vision of what the OTO was supposed to be like. Never mind AC's perception that a 'leisure class' (ill-defined) was a prerequisite to Doing the Work. They are for that, too, somehow. Kind of the Gnostic Protestant Church for real. You are a leisure class, they say to their mirrors, now work work work. Not realizing that work is not The Work, not at all. They go on endlessly about effective leaders, but they will not tell you who. Certainly not the guys doing it now, who, they inform us, have it all wrong. Maybe I say, but who has it right? I ask them.

In the authentic tradition The Work is not "work". *The Work is more about undoing than doing.* "Work is the refuge," Oscar Wilde once remarked, "of people who have nothing better to do."

I am not one of those people who goes all glazed over when someone says, “But CROWLEY SAID...” I give the purported prophet of the Aeon his due as a creative spiritual thinker, but management, personal finance or relationships are not areas I would be especially inclined to take advice from him on. Having said that, though, and lightning having once again failed to strike me dead at the blasphemy, the way I read AC, his approach to the OTO was really quite modest.

It amounted to *adapting the Reuss program for understanding the efficient utilization of the central gnosis of the order*, the thing that makes it unique, to a context one might call, for lack of a better term, “Thelemic”. A few quotations, from the period of transition from National Grand Master to OHO, and then again reiterated to students post World War II, towards the end of his life:

“Now the O.T.O. is in possession of one supreme secret. The whole of its system at the time when I became an initiate of the Sanctuary of the Gnosis (IX*) was directed toward communicating to its members, by progressively plain hints, this all-important instruction... “I therefore answered the question ‘How should a young man mend his way?’ in a series of rituals in which the candidate is instructed in the value of discretion, loyalty, independence, truthfulness, courage, self-control, indifference to circumstance, impartiality, skepticism, and other virtues, and at the same time assist him to discover for himself the nature of this secret, the proper object of its employment and the best means for insuring success in its use...” (from “The Confessions of Aleister Crowley” Chapter on “Freemasonry”)

“The O.T.O. is a training of the Masonic type; there is no ‘astral’ work in it at all, nor any Yoga. There is a certain amount of Qabalah, and that of great doctrinal value. But the really vital matter is the gradual progress towards the disclosure of the Ninth Degree. To use that secret to advantage involves mastery both of Yoga and of Magick; but neither is taught in the Order. Now it comes to be mentioned, this is really very strange. However, I didn’t invent the system; I must suppose that those who did knew what they were about.

“To me it is (a) convenient in various practical ways, (b) a machine for carrying out the orders of the Secret Chiefs of A.:A.: (c) by virtue of the Secret a magical weapon of incalculable power...”

(“Magick Without Tears”) (Quotations copyright (c) Ordo Templi Orientis. All rights reserved.)

That is *much*, but that is *all*. Essentially, programmatically and thematically, along with The Gnostic Mass written as a celebratory ritual for public and private use in the same vein, this is the entirety of the OTO program as Crowley saw it. It is not the A.:A.: program, as Crowley is at some pain to

say repeatedly. Elsewhere he offers us his conception of how to manage this rather direct and straightforward agenda, and that can certainly be profitably discussed. Too much? Too little? Just right? Totally counterproductive? These are legitimate questions. But for either the bureaucracy currently attempting to follow the managerial features and for the critics who would *change* leadership, but *emphasize* leadership, any discussion must be referred, clearly, to the straightforward and not overly ambitious programmatic and thematic agenda outlined (I believe fairly) above. For me, this suggests that the austere Calvinistic work agenda, excessive centralization and vesting too much authority in too few hardly serves these purposes, but rather impedes it.

Of course, one could say that the Crowley program is not sufficient, or appropriate. It was, in his lifetime, largely a “paper entity”. The “absolute autocrat” concept is probably best left with the “Old Europe” it grew out of. “Autocrat” – in any case – does not necessarily mean “tyrant”.

“**au-to-crat** (ô ``t...kr²t'') *n.* A person with unlimited power or authority: *a corporate autocrat.*”

“**ty-rant** (t° ``r...nt) *n.* A ruler who exercises power in a harsh, cruel manner. An oppressive, harsh, arbitrary person.

A rotational management with a light touch seems more in keeping with a program of personal and social development. The present point is that neither the present leadership nor the “Thelemist” opposition wants to depart from the Crowley program. The question then becomes, for them, and to them, how can a maximum management regime serve what is clearly a minimalist agenda? The structure of the organization effectively prevents any minimalist approach. It therefore is a failure, and the numbers reflect this.

From the appointment of the present Acting Outer Head, who admits of no magical link to the inner order that I am aware of, if the evident purpose of the system is to initiate IXth Degree members, then the administration of the program is a total failure. The percentage of the total membership (which appears to have little real sustained growth, though a “revolving

door” in the primary degrees, has kept the gross number of members, mostly at the low end of the initiatory cycle, fairly stable, and has, of course, enriched the treasury) that has gone through the complete cycle of initiations is a tiny fraction of 1%, and, in reality, though the exact number is an (embarrassing) secret, in single digits over the last twenty years, since Hymenaeus Beta came to head the organization. **In 1994, the OTO initiate membership was listed as 2213, with .6% IX Degrees (including about a dozen McMurry appointees over twenty years ago; in 2005, with 3056 initiate members listed worldwide, only .7% were IX Degree members, a net increase of .1%--essentially none. ¹Its sheer lack of productivity raises serious questions as to whether such management should stay or step down.** But, more than this, it calls for an examination of the 19th Century structure which vests absolute authority over the organization in one person for life.

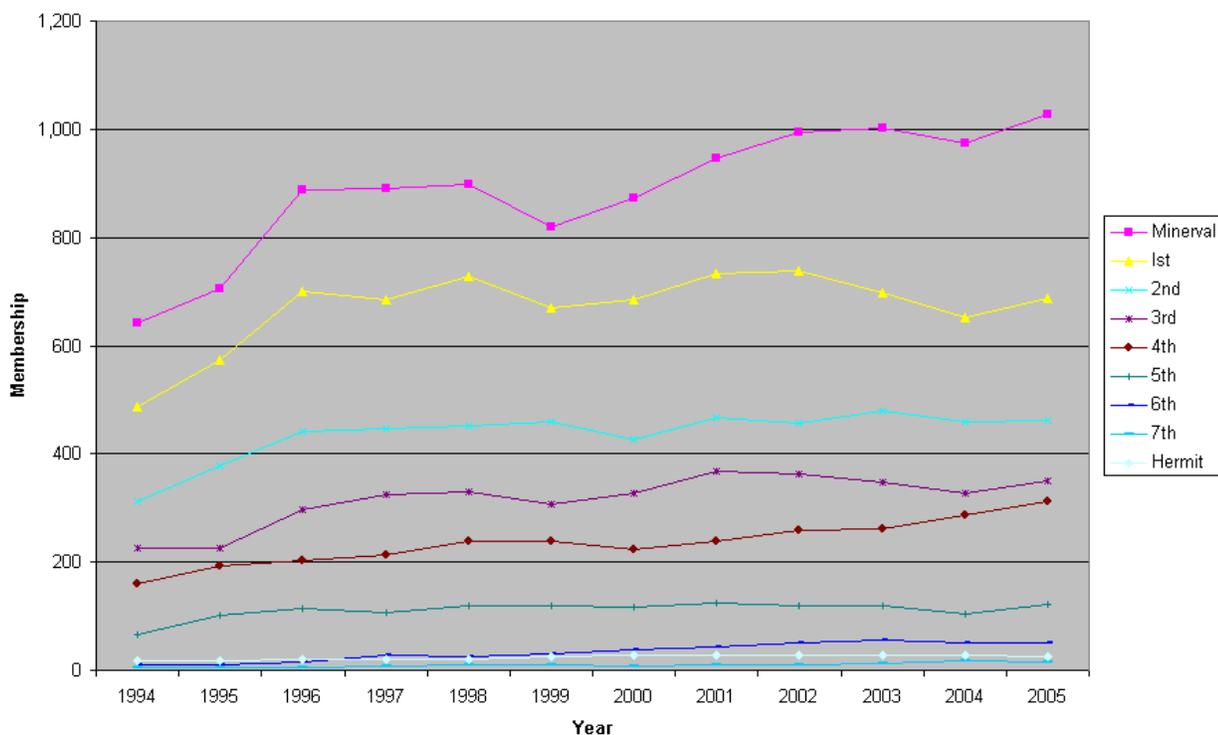
To me the Order could be in theory this, and **only** this: (A) The Initiation Rituals – and whatever the individual derives from these. (B) The Gnostic Mass and related life-passage rituals, and (C) whatever minimum structure – administrative, financial and regulatory – necessary to carry out (A) and (B) with joy and beauty, with liberal room for a variety of artistic interpretations. That is it. I also have said I accept the implicit in all this of a social structure – optional and informal, that acts as a kind of support group in a growth-oriented initiatory system. However, that is informal, and should be viewed as such. *The obvious mission is to find, initiate and promote on merit as many IX Degree members as possible. Failure to find virtually any is an indication of failure.* Success is measured in terms of how many successful qualified individuals are so advanced. That this cannot happen has become increasingly obvious. The flaw is in the management, but also in the system. It is a fatal flaw.

This failure began with the election of a relatively uninitiated archivist as the absolute autocrat for life, incorporation (hence complex obligations to the existing social paradigm) and excessive litigiousness, leading to self-consciousness and undue fear about answerability to the profane state and to lawsuit...a kind of projection which apparently caused willful bowdlerization of the initiation rituals, a sycophantic power structure built on fear to dissent

and rewards for capricious favorites of the prevailing management, and, inevitably, a decline in the numinosity and authenticity of the essential Work of the Order. By the Twenty First Century, it had become, essentially, a shell of its former self.

What follows is some documentation of that abject failure.

Total OTO Membership by Degree 1994-2004



Note that growth in the First Triad, especially the “revolving door” of Minerval and Ist Degree, is relatively high. It flattens at IIIrd Degree, and continues to flatten into the Second Triad. The Third and Highest Triad, the goal of the program according to Crowley, is virtually nonexistent. Since membership in the OTO proper is confined to the VIIth through IXth Degrees, the actual membership of OTO is an astonishing small number of persons, even when one includes persons who were elevated to this level before Hymenaeus Beta.

How Could This Happen?

“There is, however, an absolute prohibition to accept money, or other material reward, directly or indirectly, in respect to any service connected with the Order, for personal profit or advantage. The penalty is immediate expulsion, with no possibility of reinstatement on any terms soever.”

Aleister Crowley “One Star in Sight”⁷

How could this be? A cascade of events and decisions gives some insight. All authoritarian structures, which ostensibly are built upon progress based on merit, *are dependent upon the continued good faith of its upper management.* Otherwise, a “culture of fear” tends to develop, and such advancement as there may be tends to consist, not of the most able, but of sycophants and personal favorites. Independent surveys in 2005 would seem to indicate that a “culture of fear” indeed exists within the present OTO membership. In the late McMurtry period, incorporation was deemed a legal advantage to the organization. However, OTO and the EGC were separately incorporated, and local lodges were encouraged to incorporate in their own states. Thus, some localism was maintained, though legal “rights” also led to a sense of “legal obligations”. Hence, parts of the OTO initiatory fundamentals were modified to conform to local law, compromising the integrity of the initiations as written. This change was selective—for example, a feature of the Third and Perfect Initiate Degrees was forbidden on grounds of “illegality” – yet an obligation of the Second Degree, which would almost certainly involve a violation of law, perhaps multiple violations, was left in the program. The Fourth and Perfect Initiate Degrees were modified to humor Scottish Rite Freemasonry, apparently, and on the personal word of the Acting Frater Superior to myself.

After McMurtry’s passing a new absolute autocrat was elected lawfully, but not from the ranks of senior initiates, and he, in turn, promptly “regularized”

⁷ “While “One Star in Sight” refers to the work of the allied A.:A.: rather than OTO, as HB claims membership in both, and the section in question refers to the general work of the aspirant, and, it has been asserted, there is a certain equivalency between A.:A.: Grades and OTO Degrees, it would seem to the present writer something of a conflict of interest to receive personal financial support from the OTO. At minimum, it is an ethical question of some moment, as well as a major financial drain on the limited resources of OTO.

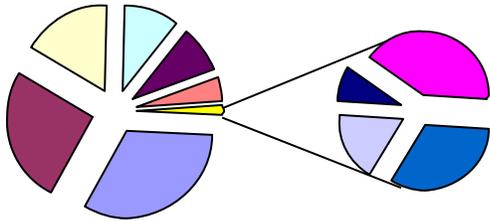
certain decisions sound and expedient in the McMurtry era, but highly debatable thereafter. A successful lawsuit resolved in OTO's favor on the day McMurtry passed on after a lengthy illness became precedent for a long series of lawsuits, leading to a litigious reputation and atmosphere for the organization. In turn, an apparent fear by the senior management, based on no actual events, led to further evisceration of the initiations and common fellowship practices in the local bodies. The litigiousness alienated some; the toned-down initiations alienated others. Further, the corporate documents increasingly eclipsed the basic documents of the Order in managing its affairs, undermining, among other things, what little check there was on the absolute authority of the Frater Superior. While organizational growth was limited, especially outside the heady social liberty of the United States (which is a bit ironic), financial demands upon the membership were increased, as were pressures upon local bodies to produce hefty space rentals, insurance programs, etc. This in an organization with, at most, a couple of thousand members, declining.

At the same time, income began to be expended upon the Frater Superior's personal life and residence, in a previously all-volunteer body. The traditional publication linking the entire Order, *The Magical Link*, began to appear so infrequently and erratically that it was referred to, with some humor, as "the missing link". The move to a U.S. Grand Lodge was in keeping with the original program, but the rules were changed in such a way as to assure that the newly appointed U.S. Grand Master did not become a check upon the autocrat's authority. At the same time, the symbolic title of the National Grand Master, "Supreme and Most Holy King" mutated from its obvious Masonic symbolism to a quite literal understanding by many members, with cries of "Hail to the King" bursting out at the program of national conventions initiated in U.S. Grand Lodge. Neither the U.S. Grand Master⁸ nor the Acting "Frater Superior" discouraged this perception in any discernable way. The EGC corporation and titles were absorbed into the OTO degree system, and OTO increasingly viewed itself as a religious

⁸ It is, however, noteworthy that the U.S. Grand Master General, Sabazius, has expressed reservations about appointments to office *ad vitam*, that is, for life, and the literal casual use of the term "king".

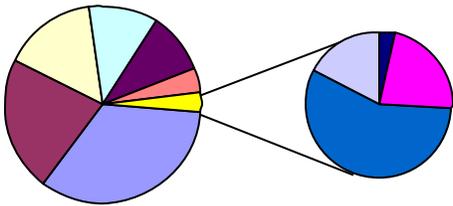
monarchy, rather than a fraternity. A myth was promulgated that Crowley himself had abandoned the Masonic character of the OTO, though, up to and including his very last letters, he signed his name with full Masonic titles. Regular Masonic degrees were communicated within the OTO degree structure until abolished without fanfare by Hymenaeus Beta and his U.S. Grand Master in very recent years; older members have them, younger members will never get them. In the meantime, the organization's reputation continued to bring in new recruits, based largely on the increasingly archaic basic documents of the Order. Nevertheless, the number of early exits was substantial, making growth in general very anemic at best, and, as referred to, an utter failure to initiate to the Sovereign Sanctuary of the Gnosis, the Ninth Degree. The Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Degree membership somewhat increased when placed under the direction of U.S. Grand Lodge and its (relatively) more liberal National Grand Master, but, pointedly, the Eighth and Ninth Degrees remained under the exclusive ultimate control of Hymenaeus Beta, who elevated virtually no persons to Ninth Degree. Only two persons to our knowledge, a married couple, were elevated in the first decade of his management, and the male half of said couple became his U.S. Grand Master. I have been told by a former Ninth Degree member that he also was elevated at the time of Hymenaeus Beta's installation, but this person had been his chief rival for the office, and these moves appear to be as political as anything else is. Another later appointment was apparently entirely honorary and irregular, and, beyond this, for twenty years out of a membership that had reached several thousand worldwide, Beta had elevated, regularly or irregularly, a negligible number, thus failing the very system he said he planned to implement.

1994 OTO DEGREE - .6% NINTH DEGREES



- Minerval
- 1st degree
- 2nd degree
- 3rd degree
- 4th degree
- 5th degree
- 6th degree
- 7th degree
- 8th degree
- 9th degree

2004 OTO DEGREE - .7% NINTH DEGREES



- Minerval
- 1st degree
- 2nd degree
- 3rd degree
- 4th degree
- 5th degree
- 6th degree
- 7th degree
- 8th degree
- 9th degree

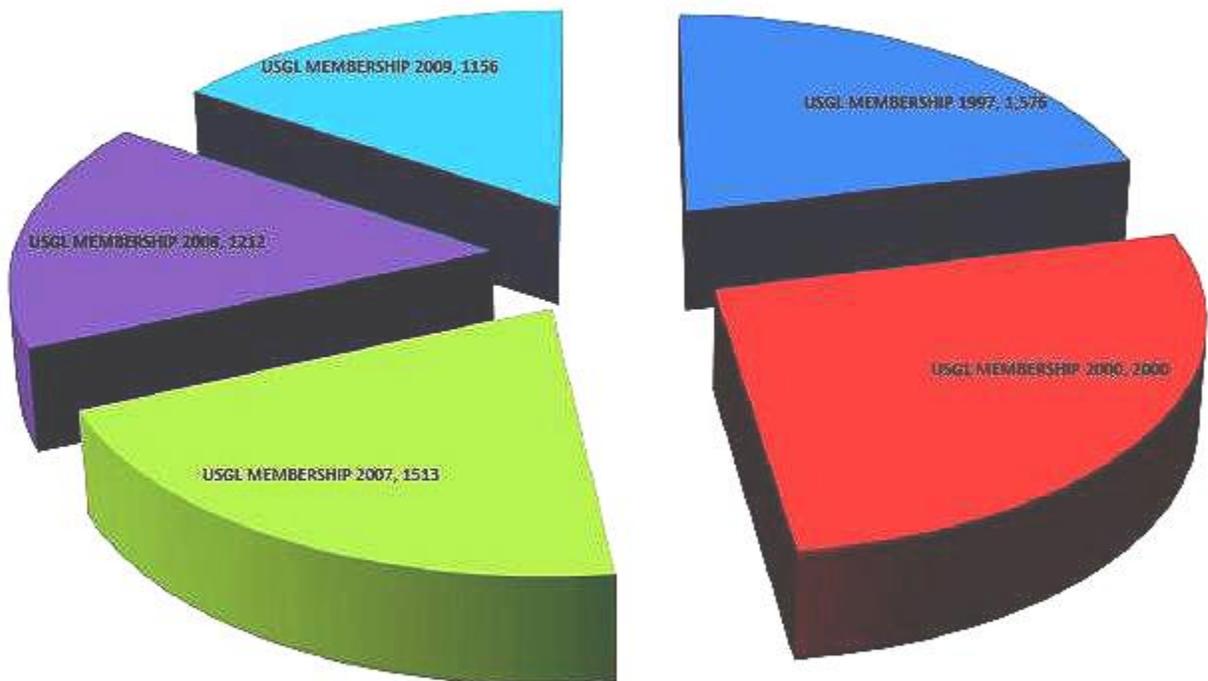
Note - If we take Crowley at his word, “the really vital matter is the gradual progress towards the disclosure of the Ninth Degree...” then, subtracting the somewhat irregular initiation of so-called ‘battlefield IXths’ remaining from McMurtry’s time (about a dozen), the present management has succeeded by its practices, either of judgment, politics, initiatory methodology or some combination of these, in fulfilling its central purpose in *almost no cases* at all, between the irregular appointment of Hymenaeus Beta as Acting OHO on September 21, 1985, and the present time as this is being written in 2005, twenty years later.

The decline is dramatically illustrated here.

USGL MEMBERSHIP 1997 1576
USGL MEMBERSHIP 2000 2221
USGL MEMBERSHIP 2007 1513
USGL MEMBERSHIP 2008 1212
USGL MEMBERSHIP 2009 1156

DECLINE OF U.S. GRAND LODGE SINCE INCEPTION 1997-2010

■ USGL MEMBERSHIP 1997 ■ USGL MEMBERSHIP 2000 ■ USGL MEMBERSHIP 2007 ■ USGL MEMBERSHIP 2008 ■ USGL MEMBERSHIP 2009



[NOTE - According to U.S. Grand Lodge O.T.O., Inc.'s own account, "In early 1996, a new corporation was founded to carry on the work of the U.S. Grand Lodge of O.T.O., while the existing corporation reorganized itself as the International Headquarters of O.T.O. On March 30, 1996, Sabazius X" was appointed as National Grand Master General for the U.S. Grand Lodge." The demograph year closes out in February of the year following. The figures for 1997 and 2000 (near the peak of membership, for the record) are from Bill Heidrick's reliable Thelema Lodge Calendar. The figures for 2007, 2008 and 2009 (through February 2010) come from the USGL official report. We are not adjusting for changes in membership policies, as said policies are, in part, responsible for the faltering membership.]

[NOTE - According to U.S. Grand Lodge O.T.O., Inc.'s own account, "In early 1996, a new corporation was founded to carry on the work of the U.S. Grand Lodge of O.T.O., while the existing corporation reorganized itself as the International Headquarters of O.T.O. On March 30,

1996, Sabazius X° was appointed as National Grand Master General for the U.S. Grand Lodge." The demograph year closes out in February of the year following. The figures for 1997 and 2000 (near the peak of membership, for the record) are from Bill Heidrick's reliable Thelema Lodge Calendar. The figures for 2007, 2008 and 2009 (through February 2010) come from the USGL official report. We are not adjusting for changes in membership policies, as said policies are, in part, responsible for the faltering membership.]

A couple of years back, the U.S. Grand Master actually had to "explain" the drop – "This past fiscal year, we experienced a drop in overall active membership of about 300 members, or about 20% of our total membership (including Full Members and Minervals). This is almost entirely the result of an artifact caused by a one-time change in policy we implemented last year: namely, a tightening up of the inactivation grace period afforded to members who are not dues-current. The result of this policy change was the inactivation of a large number of members who had not paid their dues in some time, effectively compressing several years of inactivations into a single year. So this reduction in the membership figures should really be seen as reflecting a more accurate count of active membership, rather than an actual decline in membership."

This simply will not do. The USGL membership at the end of the first decade of the 21st Century was actually below the membership in the USA at the time U.S. Grand Lodge was established, and "Sabazius" became its chief for life.

AN ALTERNATIVE NOT A RIVAL - A SHORT TAKE ON CONGREGATIONAL ILLUMINIST HISTORY: WHY NO ONE IS THE FOUNDER AND EVERYONE IS

The Stars are an Infinite multitude ...

While every being, may feel separate
at times desperate , and alone

the light remains one

we may fool ourselves ,
believing loved ones are dead, are lost or gone .

we may think we can cheat another, or chose not to believe in Love
suffering in our separateness

yet the light remains one !

we may fight over the territory of mind
Spirit, Dogma 'Systems' or Belief

we shall deceive ourselves endlessly

for the stars are an infinite Multitude

... yet their light remains One !

- (kibrick)

(Nov 21st 09 ..1-am)

I did indeed coin the *term* "congregational illuminism" but it has existed under other guises for quite some time now. The theory underlying congregational illuminist decentralism can be traced to anarcho-syndicalism, to certain Protestant Sects such as the Levelers and True Levelers in Britain at the time of the English Civil War, and denominations such as the Society of Friends on the one hand and the Congregationalist movement on the other. As it has

developed in the modern occult-metaphysical world, three interesting elements all went into the making of the present movement. First and foremost, the 19th Century Gnostic Revival and coinciding independent Apostolic Lineages set loose at the very time of the occult revival introduced decentralized Apostolic and Gnostic successions of egregore, which overlapped by the early 20th Century directly into the occult community, through the exchange of Masonic Dignities with Ecclesiastical Officers. Some centralist bodies took these successions to add legitimacy to their own agendas, but ad vitam egregoric transfers insured that no central authority could ever be definitive. This process continues inside congregational illuminism and elsewhere to the present time. Egregore without central authority or agenda has proven a fertile field for spiritual development.

The development of the modern OTO, beginning with Grady McMurtry and the establishment of Thelema Lodge out of Agape Lodge in California "spun off" a good many experiments inside the Caliphate OTO in Northern California, including "heretical gnostic masses". The increasing centralization of cOTO spun off two notable tendencies operating outside cOTO but still under the influence of Aleister Crowley's ideas, notably the Ecclesia Gnostica Universalis (EGnU). Ecclesia Gnostica Universalis (EGnU) was founded by a College of Bishops on the Fourth of July in the Year 2000 C.E. It has drawn together in a very non-hierarchical manner both Apostolic, Gnostic and both Apostolic Gnostic and Thelemic persons interested in a non-authoritarian approach to the magical-ecclesiastic egregore. A brief history is given on the EGnU site at

http://www.egnu.org/wiki/On_the_Origins_of_the_Gnostic_Mass

The EGnU has continued to develop as an ever-broadening coalition of those who choose to celebrate the mysteries as spirituality or religion, but of diverse interests from Thelemic Gnostic, Voudon Gnostic and Eastern Tantric sources. Congregational Illuminists in the USA and the Balkans are wrestling with a Gnostic ceremonial consistent with current sensibilities and the principle of Scientific Illuminism.

While having nominal "leadership" to the present day, the Neo-Thelemic Ordo QBLH founded in 1960 by the late W.W. Webb and others always had a loose-knit structure, and, after Bill Webb's death, administrative titles became almost totally symbolic and served as a direct precursor of Congregational Illuminism facilitated by Soror Tala and the late brilliant computer scientist T. Coutu.

Another more specifically Thelemic Gnostic non-authoritarian tendency is a direct antecedent of congregational illuminism per se.

The closest thing to a "founder" of this movement is the famous magician and illuminist Mort Shapiro who continues to Work the Liber XV Mass without cOTO control under the name "Congregational Thelema". Brother Shapiro ("baal_kriah") has indicated his strong affinity for congregational illuminism. I was a resident member of this group's Lodge Babalon for quite some time. It was here that Docteur Bertiaux's points chauds Voudon Gnosis Work was introduced, along with original ritual by Frater Achad and Enochian Workings. While in a state of transit out of centralized bodies of manifestation, I was invited to join EGnU's College of Bishops, a very diverse body with a minimum of structural authority and a maximum of egregoric association. This proved a decisive influence upon me personally as to the limits of any kind of "authority" in the presentation and transfer of the egregore of the authentic tradition. I looked at Brother Shapiro's term "Congregational Thelema" and, mindful of the decentralist structure of the Congregationalist Churches, and of the diverse community of occultists that think that freedom is a more conducive atmosphere for spiritual development and illumination, modified Brother Shapiro's term to acknowledge those not self-defined as Thelemic.

As Wikipedia notes "Congregational churches are Protestant Christian churches practicing Congregationalist church governance, in which each congregation independently and autonomously runs its own affairs.

"Many Congregational churches claim their descent from the original Congregational churches, a family of Protestant denominations formed on a theory of union published by the theologian Robert Browne in 1592. They arose from the Nonconformist religious movement in England during the Puritan reformation of the Church of England. In Great Britain, the early congregationalists were called separatists or independents to distinguish themselves from the similarly Calvinistic Presbyterians. Some congregationalists there still call themselves 'Independents'...Without higher courts to ensure doctrinal uniformity among the congregations, Congregationalists have been more diverse than other Reformed churches. Despite the efforts of Calvinists to maintain the dominance of their system, some Congregational churches, especially in the older settlements of New England, gradually developed leanings toward Arminianism, Unitarianism, Deism, and transcendentalism."

With these ideas and the idea that Scientific Illuminism can be applied without distinction to a wide diversity of approaches, I

coined the term "congregational illuminist" anchored to the influences of Congregational Thelema, the democracy of Freemasonry as practiced in the USA, the decentralism of the egregore in the Gnostic community and the independent lines of Apostolic Succession, the ideas of the EGnU and building from the egregoric transfer granted me by Tau Michael Bertiaux through the Ecclesia Gnostica Spiritualis (Apostolic and Gnostic egregoric succession) and the Lodge of the Sons and Daughters of Aaron chartered by Bertiaux into a kind of occult and non-authoritarian version of Frank Herbert's concept of 'the Golden Path' of his Dune novels. As Wikipedia describes it, "The Golden Path is a term in Frank Herbert's fictional Dune universe for Leto Atrides II's strategy to prevent humanity's destruction..."

As applied here, it means to create many independent and diverse "power zones" (Lodges, Temples, Nodes Individuals) fully empowered to "Work the egregore" as they see fit, ad vitam and without the possibility of revocation. Free communion is just that - mutual sharing and support on a voluntary basis with others Working the Authentic Tradition each according to their own perceptions. Once set in motion, this "golden path" is self-perpetuating and self-guiding, and has been reduced to the common denominators given on the Congregational Illuminist Facebook "Causes" site:

1. Spiritual growth is incompatible with authoritarian structure.
2. Scientific Illuminism requires a non-dogmatic, experimental approach.
3. A free society linked in free communion should be actualized in this New Aeon.
4. We facilitate, we do not lead. We do the Work, we do not extract oaths or dues, or require dogmatic beliefs.

Congregational Illuminism as such is not a religion, and there are adhering Christians, Christian Gnostics, Thelemic Gnostics, Neopagans, Jews, Hindu and Muslim Congregational Illuminists, holding in common the above principles and a free communion of mutual support.

While I created a new term, I neither consider myself a founder nor more a mover and shaker in this movement than anyone else who cares to be an active participant. I am a link in a chain, no more, no less, and well pleased to be such.

For another view of this from Brother John Crow, I quote the following and my response, originally posted here:

<http://www.thelema.com/archives/514>

Reevaluating Congregational Illuminism

I was reminded of an email I sent last May. I was asked what I thought of Congregational Illuminism. My reply, given in full below, did not paint a rosy picture for the movement. In fact, in rereading the email, it occurred to me I was actually asking the wrong questions about Congregational Illuminism and viewing it from an erroneous position. It is not that I have not changed my position on anything I say in the email, I just realized I was being too narrow in examining Congregational Illuminism. Part of the problem was mine, my expectations and biases, and part was the movements, the way it markets itself within the Thelemic paradigm. Over the last month, based on my reading for classes, I have been able to come to an appreciation for Congregational Illuminism and what it does for those involved.

For the remainder of the essay, I will be directly or indirectly referring to both Congregational Illuminism and Thelema as religious movements. I understand that this label, religious movement, is contentious and debatable. Its use does not mean I am saying that these movements are religions. That depends greatly on how religion is defined at any given time. I use the label for convenience and to place the movements within categorical structures necessary for comparison. Whether Thelema or Congregational Illuminism are religions must ultimately be decided by each individual based on their approach and viewpoint.

In the email from May I stated, "As for Congregational Illuminism, I am not convinced that it is a viable Thelemic system." I think this is true, but I have come to realize that despite claims that the movement came from Crowley's idea of Scientific Illuminism,

Congregational Illuminism has little to do with Crowley's ideas. This is where I think part of the problem comes from in my reply below. I ask for the 'scientific results' and complain there are none. I ask for these because someone using Crowley's model would have something to show for their work, even if it is just a journal of detailed information, observations, and reflections. The Congregational Illuminists lack these. Yet, on further reflection, this lack is because the participants are not interested in 'scientific' results, instead they have other motivations.

One of the aspects of Congregational Illuminism I fail to mention in the email response is the connection with modern Gnostic

Christianity and entry into the lineage of apostolic consecration. This is actually one of the most important parts of the movement and I failed to take this process of sacred empowerment into account. Any robust discussion of Congregational Illuminism must incorporate this aspect because it is central to the underlying processes manifesting in Congregational Illuminism. It is also the means by which many within Congregational Illumination see it as being legitimate, both for the groups and for the individual's spirituality.

In the email I dismissed Congregational Illuminism as being "therapeutic," I expected it to be something else. Therapeutic, in itself, is not a problem and constitutes a very important part of many religions. Many religions attempt to educate, and assist its members to rise in class and well being. These are valid ends. All this said these do contrast with Thelema which is trying to accomplish something else. So instead of dismissing Congregational Illuminism's therapeutic aspects, we should just recognize that they are not coming from Thelema.

Similarly, the political dimension of Congregational Illuminism is different than Thelema. In further discussions with Allen Greenfield, he states that anarcho-syndicism informed much of his thinking about the organizational structure of Congregational Illuminism. While this differs with my statement that it is informed by democratic ideas, it reinforces my statement that it is informed by egalitarianism, an aspect that is not foundational in Thelema and actually in conflict.

So all this leads one to ask, what does the religious movement of Congregational Illuminism do for its participants? To answer this we have to recognize that Congregational Illuminism is not so much an intellectual movement, but an affective one. It seeks to enhance, support and empower its members. As such, it has parallels in many other religions such as Primitive Baptism and Holiness Pentecostalism. While the theological underpinnings of each are different, what the participants seek is not. Things such as community, mutual support and elevation, sharing of resources, amelioration of conflict, and deep personal spiritual fulfillment and satisfaction become the main motivations for participation. In the email I call this "busy-work." That is my mistake. I made the error of confusing Thelema with Congregational Illuminism and they are very different things. While Congregational Illuminism's pedigree may have Thelemic connections, it has traveled far from Thelema, far enough for it to be considered an independent movement, in my opinion. As such, I think my email from May was slightly

incorrect. I was thinking Congregational Illuminism was attempting to be “Thelemic.” I realize it is not. With that understanding, the movement makes much more sense.

With this introduction complete, here is my email from May. Please note that initial comments about the O.T.O. have been removed because they are irrelevant to the topic at hand and would distract from this post.

On Fri, May 1, 2009 at 11:07 AM, John L. Crow wrote:

Dear [Name Removed],

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

Thank you for your email and your well wishes.

[Snip.]

As for Congregational Illuminism, I am not convinced that it is a viable Thelemic system. The problem stems from the underlying principles espoused in it. Congregationalism is not very compatible with Thelema. Its metaphysics is Judeo-Christian, not Thelemic. Even group work is difficult with Thelema and Crowley saw this. Note this paragraph from MWT:

“I am arranging to send you the official papers connected with the O.T.O., but the idea that you should meet other members first is quite impossible. Even after affiliation, you would not meet anyone unless it were necessary for you to work in cooperation with them. I am afraid you have still got the idea that the Great Work is a tea-party. Contact with other students only means that you criticize their hats, and then their morals; and I am not going to encourage this. Your work is not anybody else’s; and undirected chatter is the worst poisonous element in human society.”

While this statement is about the OTO, I think it is completely applicable to all “Thelemic Groups.” I am becoming more and more convinced that group work becomes a distraction from personal work. Being part of the group becomes more important than being engaged in your own development. It is indeed important to have groups and group work, but they must be subordinate to personal work. I don’t see this happening with Congregational Illuminism. In fact what I see is more of the mentality that numbers are more important than the quality of the people being brought into the fold. This is the same mentality that OTO has and to both it is detrimental. This is not a new criticism from me, Greenfield and I have gone back and forth about this repeatedly and simply ending up agreeing to disagree.

Another problem I see manifesting with Congregational Illuminism is that, as Crowley notes, about 90% of Thelema is self-discipline. Congregational Illuminism does not promote self-discipline, it actually works against it. The kinds of people I have noticed being attracted to Congregational Illuminism are the ones who both are unable to be self-disciplined and secondly, cannot take direct criticism that would work towards being self-disciplined. The anti-hierarchical model attacks the notion that there are people who actually know more than us and can, with that knowledge, critique us and give them feedback on what we are doing wrong. Instead

Congregational Illuminism devolves into a mutual support society where there is an implicit expectation that if one does not expose the dysfunction of one person, then that person will not expose the dysfunction of the other. The group begins to be a forum where one can behave in any way, no matter how badly, and judgment is forbidden. This is ridiculous. This is one of the reasons neo-paganism remains so shallow and schismatic. We must keep in mind the elemental weapon of the sword. Discernment and judgment is vital to self-discipline and Congregational Illuminism works against this.

Scientific Illuminism requires the highest level of scrutiny, doubt and skepticism. I see little of this in the groups. I have asked Allen repeatedly about what kind of results they have been achieved? His answers sound closer to the results one expects from mental health therapy than from magical ceremonial work. While I think the fact that many people of the groups have gotten their acts together is a positive thing, it is hardly something to boast about.

It reminds me of the OTO leader who bragged that his local body business meetings started on time for six months. Business meetings are supposed to start on time. You don't get an award for doing the minimum. Similarly, if members of the groups make claims that they now can hold down a job, keep a roof over their heads, and maintain a stable relationship, these are good things, but they are the things expected of the average person. Hundreds of millions of people do this every day without the need of Congregational Illuminism. If Congregational Illuminism really wants to claim success it is going to have to achieve more than educating the working-class members to be lower middle-class.

In the end, I unfortunately see many of the defects of the OTO in Congregational Illuminism. Greenfield created Congregational Illuminism in response to the cronyism of the OTO leadership. While his criticism of the leadership was completely valid, his solution

is problematic. The problem is not hierarchy, the problem is the people in those roles and the lack of standards associated with admission. This has been an ongoing disagreement between Allen and me. He is for the “big tent” mentality, and my assessment is that the big tent brings in leeches and dregs that hurt the others. The problem that Allen continues to avoid is that with the big tent mentality, by its own values, eventually puts leeches into the leadership position and this becomes disastrous. He wants to criticize the quality of people in the leadership role but not the way they got there. This does not work. The best defense is to not let in the dregs. Rehabilitating them is most often impossible and really a waste of time and effort. Both the OTO and Congregational Illuminism suffer from this rehabilitating desire. This means that there must be some discernment and judgment of people. The “democratic” notion opposes this critical judgment of people.

Similarly, the democratic notion does not contribute to enlightenment; you cannot vote your way to gnosis nor does hanging around with friends do it either.

In the end the modern OTO and Congregational Illuminism both suffer from not recognizing the Thelema is generally contrary to equality. This is a problem in the OTO; they don’t judge people and this is a bigger issue in Congregational Illuminism. Neither creates standards, holds people accountable, nor produces significant material demonstrating occult advancement. Until these issues are addressed neither organizational scheme will go far with Thelema.

Creating charters and website, consecrating people into positions is nice, but it is also busywork and not the real personal work that leads one to the transcendent. You mention the HGA. Yes, that is important, but before you ever get to K&C, you have to do a lot of personal work that I don’t see encouraged in Congregational Illuminism, so appealing to the HGA and K&C gets you nowhere. I think both the modern version of the OTO and Congregational Illuminism have moved very, very far away from Thelema. I am sure this is not the answer you were looking for but it is how I see it nonetheless.

009-10-31 23:09:01

[The following are comments emailed to me by Allen Greenfield. He has given permission to have these posted in reply to the blog post.]

I think the original letter is pretty off the mark, the new analysis is somewhat true of me, but not necessarily true of the very diverse people now involved, and this has always been my hope....moving from disgruntled “ex-OTO” or present OTO -types to people with no occult baggage at all, but a desire to experience and learn from experience.

I don't think Gnosis can be quantified per se. The best attempts are by William James, Dr. Bucke, and perhaps the Leon Festinger and Carl Jung schools of psychology. They describe but it remains an elusive experiential numinosity; it may have to be. Some objective data on brain states during such experiences show interesting brain changes that are objective, but the meaning lies beyond that.

re: In general, coming from where you do, you seem to be grasping for an AA type approach in preference to an OTO type approach to Thelema.

You make two major errors, IMO:

(1) Being yourself hierarchical, and possibly because for most of our personal relationship we have been together in a hierarchical context, you incorrectly identify me as the “founder” of congregational illuminism and, in some sense, the leader. I am neither. I do cop to the term, but it is a variation – more accurate, I think for both thee and me, of “Congregational Thelema” which has been a growing and now linked tendency, that emerged out of alienated Thelema Lodge OTO members, and which had been active for years before you and I got canned, and by the EGnU which has similar origins and is now intertwined with c.i. People may or may not be inspired by my views, but no one I know considers me “the OHO’ or any such nonsense. I facilitate. You know me best, but others do more facilitation than I do. In a sense, I am a link – a very visible one – but a link in a chain that goes back to before you entered OTO, and I was, if not a true believer, a social climber in OTO.

(2) I think your assessment of the science part of c.i. Scientific Illuminism is premature. It is generally encouraged to document all experiences and growth or lack of it, and – at a later time when enough data from enough people for meaningful analysis to take place, to critically analyze said documentation. I'd prefer outside analysis, you are one of those I would ask, for example. You are looking for too much too soon. Even our experimental approaches are fairly new.

There has been a *lot* of documentation, but none of it is extensive enough to yield meaningful results. You seek too much too soon, and rush to judgment.

Other than that you are spot-on...not for congregational illuminism but for me. I strongly object to calling c.i. a religion. It is or isn't depending on whether you define say AMORC or F&AM Masonry as religious. There are religious people in both, but they are Muslims, Jews, Christians and others of various stripes. In Freemasonry, in theory, one is required to be SOME TYPE of ethical deist, but not *any specific* kind.

I think your definition of "Thelema" is interesting, but I am mindful of the Short Comment. I do not describe myself as a Thelemite, but I defend the right of others to so define themselves with appeals not to purported caliphs, ohos but to the writings of the Thelemic Prophet, each to themselves. He is long dead, so no one size will never likelt fit all. I assume this is intentional. For me, I could care less. But that is ME – I am not THE "anarch". There isn't one. IF there ever is one, you may justifiably call the movement a failure at its own approach.

To the extent I facilitate, I use the "Golden Path" of Leto II in "God Emperor of Dune" setting so many independent lines in motion that they can never again be pulled under the jackboot of an organizational hierarchy.

As for discipline, I think you are going by a very small sample of the people involved. I'll match, say, T Sharif Bey with anyone you have ever met in Thelema. I suppose you consider K___ a scattered person, or something, but she is a key player here (i.e. a facilitator as much as I, fully empowered) who probably will have a doctorate in English Lit before mid year next year, from a highly respected university.

Her growth is incredible. And she is in for the long haul. Others I could mention from my immediate circle of friends, Tau Thomas as a good example, I think you do not know. Do we get scattered people? Yes. But far less than OTO ever got in my tenure of 20 years. And, as you say, we seem to be after something entirely different than you are.

Good article, but think on these comments. Your analysis seems too much about me personally. You take "me" to equal congregational illuminism. That is, at this point or any point, totally inaccurate.

Agape

Allen

REACTION BY TAU DOSITHEOS, FACILITATOR, ORMUS LODGE

Hi John,

I have read both your introduction for the October entry as well as the reprint of the original email from May 2009 you quote below it. While you do attempt to correct some of your earlier misunderstandings of Congregational Illuminism (CI) in your reevaluation, you still appear to be ill-informed about various key points. Especially so if, as you say, you have not changed your position on anything you have said in the May email. CI does not "market itself within the Thelemic paradigm". There is no requirement of being a Thelemite to participate in CI. While some of the members have come from a thelemic background, many have not. At the time of this writing there are Congregational Illuminists who are Masons, Thelemites, Gnostics, Luciferians, Voudouists, etc. The assumptions you make may be due to your view that CI is either a religious system, a thelemic system or both. For clarity, it is neither. So, what is it? Congregational Illuminism is an umbrella term that indicates various principles.

You mention some of them in your reevaluation - mutual support, sharing of resources, etc. Other key aspects include a non-hierarchical, bottom up model (in contrast to a top-down, hierarchical model), peer review of our works and experiments, an inclusive stance toward the greater magickal community and full autonomy for each node (there is no Grand Lodge or Grand Master of CI). In short, CI is a free association of groups and individuals interested in illumination.

See: http://www.lightofthegnosis.org/intro_to_ci.htm

Regarding documentation of results from various experiments and workings. At the present time documentation is located in various places (blogs, email lists, papers, personal notebooks, etc). There is an ongoing project to get many of these reports into presentable form and in a public archive. It is a huge task, but it is underway. You can look for that down the road, if you are truly interested. But do know, you are underestimating the magickal workings of so many people by saying all of these workings are merely therapeutic".

Regards,
+Dositheos

Hi All,

It isn't my purpose to demonize anyone, least of all those with dissenting views. Been there, got the tee shirt. I think the tragic error of the "thelemic right" is that they mistake some bizarre combination of Ayn Rand and Friedrich Nietzsche for Aleister Crowley, and mistake Crowley's personal social views (typical of late Victorian Tories, really) for his Class A Work. The reality is I have had access to certain AC private papers that Change Everything.

The real tragedy, though, is that neither Crow nor Keith have ever been inspectors general, and have little real knowledge of the people and social milieu in which Thelema functions, let alone the broad diversity of Congregational Illuminism. Crow has traveled extensively, but as a "good-will ambassador without portfolio" - which is a very different matter. Keith 418 is a virtual recluse with almost no real-world experience. Their universe breeds conformity of a bizarre sort; ours (exceptions always noted) breeds illumination through diversity.

"All truly great thoughts are conceived by walking."
Friedrich Nietzsche

Agape

Allen

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1. Spiritual growth is incompatible with authoritarian structure.
2. Scientific Illuminism requires a non-dogmatic, experimental approach.
3. A free society linked in free communion should be actualized.
4. We facilitate, we do not lead. We do the Work, we do not extract oaths or dues, or require dogmatic beliefs.

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A Statement Regarding the Ordo Templi Orientis (2006)

At the end of February, 2006, after much consideration and ample notification of the present management of U.S. Grand Lodge, I resigned from all positions of management held by me at that time in Ordo Templi Orientis. **The following statement is an effort to explain my actions,** further elaborated upon in the Revised Second Edition (2006) of my anthology, *The Roots of Magick*, as published by [Manutius Press](#) on April 8th, 2006.



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"Civilization is crumbling under our eyes and I believe that the best chance of saving what little is worth saving, and rebuilding the Temple of the Holy Ghost on plans, and with material and workmanship, which shall be free from the errors of the former, lies with the O.T.O." *Aleister Crowley, The Confessions*

"... the really vital matter is the gradual progress towards disclosure of the Secret of the Ninth Degree... I didn't invent the system; I must suppose that those who did knew what they were about." *Aleister Crowley, Magick Without Tears*

"The O.T.O. declares that Brotherhood of All Things Created is a fact of Nature ... The principal purpose of the O.T.O. is to teach True Brotherhood, and to make it a living power in the life of humanity." *OTO Constitution, Article II, Sections 1 and 2*

For my parents and their generation, coming out of the toughest raw times of the Great Depression, the devastating attack on Pearl Harbor on the morning of December 7, 1941 by forces of the Japanese Empire was a defining event in their lives, reframing all that had gone before in their lives, and profoundly influencing all subsequent events. For those of us born into the postwar world, there have been many profound events, but perhaps none has so comparably reframed our thinking as the fateful morning of September 11, 2001 when Islamist fanatics

attacked the mainland of the United States, killing thousands of persons, most of them innocent civilians.

In my case the attack itself was not unexpected; indeed before the second plane struck the doomed World Trade Center in New York, I already pretty well knew who had likely launched the attack and why. But that fact did not lessen the impact of the event itself, and what it implied. It raised questions for me about what is, and is not, important and meaningful in my own life, and in the life's blood of civilization, which I consider to be under attack. It raised questions about the implications of *any* variety of religious fundamentalism and *any* variety of authoritarianism. OTO has always been rather blasé about its top-heavy autocratic structure, and has gradually moved from the Scientific Illuminism that informed its initiation rituals, and its celebratory ritual, The Gnostic Mass, towards a set of what I see as superstitious beliefs and tendencies. Was this something I could support in the wake of 9/11? I had had doubts before, but now it seemed a legitimate question in the context of what has been called — rightly, in my view — a clash of civilizations.

At the time I write this memorandum, the world population is 6,477,451,000. OTO membership is, perhaps, 3000. The population of the United States, where OTO has enjoyed its greatest success to date, is at least 298,444,062. (Reference: <http://www.census.gov/main/www/popclock.html>) OTO membership is, possibly, 2000 and not growing appreciably — at the highest levels, essentially not growing at all. There is an argument that goes that this is as it should be, that the membership needs to be "few and secret" that it may "rule" (ill-defined) "the many and the known" — but in a world of 300 billions, an organization not appreciably larger than, say, the Socialist Workers Party and much smaller than, say, the followers of [Rastafarianism](#) is not just small, but hardly around at all.

The world membership of OTO is only slightly larger than that of, say, The New York Society for Ethical Culture (http://www.adherents.com/Na/Na_470.html) of which it is tellingly said, "The New York Society for Ethical Culture grew steadily until it reached its present membership of 1150 persons." The notion that thirty-five years after McMurtry initiated the revivification of OTO that *this* is becoming the "chief organization for world reform" is an embarrassing absurdity. Add to this the likely fact (OTO upper management seems highly resistant to any comprehensive demographic research) that most OTO members seem to be marginalized, essentially powerless individuals, and the absurdity becomes a farrago of nonsense. In the post 9/11 world, it may even be said to be a dangerous nonsense. Islamist fanatics have had far more influence on world events than the OTO has had in all of its history since McMurtry's activation of his emergency powers. It is not competitive in either the world of ideas or the world of practical activities. It has become not so much an evil as an irrelevancy under its present upper management.

I had already served the OTO in its current incarnation for nearly twenty years at the time of the attack, first as a private individual invited by the local body master to organize the *Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica* in the Southern United States, virtually from scratch, then as a Lodge Secretary, sole consecrated resident bishop for many hundreds of miles around, then as Lodge Master, and eventually, for the past decade, as Sovereign Grand Inspector General and Most Wise Sovereign of one of a handful of Chapters of Rose Croix in the world. When the individual

elevated to the office of U.S. Grand Master General, Sabazius, chose to make his first VII° full tripartite member, I was the member he chose. I was for some time on good — even intimate — social terms with the Acting Outer Head of the Order, known as Hymenaeus Beta. I have been a guest in the homes of both of these men, as they have been guests in mine. It is thus not without hesitation that I have come to view their efforts at doing the particular Work uniquely charged to the OTO in its founding and most basic documents, as being a dismal, ill-conceived and ill-executed effort that has brought, under their leadership, the sort of near total failure that has characterized many marginalized societies with pretensions to occult knowledge. The decision to transform an eccentric and radical form of Freemasonic School in the very heart of the authentic esoteric tradition into a rather conventional religious society with an extremely narrow base and zero societal impact was a gradual one, and has had its critics at each level of its deviation from the core program of the society.

In the middle years of the 1980s I was already deeply involved for many years in metaphysical work, but equally in radically progressive political work that I saw as a necessity for the very survival of civilization. I came to a point where I perceived that I needed to devote my energies in one direction or the other. After a major confrontation between activists and the police in Chicago, and between activists and one another, I decided that *a conceptual basis for radical social change was a necessary prerequisite* to worthwhile change, and I chose to devote my life — essentially full time — to the radical program of the OTO.

At the time I was wrestling with this decision, the OTO was undergoing a substantial transformation. After having virtually evaporated in the early 1950s, the Order had undergone a profound and vigorous revival under the acting leadership of Grady Louis McMurtry. A veteran of the Normandy Invasion and the conquest of Nazi-occupied Europe, Major McMurtry served in both World War Two and the Korean Conflict, and having trained and been initiated directly under the greatest remaining luminaries of the OTO system, including Crowley, McMurtry was nevertheless a somewhat haphazard eccentric by the time he began to pull the strands of the OTO back together in the 1970s.

Notwithstanding this, he took very seriously what he considered the basic essential documents of the Order as published in *The Equinox III (1)*, grasped its essential evident purpose as a specialized engine of the Authentic Tradition and its far-reaching message, and with unconventional but largely effective organizing skills reinvented the OTO, without deviating from its core curriculum. He rightly saw both the spiritual implications of what was essentially a Masonic system, and the danger of calling what he was doing a "religion" in anything but the most technical legal definition of the concept. Had his Teacher not admonished against calling it "a new religion... I fail to see what you will have gained by so doing," Crowley told a student, "and I feel bound to add that you might easily cause a great deal of misunderstanding, and work a rather stupid kind of mischief." Crowley had written the Gnostic Mass with the idea of building a spiritual structure without recourse to superstition and blind faith-based beliefs as the chief celebratory ritual of the Order.

In his own fashion, and well aware of his own limitations, including his own advancing years, McMurtry attempted to preserve the core Mystery of OTO, the initiations, the advantages of civil law protections, and the division of the "spiritual" and "fraternal" functions of the Work, without

introduction of any *fundamental* changes in the system he inherited which were not dictated by the exigencies of "war-time" survival conditions. Under his leadership, a tiny knot of seven or so became about seven hundred in perhaps fifteen years, at the time of his death, with studies under way to more fully explore and implement the ideas expressed in the basic documents. His successor was drawn up from the ranks of the intelligent younger members, committed to sticking to and clarifying the essential program, but his successor was a compromise candidate picked by an irregular college, and it was just not to be.

The principal mistakes that I cite below are not exhaustive. I have attempted to avoid failures on a personal level by persons in upper management, though such mistakes have, in my opinion, been at times exceptionally glaring and telling.

1. **INCORPORATION:** The move towards incorporation was something I always viewed as in conflict with the radical postulates of the essential program of OTO. Incorporation, it is true, does offer certain tax-related benefits and, more questionably, legal protections, but *it makes the organization a part of the very social paradigm its program seeks to supplant*. By placing itself within the System, a body tends to become absorbed into the system. The OTO program, its central gnosis and conceptual framework are not amenable to social conformity. It might — it *might* — be able to be a "legal entity" without gradually compromising itself into being a part of the very paradigm it postulates as that of an antiquated "Aeon" but this would require extraordinary and clear-headed management. It has not had that, and seems to consist largely of socially marginalized members attracted to the essential program which has been gradually gutted into a hollow shell of its intended realization.
2. **LITIGIOUSNESS:** Without discussing the legal merits or tactical usefulness of any individual legal cases the OTO has involved itself in, by so involving itself repeatedly the upper management appears to have blurred the line between the essential purposes of the Order as described in the basic documents and its legalistic objectives. No efforts to control the flow of information, confidential or otherwise, has resulted in any true control the Internet has more or less made a mockery of any such efforts, even supposing that the restriction of the flow of information is advantageous to the purposes of the Order, itself a debatable proposition. Further, the upper management has seemingly in the process of conducting itself as what appears to some — myself included — a litigious corporate entity, fallen into an excessively self-conscious body, unduly worried about potential legal actions against it, including concerns that are, in my view, inconsistent with the Order's history and any legal precedent. This, in turn, has weighed down the operative local bodies of the Order with a mass of bureaucratic rules, a mountain of paperwork, and even a presumptuous gutting of both the initiation rituals and the Order's primary public interface, The Gnostic Mass. As one rather ranking member observed to me, "The OTO is now run by its lawyers." This is utterly unacceptable in that it is completely incompatible with the numinous and progressive goals and methodology described in the basic documents.
3. **HUBRIS AND CAPRICIOUS INNOVATIONS:** The present upper management does not consist of the founders of the OTO. It was inevitable, of course, that this would eventually be the case. But under an *acting* Frater Superior with no established prior reputation, even within the narrow community of metaphysicians, and little to

recommend his breadth of knowledge or skill, the initiation rituals have been changed in fundamental ways, according to his personal perceptions, for example, of the relationship to Freemasonry of the Order. I consider, and have so told him, that these perceptions are unwarranted and certainly not necessary. They may have irreparably disrupted the original intent of the system. Certain degrees and ritual practices have been completely made up by the present acting outer head of the Order or his designated managers, while other established rituals have been radically altered. This is not based on new archival discoveries nor upon any practical necessity but, rather, upon the personal perceptions of the acting Frater Superior. Even (rather thin, in my opinion) legalistic considerations have dictated one radical and a number of lesser changes in the conduct of The Gnostic Mass as a public ritual of OTO for which it was designed. The Frater Superior and his inner management team have also seen fit to change the clear intent of the basic documents of the Order. Book 194, which includes a set of checks and balances on absolute power, has been undermined by modifications in practice which effectively guts the authority of the Grand Tribunal in provision 16 ("All members of the Order, even of higher grades, are subject to the Grand Tribunal"), the "independent Parliament of Guilds" of provision 21, which makes such guilds self-organizing, and they are to "... prosecute their own good in all matters relating pertaining to their labour and means of livelihood" — each guild choosing its own representative, rules, et al. Current policy effectively turns this on its head, entirely missing the point, and organizes the guilds from upper management down; provision 25, etc. Book 194 is clearly designed to act, among other things, as a check upon Authority. Present upper management has seen to it that this is not possible based on nothing I can see other than its own interests.

4. **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:** While demands by upper management upon the local chartered bodies are ever increasing, including financial demands of a direct and indirect nature, a careful reading of the OTO annual budget will show that much of the money raised goes to pay a de facto salary to the acting Frater Superior. The OTO being a rather small organization, the majority of its members being, insofar as I can assess, of relatively modest means, it would seem that this essentially all-volunteer body should remain such until and unless its size and material income become much larger than it presently is. Local body officers, Grand Lodge officers and scores of ordinary members without special portfolio do their work for the Order — the vast bulk of the Work of the Order, on a volunteer, *gratis* basis. There is every reason that this should be true for the Acting OHO as well, and no reasonable justification for such being otherwise. The same funds could serve the very policies (such as free-standing no-residential local meeting space and insurance for such spaces) advocated by U.S. Grand Lodge and many local body officers. If **any** funds should be devoted to paid services, perhaps the most effective and best use of such funds would be for a transparent, outside audit of the financial ACTIVITIES OF Grand Lodge, both National and International.
5. **INITIATION:** Most damning is the failure to initiate by the present upper management. A study of the statistical breakdown of degrees shows nearly flat growth, if it can be so called at all, in recent years, and virtually no growth at all in the highest degrees. If, as Crowley indicated, the evident purpose of the Order is to prepare individuals for initiation, the present management is a failure and should step down. Aleister Crowley stated that "... the really vital matter is the gradual progress towards disclosure of the Secret of the Ninth Degree". If one discounts those acting ninths conferred by Major

McMurtry prior to the mid 1980s, of the several thousand members who are or have been in OTO under the present Acting Frater Superior, only a tiny fraction of 1% have been so elevated on his watch. It is statistically nearly impossible to become a Ninth Degree in the OTO, and the grounds for conferring it are, at best, subject to close questioning and scrutiny.

6. **FRATERNITY:** The fraternal spirit which informed the OTO body which I first joined, and the Order in general in theory, has gradually been eroded. Until it is restored, I cannot, in good conscience, serve an upper management which has presided over the undoing in the last twenty years of the promising, if faltering beginning of the revived Ordo Templi Orientis initiated by Major McMurtry.
7. **SUPERSTITION:** In the McMurtry era, an emphasis began to be placed upon the "churchy" aspects of the EGC, even a move to separate it out from OTO but, as it were, under the same management. This itself may have been a profound error, simply because OTO then and, as far as I can tell, now, *tends to attract to its ranks spiritually disaffected people* — firstly, from "New Age" counter-culturalists of the 1960s-70s era, and, increasingly, disaffected Wiccans, Neopagans and others of similar ilk looking for something more in the Western tradition. Many of these people are sincere, but they came to OTO *alienated from a particular superstition, not from superstitious values per se.*

The present upper management moved from considering OTO *pragmatically* a "religious" entity (in the technical, legal sense) to being a religious entity proper. See Crowley's dire warning about this from *Magick Without Tears* quoted elsewhere in this memorandum. I know the individuals involved, but I obviously can't know their innermost hearts. My perception is that some upper managers are utterly cynical about this, others are sacred humanists of a sort, while still others have drifted into being believers in their own mythos.

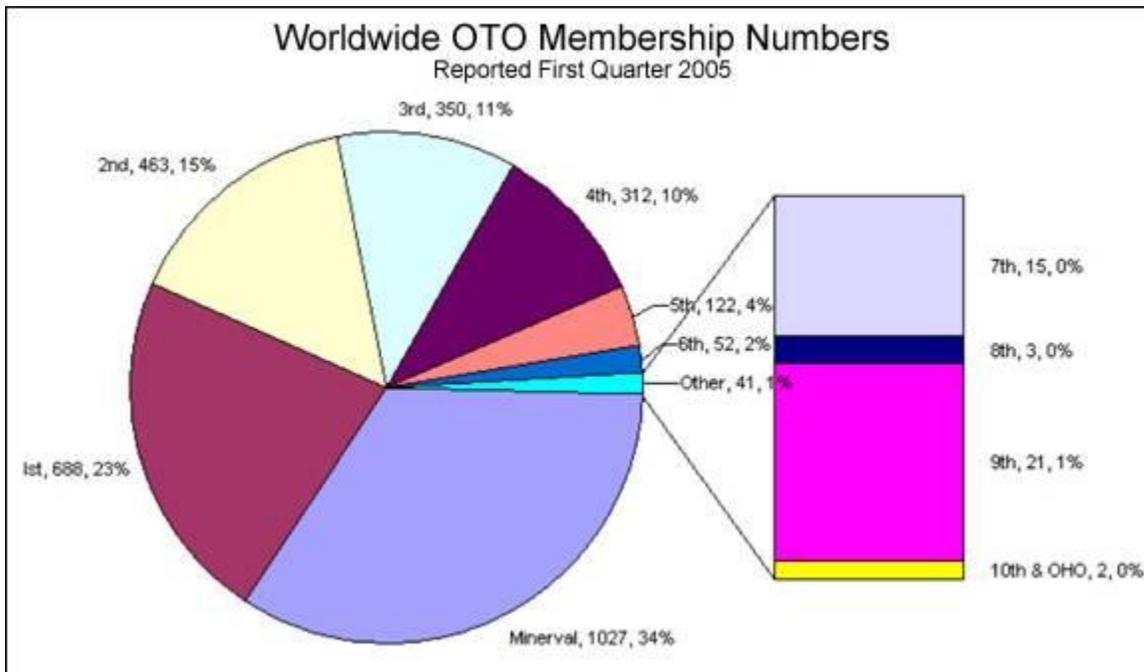
I always regarded the "church" aspect as, arguably, a form of empowerment, as with all things magical ... a working with that energy variously referred to as Od, Orgonne, Chi, Prana, *et al.* As a Scientific Illuminist, for me, each aspect of this, including the premise itself, should be something amenable to, and subjected to, scientific investigation, not credulous awe nor belief. The "churchy" aspects, in which I have been deeply involved, was not my "religion" but, as Crowley put it,

"Human nature demands (in the case of most people) the satisfaction of the religious instinct, and, to very many, this may best be done under the influence of appropriate ritual ... I resolved that my Ritual should celebrate the sublimity of the operation of universal forces without introducing disputable metaphysical theories, I would neither make nor imply any statement about nature which would not be endorsed by the most materialistic man of science ... On the surface this may sound difficult; but in practice I found it perfectly simple to combine the most rigidly rational conceptions of phenomena with the most exalted and enthusiastic celebration of their sublimity."

The ritual referred to is Liber XV, "The Gnostic Mass" of the OTO.

Whether the present upper management encourages an illogical interpretation of what essentially is an expression of the radical concept of the union of sexuality and spirituality, or whether it merely presides over it, EGC *has become just another church*, another "religion" (and a miniscule one at that) in a world increasingly dominated by "Christianists" in America and Islamists virtually everywhere, in a dangerous fundamentalism. In the post 9/11 world, "Thelemists" are no more acceptable than Islamists, but upper management of OTO has utterly failed to address and underscore the original purpose of EGC aspects of OTO at a time when such is of extreme urgency.

8. **PURPOSE:** The program of the OTO is, properly, continuation of the Authentic Tradition of the Hermetic Brotherhood of Light, to which it is legitimately (if not uniquely) heir, in the service of effective world reform in what is rightly assumed to be a New Aeon for humanity. It is neither a religious superstition nor a social club. Since the present upper management either does not understand this, or does not have a serious clue as to how to go about its proper Work, *twenty years is enough*; it is time that the Acting Frater Superior, the U.S. Grand Master General, and any other putative national grand masters under this regime to do the honorable thing, and step down.



POSTSCRIPT: The world of magical practice, of esoteric metaphysics and self-realization through initiation and empowerment remains a rich one. Its potential for serving as a source for the revivification of Western Civilization in the face of a grim medievalist onslaught based in superstition, fanaticism and authoritarianism remains a real one, and I continue the Work on a number of fronts. It is not a belief system, but an experiment. It is unfortunate that the current leadership of OTO has dropped the ball, if it ever had it, but it has, and the first thing that needs doing is to acknowledge this without ourselves putting The Great Work aside. I have stepped down from management, not from the Work. It is part of that Work to resist the forces of superstition, tyranny and reaction. This memorandum is a part of this Work.

Q in H D in II
Anno IVxii e.n.
5 March 2006 e.v.



Grand Lodge
of the United States
of America

Certificate of Appreciation

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

We, the Supreme Grand Council of the Grand Lodge of Ordo Templi Orientis in the United States of America, hereby offer our sincere appreciation and commendations to

Allen Greenfield

for his dedicated service as Most Wise Sovereign
of Hagia Sophia Chapter Rose Croix
from 8 February 1998 e.v. through 5 March 2006 e.v.

Love is the law, love under will.

Witness our hand:


National Grand Master General


Grand Treasurer General




Grand Secretary General

Q in H D in H
Anno IVxiv e.n.
24 April 2006 e.v.



Grand Lodge
of the United States
of America

Certificate of Appreciation

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

We, the Executive Council of the Grand Lodge of Ordo Templi Orientis in the United States of America, hereby offer our sincere appreciation and commendations to

Allen Greenfield

for his service as Correspondence Secretary
from 24 April 1999 e.v. through 19 April 2006 e.v.

Love is the law, love under will.

Witness our hand:


National Grand Master General


Grand Treasurer General




Grand Secretary General