

INITIUM SAPIENTIAE AMOR DOMINI

# Ordo Templi Orientis



FRATERNITAS LUCIS HERMETICÆ

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

Thank you for your recent inquiry about the Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.). The enclosed information package will provide you with some introductory material about our Order in general.

Ordo Templi Orientis is a religious and magical initiatory fraternity open to both men and women, with local bodies in 26 countries, including 50 local bodies in 26 states of the United States. It was founded in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and was incorporated as a non-profit 501c(3) organization in California in 1979.

Ordo Templi Orientis is the first of the traditional esoteric fraternities to accept the *Law of Thelema*, the religious revelation obtained by Aleister Crowley in 1904. Crowley served as the second worldwide head of O.T.O., from 1922 through his death in 1947. One of the principal functions of O.T.O. is to advance the magico-religious system of *Thelema*.

Each local O.T.O. body is designated as either a *Camp*, *Oasis*, or *Lodge* depending on its size and level of activities. Although there is often much interrelating between local bodies, each operates independently yet answers directly to the national or international government of the Order.

Specific local bodies (Oases and Lodges) can also provide ceremonial initiation into the first three degrees of our Order. The O.T.O. degrees can only be conferred by ceremonial initiation and performed by an initiator who has been properly trained and issued a charter by the Grand Master of the Order.

Most local bodies also regularly perform an O.T.O. ritual called the Gnostic Mass. This ritual is described in our system as “the central ritual of the O.T.O. both public and private”, and is presented under the auspices of the Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica, the Gnostic Catholic Church, which is the ecclesiastical aspect of O.T.O.

Most local bodies also offer public classes, workshops and book studies that usually cover a wide range of esoteric/occult subject matter. Some of these may include Qabalah, Yoga, Ceremonial Magick, Hermetic Science, Tarot, Astrology, Alchemy as well as various Thelemic celebrations, rituals, rites and holidays that assist and support the development of Thelemic community.

The material contained in this introductory package should provide you with any information that you may need concerning our Order. Should you find that you require more detailed information please refer to the reference and contact page provided, see our website at: [www.oto-usa.org](http://www.oto-usa.org) or feel free to contact our Public Information Officer directly at: [PIO@oto-usa.org](mailto:PIO@oto-usa.org). Thank you once again for your interest.

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The following provides some general explanations of terminology:

## **Magick**

Magick is the ancient art and science of causing physical and psychic changes to occur in conformity with the will of the magician. Our form of Magick is spelled with a "k" to distinguish it from stage magic or prestidigitation. We are students, practitioners and teachers of Alchemy, Divination, Qabalah, Ritual, Hermetic Science, Yoga, and related disciplines, all aimed at furthering the spiritual evolution of humankind and achieving the *Great Work*.

## **Aleister Crowley**

Aleister Crowley was a prominent British author, poet, philosopher, mountain climber, and magician who lived from 1875-1947. In 1898 he was initiated into the British section of the magical Order known as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, an occult society under the direction of S. L. Mathers. It was here that Crowley began his lifelong dedication to the study and practice of Magick. Crowley was a prolific writer on the subject of Magick and likely contributed more to the serious study of the subject than any person in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Ordo Templi Orientis**

The Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.) or Order of the Temple of the East, was founded in the early 20th century as a secret society of high-ranking Freemasons in Europe. In 1922 Aleister Crowley assumed leadership of the O.T.O. after revising its rites to conform to the Law of Thelema. Today the OTO is active in over 25 countries, with a growing membership of over 4000 people internationally in over 48 countries.

We are a serious, secret order, pledged to the high purpose of securing the liberty of the individual and his or her advancement in light, wisdom, understanding, knowledge and power through beauty, courage, truth and wit, on the foundation of universal brotherhood. Every free man and woman of full age and good report has the indefeasible right to initiation in the first three degrees of our Order.

## **The Book of the Law**

On April 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> of 1904, a spiritual entity known as Aiwass dictated *Liber AL vel Legis* (The Book of the Law) to Aleister Crowley in Cairo, Egypt. This book contains 220 verses in three chapters, and heralds the dawning of a New Aeon in human development. It brings a message of spiritual freedom and personal emancipation to all of humanity, communicated in a spiritual philosophy known as the Law of Thelema.

## **The Law of Thelema**

Thelema is the Greek word meaning "Will". The Law of Thelema may be simply stated as: "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law." This assertion recognizes the absolute right of every human being to follow his or her true course of existence without interference. It is further elaborated by the phrase: "Love is the law, love under will" indicating the manner by which this right is to be ensured and the method whereby it is to be fulfilled. The Law of Thelema is not to be interpreted as a license to indulge every whim, but as an injunction to discover one's True Will, and to do it. We believe that every person possesses a True Will, or life-purpose, which he or she may discover and follow to achieve complete harmony and absolute fulfillment throughout life. Our Order exists to support and encourage men and women in the discovery of their own True Will.

The practice of Thelema is founded on the principle of Scientific Illuminism, which is expressed by the motto, "The Method of Science, the Aim of Religion." Scientific Illuminism is the systematic and scientific study of religious, magical, and mystical practices and techniques and the objective and subjective evaluation of their results.

## **True Will**

Most Thelemites (adherents of Thelema) hold that every person possesses a True Will, a single overall motivation for their existence. The Law of Thelema mandates that each person discover and follow their True Will to attain fulfillment in life, as a star follows its true course through the universe. Just as the stars in their orbits do not haphazardly collide with each other, we hold that those who are genuinely following their True Wills will not interfere with the True Will of any other person.

The notion of absolute freedom for an individual to follow his or her True Will is a cherished one among Thelemites. This philosophy also recognizes that the main task of an individual setting out on the path of Thelema is to first discover his or her True Will, giving methods of self-exploration such as Yoga, Qabalah and Magick great importance. Furthermore, every True Will is unique, and because each person has a unique position in the universe, no one can determine or dictate another person's True Will. Each individual must ultimately arrive at this discovery for themselves.

## **The Great Work**

The Great Work (Magnum Opus) of each individual is defined by this process of discovery and ultimate fulfillment of the individual's True Will. The Great Work is a term utilized by alchemists to describe the self-transformative process of the individual, using the metaphor of the transmutation of lead into gold. Within the context of Thelema this generally means reaching and establishing a state of being traditionally known as "the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel (or *Augoeides*)". The preliminary processes of the aspirant in the Great Work usually involves self analysis, study and practice of Raja Yoga, Qabalah and Ceremonial Magick, which progressively leads the aspirant into deeper and deeper states of consciousness and Self-awareness.

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## O. T. O.

PEACE, TOLERANCE, TRUTH;  
SALUTATION ON ALL POINTS OF THE TRIANGLE;  
RESPECT TO THE ORDER.

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: GREETINGS AND HEALTH.

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

The letters O.T.O. stand for Ordo Templi Orientis, the Order of Oriental Templars, or Order of the Temple of the East. The O.T.O. is an Outer Thelemic Order which is dedicated to the high purpose of securing the Liberty of the Individual and his or her advancement in Light, Wisdom, Understanding, Knowledge, and Power through Beauty, Courage, and Wit, on the Foundation of Universal Brotherhood.

Founded near the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the O.T.O. is the first of the great "Old Aeon" Orders to accept The Book of the Law (*Liber AL vel Legis*), received by Aleister Crowley in 1904, with its message of a New Aeon in human thought, culture and religion based upon a single supreme injunction: the Law of Thelema, which is "Do what thou wilt". This Law is not to be interpreted as a license to indulge in every passing whim, but rather as the mandate to discover one's True Will and accomplish it; leaving others to do the same in their own unique ways. "Every man and every woman is a star."

The Law of Thelema can ultimately be fulfilled only through the efforts of each individual. Nevertheless, many worthy aspirants to the Great Work have a genuine need for information, guidance, fellowship, or the opportunity to assist their fellow aspirants and serve humanity. Such aspirants will find welcome in O.T.O.

The structure of O.T.O., similar to that of Freemasonry and the ancient mystery schools, is based on a series of initiations or degrees, which are conferred ceremonially. In the rituals of these degrees, O.T.O. seeks to instruct the individual by allegory and symbol in the profound mysteries of Nature, and thereby to assist each to discover his or her own true identity and purpose.

Every free man and woman of full age and good report, has an indefeasible right to the first three degrees of O.T.O. These degrees follow a pattern based on the symbolism of the Chakras of the subtle body and the rising of the Kundalini energy. They also represent, in dramatic form, the Individual's Path in Eternity. In the higher degrees, there is instruction in Hermetic Philosophy, Qabalah, Magick and Yoga, all aimed at preparing the Initiate for the revelation and application of one Supreme Secret.

In addition to the official O.T.O. instructions, many of the local O.T.O. Lodges, Oases, and Camps offer supplementary instruction to their members and the general public. The particular form of this instruction depends on the character and capabilities of each particular local body; it may be provided in the form of classes, seminars, study programs, working groups or publications.

At this writing, O.T.O. has over 4,000 members worldwide, and is active in over 25 countries. Membership in O.T.O. is private in the sense that names and addresses of its members are not released to anyone, including O.T.O. officers lacking a need to know, without prior express or implied consent of the individual members concerned.

Affiliation with O.T.O. is divided into three primary categories: corresponding associates, ecclesiastical lay membership and initiate membership. To be a corresponding associate requires no physical attendance. For a \$10.00 annual contribution, corresponding associates receive The Magical Link (O.T.O.'s official International newsletter), have access to other membership publications, and may attend certain O.T.O. activities if a local body is nearby. Otherwise, corresponding associates have the opportunity to correspond with other O.T.O. members in the U.S.A. and other countries, by mail or via the internet

Ecclesiastical lay membership in the Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica (E.G.C.) is conferred by the ceremony of confirmation, which must be preceded by the ceremony of baptism. Lay membership conveys no authority or special privileges within E.G.C. or O.T.O. and may be conferred upon initiates and non-initiates alike.

Initiate membership can be conferred only in a physical ceremony by a properly chartered initiator. The Minerval Degree (0°) is an introductory Initiate Degree, designed to allow the aspirant to determine whether or not to become a full member.

The First Degree (1°) initiation bestows full membership upon the initiate. A First Degree initiate may retire from active participation in O.T.O., but the spiritual link forged between the initiate and the Order during the ceremony of the First Degree will remain throughout the initiate's physical life.

O.T.O. also encompasses Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica (E.G.C.), the Gnostic Catholic Church, which was originally brought to the O.T.O. by Dr. Gerard Encausse (Papus). The E.G.C. is a Thelemic religious environment, dedicated to the advancement of Light, Life, Love, and Liberty through alignment with the Law of Thelema. The central activity of the E.G.C. is the celebration of the Gnostic Mass, as set forth in *Liber XV*. Membership in E.G.C. is available through baptism, confirmation, and (after a period of training) orders. Many O.T.O. local bodies celebrate the Gnostic Mass on a regular basis, and in most locations, no formal affiliation is required to attend the Mass.

O.T.O. represents a surfacing and confluence of the divergent streams of esoteric wisdom and knowledge, which were originally divided and driven underground by political and religious intolerance during the dark ages. It draws from the traditions of the Freemasonic, Rosicrucian and Illuminist movements of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the chivalric principles of the crusading Knights Templar of the middle ages as well as early forms of Gnosticism and the Western Mystery Schools traditions. Its symbolism contains a reunification of the hidden traditions of both the East and the West, and its resolution of these traditions has enabled it to recognize the true value of Aleister Crowley's revelation of *The Book of the Law*.

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## The New Aeon is Upon Us

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

The history of human spiritual evolution may be divided into distinct stages known as Aeons. Study of recent history allows us to distinguish three such aeons within the last several thousand years. The Aeon of Isis, prevailing before the time of Moses, was characterized by matriarchal consciousness in society and the predominance of nature-oriented religion. Next followed the Aeon of Osiris which emphasized the Father principle and was marked by the establishment of patriarchal religions such as Judaism, Christianity & Islam. At the present time, humanity is entering a third evolutionary stage known as the Aeon of Horus, which focuses on the product of the Mother and the Father: the Child. The advent of the Crowned & Conquering Child, Horus, is everywhere evident today as society moves away from the restrictions of conventional religion and people begin to explore their innermost selves for the first time, like a child exploring its newly found world.

Since the beginning of this century there has existed a group of men and women who recognized the dawning of this Aeon of the Child, and who have sought to attune themselves with its powerfully flowing current of Life, Love, Liberty, and Light. From early on we were persecuted by those who still clung to the past, but amidst this opposition we gained strength and eventually attained worldwide standing. Modeled on the same principles of chivalry and piety espoused by the famous Knights Templar of the middle ages, near the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century our organization was officially established as the Ordo Templi Orientis, or Order of the Temple of the East.

The O.T.O. operates according to the central philosophy of the Aeon of Horus called the Law of Thelema. Thelema is the Greek word meaning "Will". We usually express the Law of Thelema as "*Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.*" This phrase simply means that every person has the absolute right to follow his or her inner Will. Therefore, the O.T.O. does not seek to "convert" anyone to its precepts; instead, we offer support to any individual who desires to benefit from contact with the energies of the New Aeon. Some of these benefits may include: increased self-knowledge, reduction of inner and outer conflicts, greater understanding of the laws of the universe, gaining sense of purpose, and genuine affinity with the growing number of people who are aligning themselves with the Thelemic current.

Exploring these inner realms is best accomplished by ritual and meditation rather than solely by intellectual means. To this end the O.T.O. offers a series of gradual initiations into the mysteries of human spirituality. These ceremonies, nearly a century old, have proven to be quite effective in empowering each candidate with the means to determine his or her destined path in the universe, and to follow this True Will with confidence and assurance.

The O.T.O. is not a cult, because no demands of belief whatsoever are made of any candidate for membership other than agreement to respect the Law of Thelema. Nor is any investment required, other than nominal fees to cover costs if one desires to take initiation. The O.T.O. is officially recognized by the United States government as a non-profit 501c(3) religious organization. But because there are still some segments of the Old Aeon fundamentalist religious establishment, which dispute our right to peacefully exist, we protect our membership by secrecy.

Nonetheless, some of these groups persist in their efforts to defame us by spreading false and misleading propaganda. Anyone interested in our activities is encouraged to spend time with us and see the truth for themselves; that we are a close-knit association of independent, free-thinking, loving human beings who share a special bond of initiation in the Law of Thelema and revel with the Child in the coming of the New Aeon.

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## The O.T.O. Degree System

Membership in the O.T.O. is delineated by a series of degrees numbered from 0° through IX° (with X° reserved for the office of National Grand Master General). These degrees are conferred only by ceremonial initiation. The initiation rituals themselves are secret, but the nature of the degrees and the O.T.O. system in general may be described here.

The following excerpt from “*Magick Without Tears*” by Aleister Crowley (Barstow: Thelema, 1953) outlines the degree system of the O.T.O.:

Let us begin at the beginning. What is a Dramatic Ritual? It is a celebration of the Adventures of the God whom it is intended to invoke. (*The Bacchae* of Euripides is a perfect example of this.)

Now, in the O.T.O., the object of the ceremonies being the Initiation of the Candidate, it is he whose Path in Eternity is displayed in dramatic form.

What is the Path?

1. The Ego is attracted to the Solar System.
2. The Child experiences Birth.
3. The Man experiences Life.
4. He experiences Death.
5. He experiences the World beyond Death.
6. This entire cycle of Point-Events is withdrawn into Annihilation.

In the O.T.O. these successive stages are represented as follows:

- |           |                             |
|-----------|-----------------------------|
| 1. 0°     | (Minerval)                  |
| 2. I°     | (Initiation)                |
| 3. II°    | (Consecration)              |
| 4. III°   | (Devotion)                  |
| 5. IV°    | (Perfection, or Exaltation) |
| 6. P.:I.: | (Perfect Initiate)          |

Of these Events or Stations upon the Path all but [number] three (the II°) are single critical experiences. We, however, are concerned mostly with the very varied experiences of Life.

All subsequent Degrees of the O.T.O. are accordingly elaborations of the II°, since in a single ceremony it is hardly possible to sketch, even in the briefest outline, the Teaching of Initiates with regard to Life. The Rituals V°- IX° are then instructions to the Candidate how he or she should conduct themselves; and they confer upon them, gradually, the Magical Secrets which make them Masters of Life.

These degrees are further divided into three triads, according to The Book of the Law: "For there are therein Three Grades, the Hermit, and the Lover, and the man of Earth." (*AL: I.40*).

The first triad is that of "Man of Earth" and includes the degrees from 0° (Minerval) through that of P.:I.: (Perfect Initiate). Next, the Lovers' triad contains the degrees from V° through VII°, and finally, the Hermit triad encompasses the VIII° through X°. International and national government of the Order is undertaken from within the latter two triads.

Initiation into the degrees of the Man of Earth triad is open to every free man and woman of full age and good report. Membership in the order begins with the Minerval degree (0°), which serves as a kind of trial period during which the initiate may determine if the Order is suited to his or her Will. One may remain a Minerval for as long as one desires.

If the Minerval initiate decides to advance to the I°, he or she forms a spiritual bond with the Order which cannot be severed in this lifetime, although he or she may resign from active membership at any time. Initiation is therefore a commitment which is not to be taken lightly.

A minimum amount of time must be spent in each degree before advancement. Attainment of the P.:I.: degree may be reached in as little as three years, depending on the individual's rate of progress. Advancement beyond the Man of Earth triad is offered by invitation only.

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For more information, please contact us at:

Or the Public Information Officer at:

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**Published and On-line Resource Reference**

**Publications:**

The Equinox III: 10	Aleister Crowley, et al.	Samuel Weiser Publications
The Law is for All	Aleister Crowley	New Falcon Publications
The Holy Books of Thelema	To Mega Therion (Aleister Crowley)	Samuel Weiser Publications
The Confessions of Aleister Crowley	Aleister Crowley	Arkana Publications
The Revival of Magick	Aleister Crowley	New Falcon Publications
The Eye in the Triangle	Israel Regardie	New Falcon Publications
New Aeon Magick	Gerald Del Campo	Luxor Press
The Magick of Thelema	Lon Milo Duquette	Samuel Weiser Publications

**On-line Resources:**

O.T.O. U.S. Grand Lodge Homepage	<a href="http://www.oto-usa.org">http://www.oto-usa.org</a>
The Invisible Basilica of Sabazius (U.S. Grand Master)	<a href="http://www.hermetic.com/sabazius/index.html">http://www.hermetic.com/sabazius/index.html</a>
Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica	<a href="http://otohq.org/oto/egc.html">http://otohq.org/oto/egc.html</a>
The Thelema Homepage	<a href="http://members.cox.net/thelema">http://members.cox.net/thelema</a>
Scarlet Woman Lodge (Austin, TX)	<a href="http://www.scarletwoman.org/">http://www.scarletwoman.org/</a>
Sekhet-Maat Lodge (Portland, OR)	<a href="http://www.sekhetmaat.com/">http://www.sekhetmaat.com/</a>
L.V.X. Oasis (Los Angeles, CA.)	<a href="http://www.lv-x-oto.org">http://www.lv-x-oto.org</a>
O.T.O. Australia	<a href="http://www.otoaustralia.org.au/">http://www.otoaustralia.org.au/</a>
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