

## Officium De Sacerdotium

[Originally written as a talk to be delivered at the Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica Conference, August 1998 E.V., in Dallas, Texas... which was cancelled due to a lack of interest.]

I would like to begin, firstly by saying that my views and ideas do not necessarily represent those of the EGC or the OTO. And that I stand before you not as a representative of the Patriarch, but as an individual who happens to be a Priest in our Church, autonomous, and responsible for my own actions and for everything which I will say shortly.

It is not my intent to dwell on policies and politics of religion. I thought that my time, and your time, might best be served by discussing some of the issues I feel we currently face as a religious order, and some of the problems we will have to face in the very near future.

I have been a Priest in the EGC since 1987. I have had the opportunity and privilege to extend the reaches of my office outside of the OTO and the EGC itself. I have counseled and officiated on behalf of the church for Thelemites and non-Thelemites alike. I have assisted others in preparing for the Priesthood through novitiate training. I don't mention these things to impress you, but to indicate that I have been around a little while and have done a lot of things with regards to the Church. Fifteen years... I have known many couples that could not make their marriages work this long. Fifteen years, roughly ¼ of my life.

I think we can all agree that the Gnostic Catholic Mass is a very important ritual, and that it is indeed the primary public ritual of the religious body of the OTO. But if the OTO is to have a religious body, then there should be religion in it. There are many other sacraments that are ignored.

Worship, to me, is almost a blasphemy. The idea that the deity (whatever that may mean to you) needs to be praised like a king is rooted in superstition and vanity. Yet, some form of observance and recognition is necessary in order to encourage the fusion between those things that are spiritual and those things that are mundane, so that there may be no difference made between them. Our own Liber XV is a beautiful way in which we can do this respectfully.

For many people, especially Thelemites, the word religion may just as well be a four-lettered word. And not without good reason: we have seen the evils done to entire races of people in the name of some cruel, loveless and jealous god. More often than not, religion is used in order to justify some form of socially unacceptable behavior. We know the dangers of fundamentalism of any kind, and many of you have experienced firsthand what it is to be considered an infidel. I have had the distinct pleasure of being called that by my Thelemic peers. I might be so bold as to suggest that there are few

belief systems in the world today with the same potential for gross adulteration and corruption as our own.

No one religion can claim to be unique, or to provide the “one way” to enlightenment, as a close look at comparative religion seems to verify everything told to us by the ancients: that all True Religion springs forth from the same fountain.

Webster’s New Riverside University Dictionary defines religion as: “A unified system of expression.” I agree with this definition, but I would take it a step further and define religion thusly: the outward expression of the life of the spirit.

Any clergy of this church we call the EGC should be prepared to use our unique paradigms and religious symbols to explain the nature of the universe, as we understand it, to anyone who may be interested in our ways... but we don’t. In fact, much of our clergy know so little of our own doctrine that to outsiders, the whole concept of a Thelemic Priesthood is held with the highest contempt: there are so many among us who are Priests and Priestesses in title only. Anyone that thinks that the regular performance of Liber XV is all it takes to make one a Priest doesn’t understand his duties or what his office implies. To the outside world, we appear like children wearing our parents’ clothing. It is especially revealing that so many people with such contempt for Religion should be “Priests.” Humans sure do like their titles... especially if those titles have the potential to make one seem important.

By the time that Christianity was as old as the Thelemic movement, hundreds of holy books had already been written by its adherents. But I think that we may labor falsely under the assumption that the only individual authorized to write or speak of Thelema with any religious or philosophical authority is Crowley. To require that everyone have the same pre-determined religious experience is something that the true Gnostic abhors, and many of them gave up their lives rather than conform to that idea. And yet, we measure our own spiritual pearls, the ones we receive from our own higher genius, with Crowley’s.

Some people may look upon us in the same light as the Council of Nicea, who convened in order to determine if Christ would be deified, and to what extent. Perhaps we are guilty of the same behavior and may one day deify Crowley. As absurd as that may sound to you and me, this is exactly what we are doing by stifling the religious creativity of individuals who have discovered a kernel of religious truth in Thelema, and have wanted to share that experience with the rest of the world.

Those of us that have chosen Thelema as a spiritual system have no easy task. By becoming Priests and Priestesses and even Bishops, we have taken on the karmic duty of creating a religious system, which is based on highly personal religious experience: A Gnostic system. This will be no easy task.

Someone once asked me: “How do you explain the nature of the universe with the symbols that we have been given?” The answer is simple: you must create a myth. How do you create a myth? You begin writing with a simplicity that a child could understand, for the language of the spirit is the language of the Child. It is simple, uncomplicated, unpolluted by physical limitation. You take that model, and you breathe life into it by

living your life by it. We may sometimes overlook the importance of a spiritual experience because of its simplicity. One has to avoid becoming so complex that only intellectual stimulation is noticed or appreciated.

What little we know of the Gnostics is that they met regularly, they expounded their beliefs, they wrote, and they fanned the flames of a fire of inspiration in order to create an egregore which would continue to have life long after they were erased. They were proud in a way that only Thelemites could understand. We now carry a little spark of that creative fire within us, and we have the tremendous opportunity and potential to use it to create our own egregore based on our Thelemic Gnostic beliefs, so that the light of that fire will illumine the way for those that come after us... or we could do what we usually do and take this tremendous gift and responsibility for granted.

Thank you for listening to me.

Gerald del Campo  
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