

Ophiuchus

The Quarterly Journal of
Sekhet-Bast-Ra Lodge,
Ordo Templi Orientis

Volume 6, Number 1

Articles

Essays

Poetry

Artwork

Announcements

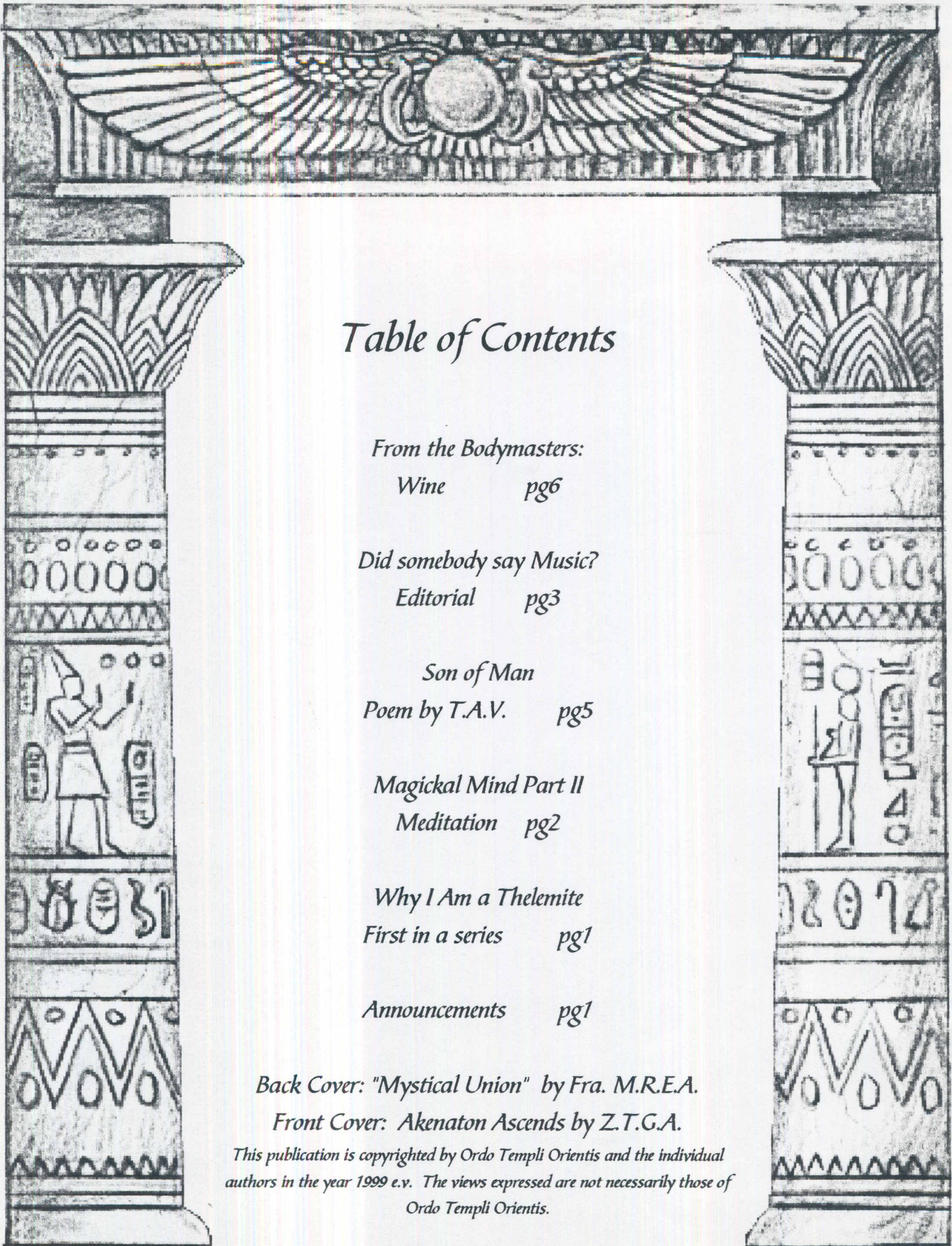


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**Why I am a Thelemite
by
Fra. O.I.V.**

Do What Thou Wilt Shall Be the Whole of the Law

I could make this article short and simple by saying that I was born a Thelemite. However, as that would not make an interesting article, and I truly don't believe that's what this article should be about, I will describe the events that led me to become a Thelemite. One thing I think was intrinsic to this decision was that my parents constantly listened to Led Zeppelin throughout my childhood, and it is interesting to note that not only am I a Thelemite, but I'm also a guitarist. Otherwise, my first exposure to Thelema involved my brother and I playing in an old abandoned shed, and discovering a copy of Liber AL (I had since forgotten what book it was, and was reminded when I got my first copy). We only read the Comment at the end of it and put it down, scared shitless, but that sparked a fascination with that book that has lasted until today. Even before discovering Liber AL, I had doubted the validity of the various Christian Churches I had attended. Simply put, I never found the answers I sought there, so I quit the church, and began my own search for truth. This began with experimentation in the occult, and led into a comparative study of major world religions. I began to see that all the divisions, between Protestant and Catholic, Buddhist and Hindu, etc. were all man made differences, that the intrinsic point of the whole thing was cast aside, and all were bickering over trivialities. This realization took me on a search for one group that united all trains of thought. I had been interested in Aleister Crowley for some time during this period, mainly due to his notorious reputation. I purchased a copy of Liber AL, and studied it for about 3 years until I finally accepted it. I then got my Minerval initiation, and have seen no reason to turn back since.

Love is the law, love under will.

Fraternally yours,

Fra. O.I.V.

**Announcements
for
Sekhet-Bast-Ra Lodge,
Ordo Templi Orientis**

◆ Sekhet-Bast-Ra was recently installed as a lodge by Fra. Salahin of Austin, Texas. Our thanks to him for his effort, cheer, and love. The ceremony was a great success and followed by a well prepared feast of Spanish cuisine prepared by Fra. Z.T.G.A. We're official now, gang!

◆ We have changed the schedule on the research into the Greater Key to once every other month. We have also added a regular class on dramatic ritual, which will focus principally on theatrical technique, and will meet once a week at Fra. Z.T.G.A's. We have also added other one or two shot classes as the members of the Lodge gain interest in particular topics.

◆ We have no other serious announcements that I am aware of, so I will go on making up silly ones for the sake of shamelessly filling space and to indulge my warped sense of the surreal.

◆ Some damn wasps decided to take up residence in my shed. So I roasted them.

◆ We continue our search for a building. Nobody wants to give us a building. So it's all taken on the proportions of a (thelemic) country song: We're so lonely/ on the Christian plain/ we need a building/ to ease our pain, etc.

◆ I plan to purchase a large plot of land right next to the 135 foot cross on I-35 and erect a 136 foot high statue of Baphomet. We can call it the "Baphomet of the Plains." My thanks to Fra. O.I.V. for the idea.

◆ will all turn purple very soon!

◆ In other rather shocking news it was recently revealed that a little more than half the human race is female. This followed hard on the heels of the astounding revelation that a little less than half the human race is male. Scientists are struggling to come to grips with the notion that sex ought have nothing whatever to do with social esteem or standing.

◆ We would like to announce that there are no other announcements.

Part II of Magickal Mind by Fra. Oishin MacFinn

Meditation is needed to develop mental control over yourself and your environment under any given circumstance. Through the use of meditation, both mental as well as physical functions can be controlled. While there are many names for many forms of meditation they all fall into roughly two categories: internal and external.

Internal meditation employs the use of the mind alone, a singular thought is used and replayed over and over again. It could be a mental sound, picture, taste, thought concept, or as complex as a combination of all the above.

External meditation employs the use of an external focus; a mandala (picture design) or a sand garden being classical examples. Even the spinning dance of the Dervish becomes such a form of meditation.

The basic process is to relax the mind, and to set the mind to the singular task. An internal example could be just the mental counting of the numbers 1 and 2, count 1 on the inhale cycle and 2 on the exhale cycle. To try this example find a quiet comfortable spot to sit down and relax. Breathe slowly, deliberately and at a comfortable rate. Count the cycles as mentioned above. Do this for at least five minutes a day. Get and set an electric (quiet) timer or clock, this way you shall not be distracted by time. You will find a myriad of thoughts enter into your mind, everything but the count of 1 and 2 will be there. Don't worry, this is quite normal; this is the mind in revolt, its little way of saying "I am running the show! How dare you control me!" It is not by any means easy, nobody ever said it was going to be. But it is you who must be master of your own castle and not the castle the master of the keep. It seems paradoxical, but the simplest thoughts are the most difficult to control. Yet you must control them. The complicated thoughts will be there; the real work is to not let them distract you while you maintain your count.

You will find that the moment that you realize/recognize a thought the faster it will pass. It is like a child who is begging for your attention, pay it heed and it will be gone as quickly as it came - never losing focus on your breathing and count. As with all things in life, the more you practice the better it gets and the easier it becomes. If the count of 1 and 2 just do not work for you at all after some time, find and try another internal meditation. Visualization. Visualization is the application of this mental focus inwardly. Note that it is not the actual projection of the formed image. It is the forming

of a solid mental image where there was only a partial or no image before. As an example, internalize the color blue, focus upon it in your mind. See your self being enveloped by the color blue. Feel the tranquility of the color. Make it permeate your entire being until your being and aura shine blue. Open your eyes, and as you open them keep the bit of tranquility that is blue.

An external meditation works in the same means except you are externalising your focus for a period of time upon an object. The object of focus can be a complex mandala pattern or as simple as a single black dot on a smooth white wall. It is best to keep things simplistic at first; a black dot on a white wall suits all your needs. Again, comfort, quiet and breathing are needed. Set your timer and begin. Stick with your practice, and your powers of concentration (and hence, the control you are able to exert on your own being) will increase.

As an example of the complex external meditation spectrum, the martial arts "forms" or kata, as they are sometime called, constitute a meditation in motion when done properly. If you ever get a chance watch a Tai Chi master during his or her routine; you will observe the immense mental focus the person has over their mind and body. You too can use one of the Arts as a form of meditation. You will find an earnest Sifu (teacher) or Sensei hard to find in our money-hungry society. Even if you do, chances are that they are western in thought, without regard for the inner workings of the arts.

Hobbies that involve and require extreme dexterity (crochet, knitting, painting, etc.) can become and are meditative as well. While training your hands you are training your mind as well in a like fashion that requires mental discipline to fully acquire the skill of the artwork you do.

Actual Magick is the next logical step of events. The sending forth of your visualization, the casting of it if I may, is the logical conclusion. With simple visualization of above, you have the power to use colors and light to do your bidding; to attract, heal, calm, etc. And, too, with any effort at all, you can make your will known to others mentally and begin to develop your latent psychic skills.

But before we go into any great detail on this subject, there is much work elsewhere to be done, and so we shall close this chapter here.

Did Somebody Say Music? Editorial by Fra. Z.T.G.A.

Editorials, I have come to discover, are the freest form of writing after letters. I could never use a sentence like that (or this) in, say, a short story. And poetry just couldn't tolerate it's almost numb blandness. No imagery. No emotion, really. Just a statement, a bare-bones thought. I don't have to put any effort into it at all. The wonderful universe has given me permission to hold forth on whatever topics come to mind for a page or two, and by Jove, at least somebody reads the crap! I'm also allowed to not come to the point until whenever I feel like it. So sit back, gentle reader, with a cup of whatever it pleases you to drink and take a little tour through the...what? I'm not sure I know, but it looks like fun.

I have been suffering writer's block recently. But a call to a good friend of mine, who is not in the Order, helped me to get over it. He read me reams and reams of (what he thought was) the worst poetry in the universe. Much to his surprise, or perhaps chagrin, it turns out that quite a bit of it was rather good. But he had written it afraid, going through almost the same kind of fear when you reach out and touch someone intimately for the first time. Will they react, shall we say, favorably? Or will they jump up and howl in anguish and tell you to go bugger yourself? Of course, that's not what you're really afraid of. You're afraid of what you might do in response to that. How much have you had to drink? What is your emotional landscape like? How will you handle utter, angry rejection? Do you really want to find out?

Same thing goes on during writer's block. Unfortunately, there's a good cure for the sexual frustration side of rejection. Rumor is we have an entire degree devoted to the practice of this technique (and herein lieth a greater mystery, beyond even the understanding of Masters and Johnson). It's just not as satisfying to stroke one's pen in a similar manner (or to caress one's inkwell, as the gender may indicate). I know, I've tried. The pen busted in a good imitation of the grand moment, but unfortunately the fact that the ink doesn't wipe off in the same manner as cum only added to my frustration. How to explain the roll of used paper towels? How to explain the ink stains that lay on my body in a pattern familiar to more than a few (far be it from me to brag...)?

So the writer's block goes on, and it affects your whole life. You start doing crazy

things in the hopes that the extremity of the experience might help you. I suppose I should say here that writers are definitely all possessed by the word and language demon—we must write or undergo the most horrible transformations. Ever seen a retired writer? Rumor is that their minds seep out of their bodies and become what the plumber drags out of your stopped-up toilet. So blame your sewage problems on us.

But nothing ever works. There is only one thing to do, dammit, and that's just sit down and write, and screw how the words come out. Screw who's reading. Screw how good or bad it is. Just sit down and do it, to hell with the consequences. You may go insane. It may kill you. But if you just stick to it, it will do you nothing but good. Sound familiar?

Yes, I had to come to magickal and mystical practice eventually, as this is a periodical more or less devoted to the subject. The smart reader will have picked up on two things above. The analogous meanderings have something to do with (the dreaded) lust of result. They also have quite a bit to do with the fourth power of the Sphinx (silence). And the two really have a whole lot to do with each other.

You know, I came to realize that any poem or story or essay that I've ever written that turned out satisfactory I've never spoken of during the process at all. The reasons why seem at first disjointed, but a little contemplation and two tablespoons of vanilla extract and viola! You have insight chantilly, and you discover that the odd shaped object you've been looking at that resembled so much whipped cream is actually a rather artful composition.

Of course you don't talk about a piece you're writing because you want it to be *yours*. The minute you get advice from someone else, it's public. It may still be mainly yours, but (and here's the second reason) it seems now to violate, at least to a small extent, the reason you wrote it to begin with. You wanted to communicate. How can you really honestly and accurately communicate someone else's ideas? Whoa! Stop!! You might say. We do that all the time, don't we? But of course we don't. We may be able to communicate our idea of someone else's idea, which may turn out to be very close to their idea. A good way to get a sense of this is to try and become a master level player at chess. You start out thinking that the masters all play the same because your eye is not trained to the intricacies. But the finer your perception, the more you realize how different the styles of play are.

Similarly, we each have a unique role in the universe (which, it may be argued, are not predetermined in the classic sense of the word). It behooves us to play out those roles as well as we can. Magick is the ultimate art of doing just this; perhaps it is for this reason that Magick, by its very nature, cannot be taught. A pupil can be taught to teach herself. But that is as close as she can come. Without silence, the teaching that the pupil's inner voice is trying to do gets lost among all the other voices we let in. Start the dialogue and who knows where it will lead. On this count alone silence becomes a very good idea.

But also spend a day observing the things you talk about. Disregard the things you say out of habit like "excuse me," or "Fuck you, shithead." These generally turn out not to be very expressive at all. Listen to what you express every day. You will find that *in general* you express only what is extra-ordinary. You express what is of interest to yourself or your audience.

Now consider when and under what circumstances you perform best. Do you drive a car best when you are tense, or when you actively begin to think about it (alright, check my speed, now stay within the lines, now put on the turn signal...)? No. You drive best when it becomes automatic without it loosing all your attention. This is a rather curious state to describe, I'm not sure I can do it accurately. But apply the idea to some other activity, such as walking. Try to walk first without thinking about the physical specifics of walking. You're only thinking of going somewhere. Then try doing the same thing thinking about the physical specifics. Make your conscious mind coordinate how you lift your leg, where you will place your foot, and so on. Ten minutes of that ought to exhaust you. But I think the point is made. You pay attention to what is behind the activity rather than the activity itself. The activity itself is uninteresting.

Your inner state, when you are wholly consumed in getting to where you are going without being concerned at all with the physical specifics of how you're getting there is what is meant by silence. The outward silence that is a natural result of such a state only provides a convenient label. Silence really has nothing to do with how much you talk. It has to do with how much energy you direct outward to non-essential objects versus how much you direct entirely towards a goal.

And here's where lust of result comes in. It may seem as if I am advocating having total lust of result. But this is far from the truth. Lust of result is a wholly separate object from the

result. But it is so dangerous because it can stand in for the object itself so easily. The two are easy to confuse. When you construct a talisman of, say, Mars, it's easy to focus on all your enemies meeting horrible ends rather than focus merely on putting as much martial energy as possible into that talisman. And you can be right in the middle of the ceremony doing the first and thinking that you're doing the second. When Magick fails, I am convinced that about three quarters of the time, this is what went wrong. The truly silent person is completely focused on the goal, and cannot be swayed even by lust of result.

When I could not write, it was because the rays of my being were scattered. Once I thought merely to focus them again, the words poured forth.

None of this is to say that you cannot seek advice if you're having a problem with something. Ultimately, I would have to stick to my guns and say that this is not the perfect solution to a problem. But so often it is easy for the beginner, and even the intermediate practitioner to lose track of the truth within that sometimes outside advice is less of an imbalance. The road to perfection is not perfect. A moment's reflection shows how absurd the idea that it could be really is. I recommend Crowley's chapter on the Wand in part two of Book 4 for a fuller explication of this idea.

I think at this point I've said all I want to say.



**From the Bodymasters:
Wine for Thelemites
by
Hunaphu and Ixel Balamke**



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

Let us first start with a few verses from the Book of the Law:

Be goodly therefore: dress ye all in fine apparel eat rich foods and drink sweet wines and wines that foam. To worship me take wine and strange drugs whereof I will tell my prophet, and be drunk thereof!

Yes, you knew we had to do it some time. A topic that is close to our hearts for this column is about wine. Actually this is the beginning of a series of articles on wine. Since it is one of the principal sacraments, we thought that we would spend some time to share with you its history, myths, religion, wine tasting, the language of wine, making your own wine, and especially how to drink & purchase good wine without going broke.

First, some history: the oldest wine bottles or rather wine jars ever found are in Iran at the site of Hajji Firuz Tepe. The jars date around 6000 BC. DNA analysis of the jars concluded that the substance inside of the jars is of fermented grapes and tree resin (terebinth tree). The terebinth tree resin was added to the grape juice to help ferment and preserve the wine. As the wine aged in order to prevent it from becoming vinegar, more tree resin was added. Wild grape vines flourished in the Middle East, but other lands were not so lucky.

The wild grape vine did not originally exist in Egypt; it was traded to the region. Even so, jars of wine were buried with First Dynasty Pharaohs. By the Third Dynasty, depictions of wine making started to appear on tomb walls and even larger amounts of wine were buried in the tombs. The Ancient Egyptians created five different kinds of wine and each one was an integral part of the wine list for the afterlife. The ancient Egyptians can also take credit for creating the first wine label. On the stopper of the wine bottles found in most tombs was the hieroglyph for vineyard, the place of the vineyard, and the name of the Pharaoh (the owner of the vineyard). We deduce by these facts that the ancient Egyptians indeed

developed a very sophisticated viticulture. In Mesopotamia beer was the fermented drink of choice and wine was secondary. However, their wine was greatly valued commodity by other nations. Even the Greek historian Herodotus remarks on the vast trade network of wine from the region. There are several depictions of royalty drinking wine from cups and even raising their wine cups, perhaps in a toast. Researchers have discovered that the funerary feast of King Midas at Gordion in 700 BC consisted of Lamb stew, wine, beer, and honey mead.

The Phoenicians were most helpful in the expansion of the wine trade. Their efforts spread the vine to Greece, Italy, France, Spain, and even Russia. Greece itself not only made even more sophisticated wines than Egypt or Mesopotamia but created religious practices around it. Wine making in Greece was not just a business, it was an art form and a part of religion, which is a discussion for another time. Many Greek paintings depict drinking wine. Greece also began experimenting with herbs, spices, and sugars to create better wines and to create wines with different textures or bodies and tastes. They even created an after dinner game of throwing the last mouthfuls of wine in your cup into the air to land on a delicately balanced dish on a pole. Perhaps this was the beginning of the swirling of wine that we now do today to bring out the body and the taste of a fine red. Many a poet from Greece has written extensively on the wonder of wine.

The Romans took wine and viticulture from Greece and raised it to an even higher level. The Gnostic Saint Virgil wrote in one of his famed Georgics instructions on wine making. Wine making was big business for Rome. They made extraordinary strides in barrel aging and the effects of heating and treating the wood of the barrel on the wine. From the barrel the Romans would sometimes then bottle their wines. Glass making had been developed in Syria. The Romans found that they made even more money selling bottled wine. Unfortunately they did not age most of their wines very long and had a practice of heating wine in bottles. The bottles were made with leaded glass, which lead to lead poisoning, which also may help explain the madness of Nero and some of the other Roman leaders.

The Romans kept pushing the envelope on aging wine. One vintage was even reported to have been aged 125 years. The Romans had even devised profound experiments into methods to keep wine from turning into vinegar. The Romans are the ones who introduced wine and vines to all of northern Europe. Julius Caesar brought the vine to Bordeaux. By the 2nd Century vines were in Burgundy; by the 3rd, in the Loire; and by the 4th Champagne, Moselle and the Rhine had producing vines. This was the start of the great French wineries.

With the fall of the Roman Empire and the

collapse of much of the social structure of Europe, the Christian Church became the retainer of the knowledge of the grape. The church identified wine with the "Blood of Christ" and monasteries began to cover the countryside. With these monasteries vineyards were planted, which later became the greatest vineyards of Europe. Even St. Bernard (who wrote of and praised a new military order known as the Knights Templar) started the new abbey of Citeaux and the new Christian order of the Cistercian. His new abbey was the great vineyard of the Clos de Vougeot in Burgundy, which is known still today for its outstanding Burgundy. The only area of France in which the Church did not own vineyards was Bordeaux, which belonged to the Duchy of Aquitaine. Then with the marriage of the Duchy of Aquitaine to English royalty, French wines were imported in large quantity to England.

By the 17th Century wine was the drink of choice. Water was often unsafe to drink and the hops in ale went bad very quickly. However, wine was ready for a change for the better. During the 17th Century great strides were made in glass making. So we see the bottle, the cork, and the corkscrew finally brought together. A new marked change happened in tightly corked bottles; it aged far longer than in barrels. This in turn created in wine a "bouquet" (that wonderful aroma of wine). Basically "vin de garde" was created and with it along came the chance to double the price of well-aged wines.

The owner of Chateau Haut-Brion in 1660 was the first to create "reserve wines". These wines were specially grown grapes which were handled and directed with care under the special direction of the winemaker. This, of course, added more intense flavors and bouquet of the wine not to mention adding to the price. He marked it under the name "Pontac's Head" and it was a big seller at his restaurant in London.

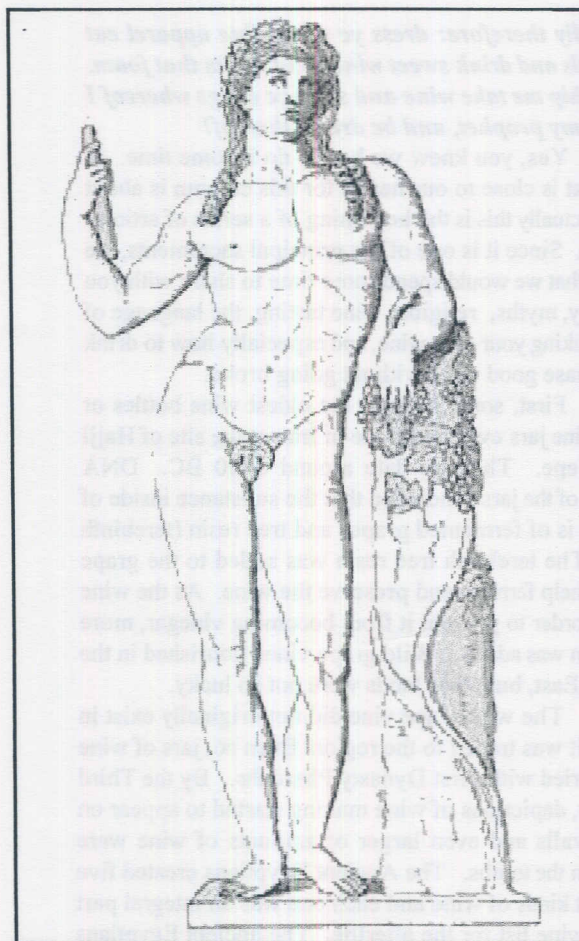
Also during the 17th Century, in Champagne, the monk Dom Perignon took wine and before fermentation added more sugar, which in turn created a new bubbling wine which we all know was named after the region of France - Champagne. When he first tasted the foaming wine he said, "I have tasted the Stars". By adding more sugar CO₂ is created, which causes the bubbles. At first great winemakers scoffed at it, but people loved it. However, it was difficult to export especially across the turbulent seas. A widow of a failing export company solved the problem. She realized while putting on her corset how to fix the problem: cage the cork.

Since then, wine making has become more science. Where in the past a bad year for grapes would spell disaster for a winemaker, more modern techniques can still produce a fair vintage. In a good year a fabulous bottle can be made. Today wine is made and consumed

in every country in the world, even Islamic countries where alcohol is taboo. Today wines are developed for a wide variety of experiences and a cornucopia of extremes in complexity, finish, aroma, color and of course, taste.

Wine has had a much more vast history than the scope of this small article could hope to indicate. We suggest reading Hugh Johnson's *History of Wine*. It is a remarkable text on the history of wine by a man whose great passion and job is wine (lucky bastard). Until the next time, your homework will be to buy a couple bottles of wines that you have never tried and drink them. First make notes on the color, how does it smell, how does it taste, and finally how does it finish. Finally, remember: always unto Nuit!

Love is the law, love under will.



Calendar of Events April, May, and June 1999 e.v.

April 1999 e.v.

- Sun 4 Gnostic Mass, 7:00 pm
Thu 8 First Day of the writing of The Book Of The Law @
Agavatal's, 7:00 pm
Fri 9 Second Day of the writing of The Book Of The Law
@ AHBH & Mem's, 7:00 pm
Sat 10 Third Day of the writing of The Book Of The Law,
7:00 pm
Thu 15 Dramatic Ritual Technique - @ Agavatal's, 7:00 pm
Sun 18 Gnostic Mass, 7:00 pm
Thu 22 Dramatic Ritual Technique - @ Agavatal's, 7:00 pm
Sun 25 Research Guild: Greater Key of Solomon, 7:00 pm

May 1999 e.v.

- Sun 2 Gnostic Mass, 7:00 pm
Thu 6 Dramatic Ritual Technique - @ Agavatal's, 7:00 pm
Sun 9 Introduction to Kabbalah, 7:00 pm
Thu 13 Dramatic Ritual Technique - @ Agavatal's, 7:00 pm
Sun 16 Gnostic Mass, 7:00 pm
Thu 20 Dramatic Ritual Technique - @ Agavatal's, 7:00 pm
Sun 23 Movie Night - tba (make a suggestion), 7:00 pm
Thu 27 Dramatic Ritual Technique - @ Agavatal's, 7:00 pm
Fri 28 Minerval Initiations, call ahead
Sat 29 First Degree and Second Degree Initiations, call
ahead
Sat 29 Gnostic Mass & Feast !!!, call ahead
Sun 30 Library, Discussion & Temple Improvement Night,
7:00 pm

June 1999 e.v.

- Thu 3 Dramatic Ritual Technique - @ Agavatal's, 7:00 pm
Sun 6 Gnostic Mass, 7:00 pm
Thu 10 Dramatic Ritual Technique - @ Agavatal's, 7:00 pm
Sun 13 The Gnostic Mass, a discussion, part one, 7:00 pm
Thu 17 Dramatic Ritual Technique - @ Agavatal's, 7:00 pm
Sat 19 Third Degree Initiations, call ahead
Sun 20 Summer Solstice Celebration, 7:00 pm
Thu 24 Dramatic Ritual Technique - @ Agavatal's, 7:00 pm
Sun 27 Gnostic Mass, 7:00 pm

How to Contact Us

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Those wishing to submit material for Ophiuchus may write to the address given for Sekhet-Bast-Ra lodge, attn: Ophiuchus, Editor.



So, I notice you've
found a sexy goat! I guarantee
you a place in heaven for five
minutes in a bathroom with
it! Deal?

Son of Man

okay jesus,

dance the hula

to tell your story

I'm sick of listening

I'll just watch your navel roll

(I'm glad you've got one)

above your grass skirt

By Ted Vanderveldt

