

## Bahkti and The Order

I am often asked (almost always apologetically) what a member who is unemployed can contribute to the Order of Thelemic Knights. I have decided that the best way to explain the answer is to look at the illusionary conflict between wealth vs. spirituality. This issue has been debated by grater minds than mine, and I hope I don't disappoint if I say right from the beginning that I don't expect to satisfactorily address the issue. But I will give it the old college try.

We'll begin with the wisdom of McGregor Matthers.

*"For wert thou to summon the Gnomes to pander thine avarice, thou wouldst no longer command them, but they would command thee. Wouldst thou abuse the pure beings of the woods and mountains to fill thy coffers and satisfy thy hunger of Gold? Wouldst thou debase the Spirits of Living Fire to serve thy wrath and hatred? Wouldst thou violate the purity of the Souls of the Waters to pander thy lust of debauchery? Wouldst thou force the Spirits of the Evening Breeze to minister thy folly and caprice? Know that with such desires thou canst but attract the Weak, not the Strong, and in that case the Weak will have power over thee." – Liber Librae*

One of the things that I admire so much about Thelema is its responsibility toward the ongoing unfolding of human evolution. It is a religion rooted in the idea of mutual respect and the recognition of the divinity of the human spirit, and we are reminded often in the Book of The Law more than once, that this is a paradigm which is concerned not so much by what a person has, but with what a person is.

We have observed that a good culture leads to greater sense of self-ownership, and this is a crucial first step in our efforts to discover our own True Will, while a healthy environment shapes ethical values. Accordingly, at the heart of the Order of Thelemic Knights is the desire to create a culture and environment where our kin can develop those ethics described by our Holy Books and thereby come to a greater understanding of their own True Nature. There is an old proverb that says: "The Work will show you how." The rub, of course, is that one must work.

We live in economically uncertain times, and I have seen the results of financial fear manifest in two ways in the area of religion. It is often said that those who do not study history are bound to repeat it. Who ever came up with that was a very wise and profound individual. I observe some groups embrace the idea of the attainment of wealth for its own sake because such wealth (as in the ownership of land, for example) confers various powers in today's capitalist society. Typically, these religious establishments reject individuals or write them off when they are unable to contribute financially to the organization's mission of attaining wealth. There is a tremendous cornucopia of creative talent wasted when this occurs, thereby creating an environment that, instead of fostering wholesome ethical values, indulges a kind of consumerism which is indifferent to spiritual ends. These groups quickly become little more than social clubs for individuals within certain income brackets and lack the diversity of a truly healthy culture. In the West, we follow the illusion of material gain. The goal is clear, and most people, even people claiming to hold their spirituality as the most important thing in their lives are drawn to the game of accumulating toys and prostituting themselves. They are like moths blinded by the shinny light which will eventually burn them.

In contrast, some churches, groups and orders cling to the idea that money is inherently evil. These groups tend to struggle unnecessarily to the extent that they are unable to accomplish their stated missions. Friends, I can tell you from personal experience that there are few things in this world that are as distracting as poverty.

So how do we reconcile these two conflicting ideas so that we avoid these sorts of problems in our own organization? I have an idea:

The rule I use for measuring evil is simple. In my personal life, anything that distracts me from my goal to pursue personal knowledge is considered evil. We need to have a healthy approach toward wealth. The one thing that we must never lose track of is our mission. If our mission includes Union with God, then this must come first.

Religious institutions don't exist primarily to have wealth, buildings or bells and whistles. (Admittedly, however, they do draw in the sorts of people who find these things important). Religious organizations are self defined by their Work in the world and exist to serve their member's spiritual goals. Without those services the organization will create an unhealthy culture lacking wholesome ethical values, and with that one can never turn a building into a church, regardless of how many people one puts into it.

Now you might be thinking that the Eastern renunciation is also an illusion, and you would be correct. Both of these concepts are illusions - we are woven into the tapestry that is Maya. Each of us has to determine for ourselves which illusion will serve us best to make us a better person, and which illusion is more effective in bringing us to our ultimate attainment.

What can you do to make sure that the Order thrives? First, you must care about it enough to contribute something. If an organization is composed of people who take and never give back it is likely that it will eventually resort to measuring worth by financial contribution. When I say that one should contribute something I don't necessarily mean money. If you are a warrior, then fight; if you are a doctor, then heal. Be honest with yourself, and do what is in your nature... and do it for the good which exists so that you might one day look into the face of your God and see your Self.

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