

# The Scroll of Set

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Issue Number 35

Volume III-11

July 1978

Editor: Michael Waters III°

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## [1] The Third Year

- by Michael A. Aquino V°  
High Priest of Set

On each anniversary of the founding of the Temple of Set, I have prepared a report for the *Scroll* summarizing the past year's developments and outlining some prospects for the future. During the first two years of the Æon, it seemed that these reports could be justifiably positive. Everyone appeared to be enjoying the Temple, contributing to its overall creativity, and cooperating in a spirit of friendship, trust, and mutual respect.

As it turned out, however, our utopian expectations were a bit premature. This past year the momentum of the Temple was interrupted by two unfortunate incidents.

In November our first Executive Director, Priest William F. Murray, experienced an emotional and physical breakdown, necessitating his resignation from office, retirement from the Priesthood, and convalescence under medical supervision.

Twenty-four hours after Murray's breakdown, Magister Robert Ethel, Chairman of the Council of Nine, resigned from the Temple to form an organization of his own. After trying unsuccessfully to get me to turn my back on the I°/II° Initiates and Priesthood of the Temple and cooperate with him, Ethel suddenly reversed himself. He leveled charges of corruption at me, sneered at the Temple and Priesthood whose care and guardianship he had accepted only four months earlier [upon reappointment to the Council Chairmanship], and endeavored to lure personal friends into his new group with promises of higher titles than they had been able to attain within the Temple.

Ultimately two Priests - Roland Holt and Howard Sinnott - opted to follow Ethel, as did about six or seven I°/II° Setians who believed his accusations. A few other Temple Initiates, presumably dismayed by the very fact of the crisis, have since resigned from the Temple without affirming a position one way or the other.

In terms of numbers the schism affected the Temple very little, but the Temple has never measured itself in terms of numbers. Psychologically the damage was serious. The reputations of the Priesthood, the Masters of the Temple, and the Council as groups of high integrity and impeccable motives were shaken. My own

ethics and credentials as High Priest of Set and a Magus V° were attacked not partially, but with venom as sudden as it was extreme.

It would have been a farcical situation save for Ethel's high degree and office, and for the unfamiliarity of many of our newer Initiates with the actual facts. In the resulting confusion the Council and I were forced to state, restate, and document the truth to such an extent that many of our other projects and responsibilities came virtually to a standstill for the ensuing eight months. At this writing I think we've cleaned up the bulk of the damage and deceit attempted by Ethel and Holt, although I understand a few more Setians are still being propagandized.

Why did something like this happen to the Temple? More importantly, what can we learn from it to prevent or at least minimize similar problems in the future? Dr. F.I. Regardie commented to me that schisms born of ego-inflation are an almost inescapable feature of magical orders. He has witnessed many others in his time, commencing with the breakup of the Golden Dawn at the turn of this century.

Let me begin by recalling the experience of the Church of Satan. As it began to grow beyond the scope of a San Francisco organization, it too encountered revolts and attempted schisms. At first Anton LaVey rode through these as fairly as he could. But, as there seemed to be no end to the incidents, he grew increasingly cynical and disillusioned, first about the integrity of the C/S as an organization and then about the sanctity of the degree system. He spoke more and more about the necessity to evaluate Satanism as a "movement", not as an institution, and of the failure of the degree-system to draw meaningful distinctions among individuals.

To make it more difficult for incidents to spread beyond a local level, Anton severely curtailed conclaves, inter-member communications, and local/regional publications. Finally, in May of X, he decided to exploit the degree-system for purposes of financial and material profit.

It was at this point that those Satanists who believed in the authenticity and sanctity of the C/S and the degree-system resigned to form a "Second Church of Satan" which, after the North Solstice X, came into being as the Temple of Set.

At one point during the XII-XIII crisis, Ethel argued that what he was doing was essentially no different from "what I had done to Anton LaVey in 1975".

Strictly speaking, however, Ethel had come full circle back to Anton's position that the organization was non-productive and the degree-system meaningless. Whereas Anton had determined to reap practical benefits from his conclusion, however, Ethel opted to attempt a new organization and degree-system based not upon a recognized

Mandate from the Prince of Darkness, but rather upon Ethel's self-proclaimed concepts of what they should be.

From a conceptual standpoint, this is the basic distinction between the Temple of Set and Ethel's Order of the Inverse Pentagram (O.I.P.): Ethel bases his claim to the title of Magus and the inspiration for the O.I.P. solely upon his own ideas while I understand the degree-system, including the V°, as authenticated and sanctified by a higher intellectual presence: Set, the Prince of Darkness. Accordingly I understand my function as a Magus to be that of an **agency** through which a magical principle (*Xeper*) is defined and explained by the Will of Set. I further presume that the Temple, like the Golden Dawn, A.'A.'. , and Church of Satan before it, is the embodiment of a Mandate greater than simply the collective desires of its Initiates. It is precisely what its name implies: the Temple of Set.

This distinction makes it far easier for Ethel to explain the O.I.P. than for a Priest of Set to explain the Temple of Set, since Ethel is dealing with a known quantity while the Temple is dealing with many concepts so overwhelming that we can only approach them by induction and approximation.

The O.I.P. is nothing more than a social club for materialists who enjoy ceremonial pageantry, and this fact bespeaks the ultimate futility of its posture: If it remains true to its proclaimed atheism, then its priesthoods, rituals, and mysteries are just so much play-acting. But if it attempts to introduce any sort of external authentication into its practices, the O.I.P. betrays its origin as nothing more than a cold-blooded attempt to exploit Murray's illness, the climate of trust and open communication within the Temple of Set, and Ethel's high office in order to cripple and supplant the Temple with an authoritarian dictatorship.

These are strong words, and I use them deliberately, because I want you to see behind the rhetoric to just what was really at stake. When the final crisis in the Church of Satan arose, there was no way for the institution to be saved in defiance of Anton LaVey, because he maintained absolute legal, financial, and organizational control of it.

When I drafted the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws for the Temple in July of X, therefore, I determined to design an institution so open and so counterbalanced that misuse of it for **anyone's** personal aggrandizement would be virtually impossible.

Accordingly organizational power was carefully divided between the Council of Nine, the High Priest, and the Executive Director via an interlocking system of checks and balances. All funds have been kept in corporate savings and checking accounts requiring multiple signatures for transaction, and the

legalizing of the Temple as a California non-profit corporation was accomplished to make it just that much more difficult for someone to abuse it or exploit it.

[Complete sets of the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws are provided to every III°, and every Setian is welcome to view them.] Finally since our inception we have endeavored to maintain a climate of openness and trust that would inhibit cliques and predatory factions from gaining a foothold.

The effectiveness of these various safeguards can be seen, I think, both in the way in which the Ethel schism developed and in the operational profile of the Temple itself during and after the crisis. Although he was Chairman of the Council, a position with, among other things, the power to remove a corrupt High Priest from office, Ethel could not have established credibility for false charges among a majority of the Nine [who would have had to confirm any such action of his by vote]. Hence the Chairman's office, although powerful enough to protect the Temple against an incompetent/megalomaniac High Priest, is useless as a platform from which to stage a "palace revolt".

Ethel's only option was to disassociate himself completely from the checks and balances of the Temple structure, placing himself in a position in which he would be responsible only to himself. And that is what he did. Although he announced that his O.I.P. would be governed by a council, it would be as toothless as the old Church of Satan Council of Nine - at most a group of favored advisors who would have no institutional or legal power to challenge or overrule Ethel's desires.

Because the Temple By-Laws specify procedures for the replacement of all officials, designation of a new Chairman of the Council and Executive Director was orderly and systematic. The new Chairman was nominated by me per recommendations from the Councillors and then confirmed by formal vote of the Council. The new Executive Director was nominated by the Chairman and again confirmed by Council vote.

Had such procedures not existed, and had the Priesthood not determined to apply them constructively, efficiently, and responsibly, it is possible that the Temple might have broken apart under the shocks that it received. Not only has it survived, however, but it has come through the ordeal with a greater sense of its own strength and character than had been apparent in the days when no such obstacles had been encountered.

The materialist/atheist alternative that had been presented and the criticisms that had been raised concerning the religious philosophy of the Temple also forced Setians of all degrees to reexamine their positions.



Some, who decided that they could not understand the propositions for the existence of Set or who grossly misunderstood the essence of that entity, but who enjoyed the pageantry of occultism, opted for Ethel's O.I.P. Others left altogether. But still others, whether by reason or sensation or a combination of the two, came to the realization that there was indeed an essence of the Temple and the Æon that was unique and authentic. They not only admit to being Setians; they take so profound a pride in that affirmation that it transforms their entire mode of existence. They look at the past, the present, and the future with an insight and an understanding that, if not yet supernatural, are at nature's intellectual extremes. And they are determined to expand and ultimately transcend those extremes to experience the phenomenon of Setamorphosis.

We have learned the hard way that the pains we took to protect the Temple against abuse by cliques or individuals were justified. We had the machinery to deal with such contingencies; the Golden Dawn, the A.'A.', and the C/S did not. They came to an end, and we survive. "Those who do not study history are condemned to relive it."

We have also learned the hard way that the Temple cannot make silk purses out of sows' ears. Persons who do not possess the qualities characteristic of the Elect cannot be taught them. Nor can persons who reject the exercise of those qualities be "rescued", no matter what degree they have attained. We must content ourselves with recognizing those who appear to be Elect, then providing them with the contacts and research assists to develop and encourage their potential.

If one chooses to experiment with atomic energy, one must risk atomic explosions. And if the Temple proposes to unleash dormant powers of the will, it must risk explosions of that power which accidentally or deliberately injure it. There is no alternative.

Consequently suggestions that the channels of information and communication in the Temple be more restrictive to lessen the chances of future Ethel-revolts cannot be accepted. We would then be following the path of the Church of Satan making our existence more comfortable at the expense of our true reason for existing at all. We must understand this now, and we must remember it in the future.

Moreover crises of this sort are not merely instructive for the damage that they cause. The history of the Temple suggests that we are prone to critical episodes which test the evolutionary stamina of the institution and its Initiates: "Seldon crises" (as defined in Asimov's *Foundation* trilogy ... on our reading list).

The resolution of a Seldon crisis does not return everything to status quo. Rather it functions as a sort of evolutionary dialectic: The clash of a thesis (the pre-existing situation) and an antithesis (the crisis) results in a synthesis (a more advanced mode of existence). We can see this process very clearly in the present case, as the Temple is far more precise now both intellectually and magically than it was a year ago. So while our "normal" projects may have been stopped in their tracks for eight months, the Great Project has taken quite a leap forward.

Now that the dust has cleared, we are in a position to bring our "normal" projects up to par. Later this summer the first edition of the *Crystal Tablet of Set*, an introductory document written for the I°, will be published. Originally designed to provide more sophisticated coverage of the same basic concepts addressed in the *Satanic Bible*, it has evolved into a text that is both more specific in what it does cover and more responsible in terms of its academic source.

Unlike the *Satanic Bible* it does not attempt to generalize the entire sweep of our philosophy. Rather it is designed to be the first in many linked stages of magical and philosophical doctrines presented to Setians. Editor and author of the *CT* is Magister L. Dale Seago, who has devoted much of his time during the past year researching, writing, and editing the document for release. Like other Temple publications it will be a "living" work, structured for efficient and economical revision as the process of *Xeper* continues.

Expect to see some revisions, expansions, and additions to the *Ruby Tablet of Set*. Glinda and I are at work upon one rather ambitious contribution right now, and others (such as some conjectures, shall we say, concerning Chambers' *The King in Yellow*) are pending. Many of you have mentioned *RT* drafts you're preparing as well. The reading list, victim of two drastic overhauls since it first appeared, will probably undergo still another updating [and fattening]. And who knows? There may be still other *RT*-related surprises in store - perhaps sooner than you think.

I have asked Magistra Wendall and Priest Waters to prepare, as their time permits, a general topical index to the *Scroll of Set* to date, so that the publication's encyclopedic value will be enhanced. An enormous amount of the substantive research conducted by Setians since the year X has appeared in this periodical, and its intellectual depth is far greater than that of any other publication of an "occult" orientation. Any Setian who does not have the complete set of *Scrolls* to date should make it a point to acquire them, and all Setians who have them should occasionally review them for the many fresh insights they offer into the unfolding of the Æon. [I

am surprised at how many bits of information I may miss at a first reading.]

You have heard me emphasize the importance of the *Scroll* before, not as a means for the proclamation of dogma but as a forum in which Setians from all parts of the globe may address the entire membership on matters important to them and to the Temple as a whole. If we are determined to have and to sustain a Fellowship that spans vast reaches of geography, rather than a varying number of purely-localized groups with only a vague sense of the entire Temple, we must not only **read** the *Scroll*; we must **speak** through it to one another. [At the San Francisco Conclave Priest Waters asked me if I would contribute a regular column to each new issue after this one, and I agreed. But such contributions of mine will be kept as succinct as possible, so that all of you will have maximum access to the newsletter.]

Conclaves too will receive fresh emphasis during this next year. There never seem to be enough of them to meet the enthusiasm sparked by them! In addition to local and regional gatherings, we hope to schedule the first truly Temple-wide Conclave since our founding, for the summer of XIV in Detroit. As much as we may endeavor to bridge the distances separating us with letters, calls, and publications, there are still so many factors in philosophical dialogue, magical workings, and personal relationships that cannot survive without first-hand contact.

As our scope of operation continues to grow, we will proceed with the integration of electronic data-processing into both our administrative and our creative operations. At present [and for the last three years] our entire membership and *Scroll* mailing records have been handled by computer. And in addition to Glinda (whom you met in the November XII *Scroll*), there are now microcomputers at work in both Magister Grumboski's data-processing headquarters and in the office of the Executive Director. Eventually we plan to develop interfaces for these, so that vast quantities of data may travel across the Temple almost instantaneously. You will probably see one of these computers handling registration/scheduling/locating at the National Conclave.

And the day may not be far off when every Priest of Set and to some extent every Setian will be able to obtain both research material and single or group communications links simply by dialing a telephone number and placing the receiver in a standard, personal-sized terminal the size of a portable typewriter or television set. At that time printed documents and newsletters may become archaic, as would many letters of a routine nature. Not as fantastic a scenario as you might think.

On an interpersonal level the Executive Director, with the aid of data-processing, has just completed a project matching every Initiate of the Temple with at least two or three contacts of a higher degree, so that no one need feel out-of-touch or awkward about initiating dialogue. Again we feel that this is all the more important because of the relative isolation of many of our Initiates. Reports that have come in to date indicate that everyone seems to like the new idea.

And so we commence our fourth year of Coming Into Being. As I look back at the first three, I see far more reasons to be satisfied with what we've accomplished than reasons to regret the jolts we've occasionally experienced. As Priest Tom Huddleston once so aptly remarked, no one said this thing was going to be easy. As we go at it with greater energy, coordination, and awareness, it's going to get tougher. And there will be more Seldon crises, too, I suspect, if only to keep us on our toes when we think that we've finally thought of everything!

When I began this report, I wondered whether I should make you any promises concerning the future of this Æon, which always seems so irritatingly open-ended. About the only thing I can come up with is a guarantee of lack of boredom. [Unless, as Ken Kesey used to say, you decide to get "off the bus".] It is a future to be determined not just by you as a person, but by That within you which is [or may be] Elect.

A short time ago I saw the motion picture *Damien: Omen II*. And I had something of a surprise, because the actor playing the young Antichrist is virtually a mirror-image of me as I was at that age [although he lacks my infamous eyebrows]. As I watched his bewilderment upon realizing his identity, I felt again the shock of the North Solstice X and the conviction that has continued to grow in me since that moment.

How foolish they were, those horror-stricken Christians who collected the fables of the "Book of Revelation"! What would a true Antichrist want with world domination if those under his sway were no more than the semi-beasts they now are? He would merely be one more Alexander, one more Cæsar, one more Bonaparte.

No, the strength of the Æon which has now been unleashed lies in its promise to free the Elect among mankind once and for all from the great patterns of animalistic conceptualization and behavior in which they have been imprisoned for so many thousands of years: to take that realization of True Will as proclaimed by the Beast 666 and force it into an independent focus of identity and creative power through the principle of *Xeper*.



Without this ambition the Temple, as colorful and stimulating as it might be, would be inauthentic. With it, and with the collective will of the Elect in support of it, we are indeed authentic so much so that no one else on this world can begin to understand how or why this is so.

And therefore, terrified, confused, and suspicious as they are, they are arrogant enough to caricature a Magus as a mere negation of their own demagogue an "Antichrist" and to think that his weapons would be terror, murder, and domination by force! Jesus Christ is irrelevant to this Æon, as are all others who champion the return of mankind to the iron grip of the Natural mechanism. And the power of a true Magus lies not in the tools of a Cæsar or a Napoleon but in a Word: *Xeper*.

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## [2] Council of Nine Appointments

The *Scroll* has the pleasure of announcing the appointment, by unanimous consent of the Council, of Priestess Linda Thomas to a nine-year term as a member of the Council of Nine. Her term of office will expire June 30, XXII/1987.

It is also our pleasure to announce the confirmation of the appointment, by unanimous consent of the Council save for his own abstention, of Magister Ronald K. Barrett as Chairman of the Council of Nine for the term to expire June 30, XIV/1979.

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## [3] Setian Elitism

- by Leon Marvell II<sup>o</sup>

In recent issues of the *Scroll* considerable debate has been engendered over the concept of "elitism". Without wishing to extend the controversy any more than is necessary, I feel that I can offer my opinions as an alternative to those ideas already proffered.

Consternation over the adjective "elitist" is rife in many other circles than that which we are concerned (the Temple of Set). A specific example is one with which I am intimately familiar; and that concerns the "fine artist". In an art school environment there is considerable attempt at justifying one's work whilst avoiding the tag of "elitist". Marxist and neo-Marxist æsthetics are the trend of the day and justifiably so.

However there is no way out of it; the fine artist is an elitist. The ideas of Conceptual Art and Abstract Art are the realms of the intellectual and the pseudointellectual. It is a specific field for a specific public. It cannot communicate to the masses. It uses a special and specific jargon and patterns of thought atypical of the "general public".

And so it is with the Temple of Set, no more and no less. We as a fraternity of magicians are an elite body. We use a jargon that is incomprehensible to outsiders; our methods of thought and working are of a special kind that is nonsensical to outsiders. In this way we are elite. **Not** because we are "better" or "superior" to other humans, but because we have chosen a special vocation and direction in life. Like plumbers. Or brain surgeons.

We cannot hope to enroll the whole of humanity under our cloak of wisdom because many will not follow and do not want to. They are prepared to merely follow their lot, even if it may seem meaningless to us.

Who is to say that we are superior humans because we are following the difficult path toward Setamorphosis and the implications of the extremes of knowledge? I certainly know of no Universal Measuring Stick. As it is written in the *Book of Coming Forth by Night*, Set is only looking for the Elect (a word not even remotely etymologically connected with "elite"), and as such they are a small percentage of humanity who will wish to understand.

The reasons why one feels one should reject the epithet of "elitist" are also very real, and we must not become too used to the concept of our elitism. It implies a small, insular group, fed constantly upon its own ideas and self-importance and cut off from the world surrounding it: a terminal concept. The structure of the Temple makes it of necessity an elite order. The ideas inherent in it, we all hope, will negate the dangers co-existent with this concept.

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## [4] Notice Concerning William F. Murray

Reports are reaching the Priesthood that William F. Murray is currently contacting various Setians on the pretext of warning them about supposed repressive or irresponsible policies of the Temple of Set.

Murray has apparently been asking that his comments remain secret. Hence it has been difficult for the Priesthood to uncover the source of a number of completely unsubstantiated rumors within the Temple. Now that the facts are out in the open, the problem has been referred to the Council of Nine.

At the Santa Barbara Conclave last fall, Murray became drunk and disorderly to the extent that he was stopped by the Santa Barbara Police and spreadeagled against his rented car. Upon Magister Seago's promise to the police that Murray would be cared for, the officers released Murray to him. Still under the influence of alcohol, however, Murray disrupted the Conclave ritual and finally had to be

taken back to his hotel by the High Priest. The next day, after telephonic consultation with and approval by Robert Ethel (then Chairman of the Council), the High Priest and the five Councillors present at the Conclave requested and received Murray's resignation as Executive Director.

The High Priest also specified that Murray take a leave of absence from III° functions for "medical reasons", with the understanding that Murray place himself under a doctor's care. Murray agreed to do this. And so, with the expectation that Murray would regain control of himself, it was stated in the November *Scroll* that Murray's "retirement" from the Executive Directorship was for reasons of "pressure and strain". However the actual developments at the Conclave can be attested to by any of the 24 Setians besides Murray in attendance, and the decisions made there to deal with the problem can be attested to by the High Priest or any of the five Councillors who were present (Wendall, Barrett, Sinclair, Seago, Bast).

After the Conclave Murray continued to violate ethical standards of the Priesthood via secret overtures to Ethel following the latter's disgrace, unannounced tape-recording of a telephone conversation with at least one IV°, and slander of a number of Setians.

When called to account for such behavior by the High Priest on 1/25/XIII, Murray offered his resignation as a III°. In consideration of Murray's continuing medical supervision, the High Priest did not accept, but instead asked him to "retire" as a III°. Murray would continue to receive III° recognition and benefits, but he would cease to exercise the office of Priest, and he would direct all criticisms of policies or persons that he might have only to the High Priest. Murray acknowledged this condition on 2/22/XIII.

It is unfortunately the case that Murray is again ignoring the arrangements compassionately made for him and is attempting, out of sight of the Priesthood, to spread misinformation and advocate distrust of the Temple leadership - presumably to influence as many Setians as he can to listen to him alone.

The Temple cannot stand by and allow its Initiates to be victimized in this manner with no means of knowing the truth. And, while some Setians have reported Murray's approaches to them, we do not know how many others have been contacted by him. And so, as much as we regret having to bring the facts of Murray's condition and conduct out into the open, we are left with no alternative.

If you are being contacted by him, please bring the details to the attention of any member of the Priesthood, so that responsible and if necessary

documentary evidence of our true policies may be provided to you.