

The Way of the  
Golden Section  
A Manual of Occult Training



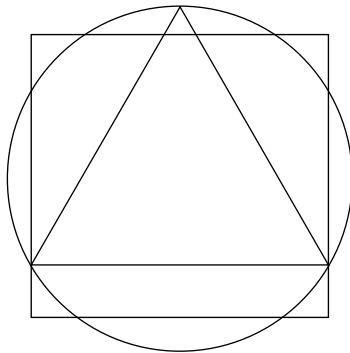
JOHN MICHAEL GREER

# THE WAY OF THE GOLDEN SECTION



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A Manual of Occult Training

*John Michael Greer*



AEON

Aeon Books  
PO Box 76401  
London W5 9RG

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A C.I.P. for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN-13: 978-1-91350-466-3

Typeset by Medlar Publishing Solutions Pvt Ltd, India

Printed in Great Britain

[www.aeonbooks.co.uk](http://www.aeonbooks.co.uk)

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## INTRODUCTION

**F**or more than five thousand years, since its origin in the temples of ancient Egypt, occultism—the science of the Unseen—has existed in the western world. Like everything else, it has had its golden ages and its times of obscurity, its successes and its failures; there have been times when its practitioners were welcome in the courts of kings, and other times when they were derided, persecuted, or burnt at the stake. Rationalists have condemned occultism as superstition and religious authorities have denounced it as devil worship; by and large, neither group has known much of anything about what it was they condemned, but blind hostility toward the unknown is a tolerably common bad habit among human beings.

In reality, occultism is neither superstition nor devil worship. It is a set of teachings about those things in our world that we don't experience through the five material senses. It is not opposed to science—occultists recognize that scientific research is the best toolkit our species has yet found for figuring out how matter and energy work, and only wish that scientists would notice that there is more to the world than matter and energy. It is not opposed to religion—many occultists are themselves people of faith, and pursue their occult studies and practices while still following the tenets of their religion. It is a third thing

distinct from these two. You turn to science to learn about matter and energy; you turn to religion to learn about faith and morals; you turn to occultism to learn about consciousness and the unseen worlds that lie between the realm of Deity and the realm of matter.

Every so often it becomes necessary to reframe the teachings of occultism in new ways, so that those teachings can address the needs, the concerns, the hopes, and the fears of people in an ever-changing world. This book is one such reframing, drawing on the long heritage of occultism but presenting that heritage in a way that is suited to students today.

In a very real sense, this book is an experiment. Most occult schools in the past used either correspondence study or in-person teaching to pass on the traditions and practices of occultism. This book, and certain other volumes related to it, provide an open source self-study program instead. As a student of these teachings, you don't need to submit your work to a mentor or take classes. The practices given here are self-correcting and will teach you through experience. By practicing them and performing the ritual of initiation that concludes this book, you become a member of the Golden Section Fellowship.

The Golden Section Fellowship is not an organization of the usual kind. It charges no dues and hands out no certificates. The qualifications for membership are simply your willingness to take on a course of occult training. You become a member by working your way through this book, and you remain a member so long as you continue to do the practices of the Fellowship. So long as you keep up those practices, no one can expel you from the Fellowship, but if you stop doing the practices, your membership lapses at once. And if you decide to take them up again? Welcome back; the door is always open.

Occultists use the word "egregor" (pronounced EGG-ruh-gore) for a collective mind or consciousness. An egregor is created whenever a group of people share the same feelings, thoughts, ideas, or values. Nations have egregors, so do cities and communities, so do churches and clubs and businesses, and so do more temporary gatherings of people. If you've ever attended a sports game and felt some force bigger than yourself make you leap to your feet cheering when your team scores, you know something of the power that an egregor can have. The Golden Section Fellowship has its own egregor—in a very real sense, it *is* an egregor. You help to build and strengthen that egregor by doing the practices in this book, and the egregor helps to guide and strengthen you, in ways you may or may not recognize.

### *Sources of the tradition*

Occultism includes many different traditions, schools, and lineages, no two of which have exactly the same teachings and practices to offer. It has therefore been standard for a long time for students of occultism to start by learning one tradition as thoroughly as possible, and then to study other traditions in order to fill in the inevitable gaps. That was certainly what I did! The material covered in this book thus comes from several different sources, though each element has been adapted and tested to work well with the others. Prospective members of the Golden Section Fellowship may find it helpful, or at least interesting, to know something about the traditions that contributed to the ideas and practices presented here.

### *The Druid revival*

This part of the story begins in the early 1700s in England, where a small but significant number of people objected to the forced choice between dogmatic Christianity and dogmatic scientific materialism their society offered them. They were deeply concerned about the casual destruction of the British environment being caused by the Industrial Revolution, and they wanted a spirituality that was oriented toward nature and open to independent thought. Since no existing tradition offered that, they drew inspiration from the ancient Druids—the priests and lore-masters of the ancient Celtic peoples—and took the name of Druid for themselves.

The history of the Druid Revival is complex, and may never be fully unraveled. Certainly, though, Druid organizations spread across the English-speaking world over the years that followed, reaching America by the 1790s and Australia by the 1850s. In 1912, physician and Freemason Dr. James Manchester founded the Ancient Order of Druids in America (AODA) in Boston. Manchester received a charter from an English Druid order, the Ancient and Archaeological Order of Druids and he became AODA's first Grand Archdruid. AODA was a very minor presence in the American occult scene until 1952, when Dr. Juliet Ashley became its third Grand Archdruid.

Ashley was a longtime occultist, a member of the Theosophical Society and a student of the great American occultist Manly P. Hall. By the time she was elected to lead AODA, she had already become the

head of two other occult organizations, the Order of Spiritual Alchemy and the Order of Modern Essenes, and had been initiated into a third, the Holy Order of the Golden Dawn. Under her leadership, all these organizations exchanged teachings and practices in the way that occultists usually do.

### *The Universal Gnostic Church*

Also in 1952, three American Universalist ministers—Revs. Omar Zasluchy, Owen Symanski, and Matthew Shaw—objected to the approaching merger of their denomination with the Unitarian Church, and left to form a church of their own. Like so many other religious dissidents in American history, they ended up coming into contact with occultism. In their case, it was by way of a French tradition that followed in the footsteps of the ancient Gnostics: that branch of early Christianity that valued personal religious experience (*gnosis* in Greek) over dogmatism. The denomination these three ministers founded was thus named the Universal Gnostic Church.

In 1972, Rev. Shaw moved to Boulder, Colorado and met Dr. Ashley. The two of them became close friends; Shaw was initiated into all three of the orders Ashley headed as well as the Holy Order of the Golden Dawn, and Ashley was consecrated as a bishop of the Universal Gnostic Church. It was a student of theirs, Dr. John Gilbert, who initiated me into all these organizations in 2003 and 2004, and it was from the material that I received at that time that the Golden Section Fellowship draws most of its practical teachings.

### *Sacred geometry*

The occult and spiritual dimensions of geometry have been part of the teachings of occultism for thousands of years, but by the twentieth century sacred geometry was at a very low ebb. It was preserved in fragmentary form in the rituals of Freemasonry and studied intensively by a handful of occultists, of whom R.A. Schwaller de Lubicz was the most significant. That began to change in 1968 when British occultist John Michell published *The View Over Atlantis*, which became a runaway bestseller in the counterculture of the time. This and Michell's later books included a great deal of sacred geometry. In Michell's wake, older books on sacred geometry found their way back into print and new

books on the same subject began to appear. It was one of these latter—Robert Lawlor’s superb *Sacred Geometry: Philosophy and Practice*—that convinced me that sacred geometry deserved as much study as I had time to give it. It was from another source, however, that I saw how it could be combined with occultism to make a workable spiritual path for people today.

### *The Golden Section Order*

Many years ago, in the 1970s and 1980s, one of the most innovative and interesting of the Druid groups in Britain was the Golden Section Order Society for the Preservation of Celtic Lore, Monuments and Antiquities. The Golden Section Order or GSO, as most people called it, was founded by a talented architect, occultist, and Druid named Colin Murray, who named it after the Golden Section or Golden Proportion, one of the most important relationships in sacred geometry. The GSO published a journal, *The New Celtic Review*, and a series of broadsheets which explored Celtic spirituality, occultism, and sacred geometry, illustrated by Murray’s exquisite ink drawings. Unfortunately the GSO did not survive Murray’s death in 1986, but some of his work was passed on to other Druid orders afterward.

That was where I first encountered the GSO and its work. One of the Druid orders in which I have been trained and initiated handed out, to initiates of a certain grade, a collection of Murray’s broadsheets. Of all the many things I experienced in the course of my Druid education, the GSO broadsheets were among the most influential. It was by studying them closely, meditating on their teachings, and experimenting with them in various ways that I came to see how Druid spirituality, traditional occultism, and sacred geometry could flow together into a practical spiritual path for modern people.

The Golden Section Fellowship is not descended from the GSO in any other sense, and can claim no lineage from that source. In one sense, the Fellowship is my own original creation. In another, it is no one’s creation, since the practices and teachings it passes on have been the property of many occult schools across the centuries. In a third sense, it derives its primary lineage from the group of occult traditions that Matthew Shaw and Juliet Ashley brought together in the 1970s. Even so, if not for the packet of GSO broadsheets I received in the mail from England in 1999, the Golden Section Fellowship would certainly not

have taken its current form and might not exist at all. For that reason, it seemed appropriate to give the Fellowship a name that expresses my gratitude to one of the core sources of my inspiration.

### *How to use this book*

*The Way of the Golden Section* is a manual for self-initiation into a tradition of occult study and practice, and into an organization, the Golden Section Fellowship, which exists at present entirely in the Unseen. If you are considering taking up the work of the Golden Section, I encourage you to start by reading the book from cover to cover. Then, if you decide to continue, begin with the first page of Chapter One and proceed from there. Each chapter builds on the ones before it, so it's important not to skip anything.

The course of training given in this book will take you a minimum of three months if you have no previous exposure to discursive meditation and the Sphere of Protection ritual, the core methods of practice taught here. If you know both of those, you may be able to accomplish the work in two months or a little less. That said, there are no prizes given out for hurrying, and no penalties for taking the time you need to do the work completely. If it takes you six months or a year to prepare for the self-initiation ritual that marks your entry into the Golden Section Fellowship, that's fine. What lies beyond that initiation—a quest for wisdom, revelation, and enlightenment using the tools of the occult initiate—is enough to keep you busy for the rest of your current incarnation.

One point should probably be stressed before we proceed. In order to follow the path of initiation presented in this book, **you will ideally need a copy of *The Sacred Geometry Oracle* book and card deck.** The thirty-three emblems of the Oracle deck are important symbols in the work of the Golden Section Fellowship, and divination with the Oracle is one of the basic practices. A few other requirements are covered further on. If for some reason you cannot get a copy of the deck, you will need to make one by learning each of the geometrical constructions in Appendix 1 and making a set of 33 cards with the relevant diagrams on them. This will take you a great deal of time and effort—though it is the way I made my original deck of Sacred Geometry Oracle cards, and making a deck of your own in this way is not without its rewards.

With that, the doors of the temple of wisdom stand open before you. Are you prepared to enter? If so, read on.

# A MANUAL OF OCCULT TRAINING

*The Way of the Golden Section* is a manual for self-study and self-initiation into the tradition of occult study and practice, and ultimately into the Golden Section Fellowship.

Comprehensive instructions include morning and evening exercises, the sphere of protection, body practices, opening and closing a lodge, and the final ritual of initiation. Also covered are exercises and meditations for the thirty-three symbols of the Way of the Golden Section.

*The Way of the Golden Section* re-examines the teachings of occultism to address the needs, hopes and fears of people in an ever-changing world. Drawing on occultism's long heritage, this book presents occult training in a refreshing new way that is suited to today's students.

**John Michael Greer** is the award-winning author of more than fifty books, including *The New Encyclopedia of the Occult*, *The Druidry Handbook*, *The Celtic Golden Dawn*, *Paths of Wisdom* and *Circles of Power*. An initiate in Freemasonry, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids, Greer served as the Grand Archdruid of the Ancient Order of Druids in America (AODA) for twelve years. Greer blogs weekly on politics, magic, and the future at [www.ecosophia.net](http://www.ecosophia.net).

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