

# **The New Order of Chaeronea**

## **Member Manual**

**2017 Edition**

### **Foreword**

This is a first attempt at a manual for the New Order of Chaeronea. It is based on research into the original Order of Chaeronea, homosexuality and religious practices in ancient Greek religion, and creative reinterpretation of these for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

This manual is a working document and is by no means complete. It provides a basic framework for individuals and chapters wishing to start exploring and practicing in the beliefs and traditions related to the Order of Chaeronea and ancient Greek religions and philosophies that were often very amiable to homosexuality, bisexuality, and other sexual and gender differences. Many of the Greek gods and goddesses were themselves homosexual, bisexual, and even transgender.

The official copy of this manual will contain proprietary information of the Order such as sign words and secret handshakes. These are reserved for actual members. A public copy of this manual will be available with these secret words and signs removed. The goal is to be mostly transparent about our organization for potential members, while at the same time reserving some mystery for those who seek to undertake initiation into the Order.

It is my hope in the years to come that the organization will grow, that chapters will sprout up across the U.S. and even the world, that we'll be able to put together a compendium of rites, ceremonies, and lessons specific to our Order, and that through the efforts of our organization love and sexuality in all its consensual forms will someday regain the status of being considered something sacred and not something that is shamed, outlawed, or looked down upon.

-- Mel Mystery

### **Part I: History**

#### **Introduction:**

The original **Order of Chaeronea** was a secret society for the cultivation of a homosexual moral, ethical, cultural and spiritual philosophy. It was founded by George Cecil Ives in 1897. He believed that homosexuals of the time would not be accepted openly in society and must therefore have a means of underground communication. The society was named after the location of the battle where the Sacred Band of Thebes, an army of 300 male lovers, was finally defeated in 338 BC.

The primary goal of the Order was to form a global chain of lovers, building upon the Platonic ideal of the "army of lovers" embodied in the Sacred Band. Ives created a homosexual centered

spiritual “faith” by mixing Greek mythology, homoerotic literature, and his and other members’ ideas about homosexuality and love. The sacred texts of the Order were Ives’ own books of ritual, the Greek Anthology, and Walt Whitman’s “Leaves of Grass.” The patron of the Order was the Greek god Eros, a god of homosexual love that Ives references in his poem “With Whom, then Should I Sleep?” Walt Whitman was given the title of prophet of the faith.

Original members of the Order included George Cecil Ives; Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, and Oscar Wilde. Other members included Charles Kains Jackson, Samuel Ellworth Cottam, Montague Summers, and John Gambriel Nicholson. It is thought that C.R. Ashbee and A.E. Housman were also members.

In the late 1990s, a partially successful effort was made to reconstitute the Order of Chaeronea along Freemasonic lines of doctrine, governance and ritual principally undertaken by the Moorish Orthodox Church's Bishop of New Jersey, the Rt Rev. Sotemohk A. Beeyayeel. Dr Beeyayeel was appointed as Grand Master of a newly instituted Grand Lodge of a revived Sovereign Military Order of Chaeronea which today has affiliates in New Jersey, Kentucky, and Missouri (USA), the United Kingdom, France and the Republic of Equatorial Guinea and South Africa. The Military Order is an affiliate of the Union of Radical Magi.

The New Order of Chaeronea is not directly affiliated with either the original order or the Sovereign Military Order, but is instead a reimagining of the Order of Chaeronea for modern times based to some extent on the ideals of the original Order and on ancient Greek culture and religion which is history’s best example of a culture and religion that accepted and embraced homosexuality and bisexuality.

The New Order loosely follows the dictates of a fraternal order and mystery school, but does not get caught up in rigid ceremony or formality.

Our Order is relatively transparent<sup>1</sup>, and we make no claim to any direct link to the original Order of Chaeronea or any of its direct derivatives. While it is possible, though unlikely, that direct lineages to the original Order (or even the 1990s versions) still exist, groups claiming to be directly related to the original order or who claim to be the “official” Order should be met with skepticism especially the more secretive their claims and the more hidden their actual credentials. Our credentials are our beliefs, our actions, and our transparency. We like the ideas of the original Order; we like Greek mythology and philosophy; we merged these along with modern Hellenism, Paganism, and LGBTQ culture; and we deliberately appended the name of group to indicate that it is something new and re-imagined.

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<sup>1</sup> The exceptions to this are that we do not share membership lists, meeting minutes, initiation rituals, and study programs publically. We do share our chapter contacts so that folks can find chapters near them and we share our member manual (excluding sign words, initiation rituals, and study programs) so that folks can determine if this is the right group for them.

The New Order of Chaeronea was officially founded on February 14, 2013 [February 14, 2351 P.C.<sup>2</sup>]

### **Greek Homosexuality:**

Most ancient Greeks lived openly bisexual and polyamorous lifestyles. While the Greek man was expected to marry and raise children, he was also expected to enter into erotic and mentoring relationships with worthy youths. Intimate relationships between older adult men and male youth were not only common, they were considered a social duty to the state. Even though male homosexual relations were common, there were certain guidelines to be adhered to. Greek homosexuality was largely intergenerational. Relationships between two adult men of similar age were unusual, and open to ridicule, as were relations with overly young boys. The ancient Greeks believed in an age of consent, marked by a young man's ability to "think for himself". This age of consent ranged from adolescence to early adulthood.

These relationships were both erotic and educational. Male youth would be courted by many men, and then he would choose one to be his lover. The goal of Greek education was the attainment of male perfection -- both physical and mental perfection. This education took place in the gymnasium. The gymnasium was the center of every Greek town, and served a far greater purpose than the modern gym. The gymnasium was an elaborate structure with many rooms, baths, and hallways decorated with all sorts of art work including statues of gods and heroes. Philosophers, poets, and other intellectuals would come together in these places. Boys and men would spend their days in both intellectual and physical exercises. Youth weren't just valued for their bodies, but also for their minds -- their ability to reason and debate. Sports and even the public Olympics were performed in the nude. In fact, public nudity was not at all uncommon. The body was something to be proud of. It did not elicit the feelings of shame or modesty that many of us feel in modern society.

Greek homosexuality was largely a male phenomenon, and Greek society was largely patriarchal and male dominated. The Greek ideal of beauty and intellectualism was embodied in young men. Women were viewed as mothers of a man's children, and generally excluded from public life and intellectual affairs. There were a few exceptions, as in the case of Sappho who taught at her own all-girls school on the Island of Lesbos<sup>3</sup>. This is how Greek life was, and not at all a justification to oppress women in our modern Order or culture.

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<sup>2</sup> P.C. or Post Chaeronea. The original Order dated materials from the date of the final battle of the Sacred Band of Thebes at Chaeronea in 338 B.C.

<sup>3</sup> This is where the term "Lesbian" comes from.

## **Part II: Purposes and Beliefs**

### **Purposes:**

1. To form a social and fraternal secret order open for men who love men. This includes homosexual, bisexual, transgender, and even heterosexual men who love their queer male family and friends.
2. To encourage the cultivation of a homosexual and bisexual male moral, ethical, cultural and spiritual ethos based upon gay and bi-positive ancient Greek and other Pagan ideals rather than Judeo-Christian ideals which are not only antithetical to gay and bi sexuality, but oftentimes sexuality in general.
3. To encourage the formation of emotional, sexual, and spiritual gay and bisexual male relationships that are truly our own, rather than mimicking heterosexual marriage and the heterosexual nuclear family model. This includes Greek style Erastes-Eromenos arrangements, polyamorous relationships, open relationships, and intergenerational relationships (so long as all partners are of legal age in their country).
4. To encourage the aspiration toward the Greek body ideal, while accepting members where they are on this quest.
5. To form a modern "army of lovers" who can stand up and fight against homophobia and heterosexism within their communities.
6. To create a large and committed membership worldwide.

### **Core Beliefs:**

1. Ancient Greek culture and religion (and other pre-Christian cultures and religions) are a superior system for gay and bisexual men to follow and a valid alternative to modern Judeo-Christian culture and religion.
2. The Greek gods and goddesses (many homosexual, bisexual, and transgender), as well as other Pagan deities, exist whether as actual deities or as archetypes that can be tapped into.
3. The importance of the four cardinal Greek Virtues (as given by Plato): Wisdom (knowledge); Justice (treating people fairly and defending those who are not); Fortitude (courage or bravery); and Temperance (moderation, balance in life and nothing in the extreme).
4. All forms of love, sexuality, and relationships between consenting adults of legal age are valid and holy. Gay and bisexual men should not limit their ideas of relationships to the models of heterosexual marriage and the nuclear family. While we support the right to gay marriage, we also support the right of gay and bisexual men to create their own types of relationships. Valid expressions of relationships and sexuality include, but are not limited to: Greek style Erastes-Eromenos arrangements, polyamorous relationships, open relationships, intergenerational relationships, one night stands, bachelorhood, and so forth so long as these relationships are consensual and all partners are of legal age.
5. Gay and bisexual men should strive for health and fitness and the Greek body ideal, but should also realize that genetics, metabolism, and other factors make this ideal harder for some of our brothers than others.

6. Gay and bisexual men have a responsibility to give back to our communities and to fight homophobia and heterosexism within those communities.

### **The Precepts:**

1. **Do not trifle with souls.** In other words, don't play games with other people and their emotions.
2. **Do not break a promise given with true intent.** Unless you make a promise under duress, restraint, or threat, or unless you were tricked into a promise, you should keep your word.
3. **Do not command or obey.** We all have personal sovereignty and we should respect the sovereignty of others. Live and let live. Feel free to question all authority, except the authority of reason. Do not bow down to tyranny.
4. **Cultivate your gifts and talents.** Develop your gifts. Work to overcome your weaknesses. Better yourself.
5. **Be a ruler of yourself.** Learn self-mastery and self-discipline.
6. **Be true to your own heart.** Be honest with yourself and don't be a hypocrite toward others.
7. **Do not vex or persecute lovers.** We believe that love in all its forms is sacred whether it be wise or unwise, happy or disastrous, or legal or illegal<sup>4</sup>.

We're all human and may fall short of these. If we fall short, we shall be forgiven. The only thing that cannot be forgiven is the breaking of any oaths or vows one makes upon entry into the Order or the persecution of love and lovers.

### **Part III: Symbolism and Signs**

#### **Motto:**

“We believe in the glory of passion. We believe in the inspiration of emotion. We believe in the holiness of love.”

#### **Group Song:**

“Chains of Love” by Erasure

The meanings of the song are thus:

- It's about breaking through the chains of restriction and stereotype about what love should and shouldn't be.

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<sup>4</sup> That said, we discourage members from breaking the laws of their locality, but instead they should work to change any laws that punish consensual love or sexuality among those of legal age.

- It was meant by the song writers to subtly call for greater acceptance of homosexual couples.
- It's a reminder that community is important.

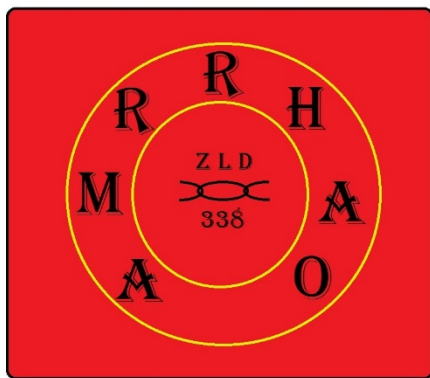
### Sign Words:

*This section is available to members only.*

### Secret Handshake:

*This section is available to members only.*

### Official Seal:



### The Double-Wreath

Inside the inner circle is a chain with open links at both ends. Above this are the letters Z L D. Below the chain link is the date 338 from which we date the foundation of the group following the ancient Battle at Chaeronea.

### Symbolism:

The circle within a circle represents the organization of the Order. The outer circle represents most members. The inner circle represents the most devout and passionate who take on the roles of leaders within the Order.

The outer wreath is Calamus. Calamus is an ancient Greek word for a water reed and the name of a mythological youth. In the story, two youths named Kalamos and Karpos were competing in a swimming contest in the Meander River. Karpos drowned and at the loss of his friend, Kalamos allowed himself to be drowned. Kalamos was then transformed into a water reed. The reeds' rustling in the wind is taken as a sigh of mourning. A section of poems in Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass" also bears the title of Calamus, and may have been inspired by the Greek story.

The inner wreath is Myrtle. Myrtle is sacred to Aphrodite and is also associated with Adonis. It also refers to Harmodius and Aristogeiton who were two male lovers who defeated the tyrant Hiparchus.

AMRRHAO is our sign word. It was once carved on an old wall.

Z is for Zeal toward the cause and for the Order. Without Zeal from its members the Order will fall.

L is for Learning. Knowledge is power.

D is for Discipline. This is self-discipline and achieving self-mastery. It is the power to obey one's conscience, but also to develop and better oneself. Rather than abstaining or denying what is desired, it is best to achieve or master it. The only thing one should deny oneself is excess. As stated at Apollo's temple at Delphi "Nothing in excess."

The chain is a symbol of unity. The links at both ends are open. It means that everyone is linked to two others in the Order and that these links have the possibility of extending infinitely.

338 BC is the date from which we date the foundation of the group following the ancient Battle at Chaeronea.

### **Patron Deities of the Group:**

- **Eros** is the Greek the god of love, beauty, and sexuality. He stands over love with Aphrodite and education with Athena. He is also considered a protector of liberty. He is specifically the god of male-male love and sexuality. Eros forms a homoerotic triad with Hermes and Heracles. Certain Greek armies, including the Sacred Band of Thebes, made sacrifices to him before battle because the love between male soldiers was believed to ensure military success.
- **Hermes** is the Greek god of communication, travel, boundaries, gamblers, and thieves. Hermes is a messenger god, and is also associated with roads, doorways, and the protection of travelers. He has been worshipped as a god of fertility, dreams, and the protection of cattle and sheep. In his earlier aspects, he was a phallic god. Hermes also serves as a trickster god and a psychopomp (a guide to the souls of the dead as they enter the Underworld).
- **Heracles** is the Greek Demi-god (half-god and half-man) of strength and vitality. His father was Zeus and his mother was Alcmeme. His supernatural origins gave him the gift of great strength. He was said to have married the Amazonian Queen Omphale of Lydia, but he also had a host of male lovers.
- **Apollo** is one of the more popular of the Greek gods, and the twin brother of Artemis. Apollo is associated with the sun gods. He presides over religious and civil law, and even foretold the future. Carrying a lyre that symbolizes music, poetry, and dance, Apollo is a patron of the arts, poets, and muses. His bow symbolized death, terror, and distance. He is also associated with crops and herds. Apollo is the only Greek god who did not sleep

with Aphrodite, but he did sleep with her son, Hymen. He had a number of male lovers, perhaps more than any other Greek god.

- **Dionysus** is the Greek god of wine, intoxication, ecstasy, sensuality, rebellion, and drama. He is said to have an effeminate, androgynous, or transgender appearance. He is considered a god of women, and men are often excluded from his rituals. Dionysus is bisexual. He had a number of male lovers.
- **Aphrodite Urania** - Aphrodite is the Greek goddess of love, beauty, and sexuality. Besides heterosexual love, she is considered a patron of both lesbian and homosexual male love. Aphrodite Urania was one of two Aphrodite's (the other is Aphrodite Pandemos, aka Aphrodite for all the people; she was also known by 19<sup>th</sup> century homosexuals as Aphrodite Dionea or the heterosexual Aphrodite). In Greek myth. Aphrodite Urania was said to have been born from the severed genitals of Uranus and to have emerged from the sea foam. The Uranian Aphrodite is associated with the noble and higher spiritual love of older men for male youths.

## **Part IV: Chapters and Membership**

### **Secret Society:**

The original Order of Chaeronea was a secret society and each chapter is welcome to base their chapter on their own interpretation of what a “secret society” is. In its broadest terms, this can mean that rites, ceremonies, membership, and group information is kept secret. With the advent of the internet, it is harder to keep such information secret, and in terms of gaining membership and promoting the group being too secret is not always advantageous.

The Order represents a mystery religion; a philosophy of life; and an ideal of duty.

### **Membership:**

Membership is open to men<sup>5</sup> of legal age regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, religious or political affiliation, age, disability or sexual orientation. The primary factors involved in membership are a commitment to the ideals of the Order, the intent to be an active participant,

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<sup>5</sup> Each chapter is open to interpret “manhood” as they deem fit. This could refer to biological males, those who identify as male regardless of their biology, and so forth. Transgender folks and lesbians might also be included. Our purpose is not to exclude anyone who might gain something from joining. However the overall tone and target audience of the Order is gay and bisexual males.



and the ability to keep our secrets. New members must be voted in by existing members and undergo an initiation ceremony.

**Prerequisites to membership as stated by the original Order are:**

- Zeal
- Learning
- Discipline

Many of our members are Pagan or follow a Hellenistic spiritual path, but this is not necessarily a prerequisite for joining. However, an open mind to ancient cultures, religions, and philosophies that were accepting of homosexuality and bisexuality in some way, shape, or form is a prerequisite.

**Membership Process (for individuals wishing to join without a chapter):**

1. It is possible, even likely, that you may wish to become a member and there is no chapter in your area. It is highly advisable that you start your own chapter to get the most out of membership. However, it is realized that not everyone has the time or resources to start a chapter, and one may just wish to become an individual member. If this is you, you're in luck as we do offer individual memberships.
2. Contact Mel Mystery at [knightsofmatrix@gmail.com](mailto:knightsofmatrix@gmail.com) and request information on becoming an individual member of the Order of Chaeronea.
3. You may be required to complete a new member questionnaire or to submit a summary of intent to become a member.
4. If accepted, you will be sent basic membership information and information on any available online member groups or forums.
5. You may be responsible for paying an annual or semi-annual membership fee.

**Membership Process (for chapters):**

1. Potential members are invited to / given the opportunity to attend social events of the Order, but not business meetings, rites, or ceremonies. They may also be allowed to view (but not keep) materials to help them better understand the views and philosophies of the Order. They should not be allowed to view actual membership lists, sign words, chapter business such as agendas or minutes, or rites and ceremonies at this point.
2. The potential member may request to join or may be invited to join by any current member. If he accepts, he is considered an initiate from this point forward and the person who invited him to join is considered his sponsor. He will be considered an initiate up

until the point he is officially initiated.<sup>6</sup> As an initiate, he will still have limited access to business meetings, rites, and ceremonies as determined by current members of the chapter.

3. The initiate must complete a new member questionnaire or submit a summary of intent to determine his membership potential. Current officers and members may have access to this and ask the initiate questions to further clarify his intent or worthiness to become a member.
4. Current members and officers of the chapter take a vote to decide whether to accept the initiate into the order. A two thirds or better vote is required to vote in a new member.
5. Upon being voted in, the initiate should be initiated. After initiation, he will be allowed full rights as a member of the Order.

### **Dues:**

Dues may be required of members annually or semi-annually. It is left up to individual chapters to determine whether dues will be charged and how much.

### **Formation of New Chapters:**

Starting a chapter is relatively simple.

1. Find at least three individuals interested in forming a chapter.
2. Contact Mel Mystery ([knightsofmatrix@gmail.com](mailto:knightsofmatrix@gmail.com)) and let him know you'd like to start a chapter.
3. Form some kind of online web presence (a web page, social media page, an online members' forum, etc.). Send the link(s) along with your group's official contact information (e-mail, phone, or whatever you want to post publically) and location.
4. Mel will add the links to the official New Order of Chaeronea website.
5. That's it, you're a chapter. Gain and keep an active membership, host monthly events, learn about the Order, Ancient Greece, and so forth.
6. Currently there are no chapter dues or national dues for chapter members. There's always the possibility these will be added later, but for now we're keeping things easy and simple.
7. We currently do not have the infrastructure to provide a great deal of support to chapters. Chapters are largely independent, though connected, entities that support the principles of the Order.

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<sup>6</sup> It is recommended that initiations take place once or twice a year in groups rather than initiating each new member individually. This is more efficient and makes initiations an event to be anticipated.

### **Meetings and other events:**

Each chapter should plan a minimum of one event per month open to all chapter members. This may include business meeting, social, workshops, study groups, or a special rites or ceremonies.

### **Oath of Service:**

*This section is available to members only.*

### **Priesthoods within the Order:**

Members may choose to belong to one or more priesthoods within the order. You may consider these to be subcommittees within the Order. These include:

- **Priests of Eros** – Learn about and share Greek views on love and sexuality. Serve as ambassadors of free love and sexuality within the group.
- **Priests of Hermes** – Learn about and share information on Greek religion, magic, and ritual. Create ceremonies and rituals for the group.
- **Priests of Heracles** – Learn about and share information on Greek fitness and athletics. Plan fitness and athletic events for the group.
- **Priests of Dionysus** – Learn about and share information on Greek holidays and festivals. Plan social events for the group.
- **Priests of Apollo** – Learn about and share information on Greek art, culture, and medicine. Host workshops to share this information with the group.
- **Priests of Mars** – Fight homophobia and heterosexism in the community. Keep the group informed of relevant current LGBT issues.

### **Initiations, Rituals, and Ceremonies:**

Currently there are no official initiations, rituals, or ceremonies for the New Order of Chaeronea. These are left to the discretion of each individual chapter. Chapters are encouraged to create their own, and to share these and their ideas for these on our social media groups. Who knows, perhaps your ritual will make it into the next edition of this manual.

### **Mystery School:**

It is my hope and intent to eventually form a Mystery School surrounding the ideals of the Order as well as Greek and other myths and ideals related to homosexuality and bisexuality. This is a longer term project, and not an immediate priority. As with the initiations, rituals, and ceremonies, individual chapters are encouraged to create their own ceremonies and lessons, and to share them on our social media groups.

### **Dress Codes:**

There are no dress codes for the Order, but individual chapters may institute their own if they desire. This could mean dressing up in suits for meetings; having group t-shirts made up for folks to wear to public events; or any combination deemed appropriate by your chapter.

It is recommended that all members of a chapter wear a similar piece of jewelry to show a sense of solidarity. This could be a ring, a necklace, a watch, a bracelet, or some other item where members are able to either have nearly identical items or items of similar style.

### **Holidays:**

While many of our members are Pagan and follow the Pagan holidays known as the Eight-fold Year, we have decided to make the official holidays of the Order different from these. For one, it gives us a unique set of holidays to celebrate and for another it reduces the number of conflicts for members who belong to other groups that celebrate these holidays. Even so, a couple of these holidays coincide with popular holidays or LGBT holidays. In the future, we may add additional holidays related to ancient Greek culture or celebrating ancient Greek Gods and Goddesses.

The following are considered official holidays of the Order:

**October 1** – George Cecil Ives' Birthday

**February 14** – Honoring Eros and Male-Male Love

**October 31** – Halloween – A traditional favorite holiday in the LGBT community

**May 31** – Walt Whitman's Birthday

**June 28** – Anniversary of Stonewall Riots (United States)

## **Part V: Our Philosophies and Greek Religion**

### **Aesthetics**

The New Order of Chaeronea promotes the aspiration to Greco-Roman body ideals, and more importantly to the good health and fitness of our members regardless of actual body type, genetics, metabolism, or other factors. We do not have any health or physical fitness requirements for members. However, it is hoped that chapters will host physical recreational activities such as hikes, sports, and so forth to give members opportunities to be active. A healthy, fit body is aspired to not just because of aesthetics, but also because health, vitality, and longevity are important for living exceptional lives.

### **Ascetics**

The original Order was viewed as an ascetic movement in that it was not meant as a place for men to meet for sexual hookups. The New Order is not meant as a hookup club either, though there is nothing wrong with members dating, getting together, etc. The original Order accepted some degree of “passionate sensuality” among members. Each modern chapter may set its own guidelines as it sees fit. Some chapters may wish to explore sacred sensuality and sacred sexuality in a group setting, while others may be hesitant to do so.

The official position of the Order is that all consensual acts of love, sensuality, and sexuality are sacred, but also that there is a time and a place for everything. Official group functions are not usually the time and place unless they are part of a structured workshop, ceremony, or ritual that members may opt out of if they are uncomfortable.

### **The Chain / The Cause**

The Chain is a concept introduced by the original Order. It is a metaphor for our unity, our connectedness, and our responsibilities to each other. The chain is open at both ends, meaning that each member has the potential to be joined by two others with the chain potentially extending infinitely.

The Cause is simply this - to advocate for the legalization and acceptance of all forms of consensual love and sexuality between consenting adults throughout the world. Each chapter may choose how they wish to be involved in the Cause.

### **Pop Culture**

Many of the members of the original Order of Chaeronea were educated writers and the pop culture of the day (mainly literary) was incorporated into the Order. The original Order

venerated Walt Whitman, as well as other “Uranian”<sup>7</sup> writers of the time. Modern chapters may wish to incorporate modern pop culture into their ceremonies and other workings. LGBT folks have long been leaders and followers of entertainment whether it be theater, Broadway, or music. Cher, Ricky Martin, Boy Bands, RuPaul, Elton John, Judy Garland, Madonna, and other pop culture icons might play into the symbology and rituals of our modern chapters.

### **Nature of the New Order of Chaeronea**

The New Order of Chaeronea is not a strict reconstructionist organization for ancient Greek religion nor for 19<sup>th</sup> century fraternal orders. We consider ourselves a re-imagining of these older religions and fraternities, and an adaptation of these to modern gay and bi male culture.

### **19<sup>th</sup> Century Fraternal Orders**

The original Order of Chaeronea was a 19<sup>th</sup> century secret society and fraternal order. Fraternal orders were based on a model of fraternal and social brotherhood, and the bettering of members. They frequently incorporated grand titles, costumes, secret handshakes, and a system of rituals, ceremonies, and levels of membership. They were frequently charitable organizations and offered a number of benefits to their members. These organizations reached their height at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While some of these organizations still exist, they went on the decline after the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century.

### **Brief Overview Ancient Greek Religion**

Specific beliefs and practices varied from city-to-city and across the history of ancient Greece, but some beliefs and practices were core. I will include a brief overview here. Those wishing to study deeper can find a number of source materials to read in the “Suggested Reading” section of this manual.

The core principles of ancient Greek religion are: Piety, Reciprocity, and Moderation. The additional concepts of “Arete” and Virtue are also important to understanding ancient Greek sensibilities.

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<sup>7</sup> Uranian was a term used for homosexuals during the 1800s. It was based on the two different types of love expressed by the goddess Aphrodite in Plato’s Symposium. The goddess Aphrodite born of Uranus was associated with the noble love of men for male youths which was seen as a higher form of love than the “base” heterosexual love meant for procreation. Uranian writers and poets frequently idealized and wrote about pederastic themes of the love of older men for younger adolescent and post-adolescent men.

## **Piety**

Piety in its strictest definition is reverence for the gods and the fulfillment of religious obligations. A number of LGBT folks and Pagans, especially those who have left Christianity or similar religions, may have issues with the concept of piety. It seems very close to the concept of righteousness which just as often becomes a sense self-righteousness. For many folks, piety has a connotation that implies a kind of religious smugness and a focus on the letter of religious duty rather than the spirit.

Further reading into Hellenic piety suggests that it involves unquestionably honoring and submitting to the gods. This seems to go against Pagan concepts of personal sovereignty and our own Precept of “Do not command or obey.” In the myths, the Greek deities were very human in temperament and were not considered infallible.

As gods, they do deserve respect and devotion and they often work in mysterious ways beyond our understanding. Piousness would dictate that we worship them without question and that we accept what we are dealt without question. This seems all too authoritarian, and doesn't set well with many modern Pagans and LGBT folks who have suffered at the abuses of such authoritarian religions.

Religious and spiritual duty and obligation are also very personal and can get complicated for polytheists who honor not one god, but many. In the fast pace of modern life, there are many who simply don't have the time, money, or energy to keep up with daily devotions or offerings to a myriad of deities.

I would like to substitute the concept of piety with the simple concepts of sincerity, kindness, and fulfilling one's vows, oaths, and promises, not just to the gods, but to everyone.

## **Reciprocity**

Reciprocity is often explained as “a gift for a gift.” It is the concept that if you want something, you should be able to offer something, and that you don't just expect a free handout. It is also the building of relationships with the gods and with our fellow humans. It's give and take.

In dealing with the gods, this means making offerings to the gods, especially if we want something in return or if we are grateful for something already given. When you pray to the gods or when you work with them in rituals, you should offer them sincere praise and various offerings. It also means being thankful for what is given and even going so far as to repay what is given to you by the gods or by humans.

Additionally, reciprocity involves give-and-take, communication, and building personal social networks (chains) and bonds with people and with the gods.

## **Moderation**

Moderation is finding a balance between extremes. It is neither too much nor too little of an activity or quality. It is keeping your actions within reasonable limits.

## **Virtue**

Virtue is in some ways similar to piety. It implies a set of ethics to live by. The Greek philosopher, Plato, identified four cardinal virtues: Wisdom, Courage, Moderation, and Justice.

1. **Wisdom** involves making sensible decisions based on reason, knowledge, and experience.
2. **Courage** is the ability to stand tall in the face of fear, danger, difficulty, and uncertainty.
3. **Moderation** is finding balance and practicing self-restraint and self-discipline.
4. **Justice** is being fair and reasonable; making fair decisions and treating people right.

## **Arete**

Arete is an ancient Greek term referring to excellence and the fulfilling of one's potential. The term is associated with effectiveness, knowledge, and athletic prowess. Arete involves excellence of the mind, body, and soul. Arete was an ineffable and intangible quality like "mojo" or the French "je ne sais quoi." Arete was something the ancient Greeks believed was transferred from mentors to students, often through sexual acts and the transfer of semen.

## **Offerings**

In ancient Greek religion, a variety of offerings were made to the deities on a regular basis. These included sacrifices, votives, and libations. Offerings were made to maintain a positive relationship with the gods, to fulfill a vow, or to seek favor from the gods – whether for a specific situation or for life in general. These were not bribes nor even necessarily bargaining to receive a certain outcome. Offerings are a part of the concept of reciprocity. It's part of building relationships with the deities. It's showing that you are willing to give back to the universe and not just to take or ask for things. Offerings can also be made to show your appreciation to the divine for something that has happened in your favor or that you hope will turn in your favor. Offerings can be made at turning points in one's life or to commemorate an important rite of passage.

**Sacrifices are typically burnt offerings.** Usually sacrifices take the form of something edible such as meat, vegetables, or fruit. While those in ancient Greece did make live sacrifices of animals, that is not necessary in today's modern world. Many consider the practice archaic and inhumane, though if done ethically this is really no worse than killing animals for food. Sacrifices can also be made from a portion of one's meal, or the first or best vegetables and fruit



from your garden.<sup>8</sup> Sacrifices can be just that – something valuable that you sacrifice to show your homage to the gods, to make the world a better place, or to better yourself. You can sacrifice food, money, or material goods. You can also sacrifice non-material things such as bad habits, goals and dreams, your time,<sup>9</sup> your ego, or other things that in sacrificing show intent or contribute to the greater good. Often sacrifices are made as part of a larger gathering, celebration, or ritual, but they don't always have to be.

**Libations are liquid sacrifices.** They might be wine, milk, or an oil.<sup>10</sup> The libation might be poured on the earth or into a sacred bowl. In many rituals, a cup, glass, or goblet is passed around. Participants offer a libation and praise for a certain deity or something they are thankful for, have a sip, and then pass the drink on to the next person who does the same.

**Votives are smaller regular offerings.** Votives are often offered daily. These are frequently offerings of thanksgiving or regular offerings made to fulfill a vow. Votives can include burning incense; lighting a *votive* candle; creating art, music, or poetry; creating and using shrines and altars; making regular monetary offerings to a spiritual or charitable organization; singing praises or reading poetry and invocations to the gods; and many other seemingly small acts that are done on a regular basis in honor of the deities.

**Vows are promises made.** Taking our oath to join the Order is similar to a vow, but vows are usually promises made to deities. Vows are often made in the spirit of reciprocity. For example, if the gods help you pass your test, you will contribute to a charity, devote your time to a good cause, or spend more time on your spiritual studies. In general, vows should be specific. Instead of saying you'll devote more time to your spiritual studies, perhaps you will devote two hours on Friday evenings to read and learn more about ancient Greek religion. The breaking of vows can bring the disfavor of the gods, so you should not make vows lightly.

## Hymns

Some might be turned off by ancient Greek hymns to the deities. They can be a bit dry by today's standards. If that's the case, by all means look to popular music. I always stop and take notice when I hear “Venus” by Bananarama. There are other popular songs that mention various deities by name or that when you listen to them evoke the spirit of a specific deity. If you can't find something that works from popular culture, you can always search YouTube or other video

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<sup>8</sup> It's bad form to sacrifice the worst items or the things you don't want.

<sup>9</sup> Perhaps volunteering.

<sup>10</sup> Like olive oil, not motor oil.

and music sites. A number of Pagan's have paved the way with songs, hymns, and chants that honor a variety of gods and goddesses. All you have to do is find them.

## **Prayers**

Prayers can be simple or elaborate. They generally serve a number of functions. They might be to praise a deity; to petition a deity for help or assistance; to ask for advice or guidance; to express gratitude (such as before a meal); to ask for safe travels; to ask for blessings on a new project; to ask for healing; or simply to communicate feelings and thoughts to the gods.

A deity might be chosen for prayer based on what areas of life they are said to preside over or because of a personal relationship you have or wish to build with the deity.

Greek prayer typically follows a three-part formula.

1. An invocation or invitation to the specific deity being prayed too. In this part you might use specific epithets of the deity, praise their feats, show gratitude for their previous help to you and so forth.
2. Mention why you deserve the deity's help. Build a case for why you deserve their assistance. What have you done in terms of reciprocity and building a relationship with the deity? What have you done yourself toward the task at hand? Why do you deserve this?
3. State your actual request. This is not necessary if you are not making a request such as in prayers of gratitude.

While this sounds complicated, it can still be very short and to the point.

When you make a prayer, it is customary to make some kind of offering as part of the process. See the above sections on “Offerings” for ideas.

## **Public, Private, and Mystery School Devotion**

Devotion to the deities and to the ancient Greek way of life can take many forms. This devotion can be made by celebrating public rituals and festivals; by celebrating privately alone or with family or friends; or through the devotion of entering a mystery school such as we'd like to create through the New Order of Chaeronea.

### **Public**

Members may choose to honor the deities and Greek ways publicly. Your chapter may decide to hold “public” rituals or festivals. Some holidays for the Order have been suggested earlier in this handbook. You can also research ancient Greek festivals and reconstruct or re-imagine these for your chapter. “Public” does not necessarily have to be general public or to take place in a public

venue. Public can mean the event is open to all members of your chapter, to members and friends, or open to all respectful seekers. The venue certainly could be a public place like a city park, but it could also be a member's home or a rented space or anywhere else capable of hosting the number of people expected.

Chapters may also piggy-back on other events in their local communities – LGBTQ Pride events; Pagan Pride events; Greek festivals; taking part in local Hellenistic or Pagan rituals and celebrations (if there are any in your area). I personally live in an area near the ocean, and there's an annual Neptune Festival. It's very secular and not really about honoring the god Neptune at all (other than in name). That's no reason your chapter couldn't take part and include honoring Neptune in your intent for the day. Some places might have Apollo film festivals or museums or gardens featuring statues of Greek gods. By all means be creative. If you decide to do more than just visit as a group, be sure to get proper permissions if you want to hold a ritual or other event at these places.

### **Private**

Private devotion is just that – what you do in private. This can be alone or with a couple of people such as partners, close friends, or family. Private devotions include singing hymns, offering prayers, making offerings, or enacting private rituals.

### **Mystery School**

Mystery schools are typically dedicated initiatory learning experiences. Often the learning takes the form of reenacting the mythology of specific deities by reenacting these myths in the form of structured lessons, ceremonies, and rituals. In this way, the dedicant learns the aspects and lessons of that specific deity. Often, specific vows are taken when entering a mystery school. Sometimes mystery schools followed the deity through the seasons of the year or through other natural cycles associated with that deity.

19<sup>th</sup> century and later fraternal orders had initiatory levels that closely followed the path of a mystery school. They often had a number of levels. Each level providing deeper insight into the mysteries and truths of the organization.

## Correspondences for Our Patron Deities

*Below is an incomplete list of correspondences for our patron deities. If you decide to work with any of these patrons, this is a place to start, but not an exhaustive list of correspondences. Feel free to do further research or even to use your intuition to select appropriate offerings.*

<b>Deity</b>	<b>Day of the Week</b>	<b>Colors</b>	<b>Symbols</b>	<b>Offerings</b>	<b>Rules Over</b>
<b>Eros</b>	Friday	Red, White, Silver	Bow, Arrow, Wings	Silver, Flowers	Love and sex, especially love between men, passion
<b>Hermes</b>	Wednesday	Red, Gold	Caduceus	Olives, Coins, Strawberries	Travel, boundaries, communication, transportation, gambling, phallus, Gymnasia
<b>Heracles</b>	Tuesday	Red	Spear, Club, Lion skin	Steak, Bacon, Cakes, Dragon's Blood	Strength, Courage, Masculinity, Sexual Prowess, Gymnasia
<b>Apollo</b>	Sunday	Gold, White, Orange	Lyre, Silver Bow, Laurel Tree, Sun	Apples, Bay Leaves, Frankincense	Music, Healing
<b>Dionysus</b>	Friday	Burgundy, Purple	Thyrsus, Grape Vine, Ivy	Wine, Steak, Honeyed Milk, Grapes	Wine, Fertility, Androgyny
<b>Aphrodite Urania</b>	Friday	Pink, White, Red, Blue	Seashell, Heart	Pomegranates, Limes, Flowers	Love and beauty, Intergenerational love, Sensuality

## Alternative Relationship Structures for Gay and Bi men

The New Order of Chaeronea supports all consensual acts of love, sensuality, and sexuality between folks above the legal age of consent. This extends beyond “traditional” same-sex marriage and exclusive monogamous relationships.

Below are some alternatives for Gay and Bi men to consider:

### **Living Together**

This one's not really that original and lots of straight folks are doing it. There aren't as many legal protections for the couple, but there are also fewer legal responsibilities and restrictions. Civil Unions and domestic partnerships still bridge a gap between simply living together and marriage proper.

### **Serial Monogamy**

Basically, you're dating or even married to someone you like and you're monogamous. This is a romantic and sexual relationship, but at some point you split up and move on to the next person. You can be in your relationships for days, weeks, years, or decades. At some point you grow apart or someone wants or needs to move on.

### **Casual Monogamy**

Similar to serial monogamy is casual monogamy. The only real difference between the two as far as I can tell, is that casual monogamy isn't as romantic. It's more about the sex. This could be an exclusive fuck buddy or a friends with benefits arrangement. It's casual because the expectations of the relationship getting romantic or being long term aren't there.

### **Casual Non-monogamy**

Casual non-monogamy is also an option for folks. It's basically having casual sexual relationships with a number of folks whether they're friends, fuck buddies, or the guy you met at the bar last night. Some might consider these folks sluts, but as long as they're honest, consensual, and safe, it is not our place to judge.

### **Open Relationships / Open Marriages**

Open relationships and open marriages are also a thing. Two folks might be in a committed romantic and sexual relationship, but realize that they have sexual needs and desires beyond their partner. Open relationships are common among gay men and some have suggested that those gay male relationships that have endured the test of time allow for some degree of play outside the relationship. There are many ways to make this work, but the rules and boundaries need to be established to avoid jealousy and misunderstandings. For some it's okay, so long as their partner's escapades aren't mentioned. For others, they want to meet the person. There may be rules against having sex with friends or at home. One night stands might be okay, but not anything longer term. Perhaps certain kinds of sex are permitted and others not, either way safer sex should be a rule.

## **Triads**

Triads are another possibility. For bisexuals, this might allow one to explore their interests in intimacy and sex with both male and female partners in a controlled setting. A triad might be sexually exclusive. It could be that all partners are comfortable having sex with each other, or it may be that one person has a relationship and sex with the other two, but the other two don't have sex with each other. A triad could also be a gay couple who wants to explore, so they bring in another person. The other person could be an equal part of the relationship, or secondary to the primary relationship. Triads might also work if one partner in a couple has health issues that prevent them from enjoying sexuality fully with their partner.

## **Polyamory**

Polyamory is ethical non-monogamy. It calls for honestly exploring non-monogamous romantic and sexual relationships and dealing with any feelings of jealousy that may arise. There are many types of polyamorous relationships. Those involved are free to set the rules and boundaries, so the possibilities are very broad and open ended. The main thing is that all involved are on the same page. There may be primary, secondary, and even tertiary relationships involved, or those in the relationship may choose to love everyone equally without ranking. The relationship may involve a couple with secondary relationships, a triad, a quad or foursome, or a network of intimate relationships.

## **Swinging**

Swinging is a form of recreational sexuality where couples in committed relationships engage in sexual activities with another couple. Swinging has traditionally been something practiced by a small number of heterosexual couples, but there's no reason gay couples couldn't practice this. It could provide variety and excitement, in a controlled environment without totally opening up the relationship.

## **Platonic Relationships**

Platonic Relationships are ongoing, emotionally involved relationships that lack the sexual aspects. These are close loving friendships. They may even dip slightly into the romantic, but for whatever reason sex is not an option. Some of these relationships among men might be described as "bromances."

## **Boston Marriages**

Boston marriages are more of a woman's thing, but there's no reason they couldn't work for men too. Back in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries it was common for two women to live together in a formalized roommate situation where they were independent from the financial support of a man. Many of these Boston marriages may have been Lesbian relationships, but others were social and financial arrangements that simply allowed women to have freedom and

independence. These might be situations where two people are friends and financially entwined – more than roommates, but not necessarily lovers. A male example would be Felix and Oscar from the Odd Couple.

### **BDSM Lifestyle**

For some BDSM is a fetish, but for others it's a lifestyle. These relationships explore power exchanges. Usually one partner (the submissive) relinquishes power and control in the relationship to the other partner (called the dominant). Often, but not always, these relationships are one-on-one.

### **Intergenerational Relationships**

I don't consider these traditional relationships, even though they are frequently monogamous. There's often a stigma attached to relationships with an age difference of more than ten years, sometimes even less than that. There's often the belief that the only reason such relationships can work is because both partners are exploiting each other. The belief is that the younger person is only in it for the financial security and the older to sexually prey on someone younger and less experienced. Sure, there may be some grain of truth to this in some cases, but in others there is real love and affection. Even traditional marriages are at least in part about financial security and sexual attraction, so why single out and judge other relationships for the same reasons? In my research, intergenerational relationships of some sort are one of the most common relationship types for homosexual relationships between men throughout history. In some cultures the older man had a mentoring role. Being of different ages or social status, also lessened some of the competition and posturing inherent in relationships between men of equal age or rank. For gay men who aren't biological fathers, there may also be a paternal instinct at work. Younger gay men may be looking for someone who is more stable and more mature than his peers.

### **Long Distance and Living Apart Together Relationships**

Long Distance and Living Apart Together relationships also exist. In these relationships, there may be all the commitment and even fidelity of other types of relationships, but for whatever reason it works best to live apart. Maybe one partner has a job in another city or their job frequently relocates them. Maybe familiarity breeds contempt as the saying goes, and living apart allows both partners their space and independence and keeps the relationship from getting too familiar and mundane. On a smaller scale, this could even be a couple that keeps separate bedrooms in the same house.

### **Hiring Escorts and Rent Boys**

Hiring escorts and rent boys is also an option, though sexual escorting is illegal in the U.S. even between consenting adults. It wasn't that long ago that homosexual sex was illegal in many states in the U.S., so take that as you may. There's a stigma associated with escorting and

escorting is often wrongly associated with exploitation and sex trafficking. The distinguishing factor, of course, are the key words “consenting adults.” Generally, the gay community is more accepting of escorting than the straight community, and many disenfranchised young gay men turn to escorting as a means of financial survival. Those who hire escorts are seeking companionship, human affection, and sexual experiences that may not be available to them otherwise.

### **Bachelorhood / Being Happily Single**

There's also the option to be happily single. Whether this means you're celibate, have one night stands, hire escorts, or spend your free time jerking off to porn. If you're happy don't let anyone tell you that you need to be in a relationship.

### **The New Order of Chaeronea is a Judgement Free Zone**

It's important not to judge or assume people's reasoning for participating in any of these types of relationships. They can be just as varied as they are for those entering into traditional relationships. It might be for love or sex. It might be for economic reasons. It could be each person has a distinct orientation that draws them to a specific type of relationship. No one judges a couple in a traditional relationship for enjoying sex, but it's often the first thing folks judge in a non-traditional relationship. Alternative relationships, are often more honest than traditional relationships. They have to be since those in these relationships have to agree on the rules rather than take the rules handed to them by society. It's also more honest because it allows for human nature. It's very likely that men in particular have both a biological and a social imperative to spread their seed, and one shouldn't assume that women don't enjoy sex with multiple partners either in spite of social conditioning. Rather than repressing or shaming biological urges, many non-traditional relationship structures open the way for folks to be honest about their needs and desires rather than lying and cheating on their partners.



### Suggested Reading:

- **The Origin and Role of Same-Sex Relations in Human Societies** by James Neill
- **The Construction of Homosexuality** by David F. Greenberg
- **Greek Homosexuality** by K. J. Dover
- **The Greeks and Greek Love** by James Davidson
- **Greek Homosexuality: The History of Eros** by Michael Hone
- **Homosexuality in Greek Mythology** by Michael Hone
- **A beginner's guide to Hellenismos** by Timothy Jay Alexander
- **Dating the Greek Gods** by Brad Gooch
- **Symposium** by Plato
- **The Poems of Meleager** by Meleager  
(<https://archive.org/details/fiftypoemsmelea00headgoog>)
- **Amores** by pseudo-Lucian of Samosata (<http://www.well.com/user/aquarius/lucian-amores.htm> )
- **Leaves of Grass** by Walt Whitman
- **Gay Warriors: A Documentary History from the Ancient World to the Present** by B.R. Burg
- **One Hundred Years of Homosexuality** by [David Halperin](#).
- **The World History of Male Love: Male Love in Ancient Greece**  
(<http://www.androphile.org/preview/Culture/Greece/>)
- **A Gay History of the World: Same-Sex Love Common in Ancient Cultures**  
([http://www.suphawut.com/gvb/gayly/gay\\_history2.htm](http://www.suphawut.com/gvb/gayly/gay_history2.htm))
- **Cassell's Encyclopedia of Queer Myth, Symbol and Spirit** by Conner, Sparks and Sparks.
- **Lovers' Legends: The Gay Greek Myths** by Andrew Calimach, Haiduk Press
- **Greek Anthology** by Meleager
- **Erotes or Amores** a Greek dialogue by pseudo-Lucian
- **"Debate of Helen and Ganymede"** a middle ages poem (aka "Altercatio Ganimedis et Helene")