

FOREWORD BY T. THORN COYLE



CASTING
SACRED
SPACE

THE CORE OF ALL MAGICKAL WORK

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FOREWORD

The stability of a casting, like the stability of the clay on the wheel, is to a great degree dependent upon your own still center point. The whirl of subtle energies called forth by a casting cannot hold a coherent pattern for long without you. Aside from concerns related to the stability and the effectiveness of a casting, the question of clarity of intent and the karma resulting from magickal actions is directly related to centering. . . . The outcomes of actions also matter, and there is where the question of will arises. Centering places us in closer alignment with our true will.

—IVO DOMINGUEZ JR.

Those words may seem simple—obvious, even—yet there is such depth to them, they could only have been written by one who has achieved a high level of mastery in his craft. Simplicity does not equal ease in execution, nor does obviousness equal understanding. For something to become simple requires a complexity of time, study, and effort. Any craftsperson—whether working in the arts or sciences, the esoteric realms or the manifest world—knows this.

Thankfully, Ivo clearly delineates the work necessary to reach a place of inner equilibrium so that our castings can be effective, rather than simply going through the motions that so often replace an active connection with empty form. If the magick worker is not fully present, nothing changes. Change begins in both subtle and readily apparent ways in our physical, emotional, mental, and energetic bodies. In preparing us for the task of promoting change in all—the seen and unseen—Ivo asks simply this: that we first change ourselves.

It is said by many teachers that we are living in times of great crisis and opportunity as we are at the turning from one age to another. What does

learning a variety of casting techniques have to do with this? In learning to cast a Triangle of Stillness, we cultivate that stillness inside, altering our own lives. We also invite the space around us into stillness, enabling work to occur that simply cannot open in a swirl of energies. This influences the individual and the group, rippling out toward all of our institutions. Something like the Sword and Staff casting, on the other hand, requires not only a deep knowledge of the tools of Air and Fire in the many realms in which we live our lives and work our magick, but also the core strength needed to ride the vortices of power that open when this casting is properly done. The Square of Abeyance clears our space of unwanted influences and also teaches the power of the psychically clear practitioner. Each of these castings makes us not only better magick workers, but also better human beings. The stronger and more capable we become, the more able we are to do our divine work in this and all the worlds. We fashion our own destiny with honed will and clear intention, and thus we can shape the world through conscious action rather than haphazard stumbling. The potential here is enormous, all the more so when groups as well as individuals take up the task.

I would like to tell a personal story about my first encounter with one of these castings. This was many years ago, not long after I first met Ivo. I was a guest at a ritual several friends and acquaintances had put together. As part of the ritual, they invited Ivo to hold the space surrounding the altar within the Triangle of Stillness. I don't even recall why this was so, nor even what the intention of the ritual was. What has stayed with me all these years was the power of that casting. It was palpable, even in the midst of the rest of the more traditional circle castings and invocations. Often the Triangle is a small casting, held by three charged objects. As they were making such a large casting of the Triangle for this ritual, rather than simply charging the three objects you will learn about in this book, they had a person stationed at each point, holding the corners. I happened to be standing in the circle near one of the points.

To continue with my story: we went through the ritual and were starting the devocations. The Triangle was to be the last thing taken down. As the circle unwound near me, I felt a big "drop" and "thunk" of energy, not just in the room, but resounding on many levels, through many planes. I quickly "picked up" the dropped corner of the Triangle, instinctively knowing that the priest holding it must have let his attention wander, leaving only the force of the circle itself to hold up his part of the casting. I held on until he

made the actions and spoke the words that would release the Triangle of Stillness, then I let it go, allowing Ivo to do the work of proper dismissal. Ivo, being an Adept, knew exactly what had transpired, speaking of it once the ritual was over. I have been impressed with his work, and with the power of these castings, ever since. The fact that the casting not only did its work, but was able to link its energy to the circle even when the priest no longer held it, was striking.

Sometimes our mistakes teach us far more than our successes. The power of that “mistake” of lapsed attention has come back to teach me many times as I have struggled to train my attention and intention throughout my own journey toward mastery.

A strong Magician or Witch fully shoulders her responsibility. This book of castings is not only an amazing compendium of innovative ways to move and shape energy forms; it also serves as a comprehensive primer on how to change the individual in order to better change the world. The work is placed in the context of other systems of magick should one wish to broaden one’s scope of knowledge and mastery, while providing enough information for beginning these unique practices from any level of experience and study. There are many treasures here. I hope that the magick held in this book not only intrigues you with its sheer novelty, but also spurs you onward and inward with its potential. If we read carefully and practice diligently, we will learn to change and be changed, in accordance with our ever-strengthening knowledge and will.

—*T. Thorn Coyle*



INTRODUCTION

Casting Sacred Space is meant to provide a safe and sane introduction to the knowledge and techniques needed to embark upon journeys into magick. The first half of the book supplies some philosophical and theoretical underpinnings in order to make the castings offered in the second half of the book accessible and effective. Hopefully, a balance between theory and practice has been struck that will encourage the development of both understanding and proficiency in the creation of sacred and magickal space. You may wish to try the various castings as you read the book, but I recommend that you finish the book before attempting them. Those items that are marked as exercises should be done as you encounter them. Reading is not the same as doing, and it is my hope that if you are an armchair occultist, this book will assist you in becoming a more active practitioner.

For the purposes of our study the word *casting* when used as a noun will be taken to mean:

A set of actions, involving a combination of mental, emotional, spiritual, and potentially physical operations, intended to create a volume of space wherein for a certain period of time there is a subjective and/or objective difference from the prevailing baseline of markers for mundane reality.

To *cast* will be used as a verb expressing:

The implementation or the enactment of the set of actions required to bring about a desired specific change in the conditions of subjective and/or objective reality of a specific volume of space for a specific duration.

It is interesting that the mundane meanings for the words *cast* and *casting* are also worthy of some contemplation. Think how versatile this term is as a verb: We cast a net or a line, cast a gaze, cast a vote, etc. A casting is also an object made by pouring a liquid that will solidify into a mold. Think upon the relationship between the object created and the container that is the mold. This is not mere wordplay; this is also a form of magickal thinking.

This book explores a number of approaches to the creation, delineation, and understanding of ritual that open the way to sacred space. The entry into sacred space is one of the most direct routes to the fountainhead of spiritual and metaphysical experience. For most of us, the thrill of the experience that called us to our paths is heralded by crossing the borderline into a wider universe. When you took your first step onto your path of magickal and spiritual development, did you not long for the strange skies of the other-worlds, conversations with the Shining Ones, keys to the gates, or the smell of flowers in a Faerie glade?

Many paths lead to magick and to the experience of sacred space, but the use of *castings* to cross the threshold into higher realities is one of the most powerful and direct ways to achieve this aim. Encounters with those higher realities that are more encompassing and enclose the lower ones in a macro/microcosm relationship occur within the matrix of culture and belief, and our methods of shifting our awareness to perceive these realities to a great degree guide and determine what we experience. Culture and belief are the foundation of the techniques to reach higher realities, and I have made an effort to offer material that can be repurposed to fit your belief system. The variations and similarities between magickal systems and Traditions may be thought of as cultural or linguistic differences. These differences can appear to be radical, but there is an ultimate limit to how far they can range because they are still anchored within the bounds of human temperament and biology. Although culture surely frames the field of experience, it is the context of the individual's life that shapes the flow arising from the fountainhead of spiritual reality. It is my hope that seekers on different paths will be stimulated

by the similarities and the differences between the many Traditions leading to sacred space.

For those readers who take a humanistic or a secular approach to integration or actualization, I suggest that you read the word *sacred* in this book to mean those things that are enduring and worthy of your respect and of your veneration. As to magick, Aleister Crowley defined *magick* (spelled with a k to differentiate it from stage magic or trickery) as “the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity to Will.”¹ You may read this definition in physical, psychological, and/or metaphysical terms without losing the essence of its meaning. You are encouraged to re-vision the techniques and castings in this book to suit your particular slant or worldview. If you like, consider the material presented in this book as art, theater, and folklore to broaden your poetic insight and imagery of your own deeper Self.

The paradigm of the Circle and the Quarters is common to many traditions, cultures, and esoteric disciplines; accordingly, a good part of this book is devoted to their use and symbolism. In addition to the Circle and the Quarters, other modes of casting sacred and magickal space will be taught. Whenever possible, instructions will be presented to allow for the use of the castings by individuals or by groups. The enactment, experience, and effect of castings are different when done solo as opposed to collectively. You should not consider yourself proficient in a particular casting, all other things considered, until you’ve used it as an individual and in a group numerous times with a consistent outcome.

For the most part the chapters stand alone and may be read out of sequence, but you may gain a better understanding of the castings if you read the chapters in their natural order. The distinctiveness of the castings will become clearer once all the chapters have been read, because it will then be possible to compare and contrast their various characteristics. As is true for most writings on esoteric matters, you will gain a deeper or a broader set of insights and awarenesses with repeated readings and with the actual practice of and experience of the castings. Also many of the nuances of the castings will escape your understanding until you actually use them for specific purposes rather than as exercises. We are beings of the Earth plane, and we learn our lessons best when they are grounded in physical actions.

1 Aleister Crowley, *Magick* (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1974), 130.

To help you develop your competency with these castings, I have used the same structural outline in each of the chapters that describes a specific casting. This arrangement should make it easier to learn the castings and has the benefit of allowing logical comparisons between the castings' protocols. Watch for the following headings in the instructional chapters as the core framework you may use to build your knowledge:

Introduction

The Calling

The Dismissal

Qualities and Uses

Principles and Basis for Action

Limitations and Precautions

Interactions with Other Castings or Magicks

Recommendations for Mastering Use

Conclusion

A one-page summary of the protocol for each of the castings is available in the appendices. I have found that reducing tension, frustration, and anxiety is essential to effective ritual, and these summaries should benefit you in that regard. I encourage you to use these as aids to mastering the castings. Either take the book with you into your ritual space or photocopy the one-page summary. In the long run most people prefer to memorize castings, but in the short run a piece of paper can provide a useful boost to your confidence. You may also wish to enlarge selected diagrams as props for the visualizations that accompany most of the castings.

A number of the castings in this book do not appear in any other written or traditional sources; to the best of my knowledge they are unique. They were created, or more accurately re-created, from my past-life memories, visions, and careful thought based on this life's learning. These castings have been in use for more than twenty years by the covens in my Tradition (Assembly of the Sacred Wheel). I will not burden you with my past-life stories as to the origins of these castings, as I believe that such memories and visions should

be taken with a grain of salt. I will say that the visions that led to these castings have been proven in the reality of practical use and that I feel secure in recommending them. I have tested the limits of these castings and taken personal risks in order to assure their safety and efficacy. They have also been successfully used by many individuals and groups outside my Tradition, which suggests that these castings are adaptable and robust.

As you are reading this book, if you find a reference to an unfamiliar concept, word, or magickal system you may wish to jot it down in your journal as a reminder to look it up later. There is also a suggested reading list at the back of this book which may be of use to you. You will notice that I am assuming that you *are* keeping a journal. For some people keeping a journal is a pleasant diversion; for many others it is drudgery. Don't put off keeping a magickal journal because of your preconceptions about what such a journal should be like; it need not be bound in tooled leather nor does it require the best prose or penmanship. Whether your journal is a notepad, a file on a computer, or a handmade book, it can serve you well.

The purpose of a magickal journal is to assist you in keeping track of your experiences, observations, and questions so that you may further your efforts on the path. Above and beyond our normal levels of forgetfulness, there is often an inner or an outer resistance to change and growth that often expresses itself as a forgetting of just those things that we need most to spiritually progress. Do not underestimate the power of the group mind of mainstream culture and its associated thought forms to work against your memory and mindfulness. Magickal journals are one of our best shields against forgetfulness and lethargy, perhaps second only to participation in a healthy working group.

I also recommend that you seek out such a working group, knowing as I make that suggestion just how hard it is to find an appropriate one. Don't rush into joining a group. Many of the members of my own group who have derived the most benefit from their participation also took years, not weeks or months, to get to know the others before joining. Make a fully informed choice whenever joining a group because the act of joining is powerful magick that puts many changes in motion. If, for whatever reason, you find that you cannot connect with a formally organized magickal working group, you may wish to seek out a study group or to form one. There are many pitfalls associated with study groups, but it is far better to be in a study group than to conform to a magickal working group that does not fit

your core beliefs and goals. Remember, most well-established groups have set plans and ideals that change slowly, if at all. If you fancy that you can change an existing group to meet your needs and expectations, what you have is a recipe for heartburn at best.

Lastly, it's normal to be overwhelmed; even virtuoso pianists began with simple finger exercises. Don't take that example as an exhortation to become a virtuoso—your goal may not be to become a virtuoso. There are many who play well enough to bring themselves and their fellows joy, and that is enough. As you work your way through *Casting Sacred Space* listen for inner guidance in whatever way that you practice stillness.

If you feel comfortable in doing so, you may ask the help of the Spirit of the Birch tree. The impetus to write this book came after a contact I had with the Birch Deva (a deva, in this usage, is the oversoul or group mind of a particular species) under the branches of a beautiful tree in Vermont. Birch is the first tree in the Celtic Tree Calendar that marks the thirteen Lunar months and the Sun's five stations of the year. Birch is Beth, the first letter in the Celtic Tree Alphabet. Birch is the setter of boundaries; it was the tree that marked the boundary between the green Earth and the melting glaciers at the end of the last Ice Age. It is the tree of inception and stands at the beginning of things. The setting of sacred bounds, and castings, which are the beginning of magick, are under the rule of Birch. This book is upheld by the essence of the Birch. Invoke the wisdom of the Birch as you work through this book.



YOUR VISION

Although many different methods will be presented in subsequent chapters, often with somewhat technical explanations, I would like to underscore that magick and ceremony are more arts than sciences. What you accomplish using the various castings is not only dependent upon your intellectual understanding, but upon your passion, creativity, and vision. The whole of what you believe is the foundation of all your castings and informs your actions and perceptions.

In certain branches of the Western Magickal Tradition students are asked to create a pantacle, a disk marked with symbols to form a visual representation of their personal concept of the forces, forms, and essences that make up the universe. The pantacle is then used in ritual as a reminder or a focus of that integrated vision. (The pantacle is sometimes also referred to as a pentacle, but we will use the former spelling to differentiate this from the five-pointed star common to many magickal systems.) The process of taking all they know or believe and concentrating it into an image is a powerful learning experience. You may wish to undertake the task of creating a pantacle or choose another method for distilling your knowledge into an organic whole. Writing a poem or a story will accomplish the same end. You may choose to paint your vision or to create a richly detailed image in your mind's eye if your hand is not suited to the visual arts. Constructing a ritual garb adorned in a way that shows your relationship to your vision is another option. Regardless of how you approach this task, it is a work of art.

The development of a personal vision, style, or voice in the arts is a difficult undertaking. When it comes to the creation of a personal vision that encompasses the sacred, the quest is all the more strenuous because it must express the fullness of your being. A part of that search may include explorations in philosophy, mythology, and metaphysics. Perhaps the most overlooked and yet one of the most central parts of any vision or worldview is a model of or paradigm for the nature of Divinity. The meaning of sacred space and the relationship of the person creating the space to their concept of Deity have countless ramifications. One thing that I hold as true for all paths is that it is always advisable to acknowledge the presence and power of the Divine whenever a casting is performed. This can be quite simple or an extravagantly rich acknowledgment, but in either case it helps to align you as a microcosm within the macrocosm. A work plan for the development of a coherent personal vision of castings is beyond the scope of this book, but I do recommend that you consider the difference between what you think and what you believe as an essential part of your spiritual development.



Exercise

Write three short myths: one should describe the creation of the manifest universe; another, the creation of humans; and the last, a meeting between humans and your concept of the Divine. A week or two after you have written the three myths, read them again and look for any resonances between the myths and your concept of sacred space. Write new myths every few months and repeat the process for new insights on the state of your beliefs. If you have access to good people, read the myths you have written aloud to these trusted souls. Myths were originally intended to be heard, not read, and the process of storytelling will reveal more about the myths that you have written than any literary critique. This exercise is as simple and as difficult as it sounds.

The Circle Is the Beginning of Magick: A Personal Vision

As a way to communicate what I mean by a coherent personal vision of castings, I offer my personal vision on the deeper meanings inherent in the casting of a circle as a point of departure for the quest for your own visions.



The basic unity of creation is held as a primal truth in many spiritual paths. This unity does not imply uniformity; it implies multiplicity connected through a commonality of source, of foundations of existence, and in some philosophies a commonality of purpose. This underlying unity of the great diversity of the Universe allows for a host of Goddesses and Gods that are each one with the whole. The word Universe (with the same root as the word *unity*) encompasses all of space, time, and everything that exists, seen and unseen. In Wicca, as in Native American traditions, all of space and time is held as sacred. The Universe is seen as divinity manifest, and in Wicca is the body of the Goddess. Within this perspective, the Universe is sacred; therefore every part and all of its parts are sacred. The beauty and glory of this perspective of the Universe are one of the roots of the spiritual desire to experience it as a unity.

To truly experience the whole of one's Self is a tall order; to experience the wholeness of the Earth—or larger yet, our arm of the Galaxy—is unimaginable. For humans the capacity for ecstatic union with the totality of things is generally achieved only after soul-refining work, and then only for brief periods. In some traditions this is seen as a human failing, but in an Earth religion like Wicca, this need is seen as normal and reflective of our nature as incarnate beings. To my mind, an Earth religion means focused on the Earth plane, not just on our planet. This is no more a failing than a cell acknowledging that it is a part of an organ within an organism, but it should also be acknowledged that each cell carries the pattern in its DNA of the whole organism. There is no shame in physical beings abiding by the laws of physical existence, let alone the limits of psychology and personality. There is also the recognition that the fullness of experience is on a continuum, perhaps several continua.

Communion with the Universe while incarnate is much like trying to reach the speed of light while in the physical level of the Universe. As you approach the speed of light, Einstein taught that your rate of time slows down, and your mass increases until at the speed of light time stops and mass is infinite. The faster you go, the heavier the load becomes, and the less time you have to push. It would take infinite energy to reach the speed of light, whereupon time would cease to pass and your mass would be infinite. Using this as a metaphor for attempts at ecstatic union, it would take infinite consciousness to reach total communion with the Universe. Having met these conditions, you would meet the criteria that many hold true for many

concepts of Deities. This imagery may seem a bit extreme, but it underlines a very important point: the effective creation of magickal space revolves around adherence to the patterns of physical, metaphysical, and psychological laws.

The casting of a Circle is an acknowledgment of the limits of human consciousness and is a tool to reach beyond those limits by choosing specific boundaries and limits. There is a basic human need for division and segmentation in consciousness; that is what we call thought. Our concentration, attention, and rates of information processing are limited. Our limits call forth the necessity for the selection of different modes of awareness for different purposes. When we read, our attention is focused on the message carried by the words—not the slight irregularities in the shapes of the letters caused by the ink spreading into the fibers of the paper. When we dream, certain gates are open to us, but the tools of rational thought are normally confiscated by the guardians of these gates. Humans are tool users, and consciousness was our first tool, not a chipped flint or fire. Although many are versatile, no one tool is applicable for every situation—the same is true for consciousness. Castings and different modes of consciousness are among the tools that, when used with skill, allow us to build and to travel our path to the Universe.

The casting of a Circle is also an opportunity to affirm the parts of yourself that exist outside of the physical frame of reference. It is an opportunity to cocreate and to re-create yourself and your universe in conjunction with whatever name(s) you give to Deity force(s) of immanence and transcendence. It is a way to make easier the shift from the consciousness used to function in daily life to the consciousness used in connecting with Life in the greater sense. A Circle is an attempt at reconciliation between the personal, collective, and transpersonal realities.

Castings are the inception of magick and the creation of intentional paradox. The intent of casting a Circle is, in no small part, an effort to create a model of the Universe that fits the scale of human consciousness. The creation of any division or subsetting of the Universe in any way produces paradoxes. The paradox of forming a representation of the *infinite*, the macrocosm, in terms of the *finite*, the microcosm, is an unending source of power and inspiration. In my estimation this is the most potent polarity we can use to power our magick.

The old Hermetic idea of the microcosm within the macrocosm is interwoven into many esoteric traditions. It is often expressed in this way:

“As above so below, but in another manner.” The simplicity of this axiom can be deceptive. Current Western culture tends to overvalue those things that are sophisticated on the surface, transparent in their mechanism of action, and measurable. Poetic truths are often set aside as less important or are trivialized because the concept of *mystery* is deeply suspect. This poetic Hermetic axiom applies across temporal or spatial spans. It is the connecting rainbow bridge between times, places, and differences of scale or vibration, and as such is a harmonizer of the paradoxes produced in the creation of sacred space.

The intentional paradox of a magickal casting is a poetic truth that is seemingly self-contradictory but coherent. The apparent simplicity of a fertilized egg, a hazelnut, or the moment before the Big Bang is each held as similar as a state of beginning by this axiom. Wiccan magick contains many poetic truths that are great levelers, that bring the sense of peer relationship and responsibility to the colossal and the small. Like the Universe, we began with all of our matter and potentiality in one cell, and we proceeded to split and to expand. Life, in its greater sense of *all that is evolving*, unfolds through the process of specialization, individuation, and harmonious relation to the laws of matter. Viewed in this context, the casting of a Circle is an extension of this process.

Many magickal Traditions use the Four Sacred Directions and Center as a way to plot a coordinate in space/time. In some ways the casting of a Circle is like starting a journey, in that one’s bearings must be determined before setting course. Unlike mundane navigation based upon the coordinates of a finite globe, the casting of a Circle is set in all of space and time, and the movement is not through space but through planes of perception and of reality. In Wiccan magick, the Circle is said to take us between the Worlds; in this statement there are twin paradoxes. In being between the Worlds we are in all Worlds, and in no Worlds. Although we are elsewhere and elsewhen in a Circle, we still stand upon the ground and in the time wherein the Circle was cast. Even in the end, the Circle is open but unbroken because it exists in time, outside of time, and in the heart.

A Quarters-cast Circle in the Wiccan manner is more than a coordinate, a gate to higher planes, and a paradox—it is a model of the poetic vision of the faith. Present in the Circle is the Wheel of the Year and the intertwining of the Solar and Lunar cycles with the life of the Earth. Present in the Circle is the power of the Elements as well as their manifestations as forces

and states, as sylphs, salamanders, undines, and gnomes, and as the five sacred parts of Self: the body, mind, heart, soul, and spirit. Present in the Circle are the chants, the incense, the drums, the dances, and the people that shape and are shaped by living traditions.

In its fullness, a Circle can contain a richness so complete that if all of Wicca were lost except for the way to cast a Circle, and its symbolism, the faith would renew itself from that one seed. A Quarters-cast Circle has the potential to be a holographic representation of the evolving energy pattern that is the way of Wicca. The same is potentially true of any casting within the context of a Tradition.

Do not allow the casting of a Circle to become merely the preliminary step in a magickal working. Consider the profundity and the power of creating sacred space in every Circle. Remember and reconnect with the poetic truths that are the seed of sacred space.