

## WHAT IS THELEMA?

The First in a Series of Three Articles on  
Thelemic Theory & Practice

by  
**Aleisterion**

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(Paidi tou Prophete, XIo O.O.O.)

[All Quotes from Holy Books in Red Ink.]

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**“Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.”**

Ideally, Thelema is an ideology steeped in mysticism without ignorant superstition, an atheist system of initiatic religion devoted not to the interests of a deity but to those of an excessively indulgent Gnosis of Hedonism. As one of our Thelemic Arhats or Masters, William Blake, once wrote: “The road of excess leads to the palace of

wisdom” - and: “The lust of the goat is the bounty of God” (both *Proverbs from Hell* being from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* by Blake). Yet ours is a subtle and sublime hedonism, being as it is a culture not merely of pleasure but also of Genius.

This is the first in a series of articles in which I intend to analyze Thelema in some detail, from the perspective of an experienced yet objective practitioner who, while affiliated with none of the main Thelemic communities, partakes of some of the views and traditions of them all, in addition to holding to a few of his own. In this first article I will deal with Thelema in theory; then in the second article I will delve into the core practice as outlined or in some cases hinted at in *The Book of the Law*; and in the third installment of the series I will discuss some of what I consider to be the greatest Thelemic minds – Geniuses of Art and Magick and Mysticism throughout recorded history.

Bear in mind that, while I hold to no ill will or agenda against any Thelemic authority of any Order or association, I naturally have my own unique views and for these I will not apologize. While I differ with some on many issues, and with many on some issues, I am determined to go my way as I will, and to stand my ground without fear or regret; but I bear ever in mind that, no matter what our differences, we who call ourselves Thelemites constitute a family – and while we may disagree vehemently, we are a regal and refined family first and foremost – who at times disagree but who always fight like brothers and sisters and not as enemies.

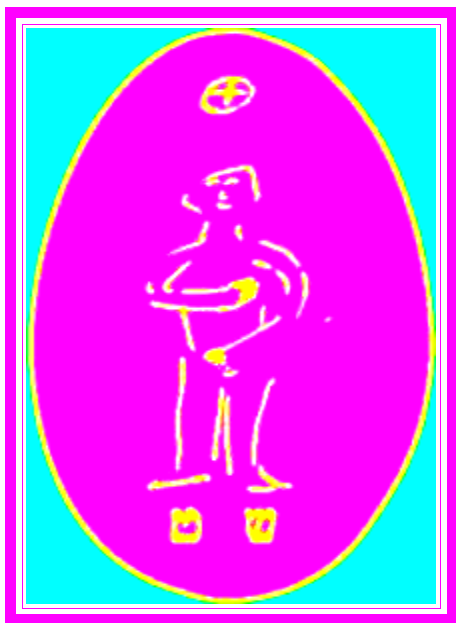
If Thelema is as I see it, i.e. the next stage in the evolution of religion, then its leaders will eventually transcend their bitterness and overlook their petty differences. **“Bind nothing! Let there**

be no difference made among you between any one thing & any other thing; for thereby there cometh hurt.” (*Liber Legis*, 1:22) The first and greatest challenge for Thelema to overcome is to rise above the forces of destructive sectarianism that have plagued all archaic religious institutions and movements.

That said, let us hesitate no longer to dive headlong into the “pestilential” abyss of Thelemic theory.

### **Article I of III:**

#### **Thelema in Theory**



One would very likely be hard-pressed to find any two Thelemites that totally agree on everything, but then one hardly needs concern

oneself with what others think. One might approach Thelema in one or more of the following ways: (a) as a religion, (b) as a philosophy, or (c) as an occult phenomenon and but one of many at that. But even that fails to settle the matter, for there is a further question of how to approach its founding document, *The Book of the Law*. It could be taken literally, as the inspired word of God unto humanity – in that tired old religious tradition – or it could be taken as a subtle message rich with a multiverse of meaning. Or it could be viewed as just another occult grimoire. Finally, there is the problem of the “Tunis Comment”.

What *is* Thelema? Is it just another occult tradition? Is it a useful new philosophy adapted to our evolving state? Or is it a new religion? In order to arrive at a truly enlightened answer to this question, one might be well-served to consider the unique nature of Thelema as expounded in its core writing, *Liber L vel Legis*, *The Book of the Law*. (I do not support Crowley's retitling of the book: its original title, as written – with hand supposedly under firm control – was *Liber L*, not *Liber AL*. See *L*, 1:36, 1:54, 2:54, and for some understanding as to the logic behind these verses, see 3:47. This is not to diminish the doctrinal significance of the Key of Thelema, *AL*, as based on the Hebrew לאל, “Divinity”, nor to lessen the achievement of the original “Child of the Prophet”, Frater Achad, in realizing and relaying its importance.)

The book is purported to be the message of a praeterhuman intelligence named Aiwass to all humanity. It contains subtleties and riddles and obscure predictions. It is also a religious covenant, without question: it calls for certain forms of behavior and it offers an assurance of “reward” (more on this later) for said action. This covenantal aspect of *The Book of the Law* is an important part of the book that will be addressed

to a fair extent at some point in our discussion.

At first glance, *Liber Legis* seems chock full of superstitious nonsense. However, verse 27 of chapter 2 of the book contains a vital caveat. It reads:

“There is great danger in me; for who doth not understand these runes shall make a great miss. He shall fall down into the pit called Because, and there he shall perish with the dogs of Reason.”

There is so much more to our existence than we can know with our brains, which being limited devices of dual perception simply cannot process that whole reality rationally. What *The Book of the Law* suggests – beneath all the archaic symbols and ciphers such as gods and demons and the like – is that there exists an infinite and undying consciousness of which our own is a part, and that this praeterordinary mind is at once “above” us and “in” us, i.e., beyond time and space in an expanded awareness that is accessible at certain moments of epiphany of Genius, and yet also at all points across time, a full and simultaneous awareness of the primal and future evolved Mind of Man, a microcosm of the macrocosmic mind of infinite consciousness, planted as a fetus of realization in the contemporary consciousness of the perfectly prepared initiate, left to grow and to assimilate the lesser temporal identity or ego (hence the expression “Babe of the Abyss”). This Genius – or Thelema – is what was interpreted by primitive minds as God.

Now then, while it is true that *Liber Legis* makes occasional use of terms such as “God”, clearly there is a subtler meaning that these words represent, because of *L*, 2:23. It reads:

“I am alone: there is no God where I am.”

The speaker of the verse, Hadit, is the Not-God, the mystical Atman – but also Shiva, the Hindu lord of destruction. Crowley writes the following of this “Not-God” in his Commentaries:

“Had is Sad, Set, Satan, Sat (equals "Being" in Sanskrit), South. He is then the Sun, one point concentrating Space, as also is any other star. The word ABRAHADABRA is from Abrasax, Father Sun, which adds to 365. For the North-South antithesis see Fabre d'Olivet's "Hermeneutic Interpretation of the Origin of the Social State in Man". Note "Sax" also as a Rock, or Stone, whence the symbol of the Cubical Stone, the Mountain Abiegnus, and so forth.”

One of the most noteworthy in the above list is Set (because of its great antiquity), the dark soul of the Sun, equivalent to Hoor-paar-kraat; but equally vital is Shaitan, the Sumerian predecessor of the Hebrew Satan, whom Crowley (in *The Equinox of the Gods*) identifies as Aiwass. As Kenneth Grant has shown, שַׁתַּן in Hebrew plus Aiwass in Greek adds to 777, the value of the Hebrew for the “World of the Shells” or Hell, the mystical region of this most ancient Serpent-Self, this *Thelema*.

Clearly, the symbolism is apt, but only if one looks beyond its corrupted associations, e.g. the embodiment of evil versus good. Satan was, for Crowley, not some heroic anti-god to be revered and served, but rather the ultimate hidden or occult Self, whose unveiling over time is a neverending initiatic process of Gnosis: in short, the innermost Genius of all animality including humanity, not that of any objective tyrannical deity. The symbolism is strong and offensive to all established religions that serve such an oppressive, unnatural

hollow idol, but that is to its credit so long as it is not interpreted literally, as referring to some devil that we are supposed to worship in the traditional adorative sense. Again, there is no God to be worshipped – there is only Self in that exalted domain beyond any particular point yet at once in all points of space and time, *ad infinitum*. (I am of course aware of the limits of space, but it is logical to assume that, beyond those limits, there is some repetitive or other reality, and so on and on to no final end, the “existence of nothingness” being oxymoronic.)

Thelema, as it is put forth in *The Book of the Law*, certainly outlines a sort of religion along with a definite ideology, but it is one based entirely on the untapped potential of the mind and not on any personal god. The atheism of the book is pronounced, and it calls for a firm rejection of all theistic creeds soever, not out of blind hate for anything they represent, but simply because such creeds encourage ignorant superstition over science, which then leads to extreme fanaticism that, being based on false myths and not actual truths, is very often at odds with those whose positions are actually based in reality.

Note especially verse 11 from the third chapter:

“Trample down the Heathen; be upon them, o warrior, I will give you of their flesh to eat!”

In his New Comment to this verse, Crowley wrote:

“The Ritual of the Adoration of Ra-Hoor-Khuit is, as one might expect, illustrative of His nature. It seems doubtful whether this Ritual can ever be of the type of symbolic celebration; it appears rather as if expeditions against the Heathen: i.e.

Christians and other troglodytes – but most especially the parasites of man, the Jews – were to be His rite.”

One should not, however, take offense to race nor to anyone for merely being of whatever religious or ideological persuasion. I do not seek to defend Crowley for such a statement, but while I do not stand against any individual on the basis of creed, I *do* stand against creeds and religious or ideological movements that seek to enslave and oppress. No religious group, no matter how much wealth they have with which to lobby for power, should have the right to impose restrictive legislation of any kind against other-minded yet less fortunate citizens. But of far greater importance than this most vile of restrictive agendas against individual liberty is the loss of innocent minds to hateful, self-loathing creeds which plague them with the neuroses of the sin-complex and rob them of their happiness in the full and unreserved appreciation of the many joys of this world.

Yet it is better to wield the pen in this war than the sword: for this is a war not of violence but of ideas. There is no need or desire on my part to oppose the servants of restriction personally, in fact I even befriend them. I am interested instead in harming their hateful ideology, never their persons or property.

It is well worth emphasizing that *we do not entertain any hostility whatsoever towards any individuals for their race, religion or ideology – not in the least*. It is out of ignorance that we blame the victims of brainwashing for their appalling intellectual condition. And doubt it not: to adhere to faith in myths that are not only completely at odds with both science and nature, but also detrimental to logic and to a healthy, self-fulfilling mental state, is most certainly an appalling

intellectual condition to be in. Yet no matter what our passion with regard to our lawful and civil opposition to restrictive ideologies, we are wise to bear always in mind that all creatures, however seemingly ignoble and base, are at some level stellar beings. Man just needs to be purged of the grosser elements of ego that tend to restricts him, inhibiting natural change and growth, in order to manifest fully without prejudicial interference, Thelema based not on fear but on Love and Liberation.

While he was the founder and prophet of this religion for the New Millennium, Crowley was no infallible figure; but his faults fail to detract from the value of his overall vision. H.P. Blavatsky, whom Crowley adored and admired, also had her personal problems, but they were nothing as compared against her extraordinary genius and accomplishment. So too with Aleister Crowley: his issues, while they were many and quite problematic, simply fail to detract from his loftier message – such was the radiance of his Genius then, and such is the Genius of Aiwass still, that certain extraordinary men and women can be inspired by it to the extent that they are put in touch with this same Supernal Mind – the Current of Thelema itself, and one's own Holy Supernal Will – and are genuinely transformed by the experience.

Thelema itself, however, exceeds its prophets. We are warned, in *L*, 2:10, of Crowley's "ill will". As if that weren't enough, we have *L*, 1:54, which tells us that Crowley would never be able to witness much less understand all of the mysteries of *The Book of the Law*. Other verses, such as 2:75-76 and 3:47, indeed reaffirm this: Crowley is *not* to be the final word on *all* matters Thelemic, simply because he knew precious little of the many intricacies of the holy Law of Thelema – and his "ill will" was in the way somewhat.

It is for us to work this out now: we must turn to ourselves not just to a dead man whose view is frozen in time. One can be worshipful of the holy Spirit of the Beast, i.e. the 93 Current of Aiwass, that is equally in us all, and take instruction and wisdom from the teachings of the prophet of Thelema, without devoting oneself blindly to his every word: for even he – ego as large as it clearly was – admitted that he lacked a great deal of understanding on the matter of *The Book of the Law*, particularly the third chapter. It is well to remember that he was quite fallible, and that we must use our own wisdom as well as his. The Supernal Current runs not through dried-up dead veins but through the impassioned hearts and minds of the living; and as the living evolve and change, so too does the Current adapt its Law to suit new conditions.

The argument against this, of course, is based solidly upon the "Tunis Comment". To quickly summarize, the "Tunis Comment" is a short note jotted down by Crowley upon arriving at Tunisia in 1925 e.v. Its content refers to *The Book of the Law*. Let us consider this small writing a portion at a time.

"The study of this Book is forbidden."

One is prohibited from studying *The Book of the Law* at all. It is expressly forbidden.

"It is wise to destroy this copy after the first reading. Whosoever disregards this does so at his own risk and peril. These are most dire."

One is advised to read the book only once, then to obliterate it. The gravest consequences are

supposed to stem directly from keeping and studying the book.

“Those who discuss the contents of this Book are to be shunned by all, as centres of pestilence.”

One is to treat anyone that discusses the book as spiritually contagious and anathema. This is the worst kind of restriction, and it is horribly un-Thelemic.

“All questions of the Law are to be decided only by appeal to my writings, each for himself.”

Finally, one is to resort to no resource, when interpreting *The Book of the Law*, other than Aleister Crowley. Even though the book itself informs us that one shall come after Crowley to expound the Law further! [While it is true that the first such “one” was Frater Achad, it is also true that Achad left many of the unresolved issues of *Liber Legis* unanswered, and Crowley expected the eventual arrival of yet another.]

So then, what are we to make of this outlandish canon of restriction known as the “Tunis Comment”? Some actually take this literally. The ridiculous superstition aside for a moment, consider first and foremost where Crowley was at in his life when he penned this bizarre note and claimed it as “Class A”, making it equivalent in authority to *Liber Legis* itself.

### **The History leading up to the Tunis Comment**

While he most certainly *was* – in my view anyway – the prince-priest and prophet of the new Thelemic movement, Aleister Crowley most certainly was *not* the supreme worldly authority of that religion by himself – the Scarlet Woman was co-equal in authority and even greater in power. According to *L*, 1:15, it is she – not he – that is vested with “all power”:

“Now ye shall know that the chosen priest & apostle of infinite space is the prince-priest the Beast; and in his woman called the Scarlet Woman is all power given.”

It was, after all, Rose Kelly – not Aleister Crowley – that first received supernatural contact with Aiwass. She found it no easy task convincing Aleister to take this contact seriously. Granted, it was he who received the verses of the Law, but when he failed to hear the words, she succeeded in recapturing them, presumably through some kind of communion with the praeterhuman entity.

Each and every one of the Scarlet Women had her gifts, but supreme among them all, in both intellect and in the ability to master her recalcitrant Beast, was Leah Hirsig, also known as Soror Alostrael, or 31-666-31 (i.e. AL-OSThR-AL, transliterating in Hebrew). It was Leah alone of all the Scarlet Women who exercised this power granted unto her by *The Book of the Law* itself, by making Crowley to swear an “Inviolable and Irrevocable Vow of Holy Obedience” unto her, at the Abbey of Thelema in Cefalu, Sicily, in 1920 e.v.

On July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1920 e.v., Leah and Aleister performed a magical operation intended to enable “Alostrael to know how to use her power”. It was

a short rite but “excellent and strong”. The following day they visited Palermo, having a discussion on the train thereto – a “long serious talk on Magick and on my Vow of Holy Obedience to 31-666-31”.

In the diary he goes on to write: “I swore to take Her [i.e. Alostrael] as my High Priestess to Him [Aiwass], and act accordingly. She is to direct all action, taking the initiative throughout.”

He describes their relationship, and how she was assuming her role of Scarlet Woman to the fullest, grabbing onto the reins of the Beast to channel their combined magical force: “She will rise up, command me, master me, lash me to manhood...She will perform Her Black – nay, unnameably-hued Mass, from my base body, elevate Her God, suck out His life, and spill it on Her midden. Her Winged Egg, my Phoenix, shall cook together in moist fire; Her crystal sea shall be enriched with pearls of God-consecrated Oyster...and Her Concoction shall be sweet in our mixed mouths, the Sacrament that giveth thanks to Aiwaz, our Lord God the Devil, that He hath fused His Beast's soul with His Scarlet Whore's, to be One Soul completed, that It may set His Image in the Temple of Man, and thrust His Will's rod over them and rule them [unto liberty in the Law of Do What Thou Wilt].”

Clearly, Crowley had a lifelong infatuation – or rather passion – for the “Trinity of Blasphemy” from the *Book of Revelation*: i.e., the “Devil” (i.e. atheist “Not-God” of Man and Supernal Beast), the Beast its Anti-Christ (or Antitheist, to be more accurate), and the Scarlet Woman, the liberated Whore of Whores, Babylon (or as Crowley came to spell it: **BABALON**), the Supernal Feminine. It is to be expected, considering the abuse he received from a repressed and verbally abusive Christian

fundamentalist mother and from others. But in the background of his later youth loomed this ominous, haunting figure – like the ghost of King Hamlet – the powerful legacy of his father, a preacher. Of course, he longed to become like his father, but he also lusted to blaspheme against the religion of his vile mother: so he blended the two urges, and fancied himself the Minister of Satan, Lord of the Self-Enlightened Atheists, King of the Shadow Realm.

His was the religion not just of the dark forces of *Revelation*, but of the forces of light as well. He did not want merely to *conquer* good with his Empire of Wickedness, he preferred to actually assimilate it – fitting justice, as he saw it, for the robbery the Christians perpetrated against the Pagan cults. After all, much of the holidays and traditions and rituals and symbols of Christianity were lifted from hedonistic Pagan religions. Crowley said that the Beast with seven heads was the same as the Lamb with seven eyes; the reverential Woman clothed with the Sun was the same as Babalon the Whore; and Satan was the same as God.

He did not, in other words, merely desire to set up his own irreligious movement in opposition to other religions, but his idea instead was *to take over and reform religion* by contending that the original source of all religions, the praeterordinary mind at once overlying yet indwelling all minds, human and beast alike, the mind not of God but of the Genius within, was in fact none other than his own “Not-God” of Supernal Self, misunderstood by apish men throughout history and idealized. It is a good idea, if for no other reason than that it modernizes religion by freeing it of the constraints of devotion to an imaginary and impractical ideal that places us at odds with our natural instincts. In such a religion, wherein blasphemy is sacramental, there is nothing to hate except that which *really*

threatens the welfare of the human race: the tribal-based ideology of theistic bondage, which always whips up fanatical extremism out of taboos and notions of conversion (in some cases coerced and in others influenced with vile lies and ignorant superstition). In such religions as these – what Crowley and *Liber Legis* refer to as “Heathen” [L, 3:11] cults (being as they are always uneducated and diametrically opposed to science) – it is not enough to enslave oneself to one’s “God”, but one must go even further and make certain that everybody else is miserable as well!

The religion of the Beast and the Scarlet Woman, on the other hand, redefines the word “worship” altogether, transforming it from some or other form of abject service to an immaterial and unreal ghost into a healthy, hedonistic celebration of ecstatic rapture and natural greatness.

All went well with Aleister and Leah until they were expelled from the Abbey of Thelema in Sicily by Mussolini for no good reason. They were also nearly broke. They relocated from Italy to Tunisia; but he turned his back on Leah in spite of his Holy Vow, and turned to another lover by the name of Dorothy Olsen, who took the Oath of Scarlet Woman on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1924 e.v.

This Oath of the Scarlet Woman, by the way, was first composed by Crowley for Leah, who took it officially on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1920 e.v. For sake of completeness, here it is:

**The Oath of the Scarlet Woman**  
**'H Kokkine Gyne**

I dedicate myself wholly to the Great Work.

I will work the work of wickedness.

I will kill my heart.

I will be shameless before all men.

I will freely prostitute my body to all creatures that so desire it.

Leah, graceful and devoted to her cause above her personal issues, in love with Crowley in spite of his cruelty, and dedicated to Dorothy – aka Soror Astrid – as the new Scarlet Woman, continued to assist them both and even travelled with them to Thuringia, Germany, in 1925 e.v. for the Council to elect Crowley as international Head of the O.T.O. Eventually she parted ways with him, fed up at last with his vile “rotteness” as she called it, which so often got the better of him, costing him many relationships. While she did in fact renounce her Holy Office at that time, it did nothing to her dedication to Thelema, which she continued to serve – in her own way – thereafter.

Aleister Crowley jotted his little “Tunis Comment” in Tunis in 1924 e.v., after he had some of his most brutal ordeals. The death of their infant, Poupee, at Cefalu Abbey, followed by a miscarriage, then the unexpected and tragic demise of his most promising young disciple and heir apparent, Raoul Loveday – Frater Aud – proved to be just too much a strain on them. Add to this the fact that they were then expelled from Italy without much money to get by with, and one can only imagine as to what sort of state he was in at the time he wrote down the utterly bizarre “Short Comment” or “Tunis Comment” as it is also called.

Yet he *did* write it, and he *did* assign it as “Class A”, which is defined by him (in *The Equinox*) as

writings or “books of which may be changed not so much as the style of a letter: that is, they represent the utterance of an Adept entirely beyond the criticism of even the Visible Head of the Organization”. As he *claimed to be* the sole authority in all matters Thelemic, this is without a doubt beyond any and all possible objection.

But what about the Scarlet Woman? And what are we to make of the “Absolute Vow of Holy Obedience”, as Crowley himself called it? He had been known to administer such a Vow to some of his disciples, by which he considered them bound forever to the Cause – an irrevocable and inescapable duty. His sworn Magical Oath to Alostrael, abnegating all authority to her once and for all, could not be broken without dire consequence. Regardless of what she did thereafter – and she remained true to Thelema even after breaking from Crowley at last – nothing could assuage him of this karma.

“The Oath is the foundation of all Work in Magick, as it is an affirmation of the Will. An Oath binds the Magician for ever.” This, from Chapter XVI of *Magick in Theory and Practice*, was dictated by Crowley to Hirsig at the Abbey of Thelema.

There is no questioning the fact that he was at times in gross violation of the Law of Thelema as put forth in *Liber Legis* – as are we all, to some degree. But he admitted that he was at fault, that he wasn't perfect Thelemically-speaking. He faulted himself for – as he put it – having one foot in the Old Aeon, being born nearly three decades before the Advent of the Thelemic Aeon, which took place with the reception of *The Book of the Law* in 1904 e.v.

All that said, it still remains a fact that he was the

founding Thelemic prophet of the New Aeon, and more, he was the first of the Aeon to attain the loftiest spiritual attainments – and he was brilliant and blessed, in spite of his “ill will” [L, 2:10] with all its attendant bad karma and misfortune. Beneath his humanity was one of the most remarkable manifestations of Supernal Genius this world has ever witnessed.

It is important though to avoid taking this prophet as some kind of Christ to be emulated in every way. Superficially, he was indeed quite flawed in many ways that are unnecessary to dig into here, yet he remained in the spiritual Office of “Beast 666” throughout his life, just as every Scarlet Woman that ever held that Office also retained her lofty estate in spite of any mundane failings. But their failings, however severe, were as nothing as weighed against the amazing beauty and sublime wisdom that they manifested.

Nevertheless, the legitimacy of the “Tunis Comment” can be called into question simply because of the fact that it was issued without the imprimatur of the Supreme Thelemic Authority at that time, which owing to the aforementioned Holy Vow rested squarely on the shoulders of Hirsig. He had abidicated his position of final authority to her – nor would a change in their relationship at all affect such a binding Magical Oath. Once she was handed the reins of final authority, it became hers to surrender. While she did formally pass the Office of Scarlet Woman to Astrid, no Scarlet Woman ever really stops being what she naturally is. It is not merely some ordinary job: it is what one is, an avatar of a Supernal Mind largely unknown by the masses of profane humanity. In the New Comment to *Liber Legis*, 1:15, Crowley expounds the nature of these spiritual and terrestrial Offices in some detail:

“The Beast and the Scarlet Woman are avatars of Tao and Teh, Shiva and Sakti. This Law is then an exact image of the Great Law of the Cosmos; this is an assurance of its Perfection.

“It is necessary to say here that The Beast appears to be a definite individual; to wit, the man Aleister Crowley. But the Scarlet Woman is an officer replaceable as need arises.”

And, in the New Comment to verse 17 of Chapter 1, he writes:

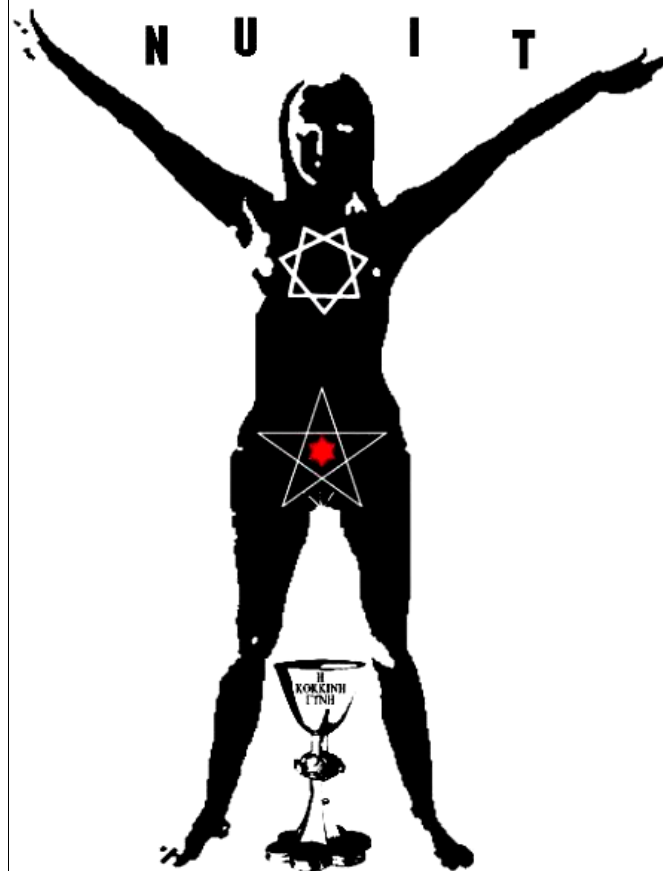
“...there is a special incarnation of Nuit and Hadit for the Beast and the Scarlet Woman, as opposed to the general truth that every man and woman are images of these ineffable Beings.”

Attempting to explain this phenomenon of the manifestation of Babalon sort of channeling through the Beast into the woman with whom he was in love at the time, he goes on to write:

“Note that a woman, having no soul of her own, can be used always as a 'Form' for any Being. This explains why Nuit can incarnate at will in successive women, careless of the physical limits of life.”

In other words, the manifestation of Babalon – or Nuit, which is the name of her universal form – occurs not through incarnation as with the Beast but according to her own whim. The problem some feminists might have is his assertion that women have no souls of their own; but in fact, just as “nothing” is actually “something” – as is the case for example with anti-matter – in the sense that there can be no real absence of things, his assertion can be interpreted to mean that women, as well as men with the soul of a woman, have another kind of soul altogether, and that it is this

subtle difference that makes the condition of manifestation of these avatars as they are.



The best analogy would be that of stars: living stars are as it were masculine, projecting energy and life; but then there are black holes, which are as it were feminine, sucking in and assimilating energy. The former is Chokmah and the latter is Binah, to which Saturn is attributed, the only one of the seven mystical planetary forces of the Tree of Life that is above the noumenal Abyss.

One might, at a glance, think for a moment that the “Tunis Comment” squares perfectly with

Thelema, in light of *L*, 1:32: **“Obey my prophet!”** But Crowley dashes that thought with the following comment to the verse:

“It is proper to obey The Beast, because His Law is pure Freedom, and He will give no command which is other than a Right Interpretation of this Freedom.”

It is important to mark this well: “He will give no command which is other than a Right Interpretation of this Freedom.” He shall give no command that restricts; his only injunction is: Do What Thou Wilt. Of course there are paths that lead off the Way of the highest and holiest Will – or what I call the Holy Supernal Will – and such are delineated in *The Book of the Law*, but as for the Beast, he shall give no order beyond the Holy Fourfold Word of Thelema itself.

So what *is* one to make of this hastily scribbled dire caveat, written in a black mood of despair and frustration, the content of which represents the very epitome of restriction? And is it not unlikely that Aiwass would wait twenty years before issuing it, allowing countless individuals to suffer without the benefit of such a critical warning?

One is best served to look to Aiwass, not Crowley, for wisdom here. The only way that Thelema can evolve beyond the limitations of previous religions is to diminish the cult of persona and to revere instead the Current that utilized him as a vehicle – a recalcitrant vehicle but a vehicle of no small ability, nonetheless. And Thelemites shall tap this Current best not by slavishly hanging on his every word or emulating his behavior, but through enlightened discernment of the subtle word, and devoted worship of the magical energy, of Aiwass, the Center of the spiritual Nexus of all being. It is, in this Aeon, to

*The Book of the Law* alone that we can turn for ultimate guidance, not to Crowley's incomplete and disappointing interpretation thereof.

Even Crowley thought so! In 1946 e.v., just over a year before his death, he referred to his own Commentaries on *The Book of the Law* as: “over a quarter of a million words of the most turgid and incomprehensible hogwash ever penned”. But it is not as if he had not been warned: *L*, 1:54 puts it in no uncertain terms: **“thou, o prophet, shalt not behold all these mysteries hidden therein.”**

Everything else aside, Crowley was simply wrong when he wrote:

“All questions of the Law are to be decided only by appeal to my writings, each for himself.”

*The Book of the Law* states very plainly that the prophet would not *ever* understand many of the mysteries, not just of prophecy and Qabalistic symbolism but of actual doctrine, hidden throughout its incredibly profound and deep versicles. To posit that no one in future should ever penetrate these veils is ludicrous: it is the equivalent of Muslims claiming that Mohammed was the last prophet that would ever come from God.

Just a couple of years before penning his “Tunis Comment”, Crowley wrote the following: “I cannot express myself adequately about my sense of failure in this Comment. More, I feel that I have not conquered my repulsion of Chapter III. I ask myself too: have I even tried to carry out the instructions in that chapter? I am utterly wretched about the whole matter. I say: have I not failed absolutely to obey the 'Heavenly Vision'?” (*The Book of the Cephaloedum Working*) So if

Crowley failed to understand and appreciate – much less be totally devoted to – *The Book of the Law*, then of what benefit is it to us to appeal to his writings, and to his writings alone, for full Thelemic Gnosis? Clearly, there is a wealth of Thelemic knowledge and wisdom to be had there, but by no means will it sate the hungry Thelemic mind.

Of the few gems to be found amidst the tons and tons of rubbish that constitute the Commentaries on the Law, arguably one of the most important to note is Crowley's New Comment to verse 78 of chapter 2 of *Liber Legis*. The portion of the verse of interest here reads:

“Lift up thyself, o my prophet, thy stature shall surpass the stars. They shall worship thy name.”

Crowley's remarks on this help to clarify:

“We may take 'thy name' as 'the Sun', for Qabalistic reasons given in the Appendix; the verse need not imply the establishment of a new cult with myself as Demigod. (Help!) But they shall worship the group of ideas connected with the Sun.”

The “Sun” being referred to here is, of course, not actual but metaphorical. We have for countless ages gazed upon the Sun and associated it with fathering and sustaining all life on the planet; and the Moon has for numberless Aeons been a source of spiritual nourishment and guidance throughout dark and frightening times, much like a Supernal Mother. With this short comment we have Aleister Crowley striking at the heart of the true Thelemic worship, instead of the sort of egotistical crap that one finds, for instance, in the “Tunis Comment” – or in *The Equinox of*

*the Gods*:

“I lay claim to be the sole authority competent to decide disputed points with regard to *the Book of the Law*, seeing that its Author, Aiwaz, is none other than mine own Holy Guardian Angel, to Whose Knowledge and Conversation I have attained, so that I have exclusive access to Him. I have duly referred every difficulty to Him directly, and received His answer; my award is therefore absolute without appeal.”

Here we see the seed of the “Tunis Comment” start to emerge, a couple of years prior to the event of its conception. This is Crowley's attempt to covet Aiwass. But what exactly *is* Aiwass, in his own words? Let us consider that question for a moment.

According to the account given by Crowley in *The Equinox of the Gods*, Aiwass is the name provided by Rose Kelly as that of the intelligence with which she was in mystical communication. It was rather unlike her to be in such an oracular state, as she preferred the way of the socialite to such occult pursuits; but one can easily see how she might be heavily influenced by Crowley's extraordinary obsession with the same. In any event, it was she, not he, that established first contact with Aiwass. If indeed “exclusive access” to the 93 Current rested once and for all with Crowley, as he came to insist upon entering the darkest phase of his life, then how is it that it was Rose Kelly, the Scarlet Woman, *not* the Beast, that gave us that Current in the first place? In fact, she had a hell of a time convincing Crowley to take her seriously – he thought that she had concocted Aiwass from the Arabic word for “yes”, *aiwa*, which she had heard so much of then, being as they were in Egypt at the time of the revealing.

Another point of note is that Crowley rarely served as the oracle for his communication with praternatural intelligences – *The Vision and the Voice* was an exception, as were the *Holy Books of Thelema*, but in neither case was the actual word of Aiwass transmitted as it had been during the Cairo Working. Of the Holy Books he wrote:

“Note, moreover, with what greedy vanity I claim authorship even of all the other A.'.A.'. Books in Class A, though I wrote them inspired beyond all I know to be I. Yet in these Books did Aleister Crowley, the master of English both in prose and in verse, partake insofar as he was That. Compare those Books with *the Book of the Law*! Their style is simple and sublime; the imagery is gorgeous and faultless; the rhythm is subtle and intoxicating; the theme is interpreted in faultless symphony. There are no errors of grammar, no infelicities of phrase. Each Book is perfect in its kind.

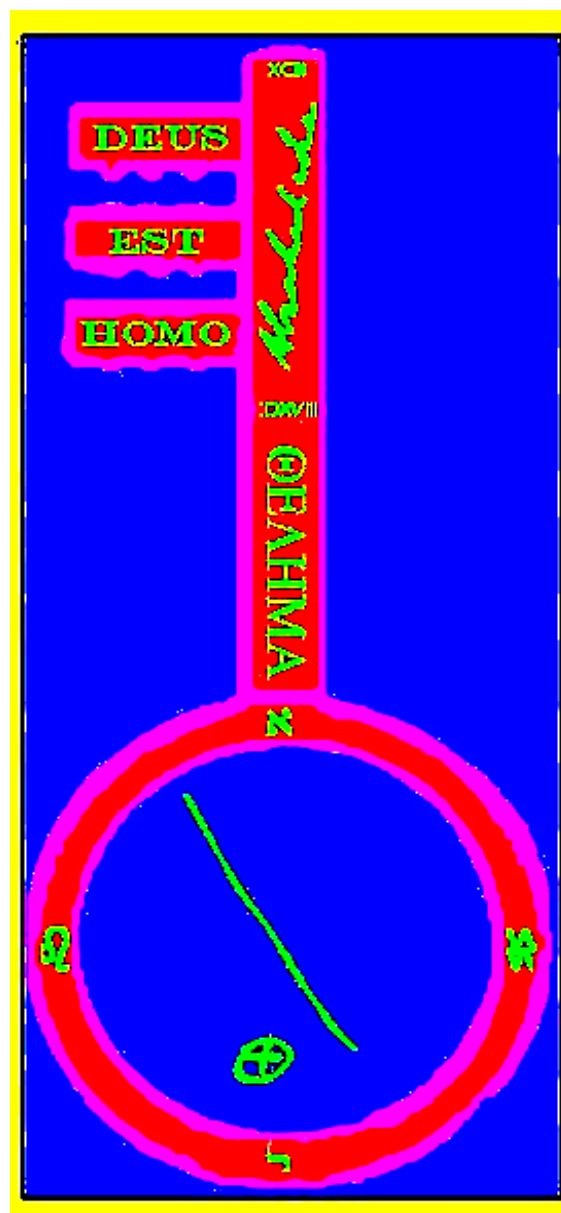
“I, daring to snatch credit for these, in that brutal Index to *The Equinox*, Volume One, dared nowise to lay claim to have touched *the Book of the Law*, not with my littlest finger-tip.”

Not with his littlest fingertip. Yet, in that very same work, while addressing the origin of the book, he writes the following:

“The question arises, especially on examining the original manuscript in My handwriting: 'Who wrote these words?'

“Of course I wrote them, ink on paper, in the material sense; but they are not My words, unless Aiwaz be taken to be no more than my subconscious self, or some part of it: in that case, my conscious self being ignorant of the Truth in

the Book and hostile to most of the ethics and philosophy of the Book, Aiwaz is a severely suppressed part of me. Such a theory would further imply that I am, unknown to myself, possessed of all sorts of praeternatural knowledge and power.”



### The 93 Current

Now, the insightful excerpt above provides something of a problem, because it is rooted in truth yet diverges therefrom into a false conclusion that has its root in the “ill will” of an overblown ego. That is, the 93 Current (i.e. Aiwass) truly *was* “some part” of Crowley's subconscious self, “a severely repressed part” – which does, in fact, make him “possessed of all sorts of praeternatural knowledge and power”, on some level unknown to his temporal self. Where he goes wrong is in assuming that this Current is not equally in all conscious beings, but in himself alone. It would be fair to say that it was – at certain times moreso than others – specially concentrated in him, but such is the case with anyone who attains unto Arhatship through transcending the Abyss of the mind – and, to be true to *The Book of the Law*, one would also have to concede that this Current was no less specially concentrated in the women who transmitted the power of the Scarlet Woman. All Thelemic Saints are equal in the Cup of Babalon; all Arhats are equally true. Or, as *Liber Legis* puts it:

“All words are sacred and all prophets true; save only that they understand a little; solve the first half of the equation, leave the second unattacked. But thou hast all in the clear light, and some, though not all, in the dark.”

And of course:

“Every man and every woman is a star.”

Of course, not all are equal in strength, talent, or intellect (among many other things), at least not at any particular point in time, but essentially, beneath the layers of genetic and experiential

effects that have adhered to and directed the essential pure consciousness, modified eventually by whatever precondition of tradition and education (or ignorant superstition, as the case may be) that is directly imposed upon him or her by family and government and culture, all men and women share this same eternal star-like condition of Supernal mind loftier than any bodily limitation.

Not all stars are the same, but each is unique in a variety of ways. All of us stem from the same Source of consciousness, however, so that on some transcendent level we are all essentially the same Mind, only splintered into infinite concentrated points of awareness for the sake of interactive experience with itself on the temporal plane. This is the reasoning behind the following verses from *Liber Legis* (3: 63, 68):

“The fool readeth this Book of the Law, and its comment; & he understandeth it not....Yet to all it shall seem beautiful. Its enemies who say not so, are mere liars.”

It is the same with such terms as “kings” and “slaves”, that we find used repeatedly throughout *The Book of the Law*: i.e., all of us are more or less both – it is the degree to which we are one or the other, in our ordinary awareness, that really matters, and that is determined by the degree of our initiated understanding, brought about and increased over time through mystical experiences and true spiritual epiphanies spurred on by the onset of the three main grades of transcendental Initiation: (1) the Baptism of Initiation itself; (2) the Gnosis of the Holy Supernal Will; and (3) the Crossing of awareness beyond the Abyss of the mind into Supernal Realization – known in Eastern religion as Samadhi – outside the limits of time and space yet at once omnipresent therein.

Even the prophet is addressed as a slave in *Liber Legis* – c.f. *L*, 1:26. The slavish will is that with which we ordinarily associate ourselves, or that with which we identify gradually over time from the first moments of perception onward. It is the uninitiated ego: a mass of complexes formed by the effects of historical (or genetic) and phenomenal experience, and supplemented eventually through education and creative imagination; and it is rooted in natural carnal will. Because it eventually may, if unenlightened by the greater Will, mislead one into obsessive notions of superstition that are out of touch with reality, religions have always tended to reject this natural will, and all its carnal attachments, as sinful, i.e. as existing in a state of imperfection contrary to the perfect divine state, which is imagined as being a condition of spiritual purity and bliss completely detached from any material quality whatsoever.

Thelemic religion, however, takes an entirely different view of “sin”. Thelema being a “left-hand” religion, not at odds with natural will, it holds a somewhat different view of the ego than more primitive religions do. For one thing, the self – however mundane – is regarded as worthy of reverence, in every aspect of its natural inclination (no matter how base). Hedonism being a very healthy and happy pursuit – especially as contrasted against asceticism – this is indeed a very beneficial aspect of Thelemic doctrine.

In *Liber Legis* (in verse 22 of ch.2) we find the following gem:

“...lust, enjoy all things of sense and rapture: fear not that any God shall deny thee for this”.

Also, *Liber Legis* (2:22) is noteworthy here:

“It is a lie, this folly against self. The exposure of innocence is a lie.”

There is no other vehicle of consciousness that is completely separate from the temporal. When we posit the existence of praeterordinary intelligence, such as that of Aiwass, it is always understood as being an intelligence that is beyond the normal reach or perception of humanity, yet at once overlying the Initiated Mind, and well within Initiated Vision. Such Supernal Intelligence, while it is an Awareness of past, present and future that is vastly superior to that to which it is linked at any given point in space and time, is to be understood as being immersed in and inseparable from its material host, thereby consecrating and uplifting the same.

Whereas most religions idealize this Supreme Mind, as being of a nature contrary to the natural condition in which there is suffering, the Thelemic perspective sees this Mind as the basis of all natural consciousness, not as some alien nature somehow purged of natural inclination – essentially, this Mind while Godlike is not at all some objective God, but is simply the natural Divinity – the 93 Current of Holy Supernal Will – that is at the foundation of all temporal mind.

While there is a general caveat in *Liber Legis* that cautions one against being “animal”, mainly the book calls for the indulgence of the ego, not asceticism or sacrifice of any kind. In fact, the notion of sacrifice is contemptible, as it is contrary to our natural welfare. Thelema is very much in harmony with natural science and evolution, unlike virtually every other system of religion, and unlike most beliefs, it calls for the consecration of hedonistic habits and the full satisfaction of personal or egoistical happiness, as being part of its spiritual fulfillment. As it is written in *L*, 1:13:

“I am above you and in you. My ecstasy is in yours. My joy is to see your joy.”

Thelema is, in other words, an ideology in which restriction is the only sin – a sin against the “God” of the self.

All that said, the mundane will of the ego, without the benefit of enlightenment that is concomitant with the Gnosis of the Holy Supernal Will, is itself a device of restriction, in that it separates one from one's greater mission of complete self-fulfillment and true happiness. Certainly it is up to no one but oneself – neither God nor man – to decide the course of one's own Will. Yet there are pitfalls! and the unenlightened ego is but one of many.

Another such pitfall is faith in a superstition that is based on an erroneous assumption; and yet another is faith in reasonable calculation alone, without any benefit of Initiated Wisdom or Understanding. The truly wise will prefer reason to unfounded or disproven superstition, but will also refuse to be enslaved to reason to the detriment of their faculty of intuition; for it is by the insight of the latter that the former is reformed and advanced.

It cannot be stressed enough, at any rate, that true Thelema is not static but dynamic – i.e., its law adjusts to our evolution, and is not merely the fixed conception of one of its prophets, no matter how brilliant. It is a living thing, our holy Law, and it lives in us. There is infinitely more to Aiwass than Aleister Crowley! Aiwass is in us all. For that Current of Praeternatural Mind is in all minds, whether human or animal. Which leads

our discussion to...

### **Theriosophy:**

#### **The Wisdom of the Beast & Related Matters**

As aforesaid, with his mind rooted solidly in the thinking of the Old Aeon in which it was born, Crowley never penetrated many of the mysteries of Thelema, including those of one of the two highest spiritual Offices of the Thelemic Aeon: the Office of **The Beast**. Let us consider the subtlety of the symbolism here. It weds the most primitive being with the loftiest spiritual force, lending this doctrine: that all life and all in nature are equal in sanctity and worth. One is no better or worse than, say, bacteria.

Crowley was of the opinion, as many still are today, that animals are but elemental creatures, not possessed of immortal souls of their own. Yet we now know that animals are actually possessed of the same complex emotional capabilities as humans. See *Emotional Lives of Animals: A Leading Scientist Explores Animal Joy, Sorrow, and Empathy - and Why They Matter* by Marc Bekoff. It is not uncommon to find animals guided not by blind elemental instinct but by emotion instead: for example, we have seen a leopard nurture a baby baboon, and a lioness adopt a baby gazelle. Certainly, a grown cat has more ability to reason than a human infant does. For too long have we enslaved, subjugated and oppressed animal life, thinking ourselves to be better than animals. Indeed we *are* animals – and savage ones at that.

Archaic systems of religion, misguidedly striving

after some imaginary ideal of immaterial spiritual perfection, naturally looked down upon animals, which they associated with the “evil” of the “sinful” condition. The ceremonial sacrifice of living beings was of course a Pagan practice originally, and was later adopted by early Judaism; later still, Christianity sublimated the practice, fixing the sacrifice in the death of their God's supposed avatar, Jesus of Nazareth, with each practitioner then carrying out the sacrifice ritually – with the Missa of bread and wine signifying the body and blood respectively – but also directly, as it were, via asceticism.

Ceremonial sacrifice in any form, symbolic or actual, is based on a doctrine the underpinnings of which are simply erroneous; and aside from this, it is a doctrine that is every way contrary to sound Thelemic theory, which holds that spiritual advancement requires no atonement with an immaterial divine ideal – and therefore no accompanying routine of asceticism and sacrifice intended to purge one of the bestial force that supposedly anchors one to the “imperfection” of dualistic existence (the only kind worth having). Buddhism, even though it incorporates no outward routine of sacrifice, also adheres to this doctrine in its obsession with transcendence through escapism.

The main issue, the central religious problem if you will, has always been attaining union with the divine. For all previous religions, this has always meant some form of transformation which totally separates one from the attachment to dualistic imperfection, either through asceticism and fortuitous Arhatship (as in Eastern religion) or through death (as in most other religions). In all cases, this meant an escape from our enslavement to the divisiveness by which we are able to perceive the difference, let us say, between pleasure and pain – without which differentiation,

of course, pleasure would be unappreciable.

Primitive cults aimed to appease a deity that was imagined as being totally detached from material or temporal limitations, in order to win material and spiritual grace; but the divisive reality by which we can distinguish anything of reality at all is always regarded as a state of sinfulness and error to be escaped from and rectified.

Thelema revisits this fundamental religious problem and arrives at a different conclusion: i.e., the Divine Consciousness, undivided and without condition, lacking therefore any potential for real experience, submits itself willingly to divided existence by consolidating itself in a particular point in time and space, subject to cause and effect with all attendant possibilities of joy and ecstasy but also, of necessity, misery and agony. In other words, each one of us is essentially a God, or rather an aspect of unlimited Being, that submitted itself to constraint to a temporary device of divided perception (a body and brain in our case), fully subject to all varieties of catastrophe, in order to achieve a more edifying experience of itself in all its limitless potential.

This simple doctrinal assumption carries with it tremendous religious implications! So let us consider these one-by-one.

First, by sublimating God into the multi-universal, impersonal and therefore indifferent base of consciousness of all living things, one derives a sort of spiritual atheism with a focus on achieving self-Gnosis and realizing one's otherwise hidden potential – somewhat akin to Buddhism, but without the escapist doctrine and pessimism. Existence is worth experiencing! Suffering, no matter how severe, is worth the trouble, because in order to experience a caress one needs to be subject

no less to the effects of a claw. The happiness obtained in all of our other experiences, no matter how few and far between, far outweighs the unhappiness caused by our ordeals, which pass and bother us no more – yet which serve to strengthen us, while the very best of the joyful memories are no doubt an everlasting joy beyond measure.

### **The Implications of Thelemic Doctrine**

Here are some of the most important practical benefits to Thelemic doctrine over archaic religious theory and practice:

#### **I**

*It provides a liberational ideology that can assimilate all religious models into its overarching system.*

All religious systems can be easily realigned to the Law of Do What Thou Wilt, so that warring ideologies become a thing of the past, with the religious approach shifting from a theistic one to one that is centered on human happiness and praeterordinary realization.

#### **II**

*It provides an Initiatic system that comes directly from the Aeon of this World: a system that really works to accelerate one's individual progress towards full Self-Realization and the*

*unlimited Occult Potential of the Mind.*

Each person's Holy Supernal Will – what Crowley and his predecessors referred to as the Augoeides or the “Holy Guardian Angel” (an archaic and somewhat misleading term) – i.e., one's praeternatural Genius – is a unique aspect of the 93 Current, which is itself the Current of Mind that is the terrestrial conjunction of the universal and impersonal feminine and masculine roots of all consciousness: Nuit and Hadit, or Babalon and the Beast. But this New Aeon Current manifested so much of its extraordinary force through the Genius of Aleister Crowley and others, especially in *The Book of the Law* and the other “Class A” Thelemic scriptures – and this force is accessible to the Initiate of the Mysteries of Thelema through various means that will be discussed in the second installment in this series of articles.

Speaking of the Aeon of this World, while it is true that it is referred to at times as “God” or “Holy Guardian Angel” or whatever have you, such references and depictions do in fact represent subtle and impersonal energies of consciousness and not actual deities. In Thelemic cosmology, the Supernal Mind that simultaneously overlies and indwells each individual is absolute and universal and triune: first, it is the universal feminine, or Nuit; second, it is the omnipresent point that is the primal masculine force in nature, or Hadit; and finally, their conjunction and projection, as a kind of Holy Thelemic Spirit or Current of Magical Energy – Mercurial and phallic – which being a blend of both also contains in itself the yonic gateway to transcendent understanding, and when penetrated by the Adept it leads to the knowledge and wisdom of the Beast. [Note that my use of the terms “feminine” and “masculine” here is not meant to be interpreted as referring to sexual gender. A lesbian or gay can be a manifestation of Babalon or the Beast – or both! It all depends on

the orientation of his or her soul, whether it is more feminine or masculine, or a Baphometric blend instead.]

It is important to comprehend exactly what this triunity of Thelemic cosmology actually represents, being extra careful not to take this in such a way as to favor the notion that these beings are objective to us or concretized in some form, whether materially incarnate or spiritually in some way. That they manifested specially in the prophet, and in the initiatrixes who were his holy oracles and goddesses, in no way exalts them to some extraordinary status worthy of extravagant personal adulation – also, it makes them neither infallible teachers nor all-knowing Thelemic minds, anymore – that is – than say any advanced initiate that has tapped the Current with any real success has the potential of being. They were avatars – though only to an extent – in order to transmit to humanity *The Book of the Law*, the Holy Books of Thelema, and various other bits and pieces of critical instruction, *not* so that they might enjoy our petty adoration.

Yet they certainly are worthy of celebration; and, more importantly, the Magical Energies that they embodied may be channeled most efficiently – given their closeness to the Aeonic Current of which they were avatars – by including the icons of these avatars in all liturgical and mystical workings and services; see the second article in the series, which deals with some of the particulars of Thelemic practice.

“The other images group around me to support me: let all be worshipped, for they shall cluster to exalt me. I am the visible object of worship; the others are secret; for the Beast & his Bride are they...” (*Liber Legis*, 3:22.)

Again, Thelemic “worship” is a service to the Self that weds the mundane perception to the Supernal; it is *not* slavish devotion to a deity that is separate from us and contrary to our nature. Thelema streamlines our religious notions, and by its new engine we may accelerate through the next great loop in human evolution, and not fall backward.

The manifestation of Nuit in our spirito-terrestrial sphere is Babalon, and her “secret name” (see *L*, 1:22) is 'H Kokkine Gyne (Greek: 'H KOKKINH ΓΥNH), which translates as “The Scarlet Woman” and which has a Greek Gematric value of 667. The manifestation of Hadit in our spirito-terrestrial sphere is the Beast, and his holy name is To Mega Therion (Greek: ΤΟ ΜΕΓΑ ΘΗΡΙΟΝ), which translates as “The Great Beast” and which has a value of 666. The Double Current that transcends yet informs them, that is essentially Beast and Babalon combined, is the manifestation of Ra-Hoor-Khuit/Hoor-pa-Kraat (i.e. Heru-ra-ha – active and passive, and so again Had/Nu) in our spirito-terrestrial sphere, and its secret holy name is Shaitan-Aiwass. In Greek (using digamma for “w”), this holy name of **AIWASS**, whose value by Greek Gematria is 418 (equivalent to the Word of the Aeon, **ABRAHADABRA** which equates to the accomplishment of the Great Work of Supernal Attainment itself), is best represented iconically by Levi's Baphomet (revised below), for it combines in a single powerful yantra the symbolism of both woman and beast, 'H Kokkine Gyne and Therion.



On the Qabalistic Tree of Life, Nuit, or **“Infinite Space, and the Infinite Stars thereof”** (L, 1:22), would be Ain/Ain Soph/Ain Soph Aur, or the Triple Negative or Sum of All; and Hadit would be Kether, or the point in which All is concentrated and scattered across the Infinite, the core of every star as it were, and the first Sephirah which (like Baphomet) contains in itself both Chokmah and Binah. The Beast, or To Mega Therion, the spirito-terrestrial projection of Hadit, is Chokmah, the phallic “Force of Wisdom”; and Babalon, 'H Kokkine Gyne, the manifestation of Nu, is Binah, the yonic “Sea of Understanding”. [Again, it is the overlying Supernal Energies of Passive and Active, or Feminine and Masculine, that are the subject of discussion here, not the persons in whom

They manifested.]

Finally, Ra-Hoor-Khuit and Hoor-pa-kraat, i.e. Hoor and Set, the magical power of the Sun and the mystical force of the Star of Sirius (see Kenneth Grant's Typhonian Trilogies), are in Tiphareth, the sixth Sephirah on the Tree of Life, where the Adept achieves the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Supernal Will, and in the darkside of Yesod, the ninth Sephirah, where the Adeptus Exemptus enters in his devolution across the Abyss into the bottomless Sea of Binah. And the intermediary of Horus (or Nuit and Hadit conjoined) to humanity is the aforementioned Shaitan-Aiwass, or Baphomet, the Sun in the Moon, which conveys the Light of Sol to the world and her creatures, as from Yesod to Malkuth on the Qabalistic Tree.

### III

*It provides an atheistic religion in which Self-Gnosis and hedonistic Self-Veneration are the staples of a healthy routine of service to one's very own Holy Supernal Will.*

Once God is purged of all religion, and the impersonal core of all consciousness is finally recognized as the true divinity, then fanatical obsession with an impossible spiritual ideal and the consequent hatred for the nature of man and beast will be replaced by the veneration of humanity itself along with the world and all of its species. Theistic religion must perish if humanity is to survive; but its reincarnation in our spiritual atheism **“shall regenerate the world”** (L, 1:53).

## IV

*It calls for no faith or any form of sacrifice.*

There is no God (other than Oneself, essentially) to appease. And there is no “spiritual perfection”, contrary to material reality, to which to conform. In Thelemic religion, sacrifice in any form, whether ceremonial or personal, is a violation of the true holy Law which mandates Self-fulfillment and gratification.

“I give unimaginable joys on earth: certainty, not faith, while in life, upon death; peace unutterable, rest, ecstasy; nor do I demand aught in sacrifice.” (L, 1:58.)

## V

*No superstition outrageously at odds with science.*

It may seem, at first glance, as if Thelemic theory were riddled with superstitious elements. Truly advanced Thelemic initiates are, however, uninterested in bewitching cattle; for them, magick is less about casting spells to mundane effect and more about realizing praeternatural forces, in order to put those forces into motion to expand their intelligence and activate their full occult potential through extraordinary realization of the Supernal Mind that underlies and transcends them yet which is, nevertheless, their own secret immortal Self.

Granted, there is a degree of mundane magick and seemingly superstitious belief in Thelemic religion – but the logic is sound and certainly not out of touch with science – not at all, for instance,

akin to Christian fanatics who essentially murder their children by denying them medical care in favor of their faith in the “power” of prayer. Other than the ordinary benefit of positive reinforcement, there is no such power or else such children would never die. When a Thelemite uses ritual in whatever mundane aim it is primarily so that he or she may work on the subconscious forces of his or her own mind so as to bend every particle of the Will to achieve the desired result, as well as to direct the unseen forces of the overlying Self to favor one's own best interest, whatever it be. If such a pursuit is exclusive of one's *genuine* overlying need, it will possibly fail unless one happens to be in luck – which is why it is of paramount importance, firstly, to know not merely oneself but *Oneself*, and secondly, to understand the guidance set forth for everyone in the New Aeon in *The Book of the Law*, for “the Law is for all” (L, 1:34). Such guidance is as it were a sign on the road that we are currently on, to inform us generally as to the best route to take to get along through our lives to the greatest possible advantage to our own Great Work of realizing maximum happiness and fulfillment, not just for our animal satisfaction but for our divine satisfaction as well. In some cases, of course, its “signs” also tell us the best way to avoid the most devastating pitfalls that litter this sometimes dark road.

Let us for a brief moment examine the parts of *Liber Legis* that might strike the critically rational mind as superstitious, that we may get some inkling as to whether or not they have some basis in logic.

First, there is the admonition against changing so much as a single letter of *The Book of the Law*, not even to “correct” apparent errors: “...the priest of the princes, shall not in one letter change this book” (1:36). This is repeated in the following chapter as well: verse 54 of chapter 2 contains the

caveat: “The stops as thou wilt; the letters? change them not in style or value!”. But it is verse 47 of chapter 3 that provides us with some clue as to the reason for this important admonition: “for in the chance shape of the letters and their position to one another: in these are mysteries that no Beast shall divine”. Once again, we are given to understand that no one – not even the prophet – is in a position of authority above the praeterhuman author of this remarkable document.

Crowley, writing on this in *The Equinox of the Gods*, discusses the matter in some detail:

“...I might also elucidate the problem of the apparent changes of speaker, and the occasional lapses from straightforward scribe-craft in the MS.

“I may observe that I should not have left such obvious grounds for indictment as these had I prepared the MS. to look pretty to a critical eye; nor should I have left such curious deformities of grammar and syntax, defects of rhythm, and awkwardness of phrase. I should not have printed passages, some rambling and unintelligible, some repugnant to reason by their absurdity, others again by their barbaric ferocity abhorrent to heart. I should not have allowed such jumbles of matter, such abrupt jerks from subject to subject, disorder ravaging reason with disconnected sluttishness. I should not have tolerated the discords, jarred and jagged, of manner, as when a sublime panegyric of Death is followed first by a cipher and then by a prophecy, before, without taking breath, the author leaps to the utmost magnificence of thought both mystical and practical, in language so concise, simple, and lyrical as to bemuse our very amazement. I should not have spelt 'Ay' “Aye”, or acquiesced in the horror “abstruction”.

“...“Change not so much as the style of a letter” in the text saved me from Crowley-fying the whole Book, and spoiling everything”.

Even though the verses in question caution only the prophet, and no one else, against editing the book (except for the punctuation, which was not done at the time of the reception owing to the velocity at which it took place), clearly this admonition applies to everyone else as well. But is this dogmatic view justified, or just superstitious nonsense?

Crowley explains in the New Comment to verse 36 of ch. I:

“It is of immense importance to the stability of the Law to have a Book not merely verbally but literally inspired, so that even errors in spelling and grammar have a secret significance”.

There is, in other words, a purely pragmatic justification for holding such a dogmatic position with regard to the inspired founding document of Thelemic religion. In the Comment to the verse, however, he goes on to write: “But the great thing is the Standard to which all disputes may be referred. It is also necessary to give weight to the authority of The Beast, lest ignorance, folly, or cunning misinterpret the text”. Whereas the prophet's insight into the book is largely on the mark, he was not – by his own admission and per the true Author of the book as well – infallible, nor was he all-knowing. So, while it may have been Crowley's personal conviction that all Thelemites should adhere to his views and his views alone with regard to the interpretation, such restriction leaves one unnecessarily stuck in the mud, should further unveiling happen to take place as prophesied (vide *L*, 1:56) in order to shed light upon said interpretation – an interpretation that

Aiwass describes as being partially “in the dark”.

One of the most incredible superstitions in the book – from a purely rational perspective at least – might well be its afterlife doctrine. There are a few verses in the book dealing with this. First, in chapter 1, there is verse 21, part of which reads as follows:

“Think not, o king, upon that lie: That Thou Must Die: verily thou shalt not die, but live. Now let it be understood: If the body of the King dissolve, he shall remain in pure ecstasy for ever.”

This is repeated in similar words, in *L*, 2:44:

“Aye! feast! rejoice! there is no dread hereafter. There is the dissolution, and eternal ecstasy in the kisses of Nu.”

Also, the phrase “joy of dissolution” (i.e. death and transcendental remembrance), the opposite of the “pain of division” (i.e. existential), occurs in ch.1, verse 30.

Having experienced three near-death experiences, two of which with extraordinary circumstances surrounding them, and numerous other supernatural events thereafter, I have no problem with this afterlife doctrine. As for the deceased remaining “in pure ecstasy for ever”, or “eternal ecstasy in the kisses of Nu”, essentially what this seems to be saying from my perspective is not that with death one is lost to perpetual bliss, but that this one moment of death among countless such that we shall endure following the infinite lives that we shall enjoy is just another spasm in the

unending series of such in the continuous orgasm of our souls – a bliss that is ongoing not apart from but within these cycles of life and death by which alone our Supernal Minds can appreciate bliss at all in any satisfying way.

In the Thelemic perspective, death is something to be longed for and yet avoided at all costs. “We live, we die, and death not ends it” (James Douglas Morrison). The sting of death is certainly very real and unfortunate – but again, unless we subject ourselves to the possibility of pain, we cannot enjoy real pleasure. But the pain of death is relatively brief, yet the memory of the lives lived is an eternal source of boundless joy.

Yet note well that *The Book of the Law* counsels us strongly against shirking the ordeal of life in favor of moving on to an easier existence. See *L*, 2: 72-74:

“Strive ever to more! and if thou art truly mine — and doubt it not, an if thou art ever joyous! — death is the crown of all.

“Ah! Ah! Death! Death! thou shalt long for death. Death is forbidden, o man, unto thee.

“The length of thy longing shall be the strength of its glory. He that lives long & desires death much is ever the King among the Kings.”

When one is in the throes of death, the ecstasy of death is something akin to the bliss of slipping into sleep whenever one is overly exhausted: it is a relief from the misery of the ordeals of division. Verse 16 of ch.3 reads: “Deem not too eagerly to catch the promises; fear not to undergo the curses. Ye, even ye, know not this meaning all.” The

verse is addressed to the Beast and Scarlet Woman, but applies no less to all. The “**curses**” are the ordeals of life, the difficulties of our struggle to persevere through a harsh reality in which we are subjected to the effects of a crash no less than to those of a kiss.

Finally, in chapter 2, we find the following (in verse 52):

“...ye do well, & I will reward you here and hereafter”.

Now, at first this may seem troubling – but only when taken out of context. It is very important to note what it means to “**do well**”: it is, quite simply, to indulge in hedonistic vice. And why not? for our Law holds that we are ourselves on some level one with our own divine being – call it God or Self or Atma or Holy Guardian Angel or Holy Supernal Will or Thelema or Satan or what have you – only this much must be understood: that no matter what one chooses to call it, it really is only the Genius of the Mind, not something other than ourselves to which we need to bow and scrape for crumbs of redemption doled out by some sadistic divine tyrant.

Aiwass and the Beast and Babalon (i.e. Herurra-ha and Hadit and Nuit) are, in Thelemic cosmology, one being in all creatures whether “under the earth” as it were (i.e. in the subconscious realm of the mind), or upon the earth (i.e. all conscious beings), or “above the earth” as it were (i.e. in the Supernal Mind, or the Transcendent Awareness beyond yet within all time and space, from which all Genius originates). So there is, in this atheistic religion in which “God” is nothing more or less than the Genius of Humanity, only one's own exalted Will to please. Thus, when Aiwass, in “his” Hadit-aspect in *Liber Legis*, says

that “he” (or “she” as the case may be – for the Current is Androgynous, being at the root of all conscious beings) is going to “**reward you here and hereafter**”, it is not the much wished-for yet quite unrealistic promise of a dictatorial deity – it is, on the contrary, the promise of full self-discovery and fulfillment here and now, and the millionfold joy not in some fantastical land of milk and honey but in the infinite possibilities of an endless series of incarnations in an everlasting cycle of living and dying parallel universes, all the while existing on a greater level of Awareness – unknown for the most part to any of its incarnations (except on the level at which true Genius is realized) – yet attainable via the processes either of the Magick of Art (in all its myriad forms – e.g., painting, drawing, writing, singing, dancing, acting, and so on) or of that of Initiated Attainment brought about by Gnosis and Epiphany, through the hard work that they require to manifest fully.

## VI

*No fanaticism in the name of a God whose supposed nature is contrary to human nature.*

I have written on this already. It is one of the most important aspects of Thelemic ideology: that no spiritual fantasy should be upheld above scientific reality. It is what sets Thelema apart from most other religions.

And that leads us to the final stretch of our discussion...

### Thelemic Ideology

Now we wind down to the final section of my thesis, which to some may also be the most controversial part. For many seem to prefer to take *Liber Legis* literally, and would reject my opinions wholesale – which is fine, but I refuse to apologize for not being traditional and striving instead to improve upon Crowley's sometimes imperfect view, and I choose to exercise my right to express the same. Simply put, I prefer to be my own master, and not the slave of “The Demon Crowley”.

The literalist view is, however, ludicrous on the face of it and at times diametrically opposed to my own, which is often more subtle and symbolic. Let us consider a few verses that stand out in this regard. (There are numerous examples of this to be found *Liber Legis*, but we will look at just a few here.)

The first and foremost example would be the holy fourfold word of Thelema itself: “**Do what thou wilt**” (*L*, 3:60). It doesn't mean “do what you wish” at all – for not only would that be impractical, but it could also prove to be insanely dangerous. Such an interpretation would allow anyone who so wishes to slaughter anyone for no reason. Also, it would legitimize racism, sexism, or any other form of bigotry. Rather, it means to do what is right for oneself *and* for all others as well – nor is it ever right to infringe upon another's Will by any means, whether it be theft, uncalled-for limitations on their freedoms, or whatever else.

“**Every man and every woman is a star.**” (1:3)

Obviously, everyone is not literally a star. This is a paralogical metaphor.

In ch.2 of the book we find Hadit, the Supernal Beast, making excessive use of such metaphors. He calls himself “**the axle of the wheel, and the cube in the circle**” (2:7). He then proceeds to say that those who worship “**Heru-pa-kraath**” do naught but worship him – which is frowned upon, because his own perspective is that of the worshipper of the body of Babalon, which is the universe of matter and the wondrous possibilities thereof. Clearly there aren't many people literally worshipping the Ancient Egyptian deity Heru-pa-kraath these days, so the verse would have little meaning to us without a subtle interpretation. And the subtle meaning is likely to have something to do with the peculiar spelling of the name – for in other verses in the book it is given differently.

Of course we may conclude what we like, but Crowley, in *The Equinox of the Gods*, wrote on this as follows:

“I may admit a Qabalistic or cryptographic secondary meaning when such confirms, amplifies, deepens, intensifies, or clarifies the obvious common-sense significance ; but only if it be part of the general plan of the “latent light,” and self-proven by abundant witness.”

Then he supplements this with the following:

“Wherever

- a. The words of the Text are obscure in themselves; where
- b. The expression is strained; where
- c. The Syntax,
- d. Grammar,
- e. Spelling, or

- f. The use of capital letters present peculiarities; where
- g. Non-English words occur; where the style suggests
- h. Paronomasia,
- i. Ambiguity, or
- j. Obliquity; or where
- k. A problem is explicitly declared to exist; in all such cases I shall seek for a meaning hidden by means of Qabalistic correspondences, cryptography, or literary subtleties. I shall admit no solution which is not at once simple, striking, consonant with the general plan of the Book; and not only adequate but necessary.”

It is *often* necessary, however. Another excellent example, but one which strongly impacts the ideological view, can be found in verses 17-22 of ch.2. But let us take them a verse at a time.

Verse 17 refers to “**the folk that not know me yet**” – an odd expression on which Crowley remarks as follows in *The Equinox of the Gods*:

“The natural order of the words is distorted by placing “**not**” before “**know me**”; it is proper to ask what object is attained by this peculiarity of phrasing.”

He explains further in the New Comment:

“Possibly “**not**” and “**me**” are once more intended to apply to Nuit. With “**know**” itself, they may be “Nothing under its three forms” of negativity, action, and individuality.”

However, in the Old Comment he opines that these “**folk**” are not people at all but rather “petty

thoughts” and “sad thoughts” to be “rooted out...They are the weeds in the Garden that starve the Flower”.

This kind of symbolism is also used in another Thelemic holy book: *Liber Tzaddi vel Hamus Hermeticus*, *Sub Figura XC*:

“**The weak, the timid, the imperfect, the cowardly, the poor, the tearful – these are mine enemies, and I am come to destroy them.**”

“**This also is compassion: an end to the sickness of earth. A rooting-out of the weeds: a watering of the flowers.**” (Vss.25-26.)

Clearly, these “**weak, the timid, the imperfect, the cowardly, the poor, the tearful**”, that are the “**enemies**” of Thelema, are psychological states to be extricated from habit. The weak will, the timid will, the imperfect will, the cowardly will, the poor will, and the tearful will – these are all examples of just a few kinds of “**ill will**” (*L*, 2:10).

“**These are dead, these fellows; they feel not. We are not for the poor and sad: the lords of the earth are our kinsfolk.**”

Again, “**the poor and sad**” are conditions of ill character, not individuals to be hated. This is also what is meant in verse 45 of ch.2: “**There is death for the dogs**”. We know to be so not only by comparison with the previous instance – *L*, 2:17 Old Comment – for this theory is supported by the next three verses, which read:

“**Dost thou fail? Art thou sorry? Is fear in thine heart?**”

“Where I am these are not.

“Pity not the fallen! I never knew them. I am not for them. I console not: I hate the consoled & the consoler.”

Failure of will, the sorry of will, the fearful will: these are “the fallen” not known (i.e. outcast) to the Beast of God and Woman and Man, being as they are the despised foes of humanity. It is the consoled and consoling heart that is wretched, not the person temporarily under its pernicious spell, who underneath his or her layers of ego-baggage is a Regent concealed.

“Is a God to live in a dog? No! but the highest are of us. They shall rejoice, our chosen: who sorroweth is not of us.”

And there is the “dog” symbol again: the superficial will that veils the secret Stellar Will. Verse 52 of ch.2 says: “Tear down that lying spectre of the centuries”, i.e. the unlightened ego, which is really just an illusory veil that is composed of countless unrelated causal factors, the rubbish of “the centuries”.

“Beauty and strength, leaping laughter and delicious languor, force and fire, are of us.”

These are the qualities we should strive to embody instead: a love and appreciation for all things of holy Art; strength of will; inspired fun and joyfulness; delicious hedonism; passion and the power of passion.

“We have nothing with the outcast and the unfit:

let them die in their misery. For they feel not. Compassion is the vice of kings: stamp down the wretched & the weak: this is the law of the strong: this is our law and the joy of the world.”

That is to say, there is no place in our ideology for criminality or tasteless unsuitability. As we gather from *L*, 2:70, the Regal of Will should always endeavor to behave in a refined manner, with delicacy and subtlety.

Verse 18 of ch.3 is yet another example of veiled wisdom. Taken superficially, it seems offensive; but in actuality it refers not to actual persons (once again) but to the suffering and piteous elements of one's own ill-directed ego:

“Mercy let be off: damn them who pity! Kill and torture; spare not; be upon them!”

Obviously, this does not advocate actually torturing or killing. Note in the verse that “Kill” precedes “torture”: how can one torture someone that has already been killed? Clearly, it is the ill will that is to be “killed”, its dominion over one's life overthrown, and its many minion-forces of recalcitrant tendencies tortured into submission and made to serve the Regal Will. It is wise to bear in mind always that ours is a *subtle* Law.

Of course we have our ideological enemies, and *Liber Legis* refers to them as “Heathen”. This is fitting enough, because in the Old Aeon the word was used as a pejorative by theists to condemn disbelievers – and we being educated atheists, and they being the ignorant “country-dwellers” that feed on hate and societal imposition, the shoe fits. Even so, I disagree with Crowley on the matter of approach, for it is better to defeat them through the war of ideas than by force of arms. Education can also make a world of difference.

Crowley exhibits his ill will – as well as a lapse of shallow thinking – again in both the Old and New Comments to *L*, 3:18. For in the former case he misinterprets “damn them who pity” as condemning persons to death and torture instead of the forces of ill will in our own lives, and so he rails against humanitarianism. “The Demon Crowley” rears its ugly head again (or is it one of several ugly heads?). He then, in the New Comment, gets even uglier – and there is no need to repeat his rant again as we have gone over similar such statements made by him on the matter: clearly his anger toward Christians personally stemmed from mistreatment at their hands as a child. I think that it is a mistake to attack people personally for what they believe, no matter how despicable or heinous those beliefs, so long as they violate no creature's Will in any way. It is far better to wage the war of ideas, and to win minds by educating the uninformed however we are so gifted and inclined to do. It is of course always a good thing to propagate the Law of Liberty that is Do What Thou Wilt, but we do not look for converts to our cause – each mind his or her own business and goes about making the case for Thelemic Liberty, everyone in his or her own way, without looking to impose it on others.

I much prefer the Crowley that wrote the following (from *Liber Aleph, The Book of Wisdom or Folly*):

A m

## De Fundamentis Civitatis

(Of the Foundations of the State)

“Say not, o my Son, that in this Argument I have set Limits to individual Freedom. For each Man in this State which I purpose is fulfilling his own true

Will by his eager Acquiescence in the Order necessary to the Welfare of all, and therefore of himself also. But see thou well to it that thou set high the Standard of Satisfaction, and that to everyone there be a surplus of Leisure and of Energy, so that, his Will of Self-Preservation being fulfilled by the Performance of his Function in the State, he may devote the remainder of his Powers to the Satisfaction of the other Parts of his Will. And because the People are oft times unlearned, not understanding Pleasure, let them be instructed in the Art of Life; to prepare Food palatable and wholesome, each to this own Taste, to make Clothes according to Fancy, with Variety of Individuality and to practise the manifold Crafts of Love. These Things being first secured, thou mayst afterward lead them into the Heavens of Poesy and Tale, of Music, Painting, and Sculpture, and into the Lore of the Mind itself, with its insatiable Joy of all knowledge. Thence let them soar!”

And on that fine note I end this first in my trilogy of articles on the theory and practice of Thelemic religion.

As always,

“Love is the law, love under will.”

## ALEISTERION

Given under Our hand and seal this Crowleymas of An IV xvii, from atop the highest mountain in Alabama:



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