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## Introduction

by the Editor

*Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.* The first issue of the *Journal of Thelemic Studies* surpassed all my expectations. The amount of feedback received (both positive and negative) is a testament to the amount of attention this *Journal* is garnering. The announcement for the first issue of the *Journal* was carried by various blogs and was even translated into several different languages.

Many Thelemites are attracted to the ideal of a multitude of opinions being openly shared and honestly contemplated with respect. In our mission statement it reads, “The subject matter of the *Journal of Thelemic Studies* will not be that of a certain ideology within Thelema, but will give equal voice to those of divergent and perhaps even conflicting viewpoints.” Not only have we gathered various threads of the Thelemic community into one tapestry, but a wide array of various groups seemed to take interest from Anarchists to Masons to Discordians (and many who do choose not to identify with a particular group).

One point must be made at the very start of this issue: the editor of the *Journal of Thelemic Studies* does not necessarily agree with or endorse the ideas espoused in the various authors’ essays. Two essays may even be printed in the same issue containing contradictory views on a single subject. This is because the *Journal* endeavors to give a voice to the most modern writers and artists in the Thelemic community even if they disagree on certain points. The idea is not to promote rigid fundamentalism or some universal agreement but, instead, a lively process of creation, debate, analysis, and artistry. Being the first academic journal to collect the work of various modern Thelemites into one place, we attempt to give a voice to Thelemites of very diverse backgrounds. The *Journal of Thelemic Studies* serves to stand as a non-partisan synthesis of the many diverse manifestations of Thelema, both literally and symbolically, and also to the fact that many, often contradicting, opinions may be harmoniously cultivated and understood together.

One major change that came with the second issue was an overhaul of the website **[www.ThelemicStudies.com](http://www.ThelemicStudies.com)** ... The *Journal of Thelemic Studies* now has a website with easier navigation, a news feed detailing current events relating to Thelema, a forum to debate and discuss on, and other interesting features. Go check it out!

In this second issue of the *Journal of Thelemic Studies* we begin with an essay by Stephen J. Ash tracing the lines of connection from Rabelais to Crowley via the Tudor Hermetic Revival and Francis Dashwood. One concern that was consistently heard from our readers was that the idea of “Thelemic Studies” should not be simply confined to literary essays. This is certainly true, so the *Journal of Thelemic Studies* made an extra effort in this issue to branch out to both the visual and auditory manifestations of Thelema. The “93 Current” manifests in multifaceted ways... In this regard, we have an amazing collection of three art pieces by Acrylick Alchemical distributed throughout the pages of the *Journal*. Accompanying this is a short interview with Acrylick Alchemical, discussing various aspects of her art. After this we have a continuation of the “Thelema & Buddhism” series from the previous issue of the *Journal of Thelemic Studies*, Vol.1 No1., where the concepts of war and conquering are discussed. Next, we have a question & answer session with the elusive and enchanting band IllumineNaughty. After this, we have an essay where John L. Crow, the host of the podcast “Thelema Coast to Coast,” examines certain trends that he sees manifesting in the Thelemic community and offers suggestions to remedy them. Though John and I may clash personally sometimes on various issues, the *Journal* stands as an explicitly non-partisan collection of Thelemic thought so we include his submission with gratitude and respect. In short, there is once again a wonderful amalgamation of all sorts of interesting flavors!

I would like to express my gratitude to John “Ash” Bowie for his help in creating the new ThelemicStudies.com website; Lynette for her encouragement and many suggestions; the band IllumineNaughty; Marlena for allowing the *Journal* to print three of her works; Ashley for her help in innumerable endeavors; and all the contributors to the *Journal of Thelemic Studies*. Without these people, and all of the interested readers, the *Journal* would never have manifested.

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

*Love is the law, love under will.*

*There is no law beyond Do what thou wilt.*

Please send all potential submissions of content for *The Journal of Thelemic Studies*, all questions, comments, concerns, etc. to [admin@thelemicstudies.com](mailto:admin@thelemicstudies.com)

# Rabelais, Dashwood, and Proto-Thelema

by Steven J Ash

It is today widely accepted that Crowley's Thelema was not written on a blank slate. The ideology has many antecedents in the Western Esoteric Tradition, some genuinely extending back to the Knights Templar (though not as many as some might have us believe!) and several parallels with eastern philosophy. It would perhaps be fair to say Crowley cherry picked traditions that were of use to him and gave them a more radical spin. Whether this was done entirely consciously or unconsciously is now hard to tell with any certainty, but if we take his stories of psychism seriously, as well as his apparent surprise at the content of some of the 'transmissions', a subconscious authorship seems most likely. Crowley was also in close touch with many people who may have been the contemporary custodians of these traditions, both at Trinity College Cambridge and within the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. But the tradition he selected as the primary skeleton of his new ideology was of course that of Rabelais, as preserved in England by the philosophy of the *Order of Knights of West Wycombe*, better known as the 'Hell Fire Club'. It is this tradition that is the subject of this essay.

François Rabelais was born in 1495, in the commune of Chinon, where his father owned several vineyards, and is variously said to have been an innkeeper, a herbalist or a lawyer, perhaps being all three at various phases of his life. Chinon of course was once key Templar territory, and the place of their imprisonment two hundred years earlier<sup>1</sup>, but alas no connection to the Knights has yet been found. Joining a monastery at a young age, Francois took holy orders in his mid 30s, after what he later regarded as a wasted youth, passing through various abbeys and convents. It was in one of these, probably the Convent of La Baumette, that he appears to have first met the wealthy de Bellay brothers, who became his friends and important patrons in his later career. Not long after this ordination he became disillusioned with the Church, largely due to the censorial attitudes of the local ecclesiastical authorities, who were seizing the classical and humanist texts<sup>2</sup> he had become fond of studying. Though he had also become fascinated by the ancient fairs of the neighbourhood, writing, "I went to see the he jugglers, tumblers, mountebanks, and quacksalvers, and considered their cunning, their shifts, their somersaults and smooth tongue, especially of those

of Chauny in Picardy, who are naturally great praters, and brave givers of fibs, in matter of the green apes." (*Gargantua*, Rabelais) In short he was developing 'pagan' tastes. At first he appealed to the Pope and was successfully transferred from the strict Franciscan Order to the relatively liberal Benedictines. At first studying Greek and Latin texts at the the Abbaye de Maillezais, he developed an interest in classical medicine and in 1530 abandoned the monastery for the universities of Poitiers and Montpellier, where he gained his baccalaureate. By 1532 he was practising medicine in Lyons.

It was then his writing career began, at first mild satires, that criticized established authority and championed individual liberty. His first major work, *Pantagruel*, soon followed, written under the anagrammatical pen-name of Alcofribas Nasier. This celebrated a lifestyle of wine, women and song, with particular reference to the virtues of the wines of Chinon. It also satirized the Catholic Church, and many of its beliefs, through the bawdy and crude humour of its protagonists, the folklore giant Pantagruel, and his father Gargantua, as well as the cunning trickster Panurge and a drunken ex-monk and fighter Brother Jean (perhaps modelled on a popular cynical perspective on the Knights Templar 3, who revered John the Baptist). His other works, *Gargantua* (1534), *Le Tiers Livre des faicts et dicts héroïques du bon Pantagruel* (1546), *Le Quart Livre de Pantagruel* (1552) continue the exact same humourous theme and met increasing condemnation from the Church and secular authorities. In what may have been his final book, *Cinquisme Livre* (1564), Panurge and friends complete their quest and find the Temple of the Holy Bottle, over which hangs the Dionysian motto, *En Oino Aletheia*, "In wine lies truth." Rabelais would not have lasted long had not his friends the de Bellay brothers looked after him. By then Jean du Bellay was Bishop of Paris, later becoming a Cardinal, and his brother Guillaume du Bellay was a senior diplomat to the Royal Court and local governor. Both men were also ardent Humanists.

The de Bellay brothers were more restrained in their critiques than Rabelais, but both were critical of the established order in Europe, and liberals in the Renaissance Humanist tradition. Highly sympathetic to Rabelais' rebellious outlook they ensured he found good employment and was protected from his enemies. Their greatest help came in their recommendation of Francois to their own patron, Margaret of Navarre, and her brother King

Francis I, both supporters of moderate Humanist culture, in opposition to Catholic orthodoxy. As a result Francis allowed the third book, *Le Tiers Livre*, to be published unopposed, that Rabelais enthusiastically dedicated to Margaret of Navarre. His second book having wisely praised Francis for the great humanistic reforms carried out under the influence of his sister Margaret. Both de Bellays were steeped in the traditions of the Renaissance, including its occult manifestations, but managed to stay on relatively good terms with the French Church and the Pope of their time. As such they were indispensable allies to Rabelais. In 1535 he went to Rome as physician to Bishop Jean du Bellay, where he gained a Doctorate in Medicine, and in 1539 he served as the chief medical advisor of Guillaume du Bellay in Turin.

The nephew of the de Bellay brothers, Joachim du Bellay was at the same time developing his career as a poet and enjoying the same support. Joachim was one of the founders of the Pleiade, a French society of poets, arguably recreating an older 14th century Toulouse group, also called the Pleiade 4, which consisted of 7 male and 7 female poets influenced by the Troubadours. This group itself, founded in 1323, was influenced by the Alexandrian Pleiade of the third century BC, consisting of seven Greek esoteric poets, symbolically linked to the seven stars of the Pleiades constellation. The Pleiade of de Bellay was concerned with reviving the Greek tradition within French literature, along with certain esoteric themes. In general it championed the ethos of 'carpe diem', and its Bacchanalian lifestyle, as well as a Romanticism akin to that of the Courtly Love cult of the Middle Ages, with perhaps even more license. Many of its poets considered their work to be divinely inspired by a dark female muse (reminiscent perhaps of the 'dark lady' inspiring the 'poet-lover' of the Shakespearian sonnets). While written in a very different style to that of Rabelais, and clearly for a different audience, its proponents are essentially extolling the same lifestyle.

The main proponent of Renaissance Humanism in France at this time was Margaret of Navarre. Known to those she sponsored as 'the Maecenas', after an ancient Roman patron of the arts. After her brother became King of France she created a great Renaissance salon often referred to as the New Parnassus. It was under her wing that a number of French Renaissance figures achieved security, and exiles, such as Leonardo Da Vinci, gained sanctuary. She is also credited with the influence on Francis I that led to his great tolerance and liberal reformism in the early period of his reign. A writer herself she was an acclaimed poetess and wrote the

Heptameron, a collection of bawdy tales of love, lust and infidelity, clearly inspired by Boccaccio's medieval erotic masterpiece the Decameron. Margaret's tastes and virtues had been cultivated early by her mother Louise of Savoy, an earlier champion of the Italian Renaissance, who ensured her daughter achieved an enlightened education in Italy. As in France the irreverent Boccaccio was seen as an almost messianic figure in Savoy, ensuring a decadent culture there. The House of Savoy itself had a past steeped in occult tradition, not least of which was its connections to the Templars, via the second Duke's wife, Anne de Lusignan, a princess and an heiress of Cyprus and Jerusalem, descended from Templar patron Guy de Lusignan; as well as from the Candia dynasty of Geneva, a Burgundian Templar family that had married into the Savoys soon after the dissolution of the Order in the early fourteenth century. In 1475 Gauvain de Candie, count of Berruyre, novelist and poet of the House of Candia, composed the famous "Chason d'Amoure" recited poems to the ducal couple of Marguerite of Austria and Philibert II, Duke of Savoy. An identifiable esoteric tradition thus underlay Rabelais' work.

Rabelais himself has no obvious connection to the occult other than his creation of the philosophy of Thelema. It is in his first book that we are introduced to the *Abbey of Thélème*, built by the giant Gargantua for Brother Jean, after he refuses any role of authority over others. This wall-less Abbey ("for where there is a wall in front and behind there is bound to be a lot of murmuring, jealousy and plotting on the inside") is an imaginary place that satirizes all monastic institutions. This is achieved via the decadent lives of its unholy monks, or Thélémites, who have taken a 'vow of riches', freely enjoying there the services of pretty nuns as maids, as well as other great luxuries, such as private swimming pools. Their eutopian lifestyle, free of all authority, and the tyranny of the clock, is described as follows:

*"All their life was spent not in laws, statutes, or rules, but according to their own free will and pleasure. They rose out of their beds when they thought good; they did eat, drink, labour, sleep, when they had a mind to it and were disposed for it. None did awake them, none did offer to constrain them to eat, drink, nor to do any other thing; for so had Gargantua established it. In all their rule and strictest tie of their order there was but this one clause to be observed,*

*Do What Thou Wilt (Fay ce que voudra);*



*because men that are free, well-born, well-bred, and conversant in honest companies, have naturally an instinct and spur that prompteth them unto virtuous actions, and withdraws them from vice, which is called honour. Those same men, when by base subjection and constraint they are brought under and kept down, turn aside from that noble disposition by which they formerly were inclined to virtue, to shake off and break that bond of servitude wherein they are so tyrannously enslaved; for it is agreeable with the nature of man to long after things forbidden and to desire what is denied us”.*

*(Pantagruel, Rabelais)*

It has been argued that beyond a comical attack on the monasteries, this ideal lifestyle was seen as something to be one day achieved, not just for a privileged group but for the whole of society.

Certainly in *Rabelais and His World*, the Russian philosopher Mikhail M. Bakhtin introduced the term *carnavalesque*, under the influence of Rabelais, to describe all those forms of activity that use laughter, parody, and "grotesque realism" as a weapon against totalitarian order. A philosophy since adopted by post-situationists and much of the international anarchist movement in their current program of activism.

Rabelais himself remained an active satirist until the decline in France of his patrons, at which point he 'retired' into the relative safety of the curacy of Mendon, near Paris, in which role he died on April 9<sup>th</sup> 1553.

His influence would long outlast him however, finding particularly fertile ground in England, within groups such as the 'Hell Fire Club'. How his influence crossed the channel is uncertain. However one important bridge may have been in Tudor times with the return to England of one Anne Boleyn.

Anne was a maid of honour to Margaret of Navarre and came to see her as a great mentor. Born in England, the progeny of Sir Thomas Boleyn, later Earl of Wiltshire and Ormunde, and his wife, Lady Elizabeth Howard, daughter of the Duke of Norfolk, Anne was related to a vast host of ancient aristocratic families. Many of whom, like the Howards, were the descendents of former Templars, or families closely related to the Order, such as the

Beauchamps, Montagus, Butlers, Mowbrays and St Legers, many of whom died in the War of the Roses. Her mother was part of an early humanist women's circle around Catherine of Aragon (which also included Maud Parr and Jane Guildford, later Jane Dudley) and sent Anne to the Continent where she served Margaret of Nevers in France for many years. Anne returned to England in 1520, where she became known as a champion of the new Renaissance Humanism. Developing connections with English Humanists, a core group of whom had been founded by John Colet, Dean of St Pauls, twenty five years earlier, she initially entered into a relationship with Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland. The Earl's great nephew was later the infamous 'Wizard Earl of Northumberland' who would become a major figure in English Hermeticism and the 'School of Night' (with its apparent muse, a Nuit-like Lady of Night). A curious connection given that Colet had a couple of decades earlier entertained the infamous Renaissance magician Henry Cornelius Agrippa in his home for several months, who later claimed to have founded the first Hermetic secret society in England (he later became a physician and a reluctant astrologer for the French Queen Mother, in the Court of Frances I, and wrote a book on marriage for Margaret of Navarre, three years after Boleyn had left for England). Interestingly Agrippa was also one of the few in his time to equate the historical Knights Templar with 'witchcraft', while also hinting they were innocent of most of the charges. Anne's affair with Earl Henry was however cut short, allegedly by agents of Henry VIII, who desired the charismatic, dusky beauty for himself. This event proved fortuitous, for after her arranged marriage to the King, Anne not only used her position to further Renaissance culture in England, but is also thought to have been a major influence on the Reformation and the creation of the Church of England. But despite such an influence Anne herself came to be regarded as a licentious character and accused of many adulteries. Worse still she became the target of allegations of witchcraft and black magic, perhaps partly inspired by tales of her polydactylism (she allegedly had six fingers on her left hand, this is widely rejected) at that time considered to be a sign of the Devil. These charges would eventually lead to her execution in 1536. Surmised reasons for which range from a Catholic plot to the schemes of Jane Seymour, Henry's next wife.

The influence of Rabelais is more obviously found amongst the followers of Sir Francis Dashwood, who placed his philosophy at the heart of his infamous decadent, rake's club, the *Order of Knights of West Wycombe (1746-1760)*. Just how deep and sincere this adoption

was still remains an unanswered question. Francis Dashwood, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the 15th Baron le Despencer (due to his father's marriage to the wealthy heiress Mary Fane) was notorious rake and most historians regard his 'Hell Fire Club', as it became known, as simply an excuse for aristocratic debauchery. However while that may be true in part, there is considerable evidence that it also had a deeper aspect. Originally based on earlier 'Hell Fire Clubs' founded by the Masonic Jacobites, such as the Duke of Wharton, with whom Dashwood had close contact, the *Brotherhood of St. Francis*, as it was initially called, developed more controversial aspects. Its self styled 'brother monks' referred to Dashwood as 'the Abbot', and regular hiring prostitutes as 'nuns', adopted Rabelaisian affectations, most notably in their the motto *Do What Thou Wilt*. Moreover, according to their critic Horace Walpole, the member's "practice was rigorously pagan: Bacchus and Venus were the deities to whom they almost publicly sacrificed; and the nymphs and the hogsheads that were laid in against the festivals of this new church, sufficiently informed the neighbourhood of the secret complexion of those hermits." While a defecting former member of Dashwood's society, the radical MP John Wilkes, declared that not only was the Club a secret society, with definite political ambitions, but that it also revered the pagan goddess Bona Dea, whom the Romans associated with Venus. Certainly Dashwood had decorated his new manor house with fashionable classical figures, after his return from Venice, following his last Grand Tour, and these included a notably prominent Venus, or Aphrodite, in his vast landscaped garden. He had also turned part of the West Wing of his new home into a 'Temple of Bacchus'. So it seems these allegations may have at least been partly true. In fact Thomas Langley's book *The History of Antiquities of the Hundred of Desborough*, written in 1797, describes the following:

*"The delightful gardens of West Wycombe were opened to the public and a novel exhibition took place in one of the rural walks. A fine portico at the west end of the house has been lately erected (in imitation of that of the Temple of Bacchus) for the dedication of which a Bacchanalian procession was formed of Bacchanals, Priests, Pans, Fauns, Satyrs, Silenus, etc., all in proper habits and skins wreathed with vine leaves, ivy, oak, etc. On the arrival of the procession in the portico the High Priest addressed the Statue in an Invocation which was succeeded by several hymns, and other pieces of music vocal and instrumental suitable to the occasion, and having finished the sacrifice proceeded through the grove to a Tent pitched among*

*several others at the head of the lake where the Paeans and libations were repeated – then ferrying to a vessel adorned with colours and streamers, again performed various ceremonies with discharges of cannon and bursts of acclamations from the populace. The ceremony was finished by a congratulatory address or ode to the Deity of the place. Several of the company wore masques on this occasion."*

Most interesting of all are the claims that Dashwood was merely a front man and the 'Master of Ceremonies' for the society, while its real master and 'High Priest' was John Montagu, the fourth Earl of Sandwich, whose wife Lady Montagu (nee Dorothy Fane, daughter of Viscount Fane) was said to preside over its orgies. Educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge, John Montagu became the First Lord of the Admiralty in 1748, and later rose to become Secretary of State. He would later become First Lord of the Admiralty again in Lord North's government in the 1770s. Earlier in his career he had been an associate and fellow Mason of the Master of the Grand Lodge of England, the Duke of Wharton, and was rumoured to have been associated both with Wharton's earlier Hell Fire Club, as well as a secret member of Dashwood's Society, being related to him via the Fane family. There is little evidence to support this however, apart from a revealing portrait of Dashwood by the painter Hogarth, a known member of the Hellfire Club, which comically depicts an angelic fourth Earl of Sandwich in Dashwood's 'halo', whispering something into his ear, while a nude woman on a platter looks remarkably like Countess Montagu!

Such connections are even more interesting when we realise the Montagu family connection and the chain of family relations linked Dashwood to those same families related to Anne Boleyn, with their ancient Templar pedigree.

Crowley was not only well versed in this history, and the traditions associated with it, at Trinity College (founded by Henry VIII as part of his reforms) he rubbed shoulders with the descendents of several of these very same families. The inclusion of the Abbey of Thelema and its philosophy in his evolving ideology was thus no accident. Taken in its occult form, through the filter of the mysteries revitalised by Dashwood, Rabelais' Thelema can be seen as part of a very old tradition (the observant may have noticed a curious, though rough, 200 year cycle in this narrative: the founding of the Templars around 1120, the Pleiade of 1323 – 10 years after the suppression of the Templars - Anne Boleyn's arrival in England in 1520 –

following Agrippa in 1510 and preceding the emergence of Rabalais in her former home in 1530 - and the founding of the original Hell Fire Club around 1720), reformed and modernised by Crowley to form the core of his emerging current, which born in 1904 reached its height in the 1920s. Clearly there is much more beneath the surface of Thelema to be yet uncovered.

## Notes

1 The Castle of Chinon was initially the property of the English monarchy in the independent French kingdom of Anjou. Fortified by Henry II, a close supporter of the Knights Templar, it was inherited by Richard the Lionheart, who worked almost hand in glove with the Templars, and the Knights are said to have often met with Richard in its great hall. In the early 13<sup>th</sup> century after Anjou was annexed by the French King Phillip Augustus, relations between the French monarchy and the Templars were still good. However by the end of the century relations had soured, culminating with Phillip the Fair's arrest of members of the Order and their imprisonment in the dungeon of the castle, where unusual and possibly esoteric graffiti was carved. The Papal investigators sent to interview the knights did so here, producing the recently released Vatican document now known as the Chinon parchment. While finding the Order as a whole innocent, contrary to recent reports the investigators did in fact find evidence of unusual practices within it. In addition to admissions of mundane homosexuality amongst some in the Brotherhood, all the accused admitted to having been asked by their receptors during their initiation to denounce the Cross and spit at the crucifix, and were absolved on account of their alleged reluctance, Templar lawyers, along with other high ranking witnesses, strongly implied they were aware of some local irregularities within the Order, and at least one knight testified as having seen an iconic head used as an idol in Montpellier. Culprits suggested by the Order itself included brothers close to the Cathars, as well as those dealing with Islamic groups, such as the Ismaili Order of the Hashashin. All those Templars who confessed and were absolved were released from Chinon, only those who later retracted their confessions were executed, as was the norm of the time.

2 The term Humanist had a slightly different connotation in this period to the word as used today. It essentially meant giving greater value to the human element and having a more positive and tolerant attitude towards humanity, as opposed to a God centred view which saw

a flawed humanity as damned and in a state of inherent sinfulness requiring God's grace. It particular indicated a view in which humans could take control of their own destiny through developing and utilising their own natural mental abilities, rather than subservience to gods. Later of course it would evolve into a rationalistic and materialistic absolutism, which put mankind at the centre of a meaningless, physical universe, with reason as their only reliable tool. Thus inspiring a Romantic backlash that led to today's radical, anti-humanist stances.

3 A popular phrase in Germany at the time was 'as drunk as Templar!' An altar of St John the Baptist was often found in Templar churches, alongside the main altar to the Virgin Mary.

4 The naming of this group as the Pleiade, remains controversial, some scholars insist they never referred to themselves as such, preferring the name the Brigade. However the clear correspondence between the groups seems undeniable.

5 Many are surprised by the notion of 'Templar families', however it should be remembered that not all Templar knights were monks, some were members of secular confraternities, who wore black instead of the white mantels of the monks, being still 'in sin' (see the Rule of the Templars, Dr Peter Partner's *the Murdered Magicians*, or my book *the Black Knights* for more details). These knights were not celibate and many had children, even some of those who eventually took holy orders did so late in life, sometimes on their deathbed, after producing offspring. The descendants of these knights varied in their attitude to their forebears, many of whom showed an unusual interest in occultism down the generations.

6 It has been argued that both Dashwood and Lord Sandwich were closely connected to the British secret service and were engaged in clandestine intrigues against the exiled Jacobites. Others have suggested they were double or even triple agents!

### **Main Sources**

*The Complete Works of Doctor Francois Rabelais*, translated by Sir Thomas Urquart and Peter Motteux An electronic text version is available from [Project Gutenberg](#)

*Life of Francois Rabelais*, by Jean Plattard

*Rabelais and His World* by Mikhail Bakhtin, Helene Iswolsky (Translator)

*Marguerite of Navarre*, by Samuel Putnam

*Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn*, by Retha Warnicke

*Three Books Of Occult Philosophy* H. C. Agrippa

*Cornelius Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian and His Declamation*, by Marc van der Poel

*Sex, Rakes and Libertines. The Hell-Fire Clubs*, by Geoffrey Ashe

*Liber AL*, by Aiwass (and Aleister Crowley)

*The Black Knights, A Secret History of the Knights Templar*, by Stephen J Ash

See also a wide range of articles on the Internet.



*"Egg"*

by Acrylick Alchemical



# **Acrylick Alchemical interview**

by IAO131

## **1) What does the name Acrylick Alchemical mean?**

Acrylic is to Acrylick as Magic is to Magick. I was a teenager and new to Thelema when started using Acrylick as my only internet handle. When I decided to make Occult art my main art, Alchemical seemed like a perfect companion. Everything I'm into seems to involve transformation.

## **2) What materials do you use to make your work?**

Obviously I adore acrylics, as they are incredible versatile. Being the Acrylick Alchemist that I am, I experiment constantly with different techniques that allow me to use it on plywood, canvas, paper, fabric, wood, clay, latex, stone, wax...really anything.

Everything is a potential art supply but Acrylick is the paint of the New Aeon.

## **3) What was the inspiration behind “Egg”? “Venus in Pisces”? “A Delightful Dance”?**

*Egg* [see page 15] - Egg, like most of my work was a very organic process. I had the background on canvas paper and meditated on the flaxen light that permeated the paper. She started out as the Adjustment card. Her brand of adjustment told me what else to include in the picture; always symbols from the Collective Unconscious.

*Venus in Pisces* [see page 26] - She started out as the Hanged Man, I was painting her upside-down. I realized someone very specific was inside the vagueness of my acrylic-water color painting so I turned her right side up to finish her face.

She's also seemingly part of a trilogy. The last of my paintings before the 2008 vernal equinox all came together within a couple of days. I often try have multiple work going because they feed each other.

The other 2 paintings are "Sun in Pisces" and a rendition on "the Universe card" [see "A Delightful Dance" on page 31]

**4) Is there any general idea you wish to convey with all of your art? Is there any overarching theme?**

Celebration of the Mind, Body and Spirit. And I do try tap into everything that also shares that message. Maybe it's my favorite part of the Ritual... the awesome after-party.

**5) How does the theory/philosophy & practice of Thelema influence your art?**

I always felt like a very natural Thelemite because I recognized that it took from every mythos, religion or philosophy I was ever into.

The bits and pieces from other ideologies, the parts that seemed to resonate Freedom, they

were all in Thelema. My work is not strictly Thelemic, but then again, Thelema isn't strictly Thelemic either.

I am the product of Bliss Following which begins with Healing. Healing means having room to breathe, and I try not to repress my art or repress anyone with my art.

**6) How do you decide the topic of your art before you start? Do you do it before you start?**

It's always different, of course. I cycle through all my favorite Motifs and Universal Blue Prints. Stuff that I need to make to balance out my own Tree of Life usually takes precedence.

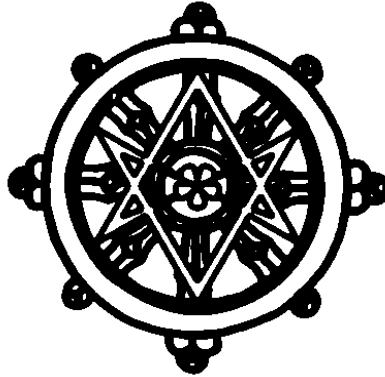
I am a huge fan of sensing my way through a picture. I might not over analyze a decision to make a mostly Green picture at first because it would be jumping the gun. It might become a very Venus/Netzach based image, but I don't want to limit it there. It might turn Purple or Orange later. Colors or subject matter, when employed, take on a life of their own and I try to respect that. I find it really works the best.

**7) What are your major influences in art/painting?**

Leonardo and Michelangelo's work taught me more about art than any school could've taught me. Overwhelmed and moved by that stuff as a kid, I learned to breakdown in my mind what sort of geometry and methods were involved. I was really into classical mythology and symbolism so I looked up to these artists.

But outside of the stuff that has inspired every other artist since the dawn of time, I will have to include Musick. It's is the single most important influence in my work. If I didn't experience THAT Magick I don't think I could make much at all. If I had to choose between art supplies and Musick I would probably have to paint with blood & spit from then on, because Musick moves me like nothing else.

[AcrylickAlchemical.com](http://AcrylickAlchemical.com)



## *Part 5: War & Conquering*

*“I forbid argument. Conquer! That is enough.”*

*–Liber AL vel Legis III:11*

*“My disciples are proud and beautiful; they are strong and swift; they rule their way like mighty conquerors.”*

*–Liber Tzaddi vel Hermeticus, line 24*

We have already encountered Horus – known in various forms in *Liber AL vel Legis* as Hoor-paar-kraat, Heru-pa-kraath, Heru-Ra-Ha, and most commonly as Ra-Hoor-Khuit – while discussing the “curses” in the previous installment<sup>1</sup>. In the beginning of the third chapter of *Liber AL*, Ra-Hoor-Khuit declares, “Now let it be first understood that I am a god of War and of Vengeance” (AL III:3). These martial themes of war, vengeance, and conquest are apparent throughout *Liber AL vel Legis*, especially in the third chapter: they deserve further investigation and understanding before we reject it all as immature squabbling. In this age where humanity has gone through two World Wars, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, two wars in Iraq, and many more, humanity largely sees war as monstrous and certainly not spiritual. The notions of war as chivalrous and honorable have long since passed. M. Brewster Smith, psychology professor and former president of the American Psychological Association,

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<sup>1</sup> Printed in *Journal of Thelemic Studies*, Vol.1 No.1

once clearly summarized this idea when he said, “My generation’s experience of war – World War II and since – involved little heroism and much wretched slogging it out in grim necessity and loyalty to one’s buddies... Since the defeat of the Axis powers of World War II, it has become uncommon in the world of Westernized nations to hear war idealized as an ennobling discipline: Now we cast our military adventures and our preparation for them in the guise of reluctant defense.”<sup>2</sup> After all of these horrors, one might ask oneself whether it is possible to rationally come to terms with these ideas of war in ourselves and the world...

Thelema is one of many traditions that attempt to wed the shunned martial aspects of the universe to the spiritual aspects. This has a long tradition with the famous knight-monks of the Knights Templar, the “engaged Buddhists” of the Vietnam War, the *mujahideen* of Islam, the “Sacred Path of the Warrior” of the more modern Shambhala movement, and not to mention the nearly inexhaustible amount of warrior symbols and archetypes from around the world. This includes the epic story of Arjuna on the battlefield in the *Bhagavad Gita* of Hinduism, the plethora of stories about Knights winning some honor in the Medieval Ages, and even the symbolic *kirpan* dagger worn by Sikhs. Even Jesus, whom many think is the ideal of the “meek and mild,” once said “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.”<sup>3</sup> Aleister Crowley reinforces this motif of the spiritual warrior in the Thelemic tradition when he poetically proclaims, “Mighty and terrible and glorious as [Love] is, however, it is but the pennon upon the sacred lance of Will, the damascened inscription upon the swords of the Knight-monks of Thelema.”<sup>4</sup>

## War & Conflict

*Liber AL vel Legis*, as mentioned in earlier installments, is not merely a step into the future but is also a fulfillment of the wisdom of the past. In the past, war was respected and understood more clearly than in these days. Joseph Campbell explains about the cultures of the past that, “There is... the cruel fact to be recognized that killing is the precondition of all

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<sup>2</sup> Smith, M. Brewster. “Nationalism, Ethnocentrism, and the New World Order.” (1992)

<sup>3</sup> King James Version of the *Bible*. Matthew 10:34

<sup>4</sup> Crowley, Aleister. “Liber II The Message of the Master Therion” from *The Equinox III(1)*. (Detroit: Universal, 1919)

living whatsoever: life lives on life, eats life, and would otherwise not exist. To some this terrible necessity is fundamentally unacceptable, and such people have, at times, brought forth mythologies of a way to perpetual peace. However, those have not been the people generally who have survived in what Darwin termed the universal struggle for existence. Rather, it has been those who have been reconciled to the nature of life on this earth. Plainly and simply: it has been the nations, tribes, and peoples bred to mythologies of war that have survived to communicate their life-supporting mythic lore to descendants.”<sup>5</sup> In this sense, war is understood to be a sort of symbol of the struggle of life and the necessary expression thereof. Those who affirm life and its struggle for existence are those who “have been reconciled to the nature of life on this earth,” and Thelema represents one of the most modern fulfillments of this life-affirming view of the universe.

Crowley explained his distaste for the motif of denying or distorting this life-affirming view when he said, “My primary objection to Christianity is 'gentle Jesus, meek and mild,' the pacifist, the conscientious objector, the Tolstoyan, the 'passive resister.'... 'Jesus' himself, in the legend, 'set his face as a flint to go to Jerusalem,' with the foreknowledge of his fate. But Christians have not emphasized that heroism since the Crusades. The sloppy sentimental Jesus of the Sunday-school is the only survivor; and the War killed him, thank Ares!”<sup>6</sup> Here Crowley implies that the true image of Jesus should be one who ‘set his face as a flint to go to Jerusalem’ without fear or weakness, which brings back once again the images of Jesus bringing “not... peace, but a sword.”<sup>7</sup> We see that a “mythology,” a symbolic understanding of the universe, which embraces war is one that acknowledges the inherent conflict in life but nonetheless affirms it all. Crowley emphatically declares, “All leaders of men are active, finding pleasure even in toil, hardship, and defeat: *they accept every Event as proper to their chosen course of action, and conquer even when they are beaten down for the moment. They die at the crisis of the battle, with failure certain; yet they rejoice, having lived and loved and fought and done their will*; those for whose cause they fought will reap at last where they have sowed”<sup>8</sup> (emphasis added) This attitude of conquering all obstacles and, most importantly, rejoicing in both happiness and hardship is an

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<sup>5</sup> Campbell, Joseph. *Myths to Live By*, p.169. Penguin Books (1972)

<sup>6</sup> Crowley, Aleister. *The Law is For All*. III:57

<sup>7</sup> King James Version of the *Bible*. Matthew 10:34

<sup>8</sup> Crowley, Aleister. Djeridensis Comment (By Aleister Crowley, c. 1923. Copyright © O.T.O. Crowley himself never published it, but it did appear in "The Magical Link" IX(4)–X(2), 1995/96.) AL II:18.

important angle to interpret the use of “conquering” and “war” in the tradition of Thelema and the text of *Liber AL vel Legis*.

Further concerning war, Campbell explains, “Heraclitus declared war to be the creator of all great things; and in the words again of Spengler, ‘The one who lacks courage to be a hammer comes off in the role of the anvil.’ Many a sensitive mind, reacting to this unwelcome truth, has found nature intolerable, and has cried down all those best fit to live as ‘wicked,’ ‘evil,’ or ‘monstrous,’ setting up instead, as a counter-ideal, the model of him who turns the other cheek and whose kingdom is not of this world.”<sup>9</sup> In this sense, the mythologies of “war” are understood to be “life-affirming” or “world-affirming” in contrast to those mythologies of “peace” which posit a perfect land in another world. Examples of this are abound in all cultures of the world. Christianity’s notion of heaven in the clouds is the most obvious reference, but there are also other traditions that attempt to escape this world including Pure Land Buddhism, or Amidism, which is a sect of Mahayana Buddhism that believes one is supposedly guaranteed rebirth into the pure land of enlightenment if one merely has devotion towards or prays to “Amitabha Buddha.” These are both views of religious traditions that cause the aspirant to look outside of him or herself for salvation, an attitude fundamentally rejected by Thelema.

As asserted in the previous installment, one important aspect of Thelema is that it does not depend on grace from God, grace from guru, initiations from esoteric societies, from figureheads, or anything ‘external’ in the normal sense. *Liber AL vel Legis* summarizes its view on this in the line, “Every man and every woman is a star” (AL I:3). Explaining this important facet of Thelemic philosophy, he continues, “We are not to regard ourselves as base beings, without whose sphere is Light or ‘God’. Our minds and bodies are veils of the Light within. The uninitiate is a ‘Dark Star,’ and the Great Work for him is to make his veils transparent by ‘purifying’ them. This ‘purification’ is really ‘simplification’; it is not that the veil is dirty, but that the complexity of its folds makes it opaque. The Great Work therefore consists principally in the solution of complexes. Everything in itself is perfect, but when things are muddled, they become ‘evil.’”<sup>10</sup> This concisely lays forth the life-affirming and especially individually-affirming message of *Liber AL vel Legis* and Thelema. Essentially, in

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<sup>9</sup> Campbell, Joseph. *Myths to Live By*, p.170. Penguin Books (1972)

<sup>10</sup> Crowley, Aleister. *The Law is For All*. I:8



Thelema, divinity is understood to be inherent within, except it is veiled in a complexity of “folds,” which are essentially one’s psychological “complexes.” This is an entirely valid psychological approach as well, which was later taken up by later individuals including Jung and his ruminations about “individuation” and “complexes” and Freud’s notions of “repression” and “neurosis.” This all relates back to the maxim “Every man and every woman is a star” (AL I:3) in that every man and every woman is a “light unto themselves,” a star (“Khabbs”), with no absolute need for exterior powers like grace of God or guru to fulfill their unique will.

### Conquering

Now we will begin looking at the lines in the *Dhammapada* which talk about the notions conquering. The most important lines of the *Dhammapada* that have a bearing on this subject come in the eighth chapter:

*“If one man conquer in battle a thousand times thousand men, and if another conquer himself, he is the greatest of conquerors. One's own self conquered is better than all other people; not even a god, a Gandharva [animal spirits], not Mara [Death & the tempter] with Brahman [limitless Godhead] could change into defeat the victory of a man who has vanquished himself, and always lives under restraint.”<sup>11</sup>*

-Dhammapada, lines 103-104

These lines synthesize the previous ruminations about the necessity of accepting all facets of life including conflict, and it forms a new and extremely important view of “conquering.” Before, we understood that the self is a ‘warrior’ who rejoices in struggles and hardships. Now we can understand that although there are many external obstacles, the one’s which are most important and most difficult to conquer are the internal obstacles. Once again, Buddha emphasizes this by saying “If one man conquer in battle a thousand times thousand men, and if another conquer himself, he is the greatest of conquerors.” Crowley thought this line so important that he said in regards to it, “This is the whole of Buddhism, as it is of any and all systems of self-control.”<sup>12</sup> Further, he explains that “[Buddhism] (the Dharma) is to be

<sup>11</sup> Muller, Max. *Dhammapada*. (1885), Ch.8 lines 103-105

<sup>12</sup> Crowley, Aleister. *The Equinox vol.1 no.4*, p.140

attained to by the wise, each one for himself. Salvation rests on Work, and not on Faith, not in reforming the so-called fallen, but in conquering oneself.”<sup>13</sup> The *Dharma* is here simply the path of illuminated consciousness, of one who, in terms of Thelema, is doing his or her Will.

A question may initially arise from this: Is Thelema itself “a system of self-control” that Crowley refers to, like Buddhism? Crowley answers this question quite clearly by himself when he asserts, “About 90% of Thelema, at a guess, is nothing *but* self-discipline. One is only allowed to do anything and everything so as to have more scope for exercising that virtue,”<sup>14</sup> and also, “What is true for every School is equally true for every individual. Success in life, on the basis of the Law of Thelema, implies severe self-discipline.”<sup>15</sup> The difference in self-discipline of Thelema from Buddhism is that, in Thelema, there are no *a priori* ‘wrong’ actions except those that somehow restrict or impede one’s Will.

This exact assertion of conquering oneself can be seen paralleled by the famous yogi Swami Vivekananda’s proclamation, “He who conquers self conquers all.” It also may be seen in Eliphas Levi’s declaration, “the magnum opus is pre-eminently the creation of man by himself, that is, the full and complete conquest which he can make of his faculties and his future; it is pre-eminently the perfect emancipation of his will.”<sup>16</sup> Here, Levi acknowledges that this conquering of oneself is precisely what is needed to ‘perfectly emancipate’ the Will.

With this, I end with a question posed by Nietzsche’s “Zarathustra” that I pose to the readers of this essay,

*“Art thou the victorious one, the self-conqueror, the ruler of thy passions, the mastery of thy virtues? Thus do I ask thee.”*<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Crowley, Aleister. *Magick Without Tears*, ch.70

<sup>15</sup> Crowley, Aleister. *Magick Without Tears*, ch.8

<sup>16</sup> Levi, Eliphas. *Transcendental Magic*, ch.12

<sup>17</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, ch.20



*“Venus in Pisces”*

by Acrylick Alchemical

An interview with  
the Thelemic band  
IllumineNaughty  
March 9, 2008

**1) When and how was IllumineNaughty started?**

The band IllumineNaughty was started by guitarist David Cherubim on the Vernal Equinox of 2005 in Los Angeles. It all began with the recording of his song 'Thelema.

**2) Who are the current members of the band? What previous projects are the current members also from?**

The current band members are David Cherubim (vocals and lead guitar), Elisabeth Night (keyboards and back-up vocals), Matt Ompehda (drums), Kris Stone (rhythm guitar) and Michael Vajra (bass). (There have been other members of the band, including the legendary Eva O from the famous Los Angeles gothic punk band Christian Death.) Beside various musical projects in the past (solo and band work), band members have been deeply involved with Magick and Thelema which is how some of them originally met. Founding band member David Cherubim also founded the Thelemic Order of the Golden Dawn in Los Angeles on the Vernal Equinox of 1990, and it was through this Magickal Order that David and four other

band members were originally linked, and three of them were directly initiated in the past by David into the grades of this Magickal Order.

**3) What genre would you classify your own music as? Why?**

We can easily be identified with various genres (such as gothic rock or metal, apocalyptic folk, alternative, and so on) due to the various musical influences we integrate in our sound.

However, we have boldly created our own genre and brand of music which we call Ritual Rock. Our live performances are literally magical rituals. It is magick and music in one, a union of the two which we call Musick. (We use the letter "k" on the end of the word music to represent certain significant ideas, one of them being that it represents music approached from a magickal perspective, since in the Qabalah the letter "k" represents the number 11, which is the number of Magick in and of itself.)

**4) Is there an overall message IllumineNaughty attempts to convey as a band through your songs?**

Illumination or, if you prefer, enlightenment through Musick. To do this, we bring to life the Spirits of Musick in ourselves and others through the manifold mix of melodies and harmonies incorporated in our songs. The Spirits of Musick give us illumination. A quote from the article "The Major Scale of Musick," by David Cherubim, is appropriate here: "Yes, there are Spirits of Musick whose work is to inspire humanity with the selfless and spiritual quality of Musick. Musick represents the selfless and spiritual aspect of existence. Musick is invisible, like the Spirit, or like the Air that we cannot see, but which is all around us. The Spirits of Musick

permeate the air of the earth, creating melodies and harmonies for all to hear. They are in every tune or song that you hear. They are also within you."

**5) How does Thelema influence the music of IllumineNaughty and the lives of the band members?**

Musically, Thelema inspires us to create sounds outside of the box. Our Musick is the creative product of our True Will, containing the technical elements of musical structure but nevertheless not conforming to any standard music out there due to the colorful combination of influences we have and our own unique quality of sound.

Personally, Thelema inspires us to do our True Will and it is our point of view that if Thelema is to genuinely survive the times, it must be expressed through the arts. Thelemic organizations, books and other intellectual tools can only serve Thelema to a point. There is another side of the coin which is to be found in the arts. Musick especially has and will even more so become a creative channel for Thelema. It is proper to the times.

**6) Tell us a little about your involvement with the "Abbey of Thelema" production.**

We were contacted by the producer Vincent Jennings to include a song or two in this movie about Aleister Crowley and his life at the Abbey. Then Vincent and his wife met with David in Los Angeles in the Summer of 2007 and they decided to use the song Thelema. Soon after this the band attended a private screening of the movie in Glendale, CA, and then band members David and Elisaebth attended a public premiere of the movie at the Fine Arts Theatre in

Beverly Hills, CA on October 27th. The movie was both entertaining and illuminating. It is now being revamped, restructured and re-edited to greater perfection before its commercial release to the public on DVD this year.

**7) Is there any final remarks you would like to convey to our readers?**

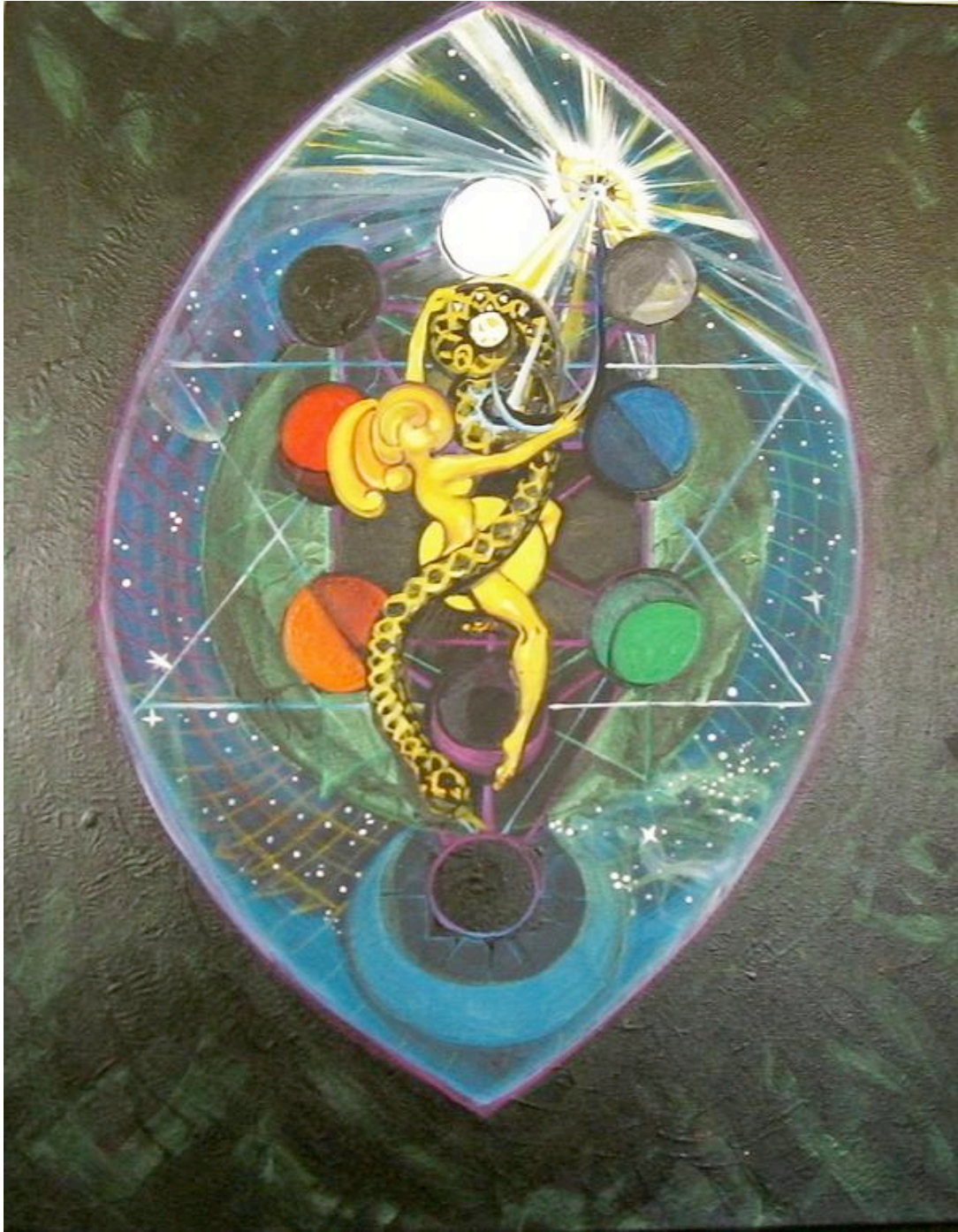
Musick and Magick go hand in hand. They are like Venus and Mercury in Astrology, or Netzach and Hod in the Qabalah, which are the foundations for the balanced Pillars of Life. Most magicians are too intellectual, just as most musicians are too emotional, imbalanced in their bodies and minds. Without artistic expression the magician becomes the prey of Reason, and without intellectual endeavors the musician becomes the prey of Emotion. Art and Philosophy must work side by side in the Spirit of Thelema. After all, equilibrium is the basis of the Great Work.

IllumineNaughty

[www.illuminenaughty.net](http://www.illuminenaughty.net)

[myspace.com/illuminenaughty](http://myspace.com/illuminenaughty)





*“A Delightful Dance”*

by Acrylic Alchemical



## The Missing Calls to the Great Work

by John L. Crow

*You may regard the establishment of the Law of Thelema as an essential element of your True Will, since, whatever the ultimate nature of that Will, the evident condition of putting it into execution is freedom from external interference.*

— Aleister Crowley, “Duty”

When reading the correspondence between Crowley and other Thelemites of his time, a clear theme can be seen underlying the letters. Indeed, this grand motivation was the foundation of much of Crowley’s, as well as other’s, life work. It was this motivation that caused Jane Wolfe, Norman Mudd and many others to make great sacrifices. What exactly was this Great Work? In short, it was the establishment of the Law of Thelema in the world as the basis of personal, social, and governmental interaction between all people.

These early Thelemites dedicated themselves to the spreading of an ideal. This ideal, for them, was the ultimate system of liberation for everyone, especially themselves. Until the Law of Thelema was established universally, they felt they could not truly be free. They also used this goal as a means to order their own lives and to have a meaning beyond themselves. As I look at the Thelemic Community today, I am struck by the sheer lack of higher teleology represented by those who label themselves Thelemites. Instead of seeing their own work and struggles as a part of the greater work for mankind, they fail to connect the issues each person has to the greater community. Alternatively they use it as a vehicle for self isolation rather than community integration. Yes, the work is individual, but if we are all doing it, then there is much we can learn from each other. Should we choose to come and work together, even if briefly, we can accomplish much, at least more than simply criticizing each other’s hats and morals.

In particular, many attitudes have changed over the past few decades, and these changes have had negative effects on the Thelemic community. These changes include the view that all information should be available to everyone, that Thelema is simply a “religion” like any other,

and that Thelema can somehow be separated from the person who announced it to the world, Aleister Crowley. In the following essay I will address each of these issues, describe their current manifestation, clarify the negative implications, and offer an alternative that will result in a great benefit for the Thelemic community as a whole.

### **Should All Information be Free and Available to Everyone?**

In speaking of concessions made to incomprehension, we are thinking especially of popularization in all its forms: can wishing to ‘put within the reach of everyone’ truth of any sort—or what at least are considered to be truths—‘available to everyone,’ when this ‘everyone’ necessarily includes a great majority of the foolish and ignorant, really be anything other than this?

— René Guénon, *Initiation & Spiritual Realization*

Today there is an egalitarian view that all information of all kinds should be made public. This ideological position is a natural development from the democratic worldview and the prevalent opinion that all dealings, government or otherwise, should be transparent and that all information should be accessible for review by whoever wants it. Moreover, Crowley himself was quite adamant that secrecy was the enemy of truth and did much to publish and expose the Golden Dawn secrets and also present many of the O.T.O. secrets in semi-veiled ways for those who had eyes to see. Many proponents of this “information egalitarianism” will point to Crowley’s opinion to justify their stance. Furthermore, in this age of open source systems, with instant communication and vast repositories of data instantly available, the idea of not having information at one’s beck and call seems antithetical to the zeitgeist.

Within the Thelemic community this has manifested in the instant availability of much of Crowley’s writings. On multiple internet websites one can find nearly the entire corpus of Crowley’s Libri as well as a number of works such as *Liber Aleph*, *Magick Without Tears*, *The Book of Lies*, Crowley’s new and old commentaries to *Liber AL* and more. There is even a website established for the universal availability of the first volume of *The Equinox*. In addition to these websites are the clandestine Internet sites that appear publishing the “initiatory

secrets” of the Ordo Templi Orientis. These sites appear just as quickly as they are shut down by the O.T.O. They contain copies of Francis King’s *Secret Rituals of the O.T.O.*, as well as other “secret” documents such as the modern O.T.O. initiations, study guides, degree papers, and ex-member’s analyses of various O.T.O. secret words and rituals. There is also a persistent trend of releasing unpublished correspondence of Crowley, Achad, Motta, Germer, McMurtry, Frank Bennett, and many more. In fact, taken as an aggregate, all of this information can be overwhelming.

Despite all the massive amount of information available online, there are fewer and fewer people who have actually read the material. The prevailing attitude is that it is better to collect, organize, swap, and distribute the material versus actually reading it. Just as there is the trend with occultists to acquire massive collections of occult books that are never read, there is a similar drive online to amass the largest digital collection without ever reading the files assembled. I have frequently asked people if they have read a particular text of Crowley’s and the curious reply is that they have it on their computer. This response is posited as if having the file available is the same thing as actually having read it. This is, of course, foolish. Yet, possession of a file acts as a substitute for actually having read it. This is simply untrue and leaves the owner of the massive repository of digital occultism just as ignorant after collecting the files as they were before.

Another problem of the ubiquity of the information is an assumption that just because the information is available to all, then everyone can understand it. This is undoubtedly false. In spite of this, the prevailing attitude is that if someone can read a document, then their understanding is the same as everyone else’s. The egalitarian ideological stance is that once a person has read a text, they “know the material.” Because any hierarchies of understanding have been leveled, the idea of differing levels of understanding, and more importantly, that others may understand a text better, is simply not an option for consideration. Thus when we do find that a text has been read, it is read once and that was enough. Moreover, no one can tell anyone else about the text, nor describe a deeper meaning because the text was read, and therefore all that can be known about the text is known. The egalitarian view of universal transparency projected onto a text renders it flat. Accordingly, everyone has the same access to the text and the information it contains. Thus no work has to be done to understand it; no

engagement into the text has to be performed. The singular level of information and interpretation makes all that is knowable apparent and available to all regardless of background, education, or familiarity with the subject matter.

At this point the reader may be wondering if I am advocating the removal of the information from the internet or even books. This is not my position at all. But I am, instead, asking the Thelemic community to look at what it is losing in the process of making the Crowley material ubiquitous. I am also asking the community to be self-critical of its ideological push to make everything available to anyone. The present ideology of egalitarianism and democracy is compelling people to want to make the information available regardless of whether anyone wants it or not. In addition, this ideology is also the source of much of the resentment against the leadership of the O.T.O. for enforcing Crowley copyrights and prohibiting the free flow of information to all. The O.T.O. is seen as withholding information and that contradicts the ideological foundation of many in the Thelemic community. Regardless of what the O.T.O. does do with the Crowley corpus, the simple fact that it withholds material, uses various legal systems to maintain its legal position, and restricts universal access to its archives simply makes them “evil.”

Undeniably, a larger and more disturbing aspect of this ideological position arises when we consider the initiatory or deeper magical secrets Crowley kept from the general public, especially the O.T.O. secrets. Over time these secrets have been revealed, published in books, newsletters and websites. Today one can pick up books like Donald Michael Kraig's *Modern Sex Magick* and get a copy of the O.T.O. 9<sup>th</sup> degree papers, or buy a CD on eBay containing PDFs of all the O.T.O. initiations including the changes since the publication of King's antiquated versions. The ubiquity of this “secret” information renders it benign and valueless; it loses its potency, and worse, its effectiveness in conveying deep or sacred knowledge is lost. This is the biggest problem the egalitarian ideological stance creates: That which was meant to be worked towards acquiring, finally earned through hard work, and then assimilated into knowledge developed over a long period of time is now easily obtained without any work, is held equal in value to all other information, and is assimilated, assuming it is even read, into a very small base of knowledge haphazardly obtained. This process leaves the former secrets as impotent, and the knowledge that was once part of the reward for hard work as ineffective and

forgotten as the rest of the amassed occult material. The hierarchy of importance assigned to certain documents also is leveled, and that which was a secret no longer has any value or status over any other document. Thus the knowledge contained in them is as equal to any other document written by Crowley. The secrets have sunk to the level of the lowest common denominator and in sinking have been castrated.

The results of this leveling process are as apparent as they are harmful. The biggest problem caused by this ideological stance is an omnipresent superficiality of knowledge that has become the standard within the Thelemic community. Very rarely are there members of the community that are truly and deeply engaged in and knowledgeable about the Thelemic material. Instead there is a prevailing surface knowledge but no depth; this includes the leaders in the community! We can see this truth in the fact that the occult sections of bookstores have an abundance of “beginner books” but exhibit a dearth of anything that would be considered intermediate or advanced. I once asked an editor from a large occult publisher about this and his reply was that the lack of more advanced books was because there is simply no market for them; no one buys anything that is challenging. We also see this trend manifest in the actions of community members who think that after only a few years in an organization or “occult order,” that they can create their own magical order—often after an argument or conflict with their previous group. We all know these schism groups are doomed to failure and the originators of them simply leave the community. This process is unhelpful for both the individual and the groups of which they were once part.

The egalitarian ideology that all information is equal, and that it should be always available at all time to all people, also ignores the very real fact that there are significant differences in levels of understanding and that much of the material is incomprehensible to most people for most of the time. It also ignores that fact that many people are simply obtuse and incapable of getting far with the corpus of Crowley’s work. As Crowley writes:

We should recognize the fact that the vast majority of human beings have no ambition in life beyond mere ease and animal happiness. We should allow these people to fulfill their destinies without interference. ... We do not insist on trying to train sheep to hunt foxes or lecture on history; we look after their physical well being, and enjoy their

wool and mutton. In this way we shall have a contented class of slaves who will accept the conditions of existence as they really are, and enjoy life with the quiet wisdom of cattle (New Comment to AL II:58).

The above quote is hardly an indication that Crowley was an advocate for egalitarianism or thought all should have access to all information. In contrast, he saw most people as incapable of discovering their True Wills and thought that any attempt to push them in that direction would actually be interference to their destinies. So instead of dealing with this reality, there is a push to make all Thelemic texts accessible, at least in material availability, even if it is inaccessible to most because of its complexity. This also is the reason that former secrets are rendered valueless and widely disseminated. To recognize that many people are simply unable to work with the Thelemic material would create a hierarchy of individuals and this is simply not acceptable to the egalitarian. Worse is the fact that with the popularization of the Thelemic material, we see it has become overly simplified and commodified. This is apparent in any of the countless Thelemic beginner's books on the market. Thus we see one of the Thelemic community's core problems: an abundance of Thelemic material from Crowley and other early Thelemic practitioners but the scarcity of individuals who can do anything productive with it. This lack of productivity has long hindered the success and growth of the Thelemic community.

### **Seeing Thelema as a New Religious Movement**

Call it a new religion, then, if it so please your Gracious Majesty; but I confess that I fail to see what you will have gained by so doing, and I feel bound to add that you might easily cause a great deal of misunderstanding, and work a rather stupid kind of mischief.

— Aleister Crowley, *Magick Without Tears*, Chapter 31, "Religion—Is Thelema a 'New Religion'?"

Another recent trend gaining some support is to render Thelema a religion similar to the various religions practiced by others within our society. Proponents of this view envision Thelema as a spirituality that is essentially on par with all the other major and minor spiritual

paths recognized by society and government and thus want to have it as an alternative to fit it into the variable “religion slot” of society. Their notion of Thelema is that it is a system that is compatible with normative society and can simply be easily substituted for Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, or any other “faith.”

I recently have labeled those who proffer this view as “Thelemic Religionists.” The Thelemic Religionists tout the benefits as including less tension or stigma with normative society, acceptance by one’s peers of having a legitimate spirituality or religion, employer or government recognition of holidays, customs and rites, economic assistance from the government, as well as the possibility that with this recognition the ranks of Thelemites will swell and the “religion” will benefit greatly from this influx of newly converted Thelemites.

Indeed, it is hard to deny some of these benefits advanced by the Thelemic Religionists. While government recognition is relatively unimportant in the United States, except for certain tax benefits, recognition in Europe could mean that governments that collect taxes on behalf of religious institutions could start issuing a portion of their collections to Thelemic organizations to buy property or support the religious purposes of Thelemites. Furthermore, who would not like to be rid of the stigmatic discomfort so many Thelemites experience when explaining their belief and practices to friends, family, or peers?

On the surface, the ideas proposed by the Thelemic Religionists seem to have a lot of benefits that are difficult to refute. In fact, as the Thelemic Religionists emphasize, Crowley frequently called Thelema a religion in his writings. For instance Crowley wrote in one of the commentaries, “Our religion therefore, for the People, is the Cult of the Sun, who is our particular star of the Body of Nuit, from whom, in the strictest scientific sense, come this earth, a chilled spark of Him, and all our Light and Life” (New Comment to AL III:22). It is hard to deny that in numerous places Crowley explicitly refers to Thelema as a religion.

Since all this is true, one might wonder why we would *not* want to refer to Thelema as a religion. Before we can answer this, though, we must first answer a different question: Since we know what we gain from describing Thelema a religion, we have to ask, what do we lose? The Thelemic Religionists are quick to point out the benefits of viewing Thelema as a religion;

I have outlined a few above. However, they are reticent to point out many of the negative results from calling Thelema as religion, especially a religion sanctioned by society and the government.

First, we have to look at how the Thelemic Religionists are positioning the “religion of Thelema.” In their arguments they frequently emphasize Liber XV, the Gnostic Mass, as evidence that Crowley saw the practice of Thelema being one that entailed group worship. Also, in diary entries Crowley makes mention of the possible need to create other ecclesiastical rituals such as marriage and baptism. Taking this as a cue, some of the leaders in the Thelemic community have created Thelemic versions of Roman Catholic rituals and certain sacraments: baptism, confirmation, marriage, ordination, last rites, administration of virtues to the sick, exorcism rites and others. The conception of Thelema supported by many of the Thelemic Religionists is actually very similar, in myriad ways to Roman Catholicism. Now this, in itself, is not necessarily a problem. All “religions” of the past have built on their predecessors by appropriating the prior rites, practices, and sometimes beliefs and then modifying them. It could legitimately be argued that the Thelemic leaders are simply doing the same. But, again, we have to ask at what cost?

One of the most striking aspects of the arguments presented by Thelemic Religionists is not what they advanced but actually what they *do not* advance. Crowley described a large number of practices and beliefs that were primary to his vision of Thelema. You hear nothing about these practices. These include practices like the Mass of the Phoenix, Liber Nu, Liber Had, Liber Astarte, and Liber Thisharb. Thelemic Religionists do not mention these practices. Thelema also contains a large quantity of “Holy Books” including Liber VII, X, LVX, XC, CCXXXI, and more. The Thelemic Religionists don’t mention these books either. With so many practices and so many Holy Books, why is it that Thelemic Religionists do not emphasize or even mention these texts or practices?

The reason these aspects of Thelema are omitted indicates the actual problem with presenting Thelema as a religion and attempting to get Thelema sanctioned by the government or approved by the public: Thelema is ultimately in contrast to and transgressive of normative society. Thelema rejects the morals and values of normative society and acts to transgress and



violate these norms. From the inclusion of intoxicants in ritual, to the positive view of sexuality, which frequently is seen as promoting promiscuity, to the pro-authoritarian and Nietzschean aspects of Thelema, normative society has much to reject in Thelema and conversely, Thelema encourages its adherents to reject most aspects of normative society. With the Holy Books containing statements such as, “The weak, the timid, the imperfect, the cowardly, the poor, the tearful – these are mine enemies, and I am come to destroy them” (Liber Tzaddi: 25), how can normative society accept a religion that is contrary to their axiomatic belief in equality and the dignity of all? Moreover, when Crowley talks of Thelema’s practices, what does he say?

I wish here to emphasise that the Law of Thelema definitely enjoins us, as a necessary act of religion, to “drink sweet wines and wines that foam.” Any free man or woman who resides in any community where this is verboten has a choice between two duties: insurrection and emigration (New Comment to AL I:63).

It is difficult to see how this kind of statement from Crowley advances as pluralistic or multicultural acceptance of others that is the foundation of current Western society. We also see that Crowley has linked the rejection of society’s laws to the practice of Thelema as a religion. Why is this something that is not indicated by the Thelemic Religionists? In fact, the corpus of Crowley’s writings contain numerous critiques and denigrations of normative, especially Judeo-Christian, society. With this anti-establishment foundation, it is a wonder that Thelemic Religionists think they can package Thelema in a way that makes it palatable to the masses. All this ultimately reveals is what we lose in calling Thelema a religion and in endeavoring to have it accepted by the general public.

To establish Thelema as an acceptable alternative to the general society around us, we would have to castrate it and remove all its transgressive and controversial aspects. This would render Thelema meaningless. Thelema matters because it is a rejection of what is commonly accepted today. The Holy Books present a metaphysic that is not egalitarian, one that does not see inherent dignity in all people. Additionally, Magick, especially sex Magick, and many other practices of Thelema are in direct conflict with societal norms. All these aspects of Thelema would have to be rejected and jettisoned by the Thelemic Religionists simply to make Thelema

acceptable and recognized by civil authorities. By the time Thelema is paired down to make it fit society's "religion slot," there would be little left of Thelema and certainly nothing that would entice people to adopt it as their "religion." Even the motivation to have Thelema accepted by the general public is contrary to Thelemic principles, which reject the necessity of approval by others. The whole push to make Thelema a religion is a push to make it safe for middle-class members of our society, but by the time they see it, there will be nothing meaningful for them to adopt or convert to!

In spite of this reality, there are many within the Thelemic community who nonetheless wish to neuter Thelema of its transgressive aspects. Even worse, many think that no matter how much transgressive material is removed from the Thelemic corpus or the discontinuation of certain practices, they believe that Thelema will always be held back by the simple association with its prophet and thus they also wish to remove him from Thelema too.

### **Can We Really Get "Beyond Crowley"?**

"I am the Beast ... I am Thelema"

— Aleister Crowley, diary entry, October 22, 1920

In 2004, the centennial of the reception of *Liber AL*, a conference was held in the United Kingdom entitled, "Thelema Beyond Crowley." The main thrust of the conference was to advocate a future time when Thelema would no longer be associated with Aleister Crowley. In a review of the conference, Paul Feazey reported statements such as Michael Staley saying he looked forward to a time when Thelema would "throw away the trappings of Crowley." Feazey also indicated that others too were less than pleased with Crowley's legacy, including Margaret Ingalls, a.k.a. Soror Nema, who called Crowley a "male chauvinist pig." The fact that there was even a conference built on the notion of removing Crowley from Thelema indicates a significant trend within the Thelemic community—a trend which should be examined, and if possible, diagnosed.

The first reality that must be accepted when examining the desire to extract Crowley from Thelema is the fact that Crowley, judged by general standards, was a very difficult person. He

often was found to be contravening the norms of his society and actively working to subvert and transgress the expectations placed upon him by his surroundings. He intentionally made people feel uneasy in an attempt to bring them out of their comfort zone. Also, his conduct was often in contrast to the morals and values of his time. He openly indulged in promiscuous sex with both men and women; he took extensive amounts of drugs and openly advocated for and performed ceremonial magic. These activities alone brought him into conflict with others, including the authorities, and alienated him from much of the public. It was not just yellow journalism that labeled Crowley “The Wickedest Man in the World.” His actions led to this label, one which still mars his legacy today. It is because of this legacy, in fact, that we begin to see why many want to disassociate Crowley from Thelema. Many see him as negative “baggage” and as a liability to the advancement of Thelema. Indeed, the mere mention of Crowley strikes fear, disgust, mistrust, and loathing in the minds of many in the general public. Many Thelemites see this heritage as simply too much for Thelema to overcome and can only envision a future for Thelema as one in which Crowley is no longer a part.

In addition to Crowley’s “bad boy” legacy, there are also other parts of Crowley’s personality or philosophy to which many object. As Margaret Ingalls indicated, Crowley’s views on women are simply not politically correct by today’s standards. Statement like “[a] woman has no soul” (New Comment AL I:3) or “Do we call Woman Whore? Ay, Verily and Amen, She is that” (New Comment AL III:55) are perceived by many as misogynistic and anti-woman. In the modern feminist and political climate, in which women have fought to be seen as equals to men, or indeed, no different than men, these statements evoke a past in which women were second class humans. Not surprisingly, those who see Crowley as anti-woman are quick to jettison him with his perceived misogyny.

Lastly, as indicated above, Crowley’s philosophy also does not see people as equal. As such, political systems that treat people as equals were ridiculed by Crowley. He denigrates democracy. In chapter 46 of *Magick Without Tears* Crowley’s views on democracy are very clear: “this imbecile and nauseating cult of weakness—democracy some call it—is utterly false and vile.” Similarly he targets the mechanism of democracy, popular election with this statement:

The principle of popular election is a fatal folly; its results are visible in every so-called democracy. The elected man is always the mediocrity; he is the safe man, the sound man, the man who displeases the majority less than any other; and therefore never the genius, the man of progress and illumination (Liber CXCIV: An Intimation with Reference to the Constitution of the Order).

In contrast to democracy, we find Crowley advocating the governmental systems of aristocracy and feudalism. With such views, it is not surprising that many who support democracy and popular election wish to distance themselves from Crowley and his anti-democratic opinions. Thus we see a generally negative public perception, seemingly misogynistic attitudes, and plainly anti-democratic position, all which cast Crowley in a very unfavorable light by modern Western standards. Is it any wonder many Thelemites are beating a hasty retreat from him?

Nevertheless, we must ask ourselves if separating Crowley from Thelema is actually possible, and assuming for a moment that it is, what would be the implications? There is simply no doubt that many of Crowley's statements and characterizations of Thelema leave almost everyone uncomfortable or conflicted. There is absolutely no way in which someone raised within the last fifty years would not have issues with Crowley's philosophy, and/or lifestyle. In other words, Crowley pushes many of our "buttons." How could this not be the case? Yet, we should ask, is this a "bad thing"? Growth only happens with crisis and conflict. Most, if not all, of the beneficial aspects of life are achieved through difficulty, crisis, and discomfort. Thelema, at its root, is a system designed to put the practitioner into various states of crisis and difficulty so that the person may grow. In addition, Thelema was not easy for Crowley either. His diaries are full of the difficulties he had with it and the position he found himself in. Even *Liber AL*, received while he was a Buddhist, struck at the core of his beliefs, and it took him years of personal conflict to finally come to a resolution. If we reject Crowley because he is challenging to us and makes us uncomfortable, are we actually performing a disservice to ourselves?

Crowley is transgressive, and yet that transgression may be exactly what we need as individuals to grow and challenge ourselves. This statement, however, has a presupposition. It

assumes that we are all not perfect or have not reached the pinnacle of our personal development. How many of us can say we are done with our own personal growth? How many can say we have nothing more to learn about ourselves or the world around us? Crowley offers us a way in which to challenge our very presuppositions, deepest beliefs, and axioms. Still this process is difficult, to say the least, and it is too much for most. Yet, is that reason enough to discard Crowley? Because he makes us feel uncomfortable and we dislike his philosophy at times?

There is another problem getting beyond Crowley presents for Thelema. Like it or not, Thelema was founded by, commented on, and manifested by Aleister Crowley. He is the Prophet of Thelema. To have a version of Thelema sans Crowley is to present a version of Thelema that is essentially *not* Thelema in any sense of the word. We are at 2000+ years since the creations of religions like Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism. Can you imagine Judaism without Moses? How useful or meaningful would Buddhism be without the teachings and example of the Buddha? What would be the point of Christianity without Jesus? Islam, a more recent world religion that is over 1200 years old, is another example. What meaning would Islam hold if the prophet Mohammed was rejected and disregarded? Would there really be a religion called Islam without its prophet? Similarly, those who advocate the removal of Crowley from Thelema advocate the removal of the anchor that created Thelema and gives it meaning and content. If we remove Crowley, the person and prophet, next to go is his uncomfortable and confrontational writings and interpretations of Thelema. After that the next to go are the Holy Books that are confrontational and transgressive. After that, what is next? The third chapter of *Liber AL* that so many dislike? Where will it end? At what point, after all the pruning, will this process stop? And assuming it does, what will be left? An empty shell of an edifice once called Thelema? With all the difficult and challenging parts removed, what would be the point of following Thelema anyway? Would it not look exactly like normative society? What would be the incentive to practice?

Like it or not, the difficult parts of a religion are the same parts that give it meaning. When Jesus told his followers to love thy neighbor as one loves oneself, it was not an easy order. When Mohammed commanded his followers to worship based on the five pillars, the instructions are not easy or convenient. The myriad rules for conduct and practice for the Jews

are not accommodating to everyday life; they are difficult and require massive amounts of time and attention. The Buddha advised his followers to not kill, lie, steal, or perform other negative actions, and his words are not simple or easy to put in practice. Yet these same difficult and challenging parts of the religion are what make the religion significant. To be a Christian but abandon all the difficult moral and physical requirements of Christ is to not be one who endeavors to be Christ-like. To be a Jew, Muslim, or Hindu that discards the practices of the religion is to render oneself as follower by name only. Similarly, those who advocate the removal of Crowley from Thelema, and in the same step his challenging beliefs, interpretations, and philosophy, would render Thelema meaningless. Like it or not, Crowley is the foundation of Thelema. To remove him from his position as prophet and first Thelemite is to simply render Thelema nonexistent.

### **What Does the Future Hold?**

The future is not a result of choices among alternative paths offered by the present, but a place that is created—created first in the mind and will, created next in activity. The future is not some place we are going to, but one we are creating.

— John Scharr

So where does all this leave the Thelemic community? We have the wholesale dissemination of our texts to everyone, but few engage with them; we have the push to render Thelema a safe and contained religion, one that can be accepted and tolerated by society, the same society that the writing of Thelema indicates Thelemites should reject or challenge, and we have the efforts of many to remove Thelema's prophet from his position, discarding him and his ideas as outdated or troublesome baggage. In essence, we have a Thelemic community that is very much in a state of disarray and in personal conflict. How do we solve such situations?

The first solution is to start looking at oneself and taking an honest look at one's morals, values, and asking, "why do you believe what you believe?" This step requires a significant amount of self-reflection and is very challenging. We need to follow Crowley's example and examine, challenge, and when appropriate, change our beliefs, morals, and values. We must

endeavor to find, understand, and do our True Will, each personally. No one can do this for us. Though Thelema has many groups, orders, and networks, it is ultimately about the individual. We all, as individuals, must return back to the work of Thelema. We must double or triple our efforts to engage in the materials left to us by the earlier generations of Thelemites. We also must recognize that not everyone will be able to do this, and that in fact, some are simply incapable of engaging in the theory or praxis of Thelema. We must stop thinking that everyone is equal, in reality or essence, and start seeing people and reality for what they are. We must all stop substituting the acquisition of Thelemic texts, in digital or book form, as a replacement for reading and practicing the texts. It is better to read one liber and actually do it than to have them all stored on a computer hard drive or website but ignored.

Similarly, we must stop pushing to have Thelema acceptable to and sanctioned by normative society. The rest of the world rejects Thelemic morals and values. It will not understand that “Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law” does not mean do what you want. We should stop trying to convince others of this and instead, invest the time, energy, action, and money in the Thelemic community. We as individuals must engage in the work of Thelema, personally, as I wrote above, but also together when and how it makes sense. The efforts to make Thelema an acceptable and safe religion should be abandoned, and the totality of Thelema, even its most transgressive aspects, should be embraced and struggled with by *all* Thelemites.

The Thelemic community is a nascent community, and like all nascent communities in the past, it must build itself up in contrast to, not with the support of, normative society. This means that the members must accept that there will be tension with those around it; that there will be extraordinary burdens and sacrifices needed of its members, and that to simply practice, there will be obstacles and struggles. Attempting to bypass these steps is to abandon the foundation upon which the future community is built. We should not be looking to the general public and the governments to support our efforts; instead we should build the community despite the general public and government. Looking for government sanction renders the Thelemic community subservient to the government instead of separate from it. As Crowley noted about democracies and popular election, those who appeal to democracy and are elected

within it are hardly the best or the brightest. To think that they will somehow see the superiority and benefits of Thelema and act to legitimize it in society is foolish at best.

We must also stop the idiotic push to jettison Crowley from Thelema. He is the foundation of and first authority on Thelema's philosophy and practice. To abandon these is to render Thelema meaningless. Yes, he can be challenging and he can be distasteful by today's standards. Nevertheless, engaging in the challenge he presents is an opportunity for growth and learning. This opportunity is squandered by discarding him in whole or in part.

Lastly, we need to keep all of our work within the context of the Great Work. We must again prioritize our personal work and see it in the context of the Greater Work of manifesting Thelema in the world around us. We must strive to manifest Thelema personally, socially, and if possible, governmentally. We must understand that when we act poorly, foolishly, or disgracefully in contradiction to our Will, we set an example that is harmful to the Great Work and thus harmful to ourselves. We should all accept the great responsibility of manifesting Thelema as part of our Will and work diligently to do it. When we engage in our personal work and achieve success from it, we demonstrate to ourselves and others the power and meaningfulness of Thelema and Thelemic philosophy. The Great Work is something that is bigger than our own selves and useful to understanding our position and gaining perspective in the great scheme of being. Liber Librae eloquently illustrates this:

Remember that this earth is but an atom in the universe, and that thou thyself art but an atom thereon ... Nevertheless have the greatest self-respect, and to that end sin not against thyself. The sin which is unpardonable is knowingly and willfully to reject truth, to fear knowledge lest that knowledge pander not to thy prejudices.

Thus we must be attentive to ourselves but also to our place in the universe. Thelema accords us great freedom but also great responsibility. For too long our community has stressed the former but neglected the latter. We must engage that responsibility and see personally to the Great Work.



The future of the Thelemic community is not written in stone, it is something that we must build together as a group and, more importantly, in our own practice. We need to stop judging Thelema based on the morals and value of normative society and instead, start judging normative society by the morals and values of Thelema. We must be engaged in our own efforts to find our Will and manifest it while keeping in mind that our own efforts contribute to the greater manifestation of Thelema, the Great Work. Our road ahead is uncertain but without a doubt, it is difficult. We will all face great challenges and will have to offer many sacrifices. But we should not bemoan this fate. Instead we should embrace it and see it as the necessary trials and tribulations that will make our journey so much more meaningful. Again as it is written in Liber Librae, "Rejoice therefore, O Initiate, for the greater thy trial the greater thy Triumph." We also need to recognize that Crowley is the guide to our journey and that Thelema is not a religion to be accepted by the masses; it is a path to be embraced by the few. Putting these pieces in perspective with the Great Work will help us all better engage in our own personal work. Ultimately this is what Thelema is about. We must all engage in *the work*; we must all find and manifest our True Wills; we must all work to establish the Law of Thelema. To do otherwise is to waste our time, squander our opportunities, and abdicate our responsibility in manifesting the Great Work.

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- *Steven J. Ash* – “Rabelais, Dashwood, and Proto-Thelema”
  - Stephen J. Ash, is a Nu Thelemite, writer and philosopher living in London. He is the author of the *Black Knights, A Secret History of the Knights Templar and the English Covenant*, a founder member of the Dionysian Underground, a UK Magister Templi for the Eldritch Esoteric Order of Dagon, and operates a lodge of Britain's smallest Thelemic Order, the *Ordo Illumines Templi*. He is currently working on a sequel to the *Black Knights* and *Liber Eolas*, an advanced guide to magick.
- *John L. Crow* – “The Missing Calls to the Great Work”
  - John L. Crow has been a practicing Thelemite for over 16 years. He hosts the Thelemic online radio show (podcast) *Thelema Coast to Coast*, owns the occult publishing company *Luxor Press*, and is currently working on a graduate degree in the study of Western Mysticism. He can be reached directly at [jcrow@thelema.nu](mailto:jcrow@thelema.nu).
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