

A Short Article on The Subject of Thelemic Gnosticism

We are advised that we can only know people by the work they produce. “By their fruits ye shall know them.” If this is true, then Thelemic philosophy has failed to produce any respected characters our society. The revival that occurred in the late 60’s and early 70’s did not produce any scientists, philosophers, politicians, or visionaries worth noting. In fact, outsiders best know Thelema by its bitter fighting (often justified by shouting: “as brothers fight ye” at the top of ones lungs), factionalism and mean spirited exchange of supposed lofty ideals between its own adherents. I am told it is because “Thelema is still young.” It is hard to imagine how anyone who is interested in spiritual fulfillment could be drawn to the system in the first place. And I often wonder if those of us that come to Thelema come to it for that.

It makes one wonder.

Why Gnosticism, as it is used in many Thelemic circles, isn't:

Gnosticism provides the answer for some of the human existential crisis: that of our origins and ultimate destination, why there is suffering in the world, how to put an end to that suffering. It does not rely on belief or materialism, which are the classic flaws in Stoicism and Cynicism. The Thelema that is interpreted by the vocal majority offers no real solution, but instead ridicules the question via statements like “Compassion is the vice of Kings” or the command to trample down the wretched and the weak, etc... In fact, one is led away from asking those questions in the first place. Many of them go as far as to claim that one cannot be a Thelemite and compassionate at the same time because compassion is an “old aeon” ideal/moral which is embraced by Buddhists and Christian. It seems the vocal Thelemic majority is unable to reconcile how they interpret what they read in Liber AL with the Saints Crowley chose for Liber XV.

Lao-Tze was a Taoist.

Siddhartha was a Buddhist.

Mohammed was a Muslim.

To Mega Therion didn't know what the hell he was until 1904, denied it for years, and died a Taoist.

Almost none of the Saints were Thelemites or Gnostics in the traditional sense. And yet they are called to manifestation during the performance of Liber XV. If the values they represented in their lives were not important, then why would Crowley have written them into the ritual? In very few places does one encounter Thelemites speaking of the spirit, much less the human struggle. Usually the entire philosophy is reduced to simple Darwinian socialism (law of the strong), and when pushed people confuse Gnosticism with what a person can grasp through ones superior intellect.

Next to “brother,” the terms “gnosticism” and “gnosis” are the most abused and least understood words in Thelemic vocabulary. Gnosis is usually reduced to what one can understand or logic out. These things may be useful (there is no arguing that), but this is not Gnosis. Gnosis is a knowing

which transcends all the intellectual gymnastics. It is a knowing which the knower does not usually feel compelled to discuss on the various so-called “Thelemic Elists” on the internet... much less argue over something so profound.

I think of Gnosticism as the knowing of ones spiritual truth. Sounds a lot like Knowledge and Conversation to me. The knowing may be the simple part. The understanding might be another matter, however. We should strive as best as we can to understand... but in order to do that we might have to step beyond what we'd like to think of as Truth.

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