

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING LIBER AL VEL LEGIS: THE BOOK OF THE LAW

It is little wonder that there have been so few comments on this work.

I: 36. *“My scribe Ankh-af-na-khonsu, the priest of the princes, shall not in one letter change this book; but lest there be folly, he shall comment thereupon by the wisdom of Ra-Hoor-Khuit.”*

This seems pretty clear, and yet Crowley changed and modified the text in various places. The original is heavily marked, complete sentences have been crossed out and new ones written over the old. Seems Crowley couldn't follow his own advice. This is one of his trademarks; it will appear, for later on he is told:

“4 6 3 8 A B K 2 4 A L G M O R 3 Y X 24 89 R P S T O V A L. What meaneth this, o prophet? Thou knowest not; nor shalt thou know ever. There cometh one to follow thee: he shall expound it...” II: 76.

And yet anyone who has ever seen the original manuscript will clearly see that he did in fact try to solve the mystery. The page is marked up with a grid and a series of letters. Like most inquisitive creatures, he did try, but died without solving it as predicted in the text.

III. 63. *“The fool readeth this Book of the Law, and its comment; & he understandeth it not.”*

Who is the fool? Is it Crowley? Or is it every reader? It is important to determine who is being addressed in the text. Various references in the book are obviously commands made to Crowley himself, while others appear to have a more universal message.

40. *“But the work of the comment? That is easy; and Hadit burning in thy heart shall make swift and secure thy pen.”*

“Hadit” makes it easy. So how is Hadit being used? As a reference to ones Holy Guardian Angel? Is Aiwass speaking exclusively to Crowley, or to the reader?

And then we have the comment itself, which states:

“The study of this Book is forbidden. It is wise to destroy this copy after the first reading. Whosoever disregards this does so at his own risk and peril. These are most dire. Those who discuss the contents of this Book are to be shunned by all, as centres of pestilence. All questions of the Law are to be decided only by appeal to my writings, each for himself.”

So the bigger question is not whether or not individuals should study and interpret this text, each according to their own level understanding. It is whether or not do that there can, or should be any agreed upon dogma based on the discoveries of such study. My hunch is that sectarianism is unavoidable, and that the day will come when those people who have everything to loose from an interpretation of Thelema that is honorable and proud will engage in battles of sorts with those of

us that embrace those concepts. We all want a Thelemic world, and Thelema can manifest in one of two ways: think about it.

With all of the warnings in the Book, it is no wonder it has never been popular to engage in discussion. In fact, I have seen various interpretations of some of the more difficult passages, and in most cases these well meaning folks have been the subjects of much ridicule. Many so-called Thelemites love to throw stones, and some take refuge in the knowledge that the Master is dead and unable to interpret the Law they abuse. They hate it when some one reminds them that there are other interpretations which indicate that doing one's Will is a tremendous responsibility. They perpetuated the myth that only Crowley is entitled to speak of Thelema. This has given way to what I call the "Gerber Syndrome."

Abu Musa Jabir Ibn Hayyan, or Gerber, as the Europeans knew him, was an Arabian Alchemist who lived in what is now considered Iraq around 721 A.D. He made many advances in science, and was so well respected by his contemporaries that no one would publish any work which was not his. If Gerber didn't say it, it wasn't worth publishing: regardless of its importance. As a result, people abandoned the work, and at least on one occasion, some of the most important alchemical works were discovered and written by others under his name. One such writer became known as "The False Geber." His real name is unknown. He wrote under the Pseudonym "Geber," to gain respect for his own experiments and to assure the publication of his works at a time when book publishing was a difficult and expensive task that only the wealthy and well known could afford. He is believed to have been a Spaniard, and ironically, the originator of the most significant discovery of the Middle Ages: sulfuric acid. We may one day see many "newly found manuscripts" by Crowley yet. And like Hubbard, he may be one of those rare individuals who publishes more when dead than when alive.

When it comes to Liber AL, however, I don't think it should be interpreted for the masses. In fact, the comment reveals how we should approach the study of this book: "... each for himself." And this is the premise on which this entire recommended practice is based. I can testify to the benefit that I have personally received from studying this book and comparing it against other "received" texts.

On the one hand, it seems to me our duty to unravel the mystery, at least for ourselves individually, since that is the only way that we can determine whether or not we are acting in accordance with the Law. On the other hand, Liber AL may be something of a time capsule, which will not surrender its contents until a predetermined time has arrived.

It is important to consider all of the facts about the book if we expect it to surrender its Truth, or a reflection of that Truth which belongs to each of us individually. I have often showed my displeasure with the meager myth building that takes place by the adherents of Thelema. We can in fact attribute at least a part of this deficit to the warning against interpretation. The other part, I suspect, has to do with a lack of interest. The one place where we can benefit from this vacuum of dogma is in the history of the Book itself. Some myths have started to become accepted within the Thelemic community, and much of this was instigated by Crowley himself. But let's attempt to use the method of science, at least at first, and stick to the historical facts that we know about this Book.

1. The book was “dictated” on April 8, 9, and 10, 1904.
2. The text was a result of some magical work initiated by Crowley and his wife Rose Kelly.
3. Crowley despised the work when first received. He was repulsed by it, and would put it away forgetting it for many years.
4. The text has been heavily edited.
5. Some of the content in the printed text does not match what is written in the original writings. (Looks more like a squashed bug than a Tzaddy).

Like all holy books, Liber AL is littered with contradiction. In the Old Testament we are told that God is loving, and then we see him playing fun and games with the Devil at the expense of his devout worshiper Lot. Similarly, in one part of Liber AL we are told “Love is the Law,” while in another we are to “stamp down the wretched & the weak.” On one place “the Law is for all” while in another, we are the “chosen ones.” It is amazing how many Thelemites are able to accept such contradictions without any further thought into the matter. This lack of interest may be the root of all of the problems inherent in most Thelemic social experiments. The Law is either Love, or we trample down the weak. How we reconcile those two seemingly opposing ideas is important. Furthermore, I am sure that you have seen many for whom “Do what thou Wilt” means “Do what you want,” which does nothing but to devalue the importance of the Book to others less familiar with it.

A good place to begin is in the study of the Egyptian deities mentioned in the text. For example, “Hadit” appears to be a mistransliteration of the name Hor Behedety (Horus of Behdet). He represents the omnipresence of Horus The Elder (Haroeris), who was adored in lower Egypt and is portrayed as a soldier deity and enemy of Set, shown in the familiar winged solar disk, usually seen topping important scenes in Egyptian art.

If this is correct, then what is the relationship between this Hor Behedety, Nuit and Ra-Hoor-Khuit? And most important, if Hadit is what defines the soul, or the spark of light inside all men and women, then perhaps by studying the relationship between Horus of Behdet and Set will help us to discover something unknown about ourselves? There are many ways that one could go. But the main thing that this illustrates is that no matter how “received” one believes this book to be, it is clear that it was filtered through Crowley’s symbol set, even the incorrect ones, and this brings me to the next problem with Thelema: Crowleyism. I am sure that you know at least one Thelemite that thinks it is okay to be addicted to drugs, or to cheat on his wife, or to spend other people’s money just because Crowley did: do not confuse the Message with the Messenger.

So as you divide those paragraphs to make room for your thought on each one, remember that you are free to use meditation, contemplation, prayer and/or ritual to get your answers. I have often employed the use of spirits to have certain passages explained. And here is the best advice that I can give you in this quest: study other religions. If you do this, as you study Liber AL, you will find some things in common which cannot be ignored.

In its short 100 years, the book has been interpreted and used (abused?) by individuals in a manner inconsistent with its apparent message, and have applied its message to control others, rather than liberate. But there is a price to be paid for such a trespass: *“There is great danger in me; for who doth not understand these runes shall make a great miss. He shall fall down into the pit called Because, and there he shall perish with the dogs of Reason.”* II: 27

All interpretative work must begin with a predetermined set of presumptions: mine has always been that the Liber Al holds an lucid message, and that Law of Thelema contains within it the key to the survival of the human species; a noble warrior code; and a benevolent religion which is applicable to all who are willing to accept responsibility for their existence.

Gerald del Campo
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Portland, OR

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