

**THE LAW OF
THELEMA**

BY MAX DEMIAN

PARTS 1, 2 & 3

The Law of Thelema by Max Demian

Part 1

Quotation, Overview, History and Schools

Editor's Note: Aleister Crowley (1875 – 1947) contributed greatly to the "*magical revival*," as it has been called, during the first half of the 20th Century. His written works have had a profound effect on the practice of Magick. In addition, Satanism, as currently practiced by the *Church of Satan* and similar groups, has relied heavily on a sensationalistic interpretation of his writings. There are even marks of his influence in the writings of Gerald Gardner, the individual most responsible for the recreation of Wicca circa 1950. Unfortunately, many conservative Christian authors have associated Crowley's beliefs and practices with Mediaeval Satanism. The latter was a form of Satan worship that did not exist in reality. The Christian church invented it in order to provide the theological and legal justification for the Witch burnings of Western Europe. Because of this association, most of the writings by Fundamentalist and other Evangelical Christians about the Law of Thelema and Crowley are hopelessly inaccurate, and may be safely ignored. The following accurate material was provided by Alexander Duncan, B.A. (Hon.) (Dept. of English, York University, North York, Ontario, Canada) Permission to copy, reproduce, or distribute this material is freely granted provided there is no charge and the name and e-mail address of the author is included in every copy. Alexander Duncan can be contacted by email at sethian@rogers.com.

Quotation:

"In the beginning doth the Magus speak Truth, and send forth Illusion and Falsehood to enslave the soul. Yet therein is the Mystery of Redemption." (Aleister Crowley, Liber B vel Magi, sub figura I, v. 1)

Summary Overview:

The Law of Thelema was revealed to the world by a praeterhuman Intelligence calling himself Aiwass in Cairo, Egypt in March and April, 1904 e.v. Aiwass appeared first to Rose Edith Kelly *nee* Crowley, in an altered state of consciousness (ASC), and subsequently to the British poet and magical adept, Aleister Crowley (born in Leamington, England on October 12, 1875 e.v.). Aiwass proceeded to demonstrate his objective existence independently of the psyches of both Crowley and Rose, by leading them to the stele of Ankh-af-na-khonsu, a Theban Egyptian priest of the 8th century B.C.E., in the Boulak Museum, where they had never been. He then dictated a sacred text to Crowley called the *Book of the Law*. For five years thereafter Crowley resisted the Law of Thelema and the mission of Thelemic prophet laid

upon him by Aiwass, regarding the Cairo Working, as it is called, as an "astral vision" (*i.e.*, a purely imaginative – but not "imaginary" – experience). However, Crowley's subsequent attainment of the grade of Master of the Temple in the Supreme College of the Great White Brotherhood resulted in his acceptance of the Law of Thelema and of his own prophetic role as described in the *Book of the Law*. Crowley proclaimed himself as the prophet of a new eon for humanity for the first time in his long mystical poem, *Aha!* (1909), which has been compared in beauty and profundity to the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Thereafter he signed his correspondence and formal instructions with the two main slogans of the *Book of the Law*, "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law" and "Love is the law, love under will."

Crowley founded a magical society, the A. .A. ., took over the leadership of another, the O.T.O., and wrote a series of formal instructions promulgating the Law of Thelema, as well as teaching Scientific Illuminism and Magick. Many of these formal instructions were published during his lifetime in his *Equinox* periodical and elsewhere. Crowley believes that the Law of Thelema resolves all spiritual quandaries, harmonises science and religion, and supersedes all historical dispensations, establishing a new cultural epoch for humanity, which he calls the New Aeon of Horus, the Crowned and Conquering Child. According to Crowley, the New Aeon will endure for at least several hundred years, possibly for as long as two thousand years.

During his lifetime Crowley succeeded in attracting a small following, mainly in Germany and America, of no more than one or perhaps two hundred souls (counting all those who adhered to Crowley at any time, for any length of time; a much smaller number remained faithful to Crowley at the end of his life). Crowley lost many followers due to his troublesome personality and libertine lifestyle, especially after he came to the attention of the British tabloid press following the First World War. After his death, Crowley left behind him a disorganised and demoralised O.T.O. movement which has since split up into several competing factions, notably the American Caliphate founded by McMurtry, the Swiss O.T.O. founded by Metzger, the English O.T.O. under the leadership of Kenneth Grant, and a Brazilian O.T.O. founded by Marcelo Ramos Motta. A very few members of the original A. .A. . also carried on the work in a very limited way, but the A. .A. . organisation *qua* organisation did not survive Crowley, at least not openly.

A larger number of revivals of the O.T.O., A. .A. ., and other self-professed Thelemic groups, without any clear historical link to Crowley, with various, sometimes divergent points of view, have also come into existence since a revival of interest in Crowley's work associated with the counterculture revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. Today the Law of Thelema has attracted several thousand adherents worldwide, as well as a larger following of curiosity seekers, including several prominent rock stars. The Law of Thelema has a strong presence on the Internet, and many of Crowley's writings are available online. Crowley first editions are in demand, and fetch high prices in the rare book market.

Introduction – History:

The Law of Thelema, also called Scientific Illuminism and Magick (spelled with a terminal 'k' to distinguish the authentic science of the Magi from sleight of hand), originated in the Cairo Working. At the time, Crowley interpreted the Cairo Working as an astral vision. At this time, Crowley was a Minor Adept of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. The Golden Dawn was the most distinguished occult society of recent times, which included such luminaries as the poet William Butler Yeats and the Buddhist *bhikkhu*, Allan Bennett (Bhikkhu Ananda Metteyya). Thus, at the time of the Cairo Working Crowley was an advanced experimental occultist in his own right, although Rose, who was pregnant with their only child, had no experience as a clairvoyant. Crowley was also a published and fairly well-known minor poet of controversial verse, yogi, world-class traveller and mountaineer, pornographer, drug taker, and wealthy libertine.

Crowley, used the freedom that the small brewing fortune he inherited from his father provided him to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ according to the fundamentalist teachings of the Plymouth Brethren sect. Crowley reacted against this fundamentalist and evangelical upbringing but his interest in religion, which, despite his promiscuous lifestyle, was serious and sincere, persisted. Because of his wife's and

his contact with Aiwass, Aiwass dictated to Crowley a sixty-five-page document, called the *Book of the Law*, in length about equal to Lao-tse's *Tao-te ching*. Crowley came to regard the *Book of the Law* as having nothing whatever to do with himself, despite the similarity of style and sentiment to Crowley's previously published writings (despite these similarities, the *Book of the Law* is also very different, being far more disorganised and ecstatic than anything Crowley produced before or after, and referring to events in Crowley's future that subsequently occurred). During this dictation Crowley "saw" Aiwass, who appeared as an Assyrian or Persian aristocrat with veiled eyes. Crowley also stated that Aiwass' English was devoid of any accent.

The *Book of the Law* is written in a flamboyant style, punctuated by innumerable exclamation points as well as powerful passages of real sublimity, profundity, and beauty, addressing a host of real spiritual problems, and prophesying various events, most notably the advent of the Second World War in the 1940s, which was fulfilled thirty-five years later. The *Book of the Law* is both a radical postmodernist critique and an endorsement of religion, which claims to go beyond all previous historical dispensations and reveal to humanity nothing less than the basis of a new spiritual epoch, the New Aeon of Horus, the Crowned and Conquering Child.

In Egyptian mythology, Horus is the son of Isis, the Great Mother goddess, and Osiris, the Dying God. After Osiris is slain by his murderous brother Set, Horus rises up against Set and assumes the throne and place of his father, Osiris. In the Thelemic exegesis, Horus represents the inauguration of a new spiritual way, which will be preceded by a transitional period of unprecedented disaster and suffering (Set), in the very beginning of which we are now (Crowley believed that this period would last several centuries, and would ultimate in the destruction of Judaeo-Christian civilization, which he identified with Osiris, the Dying God).

In fact, the *Book of the Law* is heavily indebted to various literary precedents, including the Judaeo-Christian apocalyptic writings, Gnosticism, Zoharic Cabala, magic, the Enochian writings of Dee and Kelly, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Hindu and Buddhist Tantra, Taoism, and even Vodou, and, more recently, the writings of Francois Rabelais, Max Stirner, Friedrich Nietzsche, and others. The word "Thelema" is derived from the Greek θελημα, meaning "will," and is believed to conceal various symbolic allusions in the letters and their numerical values (like Hebrew and Arabic, Greek letters are also numbers). Will is pre-eminently, however, not free, but true, thus raising the Law of Thelema above simple libertarianism.

Schools:

Thelemites are divided into two main spiritual schools or orders, the A.·A.·. (Astrum Argentium, or Silver Star), and the O.T.O. (Ordo Templi Orientis, or Order of the Temple of the Orient) (there are at least two more Thelemic organisations authorised by Crowley, *viz.*, the L.I.L. and the G.B.G., and a few that appeared posthumously, but the former are the main ones).

The A.·A.·. is a temporal manifestation of the Great White Brotherhood, and not necessarily the only one, one of the three fundamental spiritual schools of humanity, the others being the Black School, associated mainly with Buddhism and Gnosticism, and the Yellow School, associated mainly with Taoism. In addition to the White, Black, and Yellow Schools, there is a fourth group called the Black Brotherhood, not to be confused with the Black School, whose adherents consist of high-ranking adepts who, through fear and selfishness, failed to transcend the limitations of the human personality and hence "fall back into" or "remain in" the abyss, where they morally disintegrate. The Black Brothers are at odds with all true spiritual schools, and seek to dominate the human race, subjecting them for their own purposes. They are closely associated with the exoteric systems based on priest craft and rules, which almost completely reject the pursuit of personal spiritual experience in favour of a rule-based ethic of obedience, conformity, and vicarious salvation. The Black Brothers interfere with human history in pursuit of their own agenda, precipitating wars, chaos, and social strife, promoting authoritarianism, materialism, rationalism, industrialism, urbanism, scientism, and collectivism, and repressing all

authentic spirituality in the pursuit of global domination and the subjection of the human race. The White School is also involved in human history, much more so than either the Black or Yellow Schools, which avoid worldly involvements. Many of the greatest historical spiritual teachers, as well as many artistic and scientific geniuses, have actually been Secret Chiefs of the Great White Brotherhood, who have entered into incarnation in order to help guide humanity towards the realisation of the ultimate goal, the attainment of universal enlightenment. Aleister Crowley himself claimed to be a Secret Chief of the White School, and not a Black Brother, although in a moment of pique he described himself as a "black magician."

The A.∴A.∴ is divided into ten grades, plus four intermediate grades (shown below in square brackets), divided into three orders, which altogether comprise a complete system of spiritual attainment, as follows (from highest to lowest):

The Order of the Silver Star (The S.S.)

Ipsissimus 10° = 1□

Magus 9° = 2□

Magister Templi 8° = 3□

[The Link - Babe of the Abyss]

The Order of the Rose-Cross (The R.C.)

Adeptus Exemptus 7° = 4□

Adeptus Major 6° = 5□

Adeptus Minor ("without" and "within") 5° = 6□

[The Link - Dominus Liminis]

The Order of the Golden Dawn (The G.D.)

Philosophus 4° = 7□

Practicus 3° = 8□

Zelator 2° = 9□

Neophyte 1° = 10□

[The Link - Probationer 0° = 0□]

[Student]

The ten main grades correspond to the Cabalistic Tree of Life, a diagram that represents the correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm, reality and consciousness.

As in the A.∴A.∴, the O.T.O. is divided into three sets of three grades, the three main grades being (from lowest to highest) the Man of Earth, Lover, and Hermit, based on the grades described in the *Book of the Law*. However, unlike the A.∴A.∴, these grades are ritually conferred in the style of Freemasonry and correspond to increasing degrees of intelligence not tied to actual magical or mystical tasks or attainments.

The Law of Thelema by Max Demian - Part 2

Practices and Sacred Texts

Practices:

The Law of Thelema is a system of experiential spirituality. This means that Thelemites engage in various spiritual practices in order to realise the truth of the spiritual life in and for themselves. The ultimate goal of the spiritual life is to identify with and actually become a spiritual being, free of the constraints and constrictions of conditioned existence. The state of being a spiritual being is an ecstatic, powerful state of union with everything (Thelemic "compassion"). The Law of Thelema also teaches that all religions are variations of one fundamental underlying spiritual truth, which become fragmented into different religious traditions as a result of variations of place, time, and degree of realisation and mutual isolation and hostility as, with the passage of time, religions become increasingly diversified and exclusive. Religions thus harden into increasingly exoteric systems, based on devotion to priest craft and rules, in which individual spiritual experience is increasingly repressed in favour of an official orthodoxy, ultimately the prerogative of the Black Brothers, which becomes increasingly metaphorical and vicarious. Thus, the Law of Thelema rejects "religiosity" altogether, and actively seeks to destroy it, since the religious attitude in this sense is harmful to the spiritual life and impedes, blocks, restricts, and interferes with real spiritual progress. Consequently, Thelemites incorporate practices from all religious traditions without distinction, in order to reconstitute the primordial tradition that underlies them all. Crowley compared this process to recombining the colours of the spectrum into white light. This reconstruction is the special task of Scientific Illuminism, which is one aspect of the Law of Thelema, the operative branch of which is Magick.

Spiritual practices are pursued in the context of various systems of attainment, which are appropriate to different types of aspirant, differentiated by race, culture, personal psychology, and degree of realization or "grade." Consequently, not all practices are suitable for all aspirants at all stages of development. Recognising which practices are suitable to which aspirants at different stages of their spiritual development is the special skill of a spiritual master.

In the system of the A.∴A.∴, the grades correspond to specific tasks and corresponding attainments, arranged in an hierarchy. Many of these tasks and attainments have become the special study of parapsychology and transpersonal psychology in recent years. In the system described by Crowley, these are the main attainments of the Outer Order (collated from the three main documents describing these attainments, *Liber XIII*, *Liber CLXV*, and "One Star in Sight"):

- ∴ The Neophyte formulates the Body of Light (popularly known today as "astral projection").
- ∴ The Zelator masters *Hatha* Yoga, specifically, *Asana* and *Pranayama*, resulting in the experience of "psychic opening."
- ∴ The Practicus achieves *Kundalini* Awakening, so-called (see Lee Sanella, *The Kundalini Experience*).
- ∴ The Philosophus masters Rising on the Planes (popularly known as the "out of body experience" or "OBE").
- ∴ The Dominus Liminis acquires the power of mental Concentration (*ekagrata*).

“ The Adeptus Minor attains the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel, so-called, corresponding to the Hindu trance-state known as *Atmadarshana*, but with important differences as well.

The work of an aspirant to the A.∴A.∴ is so subtle and advanced that it is beyond the ability of most people, although a few aspirants attained high grades in the A.∴A.∴ during Crowley's lifetime. The tests, some of which are published, which Crowley applied to aspirants in order to qualify were very stringent, and Crowley did not grant grades casually. For example, one has to "astral travel" through an abstract symbol that one has never seen before and describe a vision the character of which is consistent with the symbol's meaning in order to pass the test for "rising on the planes."

Crowley was promoted to the leadership of the English branch of the O.T.O. in 1912 e.v., and he used this order ever afterwards as a vehicle for popularising the Law of Thelema, as well as the practice of the Supreme Secret of the O.T.O. During his lifetime, this secret was zealously guarded, although it is not always discreetly hinted at in the esoteric literature of the day and by Crowley himself. However, since Crowley's death the cat has long been out of the bag. The Supreme Secret of the O.T.O. is nothing other than the use of sex in the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment, equivalent in fact to a Western Tantra. Sex is, of course, the single most powerful psycho-physiological energy in man, so pressing it into the service of spiritual development is a natural evolution, once one overcomes the restriction of shame. From the Tantric point of view, sexual abstinence is really a form of "sex magick," so-called, since sexual abstinence modifies the sexual instinct. Exotericism sees in sexual abstinence the rejection of sexuality *per se* as contrary to the spiritual life, but the Tantric view is more subtle and profound. Rather than rejecting sex, the Tantric practitioner seeks to sublimate the sexual energy, inhibiting its outflow so that the energy accumulates in the brain, its original source, where it induces the state of illumination (the physiological precursor of enlightenment). Once one realises that this is how sexual abstinence actually works, the possibility of a contrary methodology presents itself to the discerning consciousness. Instead of repressing the sexual energy, one can intensify it to the point where the sheer excess of sexual arousal causes the energy to ascend the spine and, once again, "illuminate" the brain. In the latter case, however, the body is also "illuminated." Thus, the formulae of sexual abstinence and orgiastic excess are realised to be essentially identical, variations of the same underlying energy-economy.

The members of the O.T.O. are encouraged to engage in practical experimentation, and many members pursue various tasks connected with the Great Work. This is especially true of the followers of Kenneth Grant, who has created a system of Thelemic attainment strongly suggestive of Vodou, the primal religion of Africa and humanity, since, according to current archaeological research, humanity originated in Africa.

In addition to the major tasks of the Great Work described above, committed Thelemites are enjoined to engage in a number of regular daily practices that have the effect of disciplining and directing the mind and regulating one's life according to objective natural cycles. These include (based on the Official Publications of the A.∴A.∴):

“ A short reminder of one's dedication to the Great Work, spoken before meals.

“ Rituals of purification and empowerment, performed at the beginning and end of each day (see *Liber V, XXV, and XXXVI*).

“ A daily eucharist (see *Liber XLIV*).

“ The adoration of the Sun, followed by one hour of meditation, repeated four times daily; thus, the truly committed Thelemite, like the followers of the Sant Mat, meditates four hours per day (see *Liber CC*).

“ Adoration of one's Star, performed as it rises above the horizon (see *Liber CMLXIII*)

In addition to the foregoing, members of the O.T.O. observe the Gnostic Mass (see *Liber XV*), in which the Supreme Secret is rehearsed and an eucharist consumed by the celebrants, and various visualisation

practices. *The Book of the Law* also refers to the spiritual use of drugs, which informed the spiritual practice of many significant spiritual teachers before their criminalisation, including Georges Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (according to Timothy Leary), Julius Evola, Aldous Huxley and others. Drugs are also an integral part of many different South American aboriginal shamanic cultures. The traditional cultures of the Quiches, Incans, Mayans, and Aztecs bear many striking affinities to the Law of Thelema, more so even than Africa.

Sacred Texts:

The Book of the Law was written when Aleister Crowley was a Minor Adept of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Subsequently he underwent an experience, called the "ordeal of the abyss," similar to the "dark night of the soul" of the mystics, in which he completely annihilated his human personality and achieved an extreme state of "psychic opening." He became completely open and receptive to the influx of the divine consciousness, an intense, intuitive, transrational, and ecstatic state of self-perfection and realisation of reality in its fundamental and ultimate aspects. In this state, intermittently over a period of five years, Crowley wrote a series of books, ranging in length from several hundred to several thousand words, concerning which he declares that they are beyond rational criticism, *i.e.*, absolutely and indubitably true. These books were written "automatically," *i.e.*, without rational reflection, in a state of trance. These works constitute the revelatory foundation of the Law of Thelema, and are referred to, including the *Book of the Law*, as the Holy Books of Thelema. In order of writing, they are:

Liber AL vel Legis (1904 e.v.)

Liber Liberi vel Lapidis Lazuli (1907 e.v.)

Liber Cordis Cincti Serpente (ibid)

Liber Stellae Rubeae (ibid)

Liber Porta Lucis (ibid)

Liber Tau vel Kabbalae Trium Literarum (ibid)

Liber Trigrammaton (ibid)

Liber Ararita (1907 or 1908 e.v.)

Liber Arcanorum τῶν Ἀτῶν του Ταῦτι, etc. (1907 and 1911 e.v.)

Liber B vel Magi (1911 e.v.)

Liber Tzaddi vel Hamus Hermeticus (1911 e.v.)

Liber Cheth vel Vallum Abiegni (1911 e.v.)

Liber A'ash vel Capricorni Pneumatici (1911 e.v.)

In addition to the foregoing, Crowley wrote (or, rather, dictated to his disciple and lover, the poet Victor Neuburg, in an ASC) *The Vision and the Voice*. *The Vision and the Voice* (properly, *Liber XXX Aerum vel Saeculi*) is a series of visions based on the Enochian magical workings of famed Elizabethan scholar John Dee and his skryer Edward Kelley, to which Crowley traces the beginning of the process culminating in the advent of the New Aeon in 1904 e.v. Crowley claimed to be Edward Kelley's reincarnation. All but the first two visions were received in the Sahara Desert in 1909 e.v., to which he ascribed a combined classification, *viz.*, A-B, Class 'A' being a "holy book" as discussed above, and Class 'B' an ordinary work of rational scholarship. A prefatory note to *The Treasure House of Images*, published in *The Equinox* in 1910 e.v., was assigned the 'A' classification. *Liber NU* and *Liber HAD* also contain instructions received directly from V.V.V.V.V., Crowley's motto as a Master of the Temple of the A.:A.:., which are presumably also Class 'A,' since V.V.V.V.V. corresponds to Crowley's *neschamah*, the soul in its static aspect.

Finally, in 1925 e.v., after a hiatus of more than a decade, Crowley penned the last and the shortest of the Holy Books of Thelema, a short preamble to the *Book of the Law* of only 77 words (plus 27 words of quotation from the *Book of the Law*), in which both the study and discussion of the *Book of the Law*

are specifically and absolutely prohibited. Most Thelemites today follow Crowley's lead in interpreting *The Comment* to mean that no one may publicly interpret the Law of Thelema, and that those who do so are to be shunned, despite the fact that the prohibition is only applied to the text of the *Book of the Law* itself, and not any other holy book. Consequently, little critical literature on the Law of Thelema (as distinct from biography) has appeared since Crowley's death in 1947 e.v., the only notable exception being the writings of Kenneth Grant (most importantly, *The Magical Revival*, *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God*, and *Hecate's Fountain*). However, Grant and his followers are shunned as heretics by many Thelemites, especially the followers of the American Caliphate, who accuse him of collaborating with John Symonds. Symonds, who many Thelemites believe exploited the "old man" for personal profit and gain by hypocritically manoeuvring himself into the position of Crowley's literary executor, is the author of several extremely hostile biographies of Aleister Crowley, as well as the co-editor with Kenneth Grant of a number of Crowley's writings. In his final Crowley biography, *King of the Shadow Realm*, Symonds claims that Crowley was actually psychotic (similar assertions are sometimes made about Carl Gustav Jung as well, and are clearly ideologically motivated).

The Holy Books of Thelema are remarkable by any standard, especially the two longest books, *Liber Cordis Cincti Serpente* and *Liber Liberi vel Lapidis Lazuli*, although personal hostility towards Crowley has caused them not to be as widely regarded as they should. Except the *Book of the Law*, the Holy Books of Thelema represent the high-water mark of Aleister Crowley's literary career for sustained philosophical sublimity, lyric and symbolic beauty, and structural elegance. Often obscure, they are nevertheless potent and profound testaments to the ecstatic integrity of Aleister Crowley's spiritual realisation. *Liber Cordis Cincti Serpente* is an account of the Attainment of the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel. Crowley also wrote a long and interesting commentary on this particular holy book. *Liber Liberi vel Lapidis Lazuli* describes the Ordeal of the Abyss from an universal perspective, whereas *The Vision and the Voice* documents Crowley's own attainment of this grade as well as offering innumerable insights into the Law of Thelema and the New Aeon in general. These two attainments, the Angel and the Abyss, constitute the two critical events in the life of the adept in Crowley's system, by which the aspirant becomes a Major Adept and a Master of the Temple respectively, and have considerable resonance with the perennial philosophy from which all authentic spiritual insights derive.

Another holy book, *Liber Cheth vel Vallum Abiegni*, describes the grade of Babe of the Abyss, and *Liber B vel Magi* describes the grade of Magus. *Liber Porta Lucis* and *Liber Tzaddi vel Hamus Hermeticus* describe Crowley's mission as Thelemic prophet and the task of initiation in the New Aeon. *Liber Tau vel Kabbalae Trium Literarum* explains the ordeals of the grades. *Liber Ararita* is a description of the spiritual path in extremely subtle and abstract language. *Liber Trigrammaton* describes the process of cosmic devolution. *Liber Arcanorum* interprets the Tarot trumps as an initiatory sequence. *Liber A'ash* and *Liber Stellae Rubeae* offer practical instruction in sexual Tantra. *Liber AL vel Legis*, the Latin rendering of the "Book of the Law," is of course Aiwass' proclamation of the advent of the New Aeon and its essential formulae (even although Crowley had not crossed the abyss when Aiwass revealed the *Book of the Law*, he classifies it as an holy book because it represents the dictation of Aiwass himself, who holds the rank of Ipsissimus, *i.e.*, the highest possible grade. Crowley himself only attained this grade seventeen years later, in 1921 e.v., at which time he and Aiwass became one being: thus, the relationship with the Holy Guardian Angel represents in the Thelemic view a kind of spiritual marriage).

Further Reading:

All of the following books are available in print (based on a search of Amazon.com.) They are written by Aleister Crowley unless otherwise noted:

777 and Other Qabalistic Writings

Aha!

Book Four

Commentaries on the Holy Books and Other Papers

De Arte Magica

Do What Thou Wilt(Lawrence Sutin)

Gems from the Equinox

Konx Om Pax

Liber Aleph vel CXI: The Book of Wisdom or Folly

Little Essays towards Truth

Magick

Magick in Theory and Practice

Magick without Tears

Portable Darkness: An Aleister Crowley Reader

The Book of Lies

The Book of the Law

The Book of Thoth

The Confessions of Aleister Crowley

The Equinox (Vol. I, Nos. 1 – 10)

The Equinox (Vol. III, No. 1)

The Equinox of the Gods

The Holy Books of Thelema

The Law Is for All

The Legend of Aleister Crowley (P.R. Stephenson)

The Revival of Magick and Other Essays

The Vision and the Voice

The Works of Aleister Crowley

The Law of Thelema by Max Demian

Part 3

Holy Days, Crowley's Reputation, Further Reading

Holy Days:

Part of the spiritual discipline of a Thelemite consists in the coordination of his personal, individual, terrestrial life with the great cosmic cycles that regulate the life of the earth and humanity. Accepting the Law of Thelema is itself such an act of coordination or alignment with the cosmic cycle known as the precession of the equinoxes. Crowley implies that the New Aeon of Horus, the Crowned and Conquering Child, which began with the self-revelation of Aiwass at the Vernal Equinox, 1904 e.v., corresponds to the advent of the astrological Age of Aquarius. By aligning one's personal life with the universal life mediated by these cycles one becomes a vehicle of the manifestation of the universal life, thus making oneself a channel of higher spiritual forces which in turn accelerate one's natural spiritual evolution and affect the karma of the planet.

Other cycles with which the Thelemite aligns his life are the diurnal motion of the Sun, specifically, sunrise, noon, sunset, and midnight; the diurnal rising of the star or constellation rising in his horoscope; the diurnal rising of the lunar orb; the monthly lunar cycle, especially the new and full moons; the monthly entry of the sun into the signs of the zodiac; the annual solar cycle of the equinoxes and solstices; and an annual calendar of holy days prescribed in the *Book of the Law*, as follows:

- .. The First Night of the Prophet and His Bride, corresponding to the consummation of the marriage of Aleister Crowley and Rose Edith Crowley on August 12, 1903 e.v.;
- .. The Writing of the Book of the Law, on April 8, 9, and 10, 1904 e.v.; and
- .. The Supreme Ritual, commemorating the successful Invocation of Horus on March 20, 1904 e.v.

All these times are celebrated by means of rituals, in which energy is generated, and feasts, in which energy is both discharged and absorbed. In addition, Aiwass' directs that the birth, puberty, and death of Thelemites and their children are to be celebrated. Many Thelemites also observe the "quarter-days" of the Wiccan religion, *viz.*, Samhain (November 1 eve), Imbolc (February 1 eve), Beltaine (May 1 eve), and Lammas (August 1 eve). Finally, the *Book of the Law* alludes to a mysterious feast of Tahuti, which has never been satisfactorily explained.

The Problem of Aleister Crowley's Reputation:

Many criticisms of the Law of Thelema are based on a moral critique of the personal character and conduct of Aleister Crowley. These accusations generally resolve themselves into seven basic assertions: that he was a pornographer, traitor, sexual deviant, sado-masochist, womaniser, drug addict/alcoholic, or even psychotic. Each of these accusations can be discussed in the context of the evidence. It is certainly true that Crowley published or wrote pornographic poems and stories, and was extremely interested in extreme sexual experimentation; that he wrote apparently pro-German propaganda in America during the First World War; that he engaged in sexual relationships with both

men and women; that he engaged in physically and psychologically abusive sexual relationships; that he professed contempt for women; that he drank heavily and became severely addicted to heroin in middle-age; and that he experienced ASCs, generally induced rather than spontaneous.

Strictly speaking, however, the truth or falsehood of any of these claims is unrelated to the truth or falsehood of the Law of Thelema, just as the truth or falsehood of the *Tractatus Philosophicus* is unrelated to the fact that Wittgenstein was an homosexual. As every first year philosophy student learns, truth or falsehood is not a moral quality or a function of the personal psyche, and it is quite possible for a morally mean or even psychologically dysfunctional person to experience and express insights that are both beautiful and true. The history of Western civilisation provides numerous examples, many of whom are studied in universities. Crowley himself regards the pursuit of spiritual realisation as a science, in which moral considerations are either secondary or entirely irrelevant. Crowley himself writes, "Since the ultimate truth of teleology is unknown, all codes of morality are arbitrary. Therefore, the student has no concern with ethics as such." Philosophically, then, Aleister Crowley is an amoralist.

Nevertheless, the Law of Thelema does imply an ethical teaching. The doctrine of the Black Brothers itself implies a kind of moral judgement. The essential ethical teaching of the Law of Thelema is that each and every individual has an absolute and inalienable right to pursue his own True Will without restriction by others, and that no one has the ethical or moral right or duty to compel another to pursue any other path, or even the capacity to criticize them. A Thelemite who knows his True Will can however guide others in accordance with universal principles, but the relationship should not be one of imitation. If Aleister Crowley violated his own or any other individual's True Will at any time, he simply violated his own law and paid the karmic price, but this does not invalidate the Law itself.

Great art and true philosophies are both created by scoundrels, but we balk when a scoundrel creates a true religion. The imitative tendency, which Crowley despised, is deep. Since imitating the moral example of a founder is not the ethical teaching of the Law of Thelema, every Thelemite is free to imitate Aleister Crowley's personal lifestyle or not as they choose, although Crowley himself advises against it, warning that those who try to do so will be possessed or obsessed by the "vision of the demon Crowley." (Crowley, who was an amateur artist, even drew a sketch of this particular demon). Unfortunately, as the history of the Law of Thelema shows with great clarity, Crowley's advice was accurate, and numerous heedless Thelemites have been devoured as a result.

The True Will represents the inertia of the universe, and is irresistible (if not, that simply proves that it is not the True Will). The criteria of real success, however, may not be immediately apparent or superficially obvious. Moreover, no one may restrict the True Will of another, unless another chooses, without coercion, to be so restricted.

Aleister Crowley should be understood as a natural phenomenon, without moral judgement. A prophet is himself merely a symptom of the zeitgeist. A storm is not "evil." Aleister Crowley was a storm, which may yet sink the ship of the Judaeo-Christian civilisation that he despised.

Further Reading:

All of the following books are available in print (based on a search of Amazon.com.) They are written by Aleister Crowley unless otherwise noted:

777 and Other Qabalistic Writings

Aha!

Book Four

Commentaries on the Holy Books and Other Papers

De Arte Magica

Do What Thou Wilt (Lawrence Sutin)

Gems from the Equinox
Konx Om Pax
Liber Aleph vel CXI: The Book of Wisdom or Folly
Little Essays towards Truth
Magick
Magick in Theory and Practice
Magick without Tears
Portable Darkness: An Aleister Crowley Reader
The Book of Lies
The Book of the Law
The Book of Thoth
The Confessions of Aleister Crowley
The Equinox (Vol. I, Nos. 1 – 10)
The Equinox (Vol. III, No. 1)
The Equinox of the Gods
The Holy Books of Thelema
The Law Is for All
The Legend of Aleister Crowley (P.R. Stephenson)
The Revival of Magick and Other Essays
The Vision and the Voice
The Works of Aleister Crowley