**A FEMINIST’S GUIDE TO THELEMA and Aleister Crowley.**

*By Ray Eales (a man but a feminist never-the-less)*

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

This article was suggested by several incidents and many conversations with omen of quality and promise who have either been put off by or completely disillusioned by the numerous remarks and the linguistic inadequacies of either a chauvinistic or a seemingly chauvinistic nature contained in the works of Aleister Crowley[[1]](#footnote-1). The reasons for these failures to communicate effectively are varied but all exhibit a binding thread. The common thread is simply mistaken identity. By this last remark I mean that the comments of the man Aleister Crowley, late Victorian, euro-chauvinist, product of the dead Aeon are confused with the inspired wirings and teachings of To Mega Therion, Magus of the Aeon Horus, Adept of the A.’.A.’.

The man Aleister Crowley was full of the prejudice and laden with the opinions that mirrored the themes of his time. (Rather like each of us is today. It has been my experience that anyone who thinks themselves entirely free from prejudice and all popular opinion is either a liar, a psychopath or a preacher/politician.). there is no great mystery in the reaction of women to cure phrases like “...women should be brought to the back door like milk.”; why should a woman think automatically ‘he must mean something else’? It is only the “popular” writings of the man Aleister Crowley that phrases like these creep in; The Holy Books are entirely free from anything remotely resembling their demotic allure[[2]](#footnote-2). I believe it is evident, however, that the man Crowley who scribbled the ‘cute’ little quip above and the Prophet who penned “Every man and every woman is a star.”[[3]](#footnote-3)are in an entirely different class. It has often been said, as though in apology, that such rough places in Crowley’s character enhance the effectiveness of the Initiatic Ordeals. It is well and good to style these discontinuities as simply masks and that these “masks and that these “masks” are part of the Initiatic Ordeals[[4]](#footnote-4). In fact, it is perfectly true; they are on a level entirely beyond the focus of this article, which is initial contact with Aleister Crowley and Thelema. And in any case, he needs to be studied. But in studying the man one must never forget to balance this with study of and meditation on the words the Master. These words are available for study in all of the Class A texts.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Before the reader gets the idea that Aleister Crowley was so one dimensional as to be totally unaware of flaw in this area let me say emphatically that Aleister Crowley was “under construction” his entire life in this respect.

Aleister Crowley never quit learning, refining and modifying his opinions and beliefs. He was and entirely vital human being in this respect as well as a brilliant thinker whose contribution to modern thought was quite considerable[[6]](#footnote-6). Reading texts like “Eight Lectures on Yoga”, “Magick Without Tears” and “The Book of Thoth”, all of which were written in Crowley”s latter years, will confirm his assertion. If the Student will take the time to compare and contrast a text like “Science and Buddhism”, with its razor-sharp intellectual acumen, and a not ‘nearly so flashy’, “Eight Lectures on Yoga”, this point will be amply illustrated. Crowley taught and Liber Al teaches that balance is all important. Female and Male dance around each other in every un-feathered biped. It is the; harnessing of this mighty engine, through a sublime operation of dynamic balance, which transforms an un-feathered biped into a human being. The term equality of the sexes if often heard in politically correct circles in these 1990’s e.v. eventually it to be hoped this deceptive ad illusive ‘equality’ will be realized fully in its true from balance.

A word of caution, to the would be Aspirant, is perhaps cogent at this point in the article. It is true and even evident that the system of moral, social and spiritual attainment set forth in Liber Al vel Legis speaks of women as entirely coequal with men. It is also true that the “organizations” which teach either attainment by ‘The Master Therion’s methods or social and moral reform in light of Liber Al vel Legis do not discriminate against women. It is not true, however, that every organization which styles itself “Thelemic” is in fact Thelemic. A valid test of any so-called “Thelemic” organization is its policy on the issue of discrimination. Not just its stated policy mind you but its policy as revealed by its deeds. It is unfortunate that the discovery of these kinds of flaws is by in large only possible from within an organization. (You can’t be a good thief with a dishonest face after all!) So, it is advisable for an Aspirant to keep their critical and analytical faculties fully engaged until they are satisfied as to the legitimacy or the illegitimacy of the claims of any organization to which they may affiliate. Not to say that an Aspirant should ever totally drop his or her critical faculty, by no means, however as one becomes satisfied as to the legitimacy of an organization one can begin to concentrate more fully on other aspects and simply make random reality checks a part of one’s normal activities.

A remark in the first paragraph of this article must be approached at this time. The term ‘linguistic inadequacies’ was used to disclaim the form of discrimination of which Aleister Crowley and, at present, Thelemic organizations are often accused. Terms like Brotherhood or Fraternity all suggest a ‘boys club’ to some. Terms like Society of Order are probably the best replacements in this regard so let us alter our terms that we may equilibrate the seeming inadequacies of our language. Let there be no doubt that the writings of Aleister Crowley and Thelema are relevant to both sexes and to all races.

Feminist thought continues to evolve, and current issues in feminist thought is still largely in a ‘backlash’ phase. Some signs of its emergence from this phase are evident and there are pockets of feminist thought which bypassed this route entirely. There is no great mystery as to why a portion of feminist thought took this path; it is the natural of the repression suffered by women over the past aeon. Atrophy in this stage is to be avoided at all costs, however, as stagnation in the “backlash” stage is tantamount developing a new form of ‘racism’. Some charge that there are signs of this “new racism’ developing. It should be noted that any “feminists” who ascribe to this “new racism” (i.e., the hatred of males simply because they are male) are being used by the remnants of the male dominant social order for their own purposes! How so? Simple, if these, let’s call them remnants of the old aeon, can associate feminism with racism they can easily nullify any feminist arguments in the eyes of the “rational person” by leveling a charge of racism against feminists in general. These remnants of the old aeon will use the political climate, the stultifying ‘politically correct’ dogma of the 1990’s e.v., to say “look, see here, these women have no valid argument, they are simply radicals trying to get something for nothing”, (or any one of an hundred other cliché’s that hide their true motives i.e. to keep women out of power and themselves in power). I feel that I should remind the reader that this article is meant for a quite specific audience, those women and men who find themselves drawn to a Path of Spiritual discovery and who have chosen Thelema as that Path. The others? Well…what can I say…they will do as they see fit with their agenda(s) however unecological it may be. Females who find themselves ‘hating’ males or males who find themselves ‘threatened ‘by women should ask themselves, if they intend to Initiate themselves that is, must I not balance my feelings of anger and fear with the knowledge that in order to change society it is first incumbent that I change myself? Anger or fear, thus sublimated, is harnessed into the purpose of the Aspirant in order that they may Attain. This, for many female aspirants may well be the first lesson in equilibrating the opposites with which they are confronted. This is not to say that females (or males for that matter!) should pander to the pathological or the moral degenerate who would try to denigrate women or other races. These should be swiftly dispatched! Listen to the words of Liber Al “Lurk! Withdraw! Upon them! this is the Law of the Battle of Conquest”. Do I suggest that women become like men?...definitely not! Do I suggest that men should become like women?... definitely not! Do I suggest that new type of individual should and will emerge from the balancing of these opposites? You bet!

There is another subject that I feel it necessary to address in this short article. This is the subject of the initiatic Ordeal. With the introduction of this concept, I am moving further into technical matters than I had initially wished to go. Yet I feel strongly that this introductory paper should address as many of the most commonly recited criticisms as possible. To this end I must broaden the scope of this article somewhat.

An Initiatic Ordeal may be defined for our purposes as a process of reorganization or the stimulus to begin change within the psychosoma of an individual. The idea of the initiatic Ordeal is not that of a punishment or an arbitrary set or uncomfortable conditions (like hazing in college fraternities or sororities) that one must pass through before one can be recognized as a member of some group. The idea of initiatic Ordeal is that of demarcation points, road signs if you will, which indicate to the instructor (Spiritual mentor) and/or to the Aspirant where they are in the process of coming to know themselves. These Ordeals may seem negative insofar as they can often cause an individual some discomfort, usually psychologically but in rare instances physically. This discomfort results from the attempt to change the “status quo” o the psychological ordering of the individual who seeks “Initiation”. These changes are most often resented by the Aspirants’s, “lower faculties” (those parts of the brain involved with survival and comfort issues) and thus the Ordeal is perceived as a punishment. Change is often feared; therefore, change itself is regarded in a negative sense. If you hold within yourself attitudes which run counter to the current of the Aeon and you attach yourself to an Initiatic Order than you can bet that if you do not actively attempt to change yourself the forces of that Initiatic current will present, you with tests and trials. This process is automatic, and these Ordeals result from the direct apprehension by the instructor that some part of you is hindering You from attaining.

The purpose of the above digression is simply to prepare the ground for a discussion of a portion of Liber Al i61. The entire verse reads thus:

“But to love me is better than all things: if under the night-stars in the desert thou presently burnest mine incense before me, invoking me with a pure heart, and the Serpent flame therein, thou shalt come a little to lie inn my bosom. For one kiss wilt thou then be willing to give all; but whoso gives one particle of dust shall lose all in that hour. Ye shall gather goods and store of women and spices; ye shall wear rich jewels; ye shall exceed the nations of the earth in splendor & pride; but always in the love of me, and so shall ye come to my joy. I charge you earnestly to come before me in a single robe, and covered with a rich headdress. I love you! I yearn to you! Pale or purple, veiled or voluptuous, I who am al pleasure and purple, and drunkenness of the innermost sense, desire you. Put on the wings, and arouse the coiled splendour within you: come unto me!”

Marcelo Motta in his comment to this verse addresses the line “…gather goods…” in this way; “One further word is necessary as to the rich jewels, store of women and spices, etc. All this must be gathered “in the love of me.” This means that our wealth must be acquired, our love must be enjoyed, without the least harm to the will of any other human being or to mankind in general.” Thus, Motta emphasizes the aspect of the verse which metaphorically exhorts Thelemites t work ecologically in regard their wealth and power. Thus, the phrase “…women and store of spices…” uses an old aeonic form (in the past aeon, as we feminists are well aware, women were property) to indicate the idea of the dispensation of acquired good. It does not mean that women in this aeon are to be stored up as goods! THERE IS NO PROPERTY IN HUMAN FLESH!!!!! This is iterated again and again in Liber Al. Thus, internal evidence prevents us from taking tis verse out of context; At least if we bother to read and attempt to understand the rest. This is the first of three meanings for this verse (note: more meanings are likely to be discovered…. probably by women adepts). Here is where the digression into the definition of what an Ordeal is comes in handy. The next meaning forms a class of Blind Ordeal. This Ordeal manifests differently for males than for females and it functions something like this: a. Aiwass uses this form of phrasing to test males who may still hold the idea that there is property in human (especially women) flesh. Aiwass uses this form of phrasing to test women in their self-esteem. The Ordeal is not lessened by my pointing it out (otherwise I would shut up) nor are its results compromised. Men must learn that women are Stars (overcome conditioning), equal to themselves and women must learn, believe and act as the Stars that they truly are (overcome conditioning).

The final meaning shows us how a truly integrated personality regards such phrases. These integrated personalities secure in the knowledge of themselves as whole, healthy people, can use any phrase or concept independent of its former associations. They choose what language they will. They recognize the past associations, and they include these associations as part of their thesis without transplanting these onto current conditions, which they know to be irrevocably altered (conditioning overcome).

Finally, I should like to address an issue concerning Liber Aleph. It is often called to my attention that AC ha several derogatory things to say about women in Liber Aleph. First, I want to point out that Liber Aleph is not one of the Holy Boks, it is written in Class B. Second, I want to point out that the book was written to AC’s Magickal Son (another male). Further I want to point out that this book was written in 1918 ev in America and that it describes in a few of its chapter’s strategies for a male Adept of 1918ev to deal with the common woman of 1918ev. These chapters contain strictly temporal advice (perhaps even bad temporal advice) and bear little relevance for male Adepts in the 1990’s ev… ditto for female Adepts! I do not hesitate to say that if AC had written advice on these subjects today or for a female that the chapters would be wholly different. Gladly most of the information in Liber Aleph is more general and entirely applicable to both male and female Aspirants or Adepts of today (and one might of the foreseeable future.). Thus, understood Liber Aleph takes its place among the revered texts of Thelema. The advice and insight in Liber Aleph becomes more and more important and relevant (as does Liber 333 and others) as an Aspirant progresses through the Grades of the Outer College into the Inner College.

There are several other issues which typically arise in any discussion of Aleister Crowley; Why did this…and oh, look how incongruous is this statement with his other action and so on…these usually fall into one of two categories, either that of mistaken identity or into that of statements taken out of the context of the times in which they were issued. There is a third category into which phenomenon of this nature can fall; Aleister Crowley, like the rest of us, could be dead wrong. It is, perhaps, more useful to say that the byways of being are intricate and sometimes convoluted or even tortured, but through it all a simple and elegant thread I evident in the life of. Great woman or a great man and that thread for Aleister Crowley was a cry of triumph for the Huan over the un-feathered biped…” Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.” Popular or Temporal statements must be considered in context of the time in which they were spoken. So many of Aleister Crowley’s statements must be studied in light of the times in which he issued those statements that such as book as “The Confessions of Aleister Crowley” becomes invaluable to the Aspirant. This book, these “Confessions”, for the corpus of that which Aleister Crowley wanted the public to know about him. What he wanted them to know and what shows through even when there could be no guile involved, is that Aleister Crowley believed utterly in his message. What also shows is that Aleister Crowley could laugh and poke fun at himself as easily and as impishly as he could lampoon any of his most dear targets for criticism. Whether or not Aleister Crowley really though that “women should be left at the door like milk” or if he was to reorient the “public” of his day by shocking them is in some ways a moot point. What does matter however, is the thread which he wove into the tapestry of Human progress. What matters even more urgently is the question: “What threads will each of us weave into that tapestry.” It has been said that “To work inharmony with the great masters of the Spirit is to be or become a master of the “Spirit” is to be or become a master of the “Spirit”, let us then work in harmony to this noble end.

Let those who have ears hear these words and be strengthened by them

. to those others who cannot look beyond their physical sex, they may well perish in the spiritual wasteland which they made for themselves. Yet there is some reason for optimism in the emergence of the warrior woman of the New Aeon. There are signs that the destructive, radical, genderistic, chauvinisitic, hatreds among females are a mere symptom of a backlash and are confined to a very few. These very same signs also indicate that, for the most part, women recognize this “backlash” for what it is and are able to balance these reactions in their own harmonious ways. (Ways which men should look to as models for their own progress toward balance.). Thus, the one can assist the other if they will but observe carefully, ignore the rhetoric, and concentrate on their own improvement. Thus, one being may recognize, between the polarities of female and male, its own inner balance and achieve a true Initiation of the Spirit.

**Love is the law, love under will.**

*FOOTNOTES:*

1. We must in some respects call them failures if they are due at least in part, as we maintain, to linguistic inadequacies. But cf AL. III .39
2. Save in one very dramatic instance. Cf Liber Al i 61. Here Aiwass uses a form of linguistics that on the face of it can be taken as very offensive to females. There are at least three meanings to this verse, and these will be covered later in this paper.
3. AL I 3
4. Cf AL. ii53
5. Cf “Magick in Theory and Practice” Appendix A for details.
6. Don’t get the idea that you will see Aleister Crowley’s name in bibliographies of persons indebted to hi for a variety of influences. After all he was “the wickedest man in the world” according to the press of his day. Many of those most indebted to hi never acknowledged him openly.
7. Al iii9
8. Cf AL iii68

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. , [↑](#footnote-ref-6)