

Brief Introduction to the Religion of Thelema

Thelemic Deities

Thelema is a universal philosophy or way of life. The religion of Thelema proposes the idea that physical existence begins with the interaction of two metaphysical principles. In the most prominent Thelemic Holy Book, *The Book of The Law*, these ideas are given form by association with the ancient Egyptian deities known as Nuit, the goddess of the night sky who represents unlimited possibility, and her lover Hadit, who represents the individual experience and is characterized as a Winged Serpent. The union of these two deities produces a phenomenon, which is identified with the Hawk Headed god: Ra-Hoor-Khuit, who represents the karmic law which dominates life.

Some Thelemic Tenets

One of the most significant characteristics of the Thelemic doctrine is that it recognizes that these same phenomena also manifests in various forms throughout all cultures and religious beliefs. Therefore, the Thelemic religion holds that all beliefs and religions are mirrors that reflect these metaphysical ideas to their adherents, and consequently, many Thelemites spend their lives seeking out these ideas by the study of comparative religion.

The Law of Thelema entertains the idea of a Personal Supreme Deity, which holds the reality constructs of each individual's spirituality, and reflects each individual's Gnosis. Thelemic doctrine encourages individuals to draw on a personal and recognizable God/spark, which is individual to them, and which reflects their own True Purpose and Truth. The discovery of this Supreme Truth is referred to as "knowing ones True Will." This concept goes to further reinforce the idea that Thelemites should study the symbols of all religions and philosophies, since doing so will lead them to a greater understanding of ones self. Should a Thelemite end up on a path that is not congenial with his or her True Nature they can expect that there will be consequences to face. One who subscribes to the Christian doctrine might equate this suffering with "hell," or a separation from God.

Thelemic Practices

Prayer, invocation and evocation, meditation and comparative religion studies are all part of Thelemic religious practice. There is the blessing of food, the adorations which correspond to the four stations of the sun, yoga, and the preparation for holy space.

Like many Western religions, the Thelemite celebrates rights of passage, such as Baptism for Birth, Confirmation at puberty, Marriage, and finally, death. The birth, life and death of various Thelemic Saints are also celebrated, such as Francois Rabelais who was first to have coined the term "Thelema" in conjunction with "Do as thou woulst."

It is fair to say that presently there are various expressions of Thelema according to the temperament of the group and that these practices vary from group to group. Any religion whose holy book prohibits discussion and interpretation is subject to sectarianism in a big way.

We often receive letters from people complaining of the lack of clear-cut answers pertaining to Thelema. There are various reasons for this, one of which is a warning in Liber AL not to interpret the writings. Many people have taken this to mean that they shouldn't define beliefs or question assumptions. As one might imagine this makes it rather difficult for Thelemites to interact in social settings.

In its most basic form, a Thelemite is a person who adheres to the Law of Thelema, which is a philosophy first proposed by Catholic Priest and writer François Rabelais (1490 - 1553) in his literary works about a religious monk and a giant. It basically states that people with good upbringing need little regulation since every action will be the right action. "Do as thou wouldst" was to be inscribed on the arches of every abbey door. Much of it was tongue-in-cheek criticism of some of the more ridiculous Catholic paradigms of his times.

Later, Aleister Crowley (there is tons of material on him on the web. Don't believe everything you read) channeled a book called The Book of the Law in which it claimed: "The word of the Law is Thelema."

Thelema is a Greek word meaning "will" to signify that every person has a divine purpose. This purpose can be anything. What makes any purpose divine is whether it's in accordance with the individual's true nature. Hence, "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law" is used as a greeting between Thelemites so as to constantly remind each other that they should act in accordance with their Will. The second part of this law is: "Love is the law, love under will." Many organizations espousing different variations of this religious paradigm have sprung up. Many Thelemites are students of magic, comparative religion, philosophy, and ethics.

As might be imagined, anything that can be interpreted as "Do what you want" usually is, and often times with dire results. Furthermore, it is easy to take the Book of the Law at face value. Without study and contemplation one may simply quote Thelemic Holy Books out of context to defend lack of responsibility or condone some of the greatest human vices, much to the detriment of everyone that happens to call oneself a Thelemite.

The Order of Thelemic Knights espouses the idea that this Law invokes the greatest responsibility. We adhere to our own code of conduct and ethics which espouses the lofty concepts of soldiering. We study religion in order to come to a greater understanding of our own Thelema because we have observed that all religions are like links on a chain connecting us to our beginnings.

Gerald del Campo
September 3, 2003
Portland, OR

Copyright Gerald del Campo 2003. All Rights Reserved