

ON THE FOLLY OF THE BLACK BROTHERS

by

Laus Priapo Deo 217

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

Recently, I was asked the following question by a fellow Thelemite: “Can you point me to writings by Crowley which indicate what if anything is to be done with/about/to Black Brothers?” The following was my reply, wherein I went into a little more detail than his question originally called for! Hence the following Essay slowly emerged from the research I performed.

I’ll begin my response to your question by providing a quote from Crowley in his commentary to *Liber Legis* II:5 regarding the Black Brothers (i.e., “Behold! the rituals of the old time are black. Let the evil ones be cast away; let the good ones be purged by the prophet! Then shall this Knowledge go aright”).

What then may we understand by this verse, with its capital K for “Knowledge?” What is it, and how shall it “go aright?” The key is in the word “go.” It cannot “be,” as we have seen above; it is the fundamental error of the “Black Brothers” in their policy of resisting all Change, to try to maintain it as fixed and absolute. But (as the Tree of Life indicates) Knowledge is the means by which the conscious mind, Microprosopus, reaches to Understanding and to Wisdom, its mother and father, which reflect respectively Nuit and Hadit from the Ain and Kether. The process is to use each new item of knowledge to correct and increase one’s comprehension of the Subject of the Proposition.¹

¹ *The Law is for All*, pp. 90-91.

As I see it, the Black Brothers are those who take the Oath of the Abyss and fail to honor it 24/7, sliding back to their egoic center. Ultimately, they refuse to let go of their personalities and they resist change. Too many people think it's easy to go within to Know Thyself, but, in the end, they stick to what they Want rather than letting the True Will guide them (i.e., the True Will being the Will of Humanity). Despite the common belief that Black Brothers are inevitably torn asunder and thrown to the four winds, another side of the coin is presented in *Liber ThIshARB*:

3. Should one rashly dare the passage, and take the irrevocable Oath of the Abyss, he might be lost therein through Æons of incalculable agony; he might even be thrown back upon Chesed, with the terrible *karma* of failure added to his original imperfection.

4. It is even said that in certain circumstances it is possible to fall altogether from the Tree of Life, and to attain the Towers of the Black Brothers. But We hold that this is not possible for any adept who has truly attained his grade, or even for any man who has really sought to help humanity even for a single second [especially since in all but one grade of the A.:A.: “the aspirant is pledged to serve his inferiors in the Order”], and that although his aspiration have been impure through vanity or any similar imperfection.²

In any case, too many people think “downward” or horizontally toward their lovers, jobs, home, and all the other things that fade away with time—which you can’t take with you upon death—rather than thinking of something greater than themselves. In other words, many people never fully understand Verticality. One reason is that they refuse to bend the knee (which is perfectly valid for horizontal schools like the O.T.O. and the lessons they teach in the IVth degree, but in a Vertical Order such as the A.:A.:, the system cannot operate successfully without Holy Obedience to one’s Superiors and Teacher).

For all of Crowley’s statements in *Liber Oz*, if you know his writings, you’ll see that even HE had to bend the knee at certain points. The Gods just rubbed his face in the dirt many times. Forget about the Demon Crowley; it’s more like the Demon Ego. This is all

² Crowley, *Liber ABA*, p. 647.

metaphorical of course. But, bending the knee and knowing reverence is part of what allows you to pass beyond Netzach, which is characterized by Devotion.

Concerning the Black Brothers, J. Edward Cornelius adds the following in an, so far, unpublished document:

Crowley complicated things with his usage of the left-hand path in reference to the “Black Brothers” whom Blavatsky simply referred to as the “‘Brothers of the Shadow’—the murderers of their Souls.” Although Crowley is completely correct, often towing Blavatsky’s interpretation, his reasoning details a different scenario that most authors ignore.... The bottom line, which often causes confusion, is that most scholars see the left-hand path only from the point of view of this plane. Crowley is using the term in relationship to the lofty magickal degree of an Exempt Adept (7°=4[□]) of the A.:A.: who has failed at crossing the Abyss...and who is incapable of residing in the City of the Pyramids. Caught up in Daath, as a False Sephira, such Stars rapidly fall out of the heavens via the Left Hand, or Descending Pillar, toward Malkuth or Earth and become Black Brothers. This usually occurs because the wannabe magicians have failed to control their egos. This too, is a concept incapable for most to understand. Unlike eastern thought, western magicians know that their ego is their greatest tool related to their personality, or the mask, which they wear daily. So, they do not wish to dissolve the ego completely [like the Buddhists]; instead, they wish to control it to their best advantage. But if a false or unjustified ego is presented to the gate keeper at the threshold of the Abyss, then the magician will pay a hefty price. His ego must conform with his True Will, and not to what he Wants.

At any rate, I believe they truly do screw up their future incarnations and their essence. Karma is a bitch (and I’m not going to be the instrument it uses for Adjustment).

In short, my position is that the Black Brothers are none of my concern unless confronted with an immediate threat by them. Nevertheless, in *Artemis Iota vel de Coitu Scholia Triviae*,³ Crowley states: “The student should assimilate the doctrine of the ‘Black Brothers.’ To refuse to fulfil any of one’s possibilities is the direct negation of the Great Work.”⁴ Here he could mean several things by his use of the word “assimilate” and

³ I.e., *Artemis Iota, or Trivia’s Notes on Coitus*, also known as *Liber DCLXVI-666*. Here “Trivia is an epithet for goddesses of the crossroads, primarily the Roman Diana and Greek Hecate, meaning ‘of the three ways,’ linked to magic, the underworld, and torches” (*Wikipedia*).

⁴ *Amor Divina*, p. 78.

depending on *who* one considers to be the Black Brothers. For example, vulgar Christians and Jews were two groups that Crowley characterized as being Black Brothers many times.

In *The Vision and the Voice* (Liber 418), 18th Æthyr, he writes:

[T]his is the meaning of the Supper of the Passover, the spilling of the blood of the Lamb being a ritual of the Dark Brothers, for they have sealed up the Pylon with blood, lest the Angel of Death should enter therein. Thus do they shut themselves off from the company of the saints. Thus do they keep themselves from compassion and from understanding. Accursed are they, for they shut up their blood in their heart. They keep themselves from the kisses of my Mother Babylon, and in their lonely fortresses they pray to the false moon....

Thus they make war upon the Holy One, sending forth their delusion upon men, and upon everything that liveth.

In the 20th Æthyr, he elaborates more on vulgar Christianity:



Agnus Dei

The figures on the wheel are darker than the wheel itself; in fact, they are stains upon the purity of the wheel, and for that reason, and because of the whirling of the wheel, I cannot see them. *But at the top seems to be the Lamb and Flag, such as one sees on some Christian medals, and one of the lower things is a wolf, and the other a raven. The Lamb and Flag symbol is much brighter than the other two. It keeps on growing brighter, until now it is brighter than the wheel itself, and occupies more space than it did. It speaks: I am the greatest of the deceivers, for my purity and innocence shall seduce the pure and innocent, who but for me should come to the centre of the wheel.* The wolf betrayeth only the greedy and the treacherous; the raven betrayeth only the melancholy and the dishonest. *But I am he of whom it is written: He shall deceive the very elect. For in the beginning the Father of all called forth lying spirits that they might sift the creatures of the earth in three sieves, according to the three impure souls.* And he chose the wolf for the lust of the flesh, and the raven for the lust of the mind; but me did he choose above all to simulate the pure prompting of the soul. *Them that are fallen a prey to the wolf and the raven I have not scathed; but them that have rejected me, I have given*

over to the wrath of the raven and the wolf. And the jaws of the one have torn them, and the beak of the other has devoured the corpse. Therefore is my flag white, because I have left nothing upon the earth alive. I have feasted myself on the blood of the saints, but I am not suspected of men to be their enemy, for my fleece is white and warm, and my teeth are not the teeth of one that teareth flesh; and mine eyes are mild, and they know me not the chief of the lying spirits that the Father of all sent forth from before his face in the beginning. [emphasis added]

It is the superficial appeal of the idea of “Jesus” to the sentimental type of aspiration (the vilest parody of Neschamah is this pollution by the least virile elements of Nephesh) that has made possible the corruption implied in the doctrines of Sin and Vicarious Atonement. From this error have sprung the putrefaction of the reasoning faculties, and the suppression of all clear thinking, and the abominations of greed, persecution and the rest.

And in the 3rd Æthyr:

The bowels of little children are torn out and thrust into his mouth, and a poison is dropped into his eyes. And Lilith, a black monkey crawling with filth, running with open sores, an eye torn out, eaten of worms, her teeth rotten, her nose eaten away, her mouth a putrid mass of green slime, her dugs dropping and cancerous, clings to him, kisses him....

And this is her great blasphemy: that she hath taken the name of the First Æthyr, and bound it on her brow, and added thereunto the shameless yod [י] and the tau [ט] for the sign of the Cross. She it is that squatteth upon the Crucifix, for the nastiness of her pleasure. So that they that worship Christ suck up her filth upon their tongues, and therefore their breaths stink.

The destiny of the Black Brothers is that “they shall be eaten up by Time [Saturn] that hath cheated them to serve him, and by the mighty devil Choronzon, their master.”⁵

However, it’s important to remember Crowley’s statement in *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*: “I was trying to take the view that the Christianity of hypocrisy and cruelty was not true Christianity. I did not hate God or Christ, but merely the God and Christ of the people whom I hated.”⁶

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ P. 73.

I feel that it will be appropriate to end this disquisition with a quote from Crowley's *Commentaries on the Golden Verses of Pythagoras*:

Now the Universe itself is the result of the will of its Souls (or conscious elements) to add the pleasure of experience to those of perfection and peace by undertaking incarnations... The first realization of the non-Ego created Knowledge, and the first union with it could only be achieved by the (apparent) death of the Ego and the non-Ego with the subsequent birth of their combination. But each experiment led to greater complexities, and the Godhead of each component of such became ever more lost to itself. In the absorption of interest some of the Gods forgot their true nature altogether, and supposed themselves to be merely parts of the compound to which they belonged. They behaved as blind purposeless puppets, not understanding themselves or the universe, and abdicating their wills to the inertia of the masses of matter in which they were lost. In this condition of disorder, the forces of Nature were no longer directed by intelligence. Compounds began to collide and to destroy each other or to conglomerate in a heterogeneous mass of confusion. These elements that retained consciousness at all found themselves helpless. They suffered a Restriction other than that devised by themselves as the rules of their Game, for it was now blind and brutal constraint imposed from without. They exclaimed: The word of Sin is Restriction. Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law! Armed with this weapon, they began the work of emancipating themselves from the chaos that was crushing them. They worked themselves free by withdrawing as best as they could from their environment, and they broke up, both with crowbars and explosives, the complex excretions that were too heavy to push out of their way. These masses were swayed by their inherent properties, blind and undirected as they were; but their inert bulk was where it was by the operation of these laws, and they resisted the intelligent efforts of their conscious elements to extricate them from their disorder with the whole force of those laws, so that some of the struggling souls were deceived into thinking that the opposition to their efforts was the result of malice, and were appalled to imagine that "evil" had somehow been introduced into the universe. Such souls as were free and could observe the situation in perspective were of course able to detect the error. Evil is an unthinkable absurdity. But they saw well enough how the relation of two opposing forces would delude each into thinking that the other was evil. These freed souls, choosing active and powerful combinations, and forming an organized alliance among themselves, now determined to restore order. Some aided those souls who were straining for freedom; others attacked the masses of rubble. In order to work more continuously, a few of them kept to one combination for longer than their own work

demanding, for the plight of their fellow-explorers was such that they preferred to relieve them rather than attend to their own affairs. Practically all refrained from the customary period of repose and reflection between successive incarnations. Such is the explanation of the existing condition of the universe as it appears in the forms required by Knowledge of it. It is to be remembered that this appearance is no more than an illusion, real as it seems to those Souls that have lost consciousness of their natures. When they are restored to themselves by the breaking up of the complexes that constrain them, they will be able to recognize their experience as part of the adventure undertaken by them. It will not have escaped the student that each step in the process of releasing them is a death, and those that are unconscious of their true Nature imagine death to be the end of them, so that they dread it. Those, too, who believe themselves a part of their complex and cling to it despite its discomforts, use such power as they possess to resist what they think [are] the murderous attacks of their rescuers.

As for Crowley's position on and recommendations about the Black Brothers, the following works give a fairly complete overview:

- *The Law is for All*: pp. 90, 128 (Modesty), and 182 (Theosophy).
- *Liber 418* (sometimes referred to as "Dark Brothers"):
 - 18th Æthyr—failure is caused by thoughts, regrets, unsteadiness, and attachment. Crowley adds: "The quotation ["When thou shalt know me, O thou empty God, my little flame shall utterly expire in thy great N.O.X."], accepting annihilation, instantly destroys the myriad of insane images which hastened to occupy the vacuum created by the leap of the Exempt Adept into the Abyss. Had he faltered, he would have become—against his will—a "Black Brother." But this being involuntary, he would not have attempted to maintain his coherence, as the Black Brothers do. He would therefore, have been destroyed at once; that is, to outward appearance he would have become a demented babler,"
 - 12th Æthyr—one refuses to accept the Sacrament of suffering in a world "that unfoldeth itself as a Rose", that is, with sin; moreover, "the Supper of the

Passover, the spilling of the blood of the Lamb being a ritual of the Dark Brothers”,⁷

- 7th Æthyr—describes those who are swept away in the Waters of Binah because they won’t throw off their cloaks and look up at the lady of the Æthyr: “I see little lonely souls, running helplessly about, minute black creatures like men. And they keep up a very curious howling... And the voice says: These are they that grasped love and clung thereto, praying ever at the knees of the great goddess. These are they that have shut up themselves up in fortresses of Love.... [They] that have sought restricted love.... He desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness.... Yet remember that in every one there goeth forth for a witness the justice of the Most High. Is not Libra the House of Venus? And there goeth forth a sickle that shall reap every flower. Is not Saturn exalted in Libra? *Daleth, Lamed, Tau* [i.e., Saturn as a Door, Entrance, Gate, and/or Portal]. And therefore was he a fool who uttered her name in his heart, for the root of evil is the root of breath, and the speech in the silence was a lie... [A]nd it may be by the wisdom of the Most High that the true voice of the Æthyr, that is continual song, may be heard of thee”,
- 6th Æthyr—“For the Black Brothers lift not up their heads thus far into the *Holy Chokmah*, for they were all drowned in the great flood, which is Binah, before the true vine could be planted upon the holy hill of Zion.” He later adds this significant observation: “And although I be truth, yet do they call me rightly the God of Lies, for speech is two-fold, and truth is one....” Crowley must take the Eternal One’s “office and become the maker of Illusions, the great deceiver, the setter of snares... [For he] stands on every path, and turn[s] them aside from the truth by [his] words, and by [his] magickal arts.” In this vision the guardian is Thoth whose curse every Magus must assume, where “being guardians of truth, they have taught nothing but falsehood, except unto such as understood; for the truth may not pass the Gate of the Abyss.” Thus, they who have sought the Supernals from Tiphareth—the highest one can get below the Abyss—need only seek beauty because beauty—and not majesty, power, victory, learning, happiness, gold, or anything else—is as close to the Truth as one can get. He finishes with the secret of the Æthyr: “And this is that mystery which is spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles; that Jupiter and Mercury (*Kether* and *Chokmah*) visited (that

⁷ “...the sacraments; bread, that is labor; and fire, that is wit; and a rose, that is sin; and wine, that is death” (18th Æthyr).

is, inspired), Ephesus,⁸ the City of Diana, *Binah*—was not Diana a black stone?—and they burnt their books of magick”,

- 3rd Æthyr—“And for this is BABALON under the power of the Magician, that she hath submitted herself unto the work; and she guardeth the Abyss. And in her is a perfect purity of that which is above; and yet she is sent to them that are below. For there is no other way into the Supernal Mystery but through her, and the Beast on which she rideth; and the Magician is set beyond her to deceive the brothers of blackness, lest they should make unto themselves a crown; for if there were two crowns, then should Yggdrasil, the ancient tree, be...uprooted and cast down into the Outermost Abyss, and the Arcanum which is in the Adytum should be profaned.... From the Crown itself spring the three great delusions; *Aleph* is madness, *Beth* is falsehood, and *Gimel* is glamour”,⁹
- 2nd Æthyr—Again, “in the Great Work a man must lose his personality” and become NEMO (No-man). Furthermore: “it was the most horrible and wicked blasphemy of the blackest of all black brothers to begin *Barashith* with a *beth*, with the letter of the Magician. Yet, by this simple device, hath he created the whole illusion of sorrow.” Doing a thing simply for the thing’s sake with faith and sympathy is key. In sum, “IADNAMAD” and “in the letter N is the Voice of the Æthyr ended.” (See *Liber Stellæ Rubæ* (*Liber LXVI*-66) in conjunction with the remainder of this Æthyr.)
- *Magick Without Tears*: pp. 9, 72, 109, 112, 117-118, 135, 204, 225 (especially), 274, 277, 319, and 452.
- *Liber ABA*: Chapter XXI (“Of Black Magick; of Pacts with the Devil; of the Main Types of the Operations of Magick Art; of Necromancy; and of the Powers of the Sphinx”) and *Liber ThIShARB*.
- *Commentaries on the Holy Books*: Various places throughout (sometimes called “Brothers of the Shadow” therein).
- *Liber Aleph*: Chs. 92 (Generation vs. Acts of Nourishment), 104 (whether to destroy or make a fortress around one’s Temple), 105 (cult of the Slave Gods), 139 (Hell of

⁸ “Ephesus was a recipient city of one of the Pauline epistles and one of the seven churches of Asia addressed in the Book of Revelation. The Gospel of John may have been written there, and it was the site of several 5th-century Christian Councils (Council of Ephesus)” (*Wikipedia*).

⁹ For more information see the section on Lillith that follows in *Liber 418* and how “the mercy of God” sends forth severities upon earth.

the Slaves, Servants of Sin), 157 (those that cry “I AM I”), 162 (Karezza vs. Thelemic Silence), and 166 (how one can overcome horror, fear, and hate with the acceptance of Change).

- *Commentary on the Golden Verses of Pythagoras* (Section ΩC—“How”). (Included above.)
- *Liber DCLXVI*: Reference to *Liber Legis* III:55-56 (Included above.)
- *Little Essays Towards Truth*: Chapter entitled “Indifference”.
- *Moonchild*: The entire book is a fictional account of a war occurring between the White Lodge and the Black Lodge.

Love is the law, love under will.

An v11 Sol 11° Aquarius, Luna 26° Cancer Dies Saturnii
Saturday, January 31, 2026 e.v. 11:53 AM