

O.T.O.



LIBER CLXI

CONCERNING THE LAW OF THELEMA

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LIBER CLXI

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CONCERNING THE LAW OF THELEMA

An Epistle written to Professor L—— B—— K—— who also himself waited for the New Æon, concerning the O.T.O. and its solution of divers problems of Human Society, particularly those concerning Property, and now reprinted for General Circulation.

My Dear Sir,—

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. I was glad to receive your letter of inquiry with regard to the Message of the Master Therion.

It struck you naturally enough that on the surface there is little distinction between the New Law and the canon of Anarchy; and you ask, "How is the Law to be fulfilled in the case of two boys who want to eat the same orange?" But since only one boy (at most) can eat the orange, it is evident that one of them is mistaken in supposing that it is essential to his Will to eat it. The question is to be decided in the good old way by fighting for it. All that we ask is that the fighting should be done chivalrously, with respect to the courage of the vanquished. "As brothers fight ye!" In other words, there is only this difference from our present state of society, that manners are improved. There are many persons who are naturally slaves, who have no stomach to fight, who tamely yield all to any one strong enough to

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take it. These persons cannot accept the Law. This also is understood and provided for in the Book of the Law: "The slaves shall serve." But it is possible for any apparent slave to prove his mastery by fighting his oppressors, even as now; but he has this additional chance in our system, that his conduct will be watched with kindly eye by our authorities, and his prowess rewarded by admission to the ranks of the master-class. Also, he will be given fair play.

You may now ask how such arrangements are possible. There is only one solution to this great problem. It has always been admitted that the ideal form of government is that of a "benevolent despot," and despotisms have only fallen because it is impossible in practice to assure the goodwill of those in power. The rules of chivalry, and those of Bushido in the East, gave the best chance to develop rulers of the desired type. Chivalry failed principally because it was confronted with new problems; to-day we know perfectly what those problems were, and are able to solve them. It is generally understood by all men of education that the general welfare is necessary to the highest development of the particular; and the troubles of America are in great part due to the fact that the men in power are often utterly devoid of all general education.

I would call your attention to the fact that many monastic orders, both in Asia and in Europe, have succeeded in surviving all changes of government, and in securing pleasant and useful lives for their members. But this has been possible only because restricted life was enjoined. However, there were orders of military monks, like the Templars, who grew and prospered exceedingly. You recall that the Order of the Temple was only overthrown by a treacherous *coup*

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d'état on the part of a King and of a Pope who saw their reactionary, obscurantist, and tyrannical programme menaced by those knights who did not scruple to add the wisdom of the East to their own large interpretation of Christianity, and who represented in that time a movement towards the light of learning and of science, which has been brought to fruition in our own times by the labours of the Orientalists from Von-Hammer-Purgstall and Sir William Jones to Professor Rhys Davids and Madame Blavatsky, to say nothing of such philosophers as Schopenhauer, on the one hand; and by the heroic efforts of Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, and Spencer, on the other.

I have no sympathy with those who cry out against property, as if what all men desire were of necessity evil; the natural instinct of every man is to own, and while man remains in this mood, attempts to destroy property must not only be nugatory, but deleterious to the community. There is no outcry against the rights of property where wisdom and kindness administer it. The average man is not so unreasonable as the demagogue, for his own selfish ends, pretends to be. The great nobles of all time have usually been able to create a happy family of their dependents, and unflinching loyalty and devotion have been their reward. The secret has been principally this, that they considered themselves noble as well in nature as in name, and thought it foul shame to themselves if any retainer met unnecessary misfortune. The upstart of to-day lacks this feeling; he must try constantly to prove his superiority by exhibiting his power; and harshness is his only weapon. In any society where each person has his allotted place, and that a place with its own special honour, mutual respect and self-respect

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are born. Every man is in his own way a king, or at least heir to some kingdom. We have many examples of such society to-day, notably universities and all associations of sport. No. 5 in the Harvard crew does not turn round in the middle of the race and reproach No. 4 for being merely No. 4; nor do the pitcher and catcher of a crack baseball nine revile each other because their tasks are different. It is to be noted that wherever team-work is necessary social tolerance is an essential. The common soldier is invested with a uniform as well as his officer, and in any properly trained army he is taught his own canons of honour and self-respect. This feeling, more than mere discipline or the possession of weapons, makes the soldier more than a match morally for a man not so clothed in proper reverence for himself and his profession.

University men who have passed through some crisis of hardship or temptation have often told me that the backbone of their endurance was the "old shop." Much of this is evidently felt by those who talk of re-establishing the old trade guilds. But I fear that I digress.

I have, however, now placed before you the main points of my thesis. We need to extend to the whole of society the peculiar feeling which obtains in our most successful institutions, such as the services, the universities, the clubs. Heaven and hell are states of mind; and if the devil be really proud, his hell can hurt him little.

It is this, then, that I desire to emphasize: those who accept the New Law, the Law of the Æon of Horus, the crowned and conquering child who replaces in our theogony the suffering and despairing victim of destiny, the Law of Thelema, which is Do What Thou Wilt, those who accept it

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(I say) feel themselves immediately to be kings and queens. "Every man and every woman is a star" is the first statement in the Book of the Law. In the pamphlet, "The Law of Liberty," this theme is embroidered with considerable care, and I will not trouble you with further quotation.

You will say swiftly that the heavenly state of mind thus induced will be hard put to it to endure hunger and cold. The thought occurred also to our founder, and I will endeavour to put before you the skeleton of his plan to avert such misfortune (or at least such ordeal) from his adherents.

In the first place he availed himself of a certain organization of which he was offered the control, namely, the O.T.O. This great Order accepted the Law immediately, and was justified by the sudden and great revival of its activities. The Law was given to our founder twelve years ago; the O.T.O. came into his hands eight years later, in the vulgar year 1912. It must not be supposed that he was idle during the former period; but he was very young, and had no idea of taking practical measures to extend the Dominion of the Law: he pursued his studies.

However, with the sudden growth of the O.T.O. from 1912 E.V. onward, he began to perceive a method of putting the Law into general practice, of making it possible for men and women to live in accordance with the precepts laid down in the Book of the Law, and to accomplish their wills; I do not say to gratify their passing fancies, but to do that for which they were intended by their own high destiny. For in this universe, since it is in equilibrium and the sum total of its energies is therefore zero, every force therein is equal and opposite to the resultant of all the other forces combined. The Ego is therefore always exactly equal to the Non-Ego,

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and the destruction of an atom of helium would be as catastrophic to the conservation of matter and energy as if a million spheres were blotted into annihilation by the will of God. I am well aware that from this point you could draw me subtly over the tiger-trap of the Freewill Controversy; you would make it difficult for me even to say that it is better to fulfil one's destiny consciously and joyously than like a stone; but I am on my guard. I will return to plain politics and common sense.

Our Founder, then, when he thought over this matter from a purely practical standpoint, remembered those institutions with which he was familiar, which flourished. He bethought him of monasteries like Monsalvat, of universities like Cambridge, of golf clubs like Hoylake, of social clubs like the Cocoa-Tree, of co-operative societies, and, having sojourned in America, of Trusts. In his mind he expanded each of these to its *n*th power, he blended them like the skilled chemist that he was, he considered their excellences and their limitations; in a word, he meditated profoundly upon the whole subject, and he concluded with the vision of a perfect society.

He saw all men free, all men wealthy, all men respected; and he planted the seed of his Utopia by handing over his own house to the O.T.O., the organization which should operate his plan, under certain conditions. What he had foreseen occurred; he had possessed one house; by surrendering it he became owner of a thousand houses. He gave up the world, and found it at his feet.

Eliphaz Levi, the great magician of the middle of the last century, whose philosophy made possible the extraordinary outburst of literature in France in the fifties and sixties by

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its doctrine of the self-sufficiency of Art (“A fine style is an aureole of holiness” is one phrase of his), prophecies of the Messiah in a remarkable passage. It will be seen that our founder, born as he was to the purple, has fulfilled it.

I have not the volume at my side, living as I am this hermit life in New Hampshire, but its gist is that Kings and Popes have not power to redeem the world because they surround themselves with splendour and dignity. They possess all that other men desire, and therefore their motives are suspect. If any person of position, says Levi, insists upon living a life of hardship and inconvenience when he could do otherwise, then men will trust him, and he will be able to execute his projects for the general good of the commonwealth. But he must naturally be careful not to relax his austerities as his power increases. Make power and splendour incompatible, and the social problem is solved.

“Who is that ragged old man gnawing a dry crust by yonder cabin?” “That is the President of the Republic.” Where honour is the only possible good to be gained by the exercise of power, the man in power will strive only for honour.

The above is an extreme case; no one need go so far nowadays; and it is important that the President should have been used to terrapin and *bécasse flambé* before he went into politics.

You will ask how this operated, and how the system inaugurated by him works. It is simple. Authority and prestige in the Order are absolute, but while the lower grades give increase of privilege, the higher give increase of service. Power in the Order depends, therefore, directly on the willingness to aid others. Tolerance also is taught in the higher grades; so that no man can be even an Inspector of

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the Order unless he be equally well disposed to all classes of opinion. You may have six wives or none; but if you have six, you are required not to let them talk all at once, and if you have none, you are required to refrain from boring other people with dithyrambs upon your own virtue. This tolerance is taught by a peculiar course of instruction whose nature it would be imprudent as well as impertinent to disclose; I will ask you to accept my word that it is efficient.

With this provision, it is easy to see that intolerance and snobbery are impossible; for the example set by members of the universally respected higher grades is against this. I may add that members are bound together by participation in certain mysteries, which lead to a synthetic climax in which a single secret is communicated whose nature is such as to set at rest for ever all division on those fertile causes of quarrel, sex and religion. The possession of this secret gives the members entitled to it such calm of authority that the perfect respect which is their due never fails them.

Thus, then, you see brethren dwelling together in unity; and you wonder whether the lust of possession may not cause division. On the contrary, this matter has been the excellent cause of general prosperity.

In the majority of cases property is wasted. One has six houses; three remain unlet. One has 20 per cent. of the stock of a certain company; and is frozen out by the person with 51 per cent.

There are a thousand dangers and drawbacks to the possession of this world's goods which thin the hairs of those who cling to them.

In the O.T.O. all this trouble is avoided. Such property

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as any member of the Order wills is handed over to the Great Officers either as a gift, or in trust. In the latter case it is administered in the interest of the donor. Property being thus pooled, immense economies are effected. One lawyer does the work of fifty; house agents let houses instead of merely writing misleading entries in books; the O.T.O. controls the company instead of half-a-dozen isolated and impotent stockholders. Whatever the O.T.O. findeth to do, it does with all its might; none dare oppose the power of a corporation thus centralised, thus ramified. To become a member of the O.T.O. is to hitch your wagon to a star.

But if you are poor? If you have no property? The O.T.O. still helps you. There will always be unoccupied houses which you can tend rent-free; there is certainty of employment, if you desire it, from other members. If you keep a shop, you may be sure that O.T.O. members will be your customers; if you are a doctor or a lawyer, they will be your clients. Are you sick? The other members hasten to your bed to ask of what you are in need. Do you need company? The Profess-House of the O.T.O. is open to you. Do you require a loan? The Treasurer-General of the O.T.O. is empowered to advance to you, without interest, up to the total amount of your fees and subscriptions. Are you on a journey? You have the right to the hospitality of the Master of a Lodge of the O.T.O. for three days in any one place. Are you anxious to educate your children? The O.T.O. will fit them for the battle. Are you at odds with a brother? The Grand Tribunal of the O.T.O. will arbitrate, free of charge, between you. Are you moribund? You have the power to leave the total amount that you have paid into the Treasury

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of the O.T.O. to whom you will. Will your children be orphan? No; for they will be adopted if you wish by the Master of your Lodge, or by the Grand Master of the O.T.O.

In short, there is no circumstance of life in which the O.T.O. is not both sword and shield.

You wonder? You reply that this can only be by generosity, by divine charity of the high toward the low, of the rich toward the poor, of the great toward the small? You are a thousand times right; you have understood the secret of the O.T.O.

That such qualities can flourish in an extended community may surprise so eminent and so profound a student of humanity as yourself; yet examples abound of practices the most unnatural and repugnant to mankind which have continued through centuries. I need not remind you of Jagannath and of the priests of Attis, for extreme cases.

A fortiori, then, it must be possible to train men to independence, to tolerance, to nobility of character, and to good manners, and this is done in the O.T.O. by certain very efficacious methods which (for I will not risk further wearying you) I will not describe. Besides, they are secret. But beyond them is the supreme incentive; advancement in the Order depends almost entirely on the possession of such qualities, and is impossible without it. Power being the main desire of man, it is only necessary so to condition its possession that it be not abused.

Wealth is of no account in the O.T.O. Above a certain grade all realisable property, with certain obvious exceptions—things in daily use, and the like—must be vested in the O.T.O. Property may be enjoyed in accordance with the dignity of the adept of such grade, but he cannot leave it idle

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or sequester it from the common good. He may travel, for instance, as a railway magnate travels; but he cannot injure the commonwealth by setting his private car athwart the four main lines.

Even intellectual eminence and executive ability are at a certain discount in the Order. Work is invariably found for persons possessing these qualifications, and they attain high status and renown for their reward; but not advancement in the Order, unless they exhibit a talent for government, and this will be exhibited far more by nobility of character, firmness and suavity, tact and dignity, high honour and good manners, those qualities (in short) which are, in the best minds, natural predicates of the word gentleman. The knowledge of this fact not only inspires confidence in the younger members, but induces them to emulate their seniors.

In order to appreciate the actual working of the system, it is necessary to visit our Profess-Houses. (It is hoped that some will shortly be established in the United States of America.) Some are like the castles of mediæval barons, some are simple cottages; the same spirit rules in all. It is that of perfect hospitality. Each one is free to do as he will; and the luxury of this enjoyment is such that he becomes careful to avoid disturbance of the equal right of others. Yet, the authority of the Abbot of the House being supreme, any failure to observe this rule is met with appropriate energy. The case cannot really arise, unless circumstances are quite beyond the ordinary; for the period of hospitality is strictly limited, and extensions depend upon the goodwill of the Abbot. Naturally, as it takes all sorts to make a world—and we rejoice in that diversity which makes our unity so

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exquisite a miracle—some Profess-Houses will suit one person, some another. And birds of a feather will learn to flock together. However, the well-being of the Order and the study of its mysteries being at the heart of every member of the Order, there is inevitably one common ground on which all may meet.

I fear that I have exhausted your patience with this letter, and I beg you to excuse me. But as you know, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh . . . you are perfectly right to retort that it need not speak so much!

I add no more, but our glad greeting to all men: Love is the law, love under will.

I am, dear sir,

Yours in the Bonds of the Order,

J. B. MASON.