

The Book of Lies, Which Is Also Falsely Called Breaks: The Wanderings of Falsifications of the One Thought of Frat Study Guide

The Book of Lies, Which Is Also Falsely Called Breaks: The Wanderings of Falsifications of the One Thought of Frat by Aleister Crowley

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Plot Summary

"The Book of Lies" presents a more or less comprehensive explanation of Crowley's view of the universe and how followers of his religion, Thelema, should act in it. However, it is not purely a religious guide as Crowley interjects many of his personal struggles into the text, primarily his love for a woman named Laylah. The plot, such as it is, is very non-linear as the subject of most chapters is determined by the importance of the chapter's number in the Cabala.

Crowley begins the book by laying out how he believes the universe came into existence; his belief is mostly derived from the Cabalistic system but is also deeply influenced by Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. In this cosmogony, nothing becomes many, which then become two—the male and female forces of the universe. The two are united by love and become one and return to nothing before the cycle starts over again.

Very quickly, Crowley moves from the structure of the universe to advice to his followers with some major themes repeated throughout the book. The most important rule in Crowley's system and one introduced very early is "do what thou wilt." Furthermore, Crowley writes that thought is a disease, and he seeks to destroy it with numerous contradictions throughout the book. Furthermore, because thought is a disease, language always fails to communicate its message completely and often just serves to confuse. Anything important is usually to be done in silence and practiced so frequently that it can be done unconsciously. Crowley also urges his followers to celebrate death as it is simply the reverse of life and the origin of new life. Life is primarily to be valued as a struggle such as war, making death all the more necessary. Crowley also praises sex repeatedly because he believes that only during the orgasm can man kill his mind and destroy thought. Finally, Crowley frequently warns his followers of the dangers of material attachments.

About a third of the way through the book, Crowley introduces his love interest Laylah, and as the book advances, she becomes a more frequent subject of Crowley's chapters. For most of this time, Crowley is separated from Laylah. This separation causes Crowley to lose sight of his spiritual goals and indulge in material pleasures. After reuniting with Laylah, Crowley realizes that the many and nothing are the exact same, so it is permissible to enjoy the world. Crowley concludes that the only important thing in the universe is the love of Laylah and the other great feminine forces.



Chapters 0-9

Chapters 0-9 Summary

The book opens with a mark of interrogation and exclamation and then leads into "The Chapter that is not a chapter," which itself begins with "O!" In Crowley's note, he explains that this symbol refers to phallus and sperm as well as an ecstatic exclamation. The rest of the chapter attempts to set forth a complete theory of how the universe came into existence. It does this in four separate triads. The first of these is referred to as the Ante Primal Triad, which exists even in the nothingness before God. God is both the first and second triads. In the first, God comes into existence and creates both knowledge and light. In the second, Crowley tells us that God is concealed in nature but obvious in the heart. In the third triad, existence goes from wavering to stable and the world come into being.

In the first proper chapter, Crowley explains that energy is divided into two parts: life and death. He encourages the reader to both create new life but also to destroy one's own, as it is unacceptable to do only one.

The second chapter is dedicated to the Ancient Egyptian god Horus, or the Hawk. In it, Crowley advises the reader to do as they please. This is followed by a "Lord's Prayer" appropriate for Horus that explains Horus' kingdom is the present and his will already accomplished. Further, in the prayer Crowley asks Horus to take away both the concept of good and evil so that he can become like Horus.

The third chapter is dedicated to the Oyster, which represents a feminine point of view. It explains how the Masters of the Temple are unified with the life giving force of the universe. Both adore the other, but the feminine (the One) enjoys giving birth, while the Masters of the Temple (the Many) enjoy sex. Further, these two, along with all other things, are united by the bliss found in birth and sex.

The fourth chapter is entitled "Peaches" and again refers to the feminine, life giving force of the universe. Crowley questions how the softness of femininity can conquer the hardness of masculinity. He explains that this occurs because femininity allows for reproduction, but although the feminine force of the universe may take many lovers, it will only have one child, of which Fate will be the father.

Crowley begins chapter five with a series of seemingly contradictory comparisons: existence with non-existence, speech with silence, and meaning with senselessness. He further asserts that anything that can be thought must be false and that father and son are not really two but one. Then, as the title of the chapter is "The Battle of the Ants," he launches into a number of qualities (peace, harmony, glory) that imply a state of war.



At the beginning of chapter seven, the Word is spoken and brings into existence a multitude of worlds. These worlds contain many spheres (hence the name of the chapter "Caviar"), which contain many planes, which in turn contain stars, and the stars contain things. The reasoner chose six of these and proclaimed them to be all of existence. The Adept then harmonized those six, which were then destroyed by the Master of the Temple. The ashes of the six were burnt by the Magus and transformed back into the Word.

In the seventh chapter, Crowley introduces us to seven men who are Masters of the Temple with the mystic number six. These seven will endure until the end of time, giving the name "Dinosaurs" to the chapter. The eight are Lao-tzu, Siddhartha (the last Buddha), Krishna, Tahuti (Egyptian god of wisdom), Moses, Dionysus, Mohammed, and PERDURABO, which is a title for Crowley himself. Although PERDURABO will last until the end, at the end there will also be nothing left.

In the eighth chapter, Crowley asserts that not only is the mind a disease but one brought about by the male sex drive (semen). However, at the same time, semen contains all of man's potential. He maintains that while the body functions silently, the mind is always self-aware, but does not endure long. Man can only see the universal consciousness during orgasm ("The Charioting").

The ninth chapter is an attack on the eight parts of speech: noun, adjective, verb, pronoun, adverb, conjunction, preposition, and article. Crowley allows that interjections come close to the truth, but it still has to be destroyed to reach "The Silence" represented by Aum.

Chapters 0-9 Analysis

In the commentary for The Chapter that is not a Chapter, Crowley explains that the chapter follows the Sephirotic branch of Qabalah (Cabalah). Cabalah is the mystical subset of Judaism, and the Sephirotic system is specifically concerned with the ten attributes of god through which he manifests himself in the universe. So for instance, Kether refers to god as creator and Chokmah to his existence out of nothingness. Both of these attributes are revealed in the first line of the first triad, "I AM."

Although this chapter, and the book in general, is based on the Cabalah, influences from other religions are apparent. The fact that Crowley's theory of the universe is divided into triads is reminiscent of the Christian trinity. The same can be said of the three lines of the first triad, which Crowley writes are the three modes of understanding the universe: being, becoming, and not being. The third triad also suggests the Hindu idea that time is circular as it moves from bearing and wavering to stability and begetting.

This trend continues in the first chapter. There Crowley explains that life leads naturally to death and that while a person should start new life, he should also destroy himself.



This is similar to the First Noble Truth of Buddhism that existence is suffering and the idea that the cycle of suffering ends with end of individual rebirth.

In the second chapter, Crowley writes one of his most remembered phrases: "Do What Thou Wilt," (Crowley, p. 14). This command to personal freedom forms the basis of Crowley's religion Thelema. It also bears a striking resemblance to Friedrich Nietzsche's theory of a will to power. The comparison becomes even more obvious when Crowley asks Horus to deliver humanity from both good and evil, which immediately brings to mind Nietzsche's book "Beyond Good and Evil."

In the third chapter, Crowley explains how the universe is perpetuated by the followers of Thelema (the Angel and Abyss, referred to in the book as the Brothers of A followed by three dots in a pyramid shape and then duplicated) and the universal female spirit of the universe. Crowley here suggests that it is bliss, specifically the bliss of sex and reproduction, that drives the universe forward. In the last few lines of the chapter, he also suggests that the distinction between male and female is an arbitrary one, and that men who follow Thelema will eventually become women in that they will become one with the universal female spirit.

Again in the fourth chapter, Crowley equates death with the creation of new life. As he questions how femininity can overcome masculinity, he says that the feminine must die in this process so that it can give fruit. Crowley tells the feminine not to be overcome by the masculine but to let thousands to breed with her as this will make her stronger. This can be interpreted as Crowley proclaiming the feminine force to be stronger than the masculine even though it appears to be weaker.

By beginning the fifth chapter with a series of contradictions and leading into a number of states that all imply war, Crowley seems to be saying that both existence and the universe are full of contradictions and that contradictions necessarily lead to conflict. However, by saying that "Fatherhood is unity disguised as duality" he also suggests that all these contradictions are just illusions hiding the unity of all things, (Crowley, p. 20).

In his commentary, Crowley explains that the creation story told in the sixth chapter is similar to that in the Christian tradition with the Word of God creating the universe. Crowley also argues here that the universe is far too large to be understood by most people, so attempts to describe it by different classes of people (the reasoner, the Adept) are foolish and even counterproductive as the Ipsissimus (the highest grade in the Angel and Abyss) will remain ignorant of them.

Chapter seven reflects Crowley's desire to blend all the major religious traditions into his own. Although the Christian tradition seems oddly absent from Crowley's list, he explains in the commentary his belief that the story of Christ was just a corruption of the legend of Dionysus. Crowley also writes that although it appears as if there are eight dinosaurs, there are actually only seven because Lao-tzu counts as zero because of his philosophy. This philosophy is Taoism which emphasizes balance in nature and action through inaction, which explains why he counts as zero for Crowley.



Crowley indicts individuality in the eighth chapter as a disease brought on by sexual desire. However, it is also only during the orgasm that the individual mind is temporarily destroyed and man can become part of the universal consciousness. Here again, Crowley is highlighting the unity of an apparent contradiction.

In the ninth chapter, Crowley implies that all language is inadequate to convey information. The interjection comes closest to meaningful because it is an expression of pure emotion, but all other parts of speech do more to confuse than to inform. "Aum," which Crowley writes "represents the entering into the silence," is a sacred sound in both Hinduism and Buddhism that begins and ends prayers and invocations.



Chapters 10-20

Chapters 10-20 Summary

In the tenth chapter, Crowley informs the reader that while The Abyss may appear to have some logical structure, this is just an illusion. Furthermore, silence is impossible in the Abyss because it speaks through what men believe is silence. The Abyss is another name for Hell as well as Consciousness and the Universe. However, a person who is not silent but also does not speak, can find joy in the Abyss.

The eleventh chapter begins with a description of the universe. Above The Abyss are the Holy Three-in-Naught: Nuit, Hadit, and Ra-Hoor-Khuit. Below these three are Chaos and Babalon, which appear to be separate but are actually united. Pan is all things, but the Night of Pan—in which the things listed above reside—is the destruction of all things. Light shoots down through The Abyss, uniting what is above with what is below, so although the distance between the two seems infinite, it is really one. However, Crowley says that this is also false. This leads him into a series of contradictions, which Crowley writes leads to the supreme state.

Chapter twelve tells us that the number 1001 represent the unity of the many and also the joy of that unity. Crowley explains that when everything is seen from the outside there will be joy beyond comprehension.

In chapter thirteen, Crowley describes The Path. The Path is incredibly difficult when one first set out upon it, but it becomes easier as one sticks to the middle of The Path for its own sake. As one reaches the end of The Path, there is no longer a person on the path because the person has become The Way.

The fourteenth chapter opens with FRATER PERDURABO saying that the universe is actually a joke. His nearest disciples, however, weep at the sorrow everywhere in the universe, but the disciples next to them laugh at the joke, and so forth. Eventually some disciples weep at not knowing the joke while those next to them laugh without knowing it simply to imitate FRATER PERDURABO. Meanwhile, FRATER PERDURABO openly laughs at the joke, but cries in secret, and in his essence did neither.

Chapter fifteen is a tribute to the Will. The Will conquers desire and surrenders his individualism to act as "an hollow tube to bring down Fire from Heaven," (Crowley, p. 40).

Chapter sixteen advises the reader to embrace the change brought on by death. Crowley admits that individuality can be a joyful thing, but so can losing individuality, such as in love or death, so we should aim to kill our individuality every day.

In chapter seventeen Crowley tells the story of the Swan, Ecstasy. First, he writes that the Swan is motionless but then asserts that since motion is relative, all things are in



motion. Crowley kills the Swan, which angers others, but who let him be after seeing he is a fool.

The eighteenth chapter equates love and death as well as death with eternal life. Crowley writes that the male sex drive is the essence of a man, and that man is not in command of that drive, but the drive in command of him, so man should not attempt to control it and thereby achieve immortality.

In the nineteenth chapter, Crowley presents the reader with the parable of The Leopard and the Deer. He compares both the leopard's spots and the dappling of the deer to sunlight. This leads him to advise that it is good to blend in, but still to keep individuality.

The twentieth chapter explains that when the universe is in perfect balance, any force can topple it.

Chapters 10-20 Analysis

Crowley explains in chapter ten that cause and effect is simply an illusion and thereby implies that the pursuit of truth is a foolish game foisted on humanity by the Lord of the Abyss of Hallucinations. Crowley equates the Abyss with hell, consciousness, and the universe again recalling the Buddhist idea that existence is suffering.

Crowley begins the eleventh chapter explaining the Holy Three-in-Naught—Nuit, Hadit, and Ra-Hoor-Khuit—which immediately suggests the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Furthermore, Crowley writes that these three hold all contradictions within them. This is because Nuit is feminine while Hadit is masculine, and Ra-Hoor-Khuit is the child. Again, Crowley goes back to the idea of destruction as liberating when he describes the light descending through the Abyss as "the rapture of Union that destroys, that is The Way," (Crowley, p. 32). Finally, by invoking numerous contradictions, Crowley seems to be saying that true understanding comes from the admission of complete ignorance.

In the twelfth chapter, Crowley seems to argue that joy derives from union with the rest of the universe as merely observing one part of it will bring joy, while every other part is joyful even beyond description.

The thirteenth chapter suggests that by actively seeking The Path, a person cannot walk upon it. It is only by walking The Path for no other reason than to walk it that The Path can be maintained, and in the final analysis, The Path is not actually something to be traveled but a mode of being. This is also reminiscent of the Buddhist idea that suffering arises from attachment, so if one desires to walk the Path for an ulterior motive, it becomes impossible to walk on it.

Crowley argues in the fourteenth chapter that all existence is simultaneously comedic and tragic. While an individual may experience intense tragedy, those observing him may view it as intensely comedic. However, FRATER PERDURABO both laughs and weeps at the same time, which means that a true master must see the duality in all



things. Furthermore, because FRATER PERDURABO actually neither laughs nor weeps, it is evident that a true master must also see the unity in all things.

In his commentary for the fifteenth chapter, Crowley tells us that the title Gun-Barrel is both a reference to the will and the phallus. The opening of the chapter can be interpreted as yet another apparent contradiction. Crowley writes that he has burned his desires upon his will, but the will is generally thought of the part of a person that desires. Crowley seems to suggest that the will becomes strong through its own annihilation and union with the seemingly weak emptiness of the universe in meditation (Samadhi).

In the sixteenth chapter, Crowley equates love with death as they both involve union with another. Love unites two individuals, while death reunites an individual with the rest of existence. While a person cannot literally "die daily" as Crowley advises at the end of the chapter, he can practice meditation through which he seeks to destroy his individual spirit and unite with the universe.

Crowley discusses the relativity of all things in chapter seventeen's story of the swan. By doing so, he is also saying that all things are impermanent and subject to change, even those things that always appear to be fixed. Crowley explains in the commentary that the anger of the people after the protagonist of the story shoots the swan explains how mankind relates to an Adept, so while an Adept is skillful, he is also foolish.

The eighteenth chapter is entitled "Dewdrops" and this is a reference to semen as Crowley tells us a dewdrop contains the essence of man. Indeed, Crowley suggests that man is, and should be, subordinate to his sex drive because it is older than him as it was part of his father and will continue existing after him in the form of his son.

The story of the leopard and the deer in chapter nineteen draws a parallel between predator and prey in that they are both aided by camouflage. Crowley is arguing that no matter what an individual's goals are, it may be necessary at times to conceal parts of himself from others.

In chapter twenty, Crowley again seems to hint at the impermanence of all things. Since when the universe is in equilibrium it is easiest to change, it should be expected that the most radical change will come when things appear to be most settled. This is also reflected in the chapter's title "Samson." When the Philistines had Samson trapped and chained is exactly when he was able to inflict the most damage upon them by pulling the building in on itself.



Chapters 21-30

Chapters 21-30 Summary

In the twenty-first chapter, Crowley writes that it is not necessary to understand God but to simply adore him. Furthermore, since people are created in God's image, and people create in their own, what people create must be in the image of God.

Crowley begins the twenty-second chapter with a parable about waiters at fine restaurants. They flatter him, so he believes them to be perfect judges of a man's worth. Crowley maintains that waiters really are excellent judges of character because they serve and have no interests in the lives of their customers. This leads Crowley to conclude that an absolute monarch would be the best ruler, but since he could never be without self-interest, Pure Chance is better. Fortunately, Pure Chance does rule the universe.

In the twenty-third chapter, Crowley tells his followers to leave easy lives, the world at large, and even each other. They must do this by following The Way.

Crowley begins chapter twenty-four by stating that the goal of the book is to explain what is beyond logic in logical words, which he admits is an abuse of language. Crowley goes on to say that there is more truth found in silence than language or thought.

The twenty-fifth chapter explains how to practice the Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram, an official ritual of the Angel and Abyss. It is completed through a series of hand motions and invocations towards the east, north, west, and south, respectively.

In the twenty-sixth chapter, Crowley begins by explaining the many numerical names of Jehovah. The universe is balanced on Jehovah, but he is enclosed within the life giving force of the universe (the Tortoise or Hexagram). While it appears Jehovah redeems the universe, Crowley curses it, leaving it unredeemed.

Chapter twenty-seven tells the story of a sorcerer who controlled all things. He could travel faster than the stars and satisfied all his desires on nearly infinite planes, but he remained unchanged by all this power.

The twenty-eighth chapter is an ode to love. Love never fails and does not end in life or death. It also destroys the self to unite with another.

Crowley speaks to his beloved, Laylah, in chapter twenty-nine. He desires to make love to her in the night and to either become her or become one with her where neither exists individually anymore.

In chapter thirty Crowley explains that both dreams and consciousness are distortions of reality. In order to experience the Truth, a person must move to a higher level of consciousness.



Chapters 21-30 Analysis

Crowley may be implying in the twenty-first chapter that all things are God. He claims that even a piece of clay if adored will become God, and he also claims that anything created by people is also God. Ultimately, this chapter encourages humanity to create simply for the sake of creating.

The twenty-second chapter draws a parallel between a diner at a restaurant and a dictator, thus the chapter's title "The Despot." Crowley seems to be drawing from the fact that a diner and his waiter are locked in the roles of servant and served, which benefits both of them, that a dictator would be the best form of government. However, since men cannot be trusted to be uninterested in the affairs of another, despotism is unworkable, so randomness is preferable to any government. Crowley again insists that the universe is totally chaotic, but this to him is good because any ruler, even God apparently, would be tyrannical.

The number and title of the next chapter together—"23 Skidoo"—was a popular phrase in early twentieth century America, which meant something like "get out while the getting is good," which reflects the theme of the chapter. The chapter is again similar to the teachings of Buddhism as it advises followers of Thelema to renounce all earthly attachments, even to each other, to achieve their ultimate reward. Crowley also treats "OUT" as a noun and analyzes each of its letters. "O" represents nothing or a void, while "T" signifies a phallus, and "UT" a Holy Guardian Angel.

In the second paragraph of chapter twenty-four, Crowley says that the goal of the book is to explain snow to residents of Andaman. These are a group of islands in the Bay of Bengal where it never snows, so Crowley is attempting to explain through language things that his followers have no words for. Also, although Crowley claims there is more truth in silence than language, he says that One True God cries "hriliu," which is a cry of orgasm. For Crowley, only sounds of pure ecstasy and emotion have any real meaning.

The twenty-fifth chapter was chosen to describe a pentagram ritual as it is the square of twenty-five. The ritual shows Crowley's belief that power can be drawn from the universe itself if a person knows how to tap into it. Furthermore, his reluctance to comment on the ritual demonstrates a desire to keep certain esoteric parts of his religion from the general public.

The twenty-sixth chapter reveals Jehovah to be represented as the Fourth as he is associated with Chesed, the fourth part of the Sephirah and the one associated with love. The life giving force of the universe is also shown to be related to the number six because like a six pointed tortoise shell she covers and protects all things, including Jehovah. Crowley once again insists upon the contradictory balancing of his system in this chapter as Jehovah redeems the universe and Crowley curses it.

Chapter twenty-seven is the flip side of chapter fifteen, which advises desires to be burnt upon the will. Here Crowley tells the story of a powerful person who embraced his



desires and was not damaged by it. Crowley seems to suggest that for the immensely powerful, desire is not necessarily a bad thing and could very well be beneficial.

In the commentary on the twenty-eighth chapter Crowley explains that this chapter introduces the main character of the book, Laylah. She is "the ultimate feminine symbol" and is the one for whom the chapter is written and named. The attributes Crowley ascribes to love in this chapter are somewhat similar to those described by Paul in First Corinthians Chapter Thirteen, except that Crowley phrases them in his usual contradictory manner.

Crowley describes making love to Laylah in the night in chapter twenty-nine, which is likely a metaphor for the annihilation of the rest of the universe aside from the two lovers. This is further reinforced when Crowley refers to making love in the Night of Pan, which represents the destruction of all things at the end of time.

The thirtieth chapter is an extended analogy of dreams to consciousness. Crowley is saying that although people believe that they can perceive the truth when they are awake but not when dreaming, in fact they cannot find the truth in either state. In order to explore the Truth to be found in The Unknown, a person must practice meditation.



Chapters 31-40

Chapters 31-40 Summary

In the thirty-first chapter, Crowley introduces IT, which he defines as Ultimate Reality. Ultimate Reality is a series of contradictions (simple but complex, true and false). If a man can comprehend these contradictions, the chain of reason on his neck will be broken.

In the thirty-second chapter, FRATER PERDURABO explains that nothing is done well until the person doing it is completely unaware of it. An act must be practiced almost infinitely so that it becomes unconscious.

In the thirty-third chapter, a Templar martyr named IACUBUS BURGUNDUS MOLENSIS explains that GOD is a two-headed eagle. This eagle can go through fire without getting burnt and water without getting wet.

Crowley reveals in the thirty-fourth chapter that while man believes he is the highest predator in nature, he is actually the prey of God. Consequently, Crowley recommends man to love to the utmost but also to love death, so that God cannot take joy in the hunt.

In the thirty-fifth chapter, Crowley presents death as two necessary parts of one whole, such as male and female. Crowley concludes by writing that he loves all forms and beings.

The thirty-sixth chapter is the instructions for performing the Ritual of the Hexagram. Its primary invocation repeats the idea of two beings in one and one being in two.

Crowley explains in the thirty-seventh chapter that thought is the shadow of a lunar eclipse, and mediation is the shadow of a solar eclipse. These eclipses are rare events as most of the universe is in light.

In the thirty-eighth chapter, Crowley again implores his readers to destroy their minds as an answer to both life and death.

The thirty-ninth chapter explains how contradictions cause a person to develop a new brain function. While the contents of this new consciousness lack definite form, they are required to have Experience of THAT. Without Experience, Crowley admits, his words are simply lies.

Crowley writes in chapter forty that all things reflect only what they are not and so appear to be their exact opposite. Consequently, the Holy Illuminated Man of God (HIMOG) will be completely invisible because he will reflect nothing. Crowley advises his followers against attempts to distinguish a HIMOG from others but instead to focus on destroying the self to become a HIMOG themselves.



Chapters 31-40 Analysis

Chapter thirty-one finally explains that the reason for all the contradictions posed in the book is to break the power of reason over man. Crowley depicts reason as a chain around man's neck that will not allow him to see the true nature of IT (Ultimate Reality). Crowley associates reason with Daath, which is where the ten sephirot are united as one, which is why it also corresponds to the human throat. Tiphareth is located directly below Daath, so once Daath is destroyed, the truth from the three above Daath (Kether, Chokmah, Binah) can enter the human will.

Crowley continues in chapter thirty-two with his theme that the mind is a disease. Crowley argues that this disease can be eliminated if a man practices his actions repeatedly until they are done unconsciously, making the mind unnecessary. This is driven home by the fact that Crowley, speaking as Perdurabo, says all this while leaping across a mountain without looking.

The thirty-third chapter is an explanation of what Crowley perceives to be the religion of the Knights Templar, a Christian military order in the Middle Ages. He seems to believe that the Templars were a direct precursor of the Masons, although this is historically dubious. Crowley speculates that the eagle the Templars worshiped was the sun.

Crowley portrays God very differently in the thirty-fourth chapter than he does in most of the earlier chapters. God is now seen as a sadistic hunter of man. However, for Crowley, man is not powerless against God, and God is not omnipotent over man. Although they are certainly not equals, this chapter hints at a belief that man could make himself more like God by accepting and loving his inevitable death.

In his commentary on the thirty-fifth chapter, Crowley claims that the Venus de Milo is actually an approximation of the male body, which is what makes it truly beautiful. He also concludes that he loves all forms and gives himself up to any being. This should certainly be read as a comment on accepting both life and death, but it also likely hints at Crowley's own bisexuality.

Just as chapter twenty-five was directions for a ritual of the pentagram because it is the square of five, so chapter thirty-six is a ritual of the hexagram because it is the square of six.

In the thirty-seventh chapter, Crowley espouses the idea that the universe is full of light, which corresponds to knowledge. However, as both thought and meditation are shadows, humanity rarely glimpses any of this knowledge. Crowley suggests that this is because our individual egos get in the way; he compares them to the Earth, which blocks the light from the sun in a lunar eclipse.

In his commentary on the thirty-eighth chapter, Crowley says that the chapter is only intelligible to E.A. Freemasons, but it seems to have a couple recognizable themes. First, destroying the mind is the key to mastering both life and death. Second, by



invoking "skidoo" again, he is likely telling his followers to leave the world to follow The Path.

Near the beginning of chapter thirty-nine, Crowley claims that a person can accept a proposition and its opposite at the same time. For Crowley, this allows the mind to be open to experiences which may be blocked out by the person who insists upon rationality. Relating back to chapter six, Crowley may be saying that reason is inadequate to understanding the vastness of the universe, so only irrationality coupled with inexplicable experience can hope to understand it.

Crowley begins chapter forty with the fact that all colors humans observe are actually the only colors not absorbed by an object, so really it is the only color that object is not. Crowley then uses this as grounds to reject perception and from there, rationality as it must similarly blind people from the truth. Once a person realizes that everything is its apparent opposite, it would seem he could learn the truth of the world. Crowley appears to argue that this is a distraction that would prevent a person from becoming a Holy Illuminated Man of God.



Chapters 41-50

Chapters 41-50 Summary

The forty-first chapter describes the motto of a Master of the Temple (V. V. V. V. V.). Crowley explains that it only concerns members of the Angel and the Abyss and even then only those at or above the level of Exempt Adept.

In chapter forty-two, Crowley describes the ego as turbulence coming from the mind. Crowley also compares the universe to a desert but also reveals that there are other places beyond the desert. Visitors cross the desert going between two great seas, but they spill water as they travel, which will eventually irrigate the desert.

The forty-third chapter describes a blood sacrifice. Crowley urges his followers to celebrate both life and death in the sacrifice, and to offer their own blood.

Chapter forty-four describes a blood sacrifice ritual of the Angel and the Abyss. The magician makes a number of invocations and cuts a symbol into his chest. The magician then soaks up the blood from the cut with a cake and eats it before declaring "There is no grace: there is no guilt: This is the Law: DO WHAT THOU WILT!" (Crowley, p. 99).

In chapter forty-five Crowley celebrates doubt. He declares that only math can be proven, and it is purely arbitrary. However, doubt can make a person indecisive. Still, Crowley writes that while faith dies quickly, doubt seems to stay perpetually young.

Crowley explains in the forty-sixth chapter that desire is the root of sorrow. This is because desire is born in hunger and it dies when a person is satisfied, both of which are saddening. Crowley advises his followers to hunger for the infinite, so that they will never be satisfied.

Chapter forty-seven lists eight different yoga positions and meditative states and what Crowley sees as their uses.

In chapter forty-eight, Crowley advises his followers to always meditate at dawn through the use of several analogies.

Chapter forty-nine introduces OUR LADY BABALON, who, Crowley explains, is the female counterpart of IT. OUR LADY BABALON rides upon a seven headed beast. She is also a source of wisdom.

Chapter fifty depicts a conversation between God and a Stag-beetle. God tells the Stag-beetle to worship him, but the Stag-beetle refuses, claiming that God is imaginary. The Wind and Wood mocked them both as ignorant.



Chapters 41-50 Analysis

The forty-first chapter is another one that by Crowley's own admission is mostly inexplicable to those who are not members of the Angel and the Abyss. Perhaps Crowley is attempting to intrigue outsiders with so much discussion of the organization's secret mottoes and rites.

Crowley compares the mind to wind at the beginning of the forty-second chapter, which suggests constant change. Moreover, if the ego arises out of something that constantly changes, it must be even more impermanent. Crowley writes in his commentary that the travelers in the desert are the Masters of the Temple, so it is sensible to interpret the water they spill as knowledge being spilled into the universe that will eventually enlighten humanity.

Crowley's commentary for chapter forty-three explains that blood and virginity have been the most accepted sacrifices to all gods. The chapter again repeats the themes that death and life are actually the same and that a man should seek destroy his self, in this case through a blood sacrifice. Crowley is not necessarily advocating that these blood sacrifices be deadly, which will be further explained in the next chapter.

The ritual described in chapter forty-four is unmistakably similar to Christian communion. However, instead of eating the supposed body and blood of God, the magician consumes his own. Once again, the ritual seems to suggest a much greater balance between man and God than most more traditional religions accept.

In paragraph seven of chapter forty-four, Crowley writes that the Chinese believe an octave has five notes. This is a challenge to any notion of absolute truth as an octave, which by its very definition has eight notes; traditional Chinese music operates on a five note scale. In the last paragraph, Crowley seems to be suggesting that faith makes the mind lazy, thus killing both, but doubt keeps the mind sharp so both stay alive.

In the forty-sixth chapter, Crowley again invokes the Buddhist concept that suffering comes through desire. However, instead of advising his followers to eliminate desire as a Buddhist would, Crowley tells them to desire everything. He does this through an analogy of a moth that strives to reach a star. It is an impossible task, but the moth will never be satisfied. Crowley writes that if a man desires the infinite, he will eventually become the infinite. This again suggests that Crowley believes men can become like God.

Chapter forty-seven lists the uses for different yoga positions and meditations, with each designed to destroy some part of the self. However, Crowley ends the chapter with a joke. He writes that Homard a la Thermidor, a French lobster dish, destroys digestion, and it is this proposition in which he is most confident. It is reasonable to think that Crowley did not take even his own teachings completely seriously, and this idea would fit in well with his praise for doubt in chapter forty-five.



Crowley begins chapter forty-eight with the familiar saying about the early bird and the worm, but he immediately jumps to a far more controversial example by saying "the twelve-year-old prostitute attracts the ambassador," (Crowley, p. 106). In part, Crowley is certainly being intentionally outrageous, but in relating this story to the importance of dawn meditation, he is also drawing a parallel between youth and morning. Perhaps he is suggesting that every morning, it is as if people grow young again.

Much of chapter forty-nine bears an obvious resemblance to the Book of Revelations in the Bible. OUR LADY BABALON is almost certainly the Whore of Babylon. This is reinforced by Crowley's statement that OUR LADY BABALON lives in the harem of IT. Crowley likely praises OUR LADY BABALON and THE BEAST because they bring destruction and death, both of which he celebrates throughout the book.

In chapter fifty, Crowley argues that ego is an illusion that leads people to make assumptions, thus blinding them to true knowledge. This is why the Wind and Wood laugh at both God and the Stag-beetle. Since they both have egos, they speak and behave as if they are separate, but Crowley seems to be suggesting they are really one. This makes God's claim to have created the universe and the Stag-beetle's refusal to worship God silly.



Chapters 51-60

Chapters 51-60 Summary

Chapter fifty-one is another encouragement to doubt everything. It is only by doubting in everything that a man can reach his deepest state of mind (THAT), which he must then kill.

Crowley begins chapter fifty-two telling of the many books he has written explaining THE GREAT WORK. When men come to Crowley asking him to explain this work to them, he refuses. Crowley closes the chapter advising people to speak less and work more to understand THE GREAT WORK.

Chapter fifty-two describes a man attempting to find water using a divining rod. When the man finds water beneath the horse paddock, the horse inside grows wings and becomes Pegasus. Inside the paddock is also the Toad, which Crowley identifies with the feminine force of the universe.

The fifty-fourth chapter describes a group of workers who are sitting idle waiting for THE WORD. They are told by a group of travelers that THE WORD is LOVE, represented by the number 111. The workers resume work, but it does not go as planned.

In chapter fifty-five, Crowley tells the story of a man whose one love is taken away from him. The man longs to reunite with his love by traveling to America, but does not have the money to do so because he spent it all on a trip to Paris with his love.

Crowley begins chapter fifty-six explaining how holy the feminine forces of the universe are, but Crowley immediately renounces and blasphemes all of these for LAYLAH. Crowley then claims that FRATER PERDURABO did not write such blasphemy but writes that it was done by "the Imp Crowley in his Name," (Crowley, p. 122). For the forgery, Crowley should be punished. The chapter ends asking who can distinguish between Crowley and FRATER PERDURABO.

Chapter fifty-seven opens with a comparison of thought to dirt. Crowley then explains that the Rose is useless without the Cross and vice versa, which leads him to again celebrate duality in unity.

In chapter fifty-eight, Crowley expresses his distress at being unable to communicate the secrets of THE GREAT WORK. Still, Crowley celebrates THE GREAT WORK as being "sublime."

Chapter fifty-nine is a short poem on fate. Crowley writes he views fate as good because he will become a Buddha. However, if Crowley were a drunk, he would view fate as being very bad.



Crowley complains in chapter sixty that the things that have elevated man and society in the past have been lost. Since the old moral code now longer serves mankind's needs, a new one must be created. Near the end of the chapter, Crowley refers to himself as the "new Christ" before telling men to do whatever it is they cannot do.

Chapters 51-60 Analysis

In chapter fifty-one, Crowley suggests that certainty is a form of creation, and doubt is a form of destruction. Crowley advises his followers to destroy all certainty in their mind through doubt. In the commentary, Crowley writes that destruction, and thus doubt, will become as joyful as creation, or certainty.

Chapter fifty-two suggests that THE GREAT WORK is not actually something that a man can learn, but something that he must do. This idea is supported by the fact that Crowley harshly condemns talkative people and instead advises them to work. Furthermore, talking is something that reinforces the mind and ego, while work, if practiced enough, can be done without thought.

The fifty-third chapter hints at the magical powers of water as a spring is capable of turning an ordinary horse into a Pegasus. Mystical powers are often ascribed to water, perhaps most obviously in the Christian sacrament of baptism. In his commentary, Crowley describes woman as being one of the "lower animals." It is a matter of debate how deeply Crowley's misogyny ran, but it is certainly fair to say that his views of women were not that far from the mainstream of late Victorian society.

Chapter fifty-four is preoccupied with the number 111. This is strange as Crowley does not explain how the number relates to the number of the chapter as he does for other such chapters. Crowley also may suggest in this chapter that while love is necessary to complete life's work, it is not sufficient. This is represented by the workers returning to work after hearing THE WORD is LOVE but being still unable to successfully complete the job.

The fifty-fifth chapter is an analogy for the separation of the individual soul (Jivatma) and the supreme soul (Paramatma). Crowley argues that this occurs when a man loses himself in enjoyment instead of focusing on the truly important work of following the Path.

Chapter fifty-six continues with the theme of chapter fifty-five. Crowley's love for LAYLAH is causing him to lose the Path. Furthermore, the end of the chapter suggests that it is causing him to lose his role as FRATER PERDURABO. As FRATER PERDURABO, he does not veer from the Path, but Crowley is still imperfect. This again raises the theme of unity in duality.

Crowley's discussion of the Rosy Cross in chapter fifty-seven is certainly a reference to the crucifixion of Christ with the Rose representative of blood. Crowley is arguing here that in order for two to have joy in uniting, they have to first be separated, which is why Crowley is now glad LAYLAH is far away.



In chapter fifty-eight, Crowley hits upon two of his recurring themes: the inability of language to communicate and contradiction. In the fourth paragraph he claims the light inside him just causes more darkness and that the song in him causes dumbness. Crowley is saying that his words more often seem to confuse his disciples than to set them on the Path. However, Crowley still views THE GREAT WORK as one of the greatest goods even if he cannot communicate it to others.

In addition to showing that a man's view of fate rests on his position in life, chapter fifty-nine argues that all things have costs. An example Crowley uses to illustrate this point is that while man might have a spine and high aspirations, his species will die out far before the amoeba. Whatever attribute anything might have, it loses the benefits of having the opposite attribute. In his commentary, Crowley makes reference to Dr. Pangloss, who was a character in Voltaire's novel "Candide," who argued that this is the best of all possible worlds.

In the sixtieth chapter, Crowley seems to be arguing that man must build off of the failures of older societies, but instead the opposite is happening at the present. The new moral code that Crowley advocates appears to be that people must be the opposite of what they are now and everything their society says they should be. This is why Crowley writes that the best women in France, where sex is more restricted, are whores, while the best in England, where sex is rampant, are virgins.



Chapters 61-70

Chapters 61-70 Summary

Chapter sixty-one is a series of puns. The essential meaning of these puns is that once a man's karma is in balance (that is, he owes and is owed nothing) THE GREAT WORK can be finished, which will be the destruction of the universe.

Chapter sixty-two explains many of the symbols used in the blood-ritual discussed in chapter forty-four. It explains that the ritual is about being reborn like a Phoenix.

At the beginning of chapter sixty-three, Crowley writes that he loves LAYLAH but does not have her. Crowley proceeds to say that he gave up all things for LAYLAH's unity, and she gave up her unity for all things. Crowley proclaims himself to be all powerful and demands a hut, some straw, and LAYLAH naked.

The sixty-third chapter is a conversation between Crowley and the angels DIN and DONI. The angels tell Crowley that an energetic man would not eat everyday at the same restaurant. Crowley admits that this is true, but that life would still be diminished if the restaurant were closed. Crowley then tells that though he has slept with several other women, he still desires LAYLAH. Believing Crowley is now inspired, the angels leave.

Chapter sixty-five describes a man dying in the midst of a ritual and being taken in by a Lily, which Crowley explains in the commentary represents Kether. The disciples then find the dead man's body at the altar.

In chapter sixty-six, Crowley again puts LAYLAH above God. Crowley claims that both Unity and God are not even equal to LAYLAH's blemishes and that her number (77) is greater than that of Allah (66).

Crowley explains in chapter sixty-seven how he has made himself happy without LAYLAH by buying "pleasant trifles." However, Crowley realizes that these things are just momentary distractions that make his ultimate situation worse.

At the beginning of chapter sixty-eight, Crowley is eating at a restaurant reflecting on how his situation compares to that of other great prophets. Crowley comforts himself knowing that the food he is about to eat is better than what the other prophets had and that he will be with LAYLAH in a week.

Chapter sixty-nine explains the structure of the Holy Hexagram. It is formed by the red triangle descending down from the gods to accept offerings, and the blue triangle ascending up from man in devotion. Since the hexagram is formed of two tongues, it is associated with the Word of Double Power, ABRAHADABRA, which is also a sign of the GREAT WORK. Crowley ends the chapter by imploring people to love one another.



Chapter seventy describes the Witches' Sabbath. It explains that men believe FRATER PERDURABO is one of the Sanhedrin while women believe he is from the Old Goat. Both men and women adore him, even if they hate him. All offer their children to FRATER PERDURABO and dance around him, but he takes his pleasure from the larger universe.

Chapters 61-70 Analysis

Crowley again equates creation with destruction in chapter sixty-one. The completion of THE GREAT WORK will be the destruction of all things. Furthermore, Crowley ends the chapter calling for the death of all fishes, which Crowley writes in a note is a symbol for Christ. Although this may appear to be a negative statement about Christ, for Crowley death implies resurrection, so it is actually a positive one.

Chapter sixty-two again hints that man can be as powerful as God. The ritual described is performed at sunset, so that the magician's light can replace the sun's dying light. In chapter thirty-three, Crowley writes that the sun was an object of worship for most early cults, so by equating a magician's light with the sun's, he equates the magician's powers with God's.

In chapter sixty-three, Crowley explicitly equates himself and Laylah to the Thelemic gods Hadit and Nuit, respectively. In the chapter's seventh paragraph, Crowley writes "I wrenched DOG backwards to find GOD; now GOD barks," (Crowley, p. 136). This suggests that Crowley looked for God inside himself and thus became God. At the end of the chapter, although he is all powerful, Crowley renounces all material possessions for Laylah, which implies that in order for man to make himself into God, he must renounce earthly attachments as in Buddhism.

Chapter sixty-four is a defense of freedom and variety in life. Crowley agrees that a person should not dine at the same restaurant everyday, but he does believe the option should be available at any time and that it makes life richer. It is similar with sex; Crowley finds little joy in sleeping with other women than Laylah, but he is defending the right to do so.

It should be assumed that Crowley is the one who dies in chapter sixty-five, so clearly the death is not a literal one. What Crowley likely means is that he killed his ego and became one with Kether, which made him appear to be literally dead to his disciples.

In chapter sixty-six, Crowley explicitly places Laylah above God. Moreover, Crowley no longer seems to believe that he deserves punishment for this claim or that it constitutes blasphemy. Perhaps Crowley is suggesting that he and Laylah have become more powerful than God.

In chapter sixty-seven, Crowley returns to earthly attachments and knows that he will be punished for this. In his commentary, Crowley writes that it is pointless for him to ever abandon the Great Work, yet it is not mentioned in the main text of the chapter. The



items he buys are distracting him from Laylah's absence. This could suggest that obtaining Laylah is part (or perhaps even all) of the Great Work.

In chapter sixty-eight, Crowley is disgusted with people, whom he refers to as apes, and their rejection of his teachings. Crowley comforts himself materially with extravagant food and spiritually with thoughts of Laylah. The fact that he expects no punishment for the former may suggest that Crowley is giving up on his teachings. The last paragraph indicates that he is still confident that he will succeed but also that it does not matter as he will die anyway. He also could be suggesting that death is success.

In chapter sixty-nine, Crowley writes that the Holy Hexagram is formed by an interlocking of God and Man, which again suggests an equality between the two. Crowley also explains that the Great Work destroys itself, which makes it the perfect creation. This suggests the Ouroboros, the snake that devours its own tail and is usually used to represent cyclical time and infinite death and rebirth, which is very similar to Crowley's conception of the universe.

The Sanhedrin referred to in paragraph one of chapter seventy were the supreme judicial authority in Ancient Israel. Before his crucifixion, Jesus is brought before the Sanhedrin who convict him of blasphemy, so it is possible Crowley is suggesting that FRATER PERDURABO helped put Jesus to death thereby fulfilling his role. The Old Goat mentioned in the same paragraph is almost certainly the devil. Again, Crowley is likely suggesting a unity between two seemingly opposite figures.



Chapters 71-80

Chapters 71-80 Summary

Chapter seventy-one is an anthem repeating that there is no better way to purify the mind and body than Pranayama.

In chapter seventy-two, Crowley writes of a word that if spoken would destroy the universe. This destruction will be absolute, destroying even logic, which Crowley says is just a game.

Chapter seventy-three begins with Death riding a camel, which struggles forward without water. The camel aspires only to die, which Crowley explains will reunite it with the infinite.

Chapter seventy-four describes how nothing came to be conscious and individualized, which Crowley sees as a negative development. Crowley seeks to return to nothing, so he prepares to sail to Laylah.

In chapter seventy-five, Crowley cannot decide whether to give up all his material possessions for Laylah or Laylah for all his material possessions. Crowley explains that this indecisiveness allows a man to compromise, which can allow him to live a long life peacefully. Crowley is unsure if even this is desirable, however.

Chapter seventy-six begins with a series of one word sentences that Crowley explains in the commentary represent different stages in his cosmology. Crowley then predicts that old, slow horses will run faster than the planets because of the silence following their neighs.

Chapter seventy-seven is devoted entirely to Laylah. The title is a description of Laylah and is much longer than the text, which consists wholly of her name.

Chapter seventy-eight mentions five wheels in motion in the universe, but Crowley writes that only the Wheel of the TARO explains cause and effect and shows man the Path. By using the Taro, man can pass through the Abyss.

In chapter seventy-nine, Crowley attacks those who preach that people should abandon everything. Crowley admits that nature is wasteful, false, useless, and cruel, but it also has several good qualities that outweigh the bad ones. Crowley then writes that while Buddha may have found life too difficult, he finds it too boring.

In chapter eighty, Crowley writes that to exist a man must fight but also that man exists to fight. Crowley further states that he is against all government and threatens to fight a hypothetical questioner.



Chapters 71-80 Analysis

Chapter seventy-one is solely concerned with Pranayama. This is the Yogic practice of controlling one's breath. Crowley's repetition of Pranayama's usefulness serves to underscore its importance.

In chapter seventy-two, Crowley mocks what he considers to be the arrogance of logicians. Crowley writes that if existence had a purpose, it would be only to undermine logic. Crowley is suggesting that seeking answers in logic is a game and therefore a childish pursuit.

The third line of chapter seventy-three refers to Asana, which is a series of positions in yoga. These positions are often uncomfortable, so Crowley is comparing the camel's struggles to a person practicing yoga. In the next to last line of the chapter, Crowley writes of the Infinite Snake Ananta. In Hindu theology, Vishnu lies upon this snake, which surrounds the universe and continues to exist after it has been destroyed. Here Crowley is certainly suggesting that the only way to become eternal is through death, but he also appears to be contradicting his claim from the last chapter that everything in the universe will be destroyed.

In chapter seventy-four, Crowley seems to outline the process for returning to the infinite nothing. First, Crowley must give up material possessions for love, which in this case is Laylah. However, Crowley must go further by giving up Laylah to become a hermit. By progressively renouncing more parts of his being, Crowley seems to believe he can become one with the universe.

The first paragraph of chapter seventy-five refers to Crowley's diet changing from oysters to spring beans and strawberries as the season changes. In the third chapter, Crowley uses the oyster as a symbol for femininity, and so it is sensible to assume he is doing the same here. Thus, the first paragraph symbolizes the choice between material possessions and Laylah. The choice seems to torture Crowley, but he also seems to enjoy having the option.

In chapter seventy-six, Crowley is again attempting to destroy rational thought by affirming one thing before immediately denying it. In the conclusion, Crowley uses the term "neigh" to mean both the sound a horse makes as well as nay. Crowley is arguing that in the silence following the end of the universe, the horses, which represent those different stages of Crowley's cosmology, will continue to exist and carry the spirit onward.

The title of chapter seventy-seven compares Laylah to the HE-GOAT, which is the devil. In the commentary, Crowley explains that this is because in Tarot the devil represents redemption, which Laylah represents to him. Crowley also explains that having the title longer than the text implies all the other contradictions in the book.

The first wheel mentioned by Crowley in chapter seventy-eight is the Great Wheel of Samsara. Samsara is the cycle of birth, death, and reincarnation in a number of Eastern

religions including Buddhism and Hinduism. The second wheel Crowley mentions is that of the Law or Dhamma. Dhamma (also spelled Dharma) is the concept of holy duty in Buddhism and Hinduism. Finally, by portraying existence as a series of wheels, Crowley is attempting to show that it has no beginning and no end.

Chapter seventy-nine is a rejection of many of the Buddhist teachings Crowley incorporates into the book. Crowley embraces the world even if it is transitory and not useful for reaching a higher state simply because it is enjoyable. Again, this shows a battle between Crowley's instinct to satisfy his human desires and his goal of becoming one with the eternal.

Chapter eighty recalls chapter five in its celebration of warfare. In this chapter, Crowley does not see warfare as a necessary evil but instead he sees the time between fights as something to be endured. Crowley's portrayal of himself as an Irishman when describing his urge to fight is in keeping with contemporary stereotypes about the Irish.



Chapters 81-91

Chapters 81-91 Summary

In chapter eighty-one, Crowley claims that he is not an anarchist because he fears what policemen would do if not heavily restrained. Instead, Crowley wants to create a society where rulers care for their subjects like a father to his children.

In the first verse of chapter eighty-two, Crowley declares that there is no individual ego, no joy and that nothing lasts forever. This leads Crowley to wonder in the second verse how it is that everything dies but eternally returns. Crowley concludes in verse three that it is Love that destroys nothingness and recreates life.

Chapter eighty-three is advice to the Adepts. Crowley tells them that since they know that the many is the same as nothing, they do not need to analyze it further but can instead enjoy life.

The beginning of chapter eighty-four explains that to understand the book, a person must be devoted to FRATER PERDURABO, but to write it, he must devote himself to the Holy Books. This isolates FRATER PERDURABO from society and makes him very tired, so he is glad that it is done regardless of the reward.

In chapter eighty-five, Crowley writes that he distrusts anything said by a diseased man because his words are just symptoms of his disease. The best men do everything in silence. According to Crowley, the fact that people like speech just shows that their tastes are corrupted.

Chapter eighty-six explains that the universe is nothing and uses the letters for "nothing" in Latin (N.I.H.I.L.) to represent different aspects of the universe. The second half of the chapter gives a different explanation of the universe in which fire is the foundation for earth, followed by water and then air.

In chapter eighty-seven, Crowley writes that he created several fine dishes of food, but he never tasted anything as good as the Sacrament that Laylah gave him before she left.

Chapter eighty-eight is a parable about a foolish man who wishes to learn Magick. The man asks the master to teach him how to make gold, and the master asks him how much the man would pay for the knowledge. The man gives the master a hundred thousand pounds for the secret of making gold, and the master then tells the man that he is a sucker, but he can cheat other men in the same way.

Crowley declares in the eighty-ninth chapter that the number eighty-nine annoys him, so he will not write the chapter. Crowley says this is good because he cannot even write a good lie while annoyed.



In the ninetieth chapter, Crowley writes that he has traveled all over the Earth and found that there is nothing worthwhile in it except for the love of LAYLAH. Crowley also claims to have traveled across heaven and found that the only thing worthwhile is the love of OUR LADY BABALON. Beyond both heaven and Earth, the only thing worthwhile is the love of OUR LADY NUIT. Crowley then declares that at THE END is the feminine force of the universe.

Chapter ninety-one consists only of the word "A.M.E.N.," which Crowley explains in the commentary is numerated by ninety-one. Crowley concludes his commentary by writing that the final Mystery cannot be solved.

Chapters 81-91 Analysis

In his commentary on chapter eighty-one, Crowley makes reference to the Haymarket affair, which was a strike that took place in Chicago in 1886. Someone threw a bomb at the police, and then a riot broke out between police and strikers. Several anarchists were tried, convicted, and executed for throwing the bomb. This chapter clearly reveals Crowley's sympathy with the anarchists against the police even if he does not approve of their ultimate ends.

Chapter eighty-two directly explains how the circle of destruction and creation continues. Crowley has explained how love pushes forward this cycle many times, but what makes this chapter stand out is that Crowley seems to genuinely marvel at the workings of life, especially in verse two. Crowley's surprise at life and its continuation stand in sharp contrast to his confidence at describing all of existence in earlier chapters.

In chapter eighty-three, Crowley argues that the many and the nothing are completely identical. This stands in sharp contrast to many of the earlier chapters of the book where Crowley attempts to get past the many to the nothing. Crowley suggests that with this realization there is no longer a need to renounce the world.

Crowley returns to the theme of functioning without thought in chapter eighty-four. In his commentary, he compares finishing the book to a glacier coming down a mountain. The glacier does not fall because it wants to or desires a reward, so Crowley writes the book without just as unconsciously as the glacier falls.

Chapter eighty-five continues the theme of the previous chapter but goes further by once again calling thought a disease. However, in this chapter Crowley suggests that it is not thought itself which is a disease but a person's tastes, which are arguably even more deeply ingrained than thought.

Chapter eighty-six seems to be almost purely descriptive, with Crowley merely detailing different views of the universe instead of insisting on any particular one. This might suggest that since the universe is nothing, all views of it are equally correct and equally false.



The first paragraph of chapter eighty-seven refers to a meal of seafood served in birds' nests. This combination is likely meant to suggest an unusual and amazing pairing of the sea and air, which makes the dish, and in turn the Sacrament, all the more perfect.

In his commentary for chapter eighty-eight, Crowley writes that the moral of the story is that people who need to be taught cannot learn. However, it also seems to suggest that excessive greed makes men foolish and will cause them to be poor.

Chapter eighty-nine might seem to be completely useless, but with its brevity, Crowley may be demonstrating the importance of silence.

In chapter ninety, Crowley shows that he believes love to be the most important force in the universe. In the third and fourth paragraphs, he suggests that although he is now old, love will restore him to eternal youth and ultimate power.

The book concludes with chapter ninety-one, which somewhat undermines the rest of the book by saying that the final Mystery cannot be solved. However, this is broadly in keeping with the rest of the book as it is mostly composed of contradictions.



Characters

Frater Perdurabo

This is Crowley himself, although he occasionally hints that he is separable from this title. The name is a magical title Crowley took when he was initiated into the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and it is Latin for "I will endure to the end." Perdurabo is the leader of the magic order Angel and Abyss (referred to in the book as A followed by three dots in a pyramid shape and then duplicated), and his teachings fill most of the book. Perdurabo is the seventh Master of the Temple, preceded by such major religious figures as Lau-tzu, Buddha, Moses, and Muhammad. Perdurabo's teachings often seem serious, but he often finds some humor in them, suggesting a wry sense of humor. Accordingly, he is usually portrayed as a magician of great power and knowledge. Although he often preaches against material attachments, Perdurabo frequently partakes in material pleasures, especially dining at fine restaurants. Perdurabo often expresses a deep appreciation for the beauty of nature and is known as a skilled mountaineer. While he has devoted his life to completing the Great Work and teaching it to others, Perdurabo often becomes irritated at the inability of his students and people in general to understand and accept his message. Perdurabo's primary love interest is Laylah, and she occupies many of his thoughts sometimes causing him to stray from his spiritual path.

Laylah

Laylah is Crowley's primary love interest and a major subject of the book. In many ways, Laylah is simply Crowley's idealized woman, but there are some details about her provided by the text. She is an Australian and is frequently referred to as "night" as that is the Arabic translation of her name. For most of the book, Laylah and Crowley are separated because she is in America. Laylah was last with Crowley in Paris, where they spent all their money living extravagantly. The distance between them only makes Crowley desire Laylah more. At one point, Laylah is compared to the female god Nuit, which presents her as nearly all powerful, and Crowley later claims that Laylah is greater than God. Crowley also describes Laylah as a devil, which is a label that she appears to gladly accept. Crowley sees Laylah as his redemption and the end of the book suggests that she is that, as she gives Crowley the sweetest sacrament he ever experienced.

Horus

Horus is one of the most powerful Egyptian deities and is represented by the hawk.



Gimel

Gimel is the High Priestess in Tarot and is represented by the camel.

THAT

THAT is a name for the unity of all things.

Pan

Pan refers to the Greek goat god but is also a generic name used to refer to all who live above The Abyss.

IT

IT is a name for Ultimate Reality.

V. V. V. V. V.

V. V. V. V. V. is a traveler from the Great Sea in the desert and is also represented by the camel.

OUR LADY BABALON

OUR LADY BABALON is a god, who lives in the harem of IT in heaven and rides upon THE BEAST.

Ra-Hoor-Khuit

Ra-Hoor-Khuit is a major deity in Thelema and is the son of Hadit and Nuit.

Nuit

Nuit is the primary female god in Thelema and is represented by the sky.

Hadit

Hadit is the primary male god in Thelema, who provides the energy to all things.

DIN and DONI

DIN and DONI are two angels who argue with Crowley about his habit of eating at fancy restaurants.



Objects/Places

The Abyss

The Abyss is the space that separates the world from God. Followers of Thelema must cross The Abyss to become one with the universe.

The Night of Pan

The Night of Pan is when all things become reunited as nothing. Followers of Thelema strive to reach The Night of Pan.

City of the Pyramids

The City of the Pyramids is beyond the Abyss but below the Night of Pan. It is a midway point for followers of Thelema between the two.

The Path

The Path is the set of behaviors that ultimately leads to the Night of Pan.

OUT

OUT is where a man must go to find THE PATH. To get OUT, a man must renounce material attachments and even others who seek to find The Path.

Australia

Australia is where Laylah, Crowley's primary love interest, is from.

The Desert

The Desert is another name for The Abyss. It lies between two Great Seas.

The Great Sea

The Great Sea is a place outside the universe. Travelers sometimes come from the Great Sea and bring water into The Desert.



The Harem of IT

The Harem of IT is located in the heavens and is the home of OUR LADY BABALON.

THE GREAT WORK

THE GREAT WORK describes how a person follows The Path. It sometimes seems to refer to the book itself.

PADDOCK

The PADDOCK is home to a horse that is transformed by the Spring beneath the PADDOCK into the Pegasus. It also houses the Toad with the jewel between his eyes.

Paris

Crowley and Laylah spend three weeks in Paris where Crowley spends all of his money.

King's College Chapel

King's College Chapel is a chapel at Cambridge, where Crowley attended college.

Carey Street

Carey Street is where the Bankruptcy buildings are located in London.

The Mauretania

The Mauretania is the ship that takes Crowley to visit Laylah in America.



Themes

Love

Crowley portrays love as the most important force in the universe. According to Crowley, Love is not just the source of new life but also of death, which Crowley views as equally important. This is because Love brings two together as one, thus killing the individual egos. This is true not just between a man and a woman but also at a universal level with the gods Hadit and Nuit. For Crowley, existence moves in a cycle from Nothing to the One to the Many and back again endlessly. In order for the Many to ultimately once again become Nothing, a man must surrender himself through love to everything in the universe.

However, at some points in the book, Crowley expresses some ambivalence about love insofar as it can lead a person from The Path. This is illustrated by the sub-plot concerning Laylah. Although Crowley frequently writes that his love for Laylah helps him to destroy his self, it also causes him to commit blasphemy against the gods. Furthermore, in Laylah's absence, his Love for her distracts him from completing The Great Work and causes him to focus on earthly pleasures. Ultimately, Crowley claims that Laylah gives him the greatest sacrament he has ever known and that her love is the only important thing on earth. This indicates that while love can cause a man to lose sight of The Path, it is also the most important part of The Path.

Thought as Disease

For Crowley, thought is the greatest impediment to true human enlightenment. Thoughts are a series of lies. They also sustain the ego, preventing the destruction of self and unification with the universe. Since thought rests upon the systems of language and logic, Crowley also attacks these systems as misleading. Language can only be a rough approximation of the truth and can easily be misinterpreted by others, so it is not to be trusted. For its part, logic seems to offer certainty, but these certainties are often false.

Crowley offers a number of means for destroying Thought. He recommends doubt instead of faith as it prevents a person from believing in lies. This is also the purpose of the numerous contradictions found in the book. Crowley believes that through these contradictions, the logical system of the mind can be broken down and Thought, along with the ego, destroyed. The constant practice of meditation can also eliminate Thought because if it is performed often enough, it can be done unconsciously. Finally, Love is the greatest method for eliminating Thought as it combines individual egos into one, and Thought is destroyed temporarily during an orgasm.



The Evil of Earthly Attachments

Throughout most of the book, Crowley maintains that Earthly Attachments cause men to lose focus on the spiritual quest to destroy their egos. This idea is mostly borrowed from Buddhism. Crowley advises his followers who have comfortable lives to renounce their possessions and go OUT into the world to find The Path. These Earthly Attachments are not merely limited to material items, however, as Crowley writes that men must even abandon their connections to other followers of Thelema. Men must avoid these Earthly Attachments because if they do not wish to lose their possessions and friends they will be even more hesitant to surrender their lives and become one with the universe.

Near the end book, Crowley reverses his position on Earthly Attachments to a large degree. Crowley argues that once a man realizes that the Many is the exact same as Nothing, he can enjoy the pleasures of the world without fear of distraction. Since the Many will eventually become Nothing again—and vice versa—it does not matter if a man has Earthly Attachments. Crowley goes so far as to explicitly rebuke Buddha and insist that some Earthly Attachments are a positive good. The foremost of these is the Love of a woman, which although it is an attachment, serves to destroy the ego by uniting two as one.



Style

Point of View

Crowley uses a variety of different points of view in the book. Since most of the book is not a narrative, it would be incorrect to call Crowley a narrator, but he frequently writes from an omniscient perspective. For most of the book, Crowley explains the structure of the universe, the nature of the gods, and how humans should behave with the air of complete authority. Occasionally, Crowley gives his advice in the form of a parable but for the most part it is delivered directly, but it never shows any doubt on Crowley's part. In a few chapters, Crowley even goes so far as to write from the point of view of God or a god.

However, in the sections that are personal narrative, Crowley shows doubts and failings, demonstrating that he is less than omniscient and bringing into question the accuracy of the other chapters. These sections are written from a first-person point of view. One of these chapters suggests a difference between Crowley writing as himself and writing under his magic title Frater Perdurabo. Crowley seems to argue that writing as Perdurabo, he makes no mistakes, but as Crowley he is human and fallible.

There are also a few chapters which simply describe rituals of the Angel and the Abyss in which Crowley adopts a third person objective point of view for the purpose of instructing his followers.

Setting

The book primarily deals with Crowley's religious ideas, so even in the small amount of plot that there is, the setting is of a secondary or even tertiary importance. That being said, most of the plot takes place in London but Crowley also spends a good deal of time describing planes of existence outside of Earth.

Crowley lives and writes in London, England around the turn of the twentieth century. This is the end of the Victorian Period, which means social mores and customs are highly restrictive compared to contemporary London. London is also the financial center of the world in an era of globalizing markets, making it a very cosmopolitan city. This is reflected in the book by many of the restaurants that Crowley frequents, which often feature dishes from across Europe. Some of the plot also takes place outside London, such as in Paris, America, or on unnamed mountains, but Crowley never goes into any detail about them.

Crowley also describes existence outside of Earth in much of the book. He writes that the universe is The Abyss and beyond the Abyss is the City of the Pyramids. Above the City of the Pyramids is the Night of Pan, where most of the gods reside and all things are one.



Language and Meaning

The language of this book is relatively dense for a modern reader as it reflects the vocabulary of the time it was written. Furthermore, many of the words and names Crowley uses come from foreign cultures and religions and will therefore be unfamiliar to many readers. The book is also written in a deliberately confusing style. This is likely an effort to prove Crowley's point that language is actually a hindrance to true communication and as an attack on the systems of language and logic.

Most importantly, the meaning of the book's language is very complex. Most phrases can be interpreted in several different ways, and words and names frequently have double or even triple meanings. Most of the symbols used are derived from Tarot, the Cabala, or Eastern religions like Hinduism and Buddhism. This can make the book frustrating at times and necessitate multiple readings to truly grasp Crowley's thought. The commentary can be helpful in deciphering much of the book, but many things are left unexplained or open to interpretation. Finally, a few of the chapters are deliberately incomprehensible to most readers as they are intended to be understood only by members of the Angel and Abyss. This book is meant to be somewhat mysterious and difficult to understand fully.

Structure

The book is divided into ninety-three chapters, most of which are no longer than half a page. Most chapters are short poems written in free verse, but some are simply instructions for members of Angel and Abyss. Each chapter is accompanied by a commentary also written by Crowley, which is often longer than the chapter itself. The subject of each chapter is often determined by the meaning of its number in Tarot or the Cabala. For instance, the number eighteen represents the moon, which was believed to drip dew, so chapter eighteen is entitled Dewdrops. Consequently, the book jumps from subject to subject very quickly.

Most chapters deal with Crowley's cosmogony, the nature of the gods, and how his religion should be practiced. However, there are several chapters that deal with his love for Laylah. These chapters increase in frequency as the book advances. Laylah is absent for most of the book, so Crowley spends much of his time longing after her and not concentrating on his spiritual mission of destroying his ego and becoming one with the universe. Crowley eventually reunites with Laylah, which helps him to see that everything in the universe is already one, so the most important thing for him to do is love Laylah.

The book can be very difficult to read at the beginning because it has no discernible plot. However, the plot becomes more dominant towards the middle of the book making it much easier to read and comprehend.



Quotes

"To beget is to die; to die is to beget."
Chap. 1, The Sabbath of the Goat, p. 12.

"Deliver us from good and evil."
Chap. 2, The Cry of the Hawk, p. 14.

"Peace implies war."
Chap. 5, The Battle of the Ants, p. 20.

"I am not I; I am but an hollow tube to bring down Fire from Heaven."
Chap. 15, The Gun-Barrel, p. 40.

"In love the individuality is slain; who loves not love?
Love death therefore, and long eagerly for it.
Die daily."
Chap. 16, The Stag Beetle, p. 42.

"Love destroyeth self, uniting self with that which is not-self, so that Love breedeth All
and None in One."
Chap. 28, The Pole-Star, p. 66.

"Awake from dream, the truth is known: awake from waking, the Truth is—The
Unknown."
Chap. 30, John-a-Dreams, p. 70.

"All this is true and false; and it is true and false to say that it is true and false."
Chap. 31, The Garotte, p. 72.

"Death is the veil of Life, and Life of Death; for both are Gods."
Chap. 43, Mulberry Tops, p. 96.

"I slept with Faith, and found a corpse in my arms on awaking; I drank and danced all
night with Doubt, and found her a virgin in the morning"
Chap. 45, Chinese Music, p. 100.

"Doubt even if thou doubttest thyself."
Chap. 51, Terrier-Work, p. 112.

"My certainty that destiny is 'good'
Rests on its picking me for Buddhahood."
Chap. 59, The Tailless Monkey, p. 128.

"I wrenched DOG backwards to find GOD; now GOD barks."
Chap. 63, Margery Daw, p. 136.



"For mind and body alike there is no purgative like Pranayama, no purgative like Pranayama."

Chap. 71, King's College Chapel, p. 152.

"And this Many and this Naught are identical; they are not correlatives or phases of some one deeper Absence-of-Idea; they are not aspects of some further Light: they are They!"

Chap. 83, The Blind Pig, p. 176.



Topics for Discussion

Given the name of the book, do you believe it is meant to hold any truth for anyone outside of Crowley himself?

On balance, is Laylah a positive or negative influence on Frater Perdurabo throughout the book?

Would you describe Crowley's philosophy as more worldly or spiritual?

Which is more central to Crowley's philosophy: love or death? (Or is this a dichotomy?)

How would you describe The Path as presented in the book?

Crowley often refers to thought as a disease and likewise dismisses language as misleading. Is it not then inherently contradictory for him to write a book on such subjects? How do you believe Crowley would respond to this question?

Crowley frequently condemns indulging in worldly pleasures throughout the book but also portrays himself as frequently partaking in them. Is this hypocrisy? If charged with hypocrisy, how would Crowley respond?

According to Crowley, how should someone follow The Path?