

The Autumn Equinox Its Spiritual Significance

IN ALL ANCIENT RELIGIONS the four solar festivals marking the sun's equinoctial and solstitial points in the zodiac have always been considered holy seasons. In approaching this study therefore we are not learning a new faith, but only relearning a very old one.

In early Egypt these festivals were celebrated with great pomp and pageantry and in the impressive processions the priests carried the holy books of astrology. These priests taught that both Libra and Scorpio were signs of the autumn equinox. Souls, according to their belief, descended through the serpent, to be regenerated at the vernal equinox by the power of the Lamb, which is a close approximation, we note, to our present Christian teaching.

In Egypt, the origin of evil was also ascribed to the autumn equinox. It was held that as this season ushered in the cold and darkness of the winter, so it also brought temptation and sin unto man.

All peoples have worshiped a god whose strength and weakness they looked upon as symbolized by the light and darkness, and by alternating warmth and the cold as marked by the passage of the sun through the twelve signs of the zodiac. Hercules was revered for hundreds of years before the establishment of the Grecian Empire, his twelve labors describing accurately the passing of the sun through the twelve signs of the zodiac. So also does the work of Jacob and his twelve sons as



From the *Trés Riches Heures* of Jean, duc de Berry (1416), Musée Condé, Chantilly, France

Anatomical Man

Zodiacal Man is circumscribed by a mandorla of signs for the solar year. Corresponding to and ruling parts of the human anatomy, these whimsically-placed sun symbols include the lamb/ram nesting on the head, the bull behind the neck, the Gemini twins peeping out from behind both shoulders, and two fish underfoot.

presented in the Bible.

The autumn equinox was celebrated by the early Hebrews and is referred to in the Old Testament as the Feast of Tabernacles or the Festival of Ingathering. In our Christian Scriptures we also note Ezekiel's reference to the maidens of Israel weeping and looking toward the north for the return of Thammuz who was the Syrian sun god. Astrologically, the murder of Hiram Abiff is also a story of the autumn equinox. The three murderers are

Libra, Scorpio, and Sagittarius. Hiram is the sun who is raised up at the vernal equinox by the Master's word, or the sun in Aries.

Many occult stories of these writers have given the solar festivals from the purely astronomical viewpoint. To interpret their spiritual and Christian meaning becomes the task of our School of Christian Mysticism.

The Christ is a cosmic character and His life is outlined in these solar festivals. Initiation is a cosmic process of development. Man is an epitome of God. As above, so below.

Every man is a Christ in the making and the stars contain an anticipated biography of our own lives. The awakening of the Christ within constitutes the perfect consummation of our present stage of evolution.

At the time of the vernal equinox which the Christian church celebrates as Easter, the sun crosses the equator from the southern into the northern latitudes. This event the Rosicrucians recognize as the time of the Great Liberation, when the sun Spirit, the Christ, is set free from his bondage in the earth.

At the summer solstice, when the sun enters the highest point of its northern declination, it is in Cancer, the great feminine or water sign. It is then that the Christ Spirit reaches the throne of the Father and bathes in the ecstasy of His vibration. The sun then passes into Leo, the great masculine and fiery sign. For mystic Christians this is indeed a holy season.

During the months of July and August, or as the sun passes from Cancer into Leo, the Christ Spirit is blending the principles of fire and water in the renewed, radiant, and glorious life spirit body which He is building as His gift to the earth on Holy Night, or the time of the winter solstice. It is upon this great body of light, furnished by the Christ, that all the life waves evolving upon this planet—mineral, plant, animal and man—are sustained during the year. St. Paul stated a deep occult truth when he said, "In Him we live and move and have our being."

As the sun enters Virgo this great descending Ray of life touches the upper realms of the earth. Mystics and sensitives are conscious of a tender, brooding compassion, a divine, ethereal beauty that envelops all nature, as the sun enters this the divine mother sign. In this season all nature is suffused with the



Planet Art

As Christ reenters the physical earth-sphere at the autumn equinox, He cleanses and purifies the astral envelope of the planet, assisted by Michael and His archangelic hosts. Michaelmas is celebrated on September 29. This balance point of the year (Libra) is also associated with Michael in his eschatological capacity as judge who weighs the merit of souls.

overwhelming love and the sublime glory of His great annual sacrifice for humanity.

In the words of Longfellow it is the time when the air is filled "with a dreamy and magical light" and when the great sun looks down "with the eye of love through the golden vapors around him."

Many other poets have responded unconsciously to these occult truths and given us lovely tributes to the glory and the brooding sadness of autumn time.

*"Divinest autumn! who can paint thee best,
Who guess thy certain crown, thy favorite crest",*
sings one.

And Lucy Larcom in her poem entitled *Indian Summer* has given voice to something of this inner

glory in the beautiful lines:

*To her bier
Comes the year
Not with weeping and distress as mortals do,
But, to guide her way to it,
All the trees have torches lit.*

In the orthodox church we lament, we pray, and we praise Him because He once died for us upon the cross. In that wider conception of Christianity which we are here considering we come to realize that He sacrifices Himself for us annually and that He must continue to do so until we have learned to evolve the powers of the Christ within ourselves. Only in this way may we aid in His final and complete liberation. When the sun enters Libra, this ray of the Christ life definitely touches the surface of the earth. It is this great inflow that the mystic Christian observes so reverently at the autumn equinox.

Important events in the life of Christ are in perfect harmony with the spiritual meanings of these great turning points of the seasons. In the holy joys of the Annunciation we find a parallel to the secrets of the new life of the vernal equinox. In the holy mystery of the Immaculate Conception the sun touches the atmosphere of the earth at the autumn equinox, and at the winter solstice we celebrate the Holy Birth, or the Christmas season.

Libra is the testing place or balance wheel. Saturn, exalted in Libra, brings the earth under the sway of darkness, and also causes man to be tested to the uttermost. But as Venus, the planet of love, also governs Libra, we find that in the divine providence of God's infinite mercy and wisdom there is also provided a means of escape from every temptation brought us by the Great Tester.

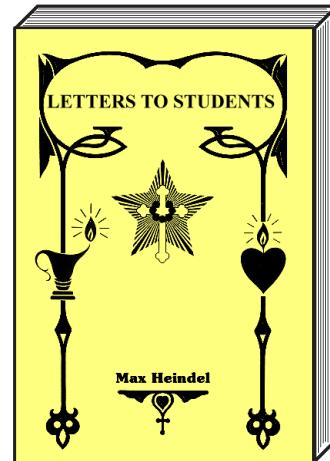
As the sun passes from the vernal to the autumn equinox, or from Aries to Libra, the Christ Life is working through the higher envelopes of the earth. As the sun passes from the autumn to the vernal equinox, or from Libra to Aries, the Christ Life is working through the physical or material layers of the planet.

As we meditate prayerfully upon these sublime, spiritual truths, we find a new, a deeper, and holier meaning in Christ's final benediction given just before the ascension when He said, "Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world." □

—Corinne S. Dunklee

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