

Toward Freedom

JOYCE COLLIN-SMITH, the author of *Call No Man Master*, spent many years with a number of different teachers and their followers. Her experiences led her to accept a basic motto, which stems by tradition from Pythagoras, who forbade his pupils to call him Master: "I too am a student. Call no man master. The master is in yourself."

Collin-Smith's book is described as "fifty years of spiritual adventures—in praise of teachers yet wary of gurus." She accepted the Gurdjieff concept of humankind as a self-evolving species, where each individual needs to make continuing efforts to awaken from sleep and grow towards higher consciousness—this being the purpose of humanity on Earth.

"In truth the Way is always your own. In solitude and with an inward promise, you make the first step, even if it is over a precipice of time and circumstance, saying, For this I give myself. And miraculously you are caught in the arms of Fate and turned to face Reality."

L. Frank Baum reached the same conclusion from a different approach. A self-described "indecisive" author, Baum came from a well-to-do family whose estate was called, appropriately, "Roselawn." When he was a boy, his parents tried to cure him of his day-dreaming by sending him to military school, but that attempt failed, and he was released after suffering a seizure, which was diagnosed as a "heart-attack." Wouldn't you suffer a heart-attack if you were a daydreamer and got sent to military school? Baum's family supported and indulged him while he wrote whimsical stories and dabbled in acting, playwriting, and theater-

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Johfra, Courtesy of Ellen Lorien

Libra

management, finally creating the *The Wizard of Oz*.

Both Joyce and Frank Baum see humankind as a self-evolving species, where each individual needs to wake to higher stages of consciousness and can do so through the guidance of the Master within.

On September 22,* the Sun will reach an equinoctial point and enter the cardinal sign of Libra. Equinoxes and solstices mark turning points or new beginnings and their cardinal nature is indicative of a focus of energy that initiates activity. Initiate. Initiative. Initiation. You take the first step. On the yellow brick road? Yes. For what? For life. For everlasting life. How do we attain ever-

lasting life? Through spiritual advancement, growing toward higher consciousness in order that we may adapt to the rarefied conditions which will prevail as we progress through the Aquarian age and onward toward liberation.

In Atlantis the dense mist which enveloped the earth cooled, condensed, and flooded the various basins. The atmosphere cleared, and along with this atmospheric change a physiological adaptation in man took place. The gill clefts, which had enabled him to breathe in the dense water-laden air, gradually atrophied, and their function was taken over by lungs, pure air passing to and from the lungs through the larynx. This allowed the spirit, until then penned up within the lump of flesh, to express itself in words and daylit actions in order to gain the experience needed to build the soul body, the *soma psuchicon*, the golden wedding garment.

According to Heindel, the most significant events occur at the equinoctial and solstitial points as the sun moves into the four cardinal signs, Aries, Cancer, Libra and Capricorn. The Cardinal signs are the signs of initiative and initiation..

The Autumn equinox occurs in the sign of the Scales, a time of weighing, of measuring, of determining values—and then acting on those values. Libra is the seventh sign and the first in the second half of the zodiac. Whereas the first half represents our early life and our self-development, the seventh house or sign represents our relations with the outer world, particularly with other individuals. It is the house of "the other," the spouse, the lover, the partner, the co-worker, the enemy, and it is in these relationships and the decisions that we make regarding these relationships that we receive most of our trials and opportunities for growth.

On one side of Libra, Virgo stands for generation in its primordial aspect as a spiritual function, which leads to regeneration—but only after it passes through the scales of decision and values. On the other side of Libra, Scorpio requires a decision regarding the use of the creative force—whether for good or ill, regeneration or degeneration—and thus confronts us with the choice of living for the higher or the lower self, of choosing between light or darkness.

Libra refers to the weighing of the soul, know-

ing how to balance between the legitimate requirements of the flesh (the animal soul) and the call and culture of the spirit. Without cultivating equipoise, no spiritual advancement can be made. Venus is the ruler of Libra, but it is Saturn's exaltation in this sign that makes this work possible, for Saturn gives the capacity for law and order. It gives patience and deliberation, application, and resolution—the qualities so necessary for spiritual unfoldment and to the expression of love in all of our relationships with others.

Libra associates with the element of air. Its work comes under the direction of the Archangel Michael and his Hosts and is concerned, as St. Paul phrases it, with the renewing of the mind. In the words of Heindel, from *Gleanings of a Mystic*:

Nature is the symbolic expression of God. She does nothing in vain or gratuitously, but there is a purpose behind every thing and every act. Therefore we should be alert and regard carefully the signs in the heavens, for they have a deep and important meaning concerning our own lives.

The intelligent understanding of their purpose enables us to work much more efficiently with God in His wonderful efforts for the emancipation of our race from bondage to the laws of nature, and for its liberation into a full measure of the stature of the sons of God—crowned with glory, honor, and immortality.

The precession of the equinox, due to a wobble of the Earth on its axis, refers to the sun's vernal crossing of the equator one degree backward in the zodiac every 72 years—a motion which, in about twenty-six thousand years, will bring the sun full circle to its earlier point of departure. This cycle is analogous to and bears evidence of an evolutionary growth spiral.

Previous to the sixth century, the symbol of the Christ was a cross with a lamb resting at its foot. It conveyed the idea that at the time when the Christ was born the sun at the vernal equinox crossed the equator in the sign Aries, the Lamb. The symbols of different religions have their origin in this astronomical fact. At the time when the sun, by precession, crossed the vernal equinox in the sign Taurus, a religion was practiced in Egypt in which

the Bull was worshiped, analogous to our current worship of the Lamb of God. At an earlier time, when the Norse God Thor drove his twin goats across the sky, the vernal equinox was in the sign Gemini, the Twins.

There was a dispute in the earlier centuries regarding the propriety of having the lamb as a symbol of our Savior. Some claimed that the vernal equinox at His birth was in the sign Pisces, the Fishes, and that the Christ's symbol should be a fish. Evidence of that dispute can be seen in the bishop's miter, shaped like the head of a fish. The earliest Christians were identified by the fish, the Greek word for which, *ichthys*, served as an acronym for *Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour*.

Today the vernal equinox is about seven degrees from Aquarius. Since, technically, Earth is within orb of the Waterbearer, we could argue whether we should use the ciphers for Pisces and Virgo or those for Aquarius and Leo. In about 500 years, by precession, we will enter the sign of Aquarius. We are in a time of transition.

1350 years before Christ, when the vernal equinox was in Aries, Akhenaten instituted a monotheistic religion, the worship of the Sun God Aten. Aries is the first sign of the zodiac. Number one. Monotheism—One God. Those who have seen the exhibit of “The Pharaohs of the Sun” may have noticed that the stylized sculpture of the head of Akhenaten looks like the head of the ram, complete with ram's horns as part of the headdress.

It is really and actually true that "in God we live and move and have our being." Outside of Him we could have no existence; we live by and through His life; we move and act by and through His strength; it is His power which sustains our dwelling place, the earth, and without His unwavering spiritual radiations the universe itself would disintegrate. We are taught that man was made in the likeness of God, and we are given to understand that according to the law of analogy we have certain latent powers which are similar to those we see so potently expressed in the labor of Deity in the universe. This gives us a particular interest in the annual cosmic drama involving the apparent death and resurrection of the sun.

As above, so below. The life of the God Man, Christ Jesus, was historically enacted in conformi-



Oil on canvas, 1625-29, Gerard Seghers, Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

Repentance of St. Peter

"We cannot trust too much in ourselves, for we often want in grace and understanding."—Thomas à Kempis

ty with the solar story, and it foreshadows in a similar manner all that may happen to the Man God of whom this Christ Jesus prophesied when He said: The works that I do shall ye do also; and greater works shall ye do; whither I go thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards.

So, what happens when we take that initiative—when we take that first step? When we succeed, we gain more freedom. We advance in our spiritual capabilities. But do we increase our faculties, expand our consciousness? Maybe yes, maybe no. With our new-found freedom, we assume greater responsibility. We gain knowledge. Can we handle it—more freedom and responsibility? More knowledge? Knowledge carries added responsibility and occult knowledge must always and only be used for altruistic purpose, never for personal gain.

When we take initiative and do not succeed, it's a different story; we pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off and begin again. Sometimes we end up doing time—time in the wilderness. Or we get a "time-out," which gives us time to reflect and

retrospect, to sort things out. We may seem to lose a bit of precious time which sets us back, but if we are willing and able to be honest with ourselves, we end up wiser and we gain humility, and, perhaps, an ounce of compassion.

Can we be surprised that the Apostle who blundered the most received the keys to Heaven? When Peter, the outspoken disciple, objected to Jesus' foretelling of His impending suffering and death, Christ rebuked him, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men."

Pledging his loyalty unto death, in response to Christ's words that Satan desired to sift him as wheat, Peter was told "the cock shall not crow this day before thou shalt three times deny that thou knowest me." We have been as earnest as Peter in avowing our good intentions, only to violate them and fall grievously short—and to weep bitterly for the failure—and to learn from it.

Several decades ago, an author advanced a principle, an idea based on the observation that in hierarchically structured organizations new employees typically start in the lower ranks, but when they prove to be competent in the tasks to which they are assigned, they get promoted to a higher rank. This makes sense.

If you do your work well, you get promoted. This process of climbing up the hierarchical ladder can go on indefinitely, until the employee reaches a position for which he or she is no longer qualified. At that moment the process typically stops, since the established rules of bureaucracies make it very difficult to "demote" someone to a lower rank, even if the person would be much better fitted and more happy in the lower position. The result is that most of the higher levels of an organization will be filled by incompetent people, who got there because they were quite good at doing different (and usually, but not always, easier) tasks than the ones they are expected to do in their current position. The term describing this phenomenon is called the Peter Principle, introduced in a book by that title authored by L. Peter. I had always thought that the Peter Principle referred to the Apostle Peter, because while he was undoubtedly a competent fisherman, he, as are all new

aspirants to the higher life, under-qualified for discipleship.

A good question to ask is, do we learn more from our successes or from our failures? Do we learn more from our friends or from our enemies? Do we learn and evolve more from the things that come easy or from the really tough challenges of life? In the secular world, it is suggested that if a species were to overcome all the obstacles in its way then "the Red Queen Principle" would ensure that new obstacles arose. The Red Queen principle is not a law of nature, it is merely a truism. If some species is ever fortunate enough to overcome all its obstacles, then there is no reason why new obstacles should arise. Indeed many species have managed to survive, largely unaltered, for millennia, just because they have evolved to the point where they are fully able to cope with their environment. It is only when the environment changes, which it need not necessarily do, that they will once again have to start running just in order to stay in place.

If ever a species would overcome all its evolutionary problems, then the "Red Queen Principle" would make sure that new, more complex problems would arise, so that the species would continue to balance on the edge of its competence.

What the secular world calls the Red Queen Principle, we call God's Grand Design. The quarter of the year that begins with the Sun's ingress into the Cardinal sign of Libra, culminates in the flexible, adaptable, common or mutable sign of Sagittarius. Every equinoctial or solstitial cycle begins with the Sun in a Cardinal sign and culminates with the Sun moving into a mutable or adaptive sign.

The Centaur of Sagittarius, half man and half beast, represents the higher and lower natures of man. The untransmuted or unredeemed elements of the animal-soul, which retard spiritual growth must be purified and finally transmuted. The archer, who has free-range because he has gained a degree of freedom, must aim his arrow of aspiration high—to the heavens.

The Archangel Michael endeavors to aid man in the Great Overcoming. The symbolic image of Michael as the dragon slayer possesses a planetary as well as a personal significance, for the collective

evil of the race, every year, creates a miasmatic cloud over the earth which, under certain conditions, may suggest the form of a dragon or serpent. Each year at the Autumn Equinox Michael enters into conflict with this dragon-cloud, and each year he vanquishes it anew, slaying the evil cloud so that the fresh inflow of the Christ's magnetic healing currents can course freely through our planet.

In imitation of the Sun's ascent into the Northern heavens, the Candidate to the higher life must learn that his place is with the Father, and that ultimately he is to ascend to that exalted place. Furthermore, as the sun does not stay in that high degree of declination, but cyclically descends again toward the Autumn equinox and Winter solstice to complete the circle again and again for the benefit of humanity, so also must everyone who aspires to become a Cosmic Character, a savior of mankind, be prepared to offer himself as a sacrifice again and again for his fellow men. □

—Elizabeth Ray

Librans—A Brief Profile

Libra is the turning point in the evolutionary process. The nadir of selfness has been reached and in this sign, relationships involving cooperation are born. This is the 'union' or marriage sign of the zodiac, and the soul can no longer function in the 'me' consciousness. It has to become the 'we' consciousness. Now the soul has to balance the world of appearance (the personality) with the inner world of reality (the soul). Venus is the ruler of this sign, for only through love and cohesiveness can true union be attained. The development of relationships is the most important attainment for the Libran. One of the Libran's weaknesses is wanting to be all things to all men. So great is their desire to be liked by everyone, they will not take a stand on an issue, even when they know it to be right inwardly. "Peace at any price," is their motto, but sometimes the price is too high. When integrity is involved, it is well to be willing to pay the price. It is difficult for the Libran to be generous for there is tenacity and Saturn is exalted in this sign. Librans are very secretive about finances and personal matters and will resent any attempt to pry into their affairs. They have an executive and legal type mind. Many lawyers have planets in this sign. Librans are not the stay-at-home types like Virgo and Cancer. They like to travel and



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St. Michael and the Blessed Virgin

explore horizons, either mentally or physically. Librans can work up a storm where other people are concerned. On the surface there is a diplomacy and sweetness, but beneath the velvet glove is a fist of iron. It is hard for a Libran to believe they are dominating and self-willed, but it is true. The esoteric ruler of Libra is Uranus. This explains a great deal.

There is a tendency to stay overlong in the parental nest due to a strong identification with the mother. Because of a strong sense of duty and responsibility it is difficult for the Libran to get away from "the womb of the past." This blockage causes deep seated resentment which becomes stronger because it is unexpressed.

Librans are the diplomats par excellence for they are friendly, outgoing, and interested in living life to the fullest. Their desire for approbation is very strong. In group associations they shine because they are tactful and conscientious, have a strong sense of justice and the will to do good. □

—Isabel Hickey

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