

Appendix 30

Overcoming the Luciferic and Ahrimanic Temptations Throughout the Year with the Calendar of the Soul

In this short article I want to explore the nature of the Luciferic and Ahrimanic temptations during the course of the year, as portrayed in the Calendar of the Soul. These key challenges are expressed most of all in the verses of cross 7. We can call these verses "threshold" or "warning" verses, and they are situated equidistantly from each other, thirteen verses apart: verses 7, 20, 33 and 46 as seen here below.

Verse 7 (May 19-25)

My self is threatening to fly forth,
Lured strongly by the world's
enticing light.

Come forth, prophetic feeling,
Take up with strength your rightful
task:

Replace in me the power of
thought

Which in the senses' glory

Would gladly lose itself.

Verse 20 (August 18-24)

I feel at last my life's reality
Which, severed from the world's
existence,

Would in itself obliterate itself,
And building only on its own
foundation,

Would in itself bring death upon
itself.

Verse 33 (November 17-23)

I feel at last the world's reality
Which, lacking the communion of
my soul,

Would in itself be frosty, empty
life,

And showing itself powerless

To recreate itself in souls,

Would in itself find only death.

Verse 46 (February 16-22)

The world is threatening to stun

The inborn forces of my soul;

Now, memory, come forth

From spirit depths, enkindling
light;

Invigorate my inward sight

Which only by the strength of will

Is able to sustain itself

Unique among the verses of the Calendar, those of cross 7 speak of either "death" or a "threat." We are told that something is happening in the cosmos to which the soul has to respond swiftly and promptly. They are

times of decision. The verses mark approximately the mid-season times of the year, which means they are situated midway between the four festivals that mark the solstices and equinoxes: Easter, Saint John, Michaelmas and Christmas. At these crucial times the soul can strive to create a transition between two different festival moods. It prepares itself while facing the two major temptations, the Luciferic one before Saint John and before Michaelmas, the Ahrimanic temptation before Christmas and before Easter. Let us see how.

The succession of two to three verses leading to a threshold verse, as well as the one or two immediately following, reveal how the Calendar helps us strengthen the soul to negotiate these turning points of the year.

The time after Easter is a time of reconnection and expansion. In embracing the Christ impulse the soul gains a connection with the sphere of cosmic life, one made possible through the deed of Golgotha. This opened the way for the human being to be able to reconnect to and experience the realm of the Tree of Life, expressed in the verses as "cosmic life" or similar expressions. In anthroposophical terms these are the two "lower" ethers—life ether and tone/chemical ethers.¹

Being able to experience an echo of the time before the Fall signifies an expansion of the soul, clearly familiar to all of us in spring and summer. In this feeling of expansion Lucifer can lure the soul away from the Earth into a feeling of otherworldliness, expressed in the words: "My self is threatening to fly forth, lured strongly by the world's enticing light" (verse 7). The soul needs to find a rudder to navigate the further expansion that takes place after verse 7 and before verse 20.

At the end of this journey verse 20 (August 18-24) enunciates a stern warning: unless the soul connects consciously to the world's existence it is threatened because it "would in itself obliterate itself," and even more consequently it "would in itself bring death upon itself," in other words the death of the soul. The Luciferic temptation is really only overcome when the soul, blessed by the gifts of the cosmos in its ascent through the ethers, decides as it were to return to Earth and consecrate itself to its objective needs.

The time following Michaelmas is denoted by the rise of the Michaelic, "self-engendered will" (verse 24) and the power of thinking. The soul in verse 33 (November 17-23) experiences the urgent call of the macrocosm, asking for the "communion of [our] soul" and asking us to "recreate [the world's reality] in [our] souls." This time the danger is not the death of the soul; it is the danger of the world's reality that "in itself [would] find only death." This is the beginning of the Ahrimanic temptation. Turning our attention to life on Earth is not enough for supporting world evolution. To that end we

¹ The lower ethers are those of more recent formation. Though they can be called lower, they are in fact more comprehensive. The life ether encompasses the tone/chemical ether, the light and warmth ethers. The tone ether encompasses the light and warmth ethers and so forth.

must undertake a conscious spiritual development. We must seek the path of initiation.

The process of initiation leads to the "spirit birth" or birth of the higher Self/Manas in the soul in verses 44 and 45. Even when this has been achieved in its initial stages, the soul still faces the danger of the splitting of the soul forces, of which we are warned in verse 46: "The world is threatening to stun the inborn forces of my soul." To this danger the antidote, as we will see more fully in what follows, is the strengthening of the power of memory of that eternal Self which can bring the forces of the soul under its control and avoid the temptation of an egotistical use of the fruits of our spiritual development.

Overcoming the Luciferic Temptation

The verses following Easter are verses of continued expansion into the realm of cosmic life first (from verse 47) and cosmic light afterward (e.g., verses 1 and 4). The verses that precede express what we can experience most strongly of all in our feeling life if we want to be prepared to overcome the Luciferic temptation.

Verse 5 (May 5-11)

Within the light that out of spirit depths
Weaves germinating power into space
And manifests the gods' creative work:
Within its shine, the soul's true being
Is widened into worldwide life
And resurrected
From narrow selfhood's inner power.

This is a verse that signifies a further resurrection for the soul that follows the light not only in its expansion, but also in the deeds in which it unites itself with the work of creation in Nature. Through this penetration of the light in the spheres of Earth the human being itself is "resurrected from narrow selfhood's inner power." This verse anchors us in a balance between heaven and Earth.

Verse 6 (May 12-18)

There has arisen from its narrow limits
My self and finds itself
As revelation of all worlds
Within the sway of time and space;
The world, as archetype divine,
Displays to me at every turn
The truth of my own likeness.

There couldn't be any starker contrast between the "narrow selfhood's inner power" of the preceding verse and the glorious expression of the "revelation of all worlds" and the emergence of the Self of this verse. Clearly this is

something that the soul can only intuit as a far-off destination, something that will become a reality only much later in the year. For the time being this is something we can only feel and fathom; it isn't something that we can fully inhabit as the threshold verse reminds us and warns us immediately after. Coincidentally this is also the time of Ascension, the time in which the Apostles initially believed that Christ was leaving the Earth, rather than more fully inhabiting it. The Luciferic temptation invites us to follow the intimation of the higher Self at the expense of the lower Self, to leave the lower Self behind, if this were possible.

Verse 7 (May 19-25)

My self is threatening to fly forth,
Lured strongly by the world's enticing light.
Come forth, prophetic feeling,
Take up with strength your rightful task:
Replace in me the power of thought
Which in the senses' glory
Would gladly lose itself.

Verse 7 establishes the balance between the desire to overcome our lower Self and the danger of living in a premature sensing/foreknowledge of our higher Self. We can integrate both yearnings if we can find a middle ground and live realistically in the ongoing unfolding of our selfhood power. Verse 7 offers us a direction by first telling us what we can no longer do—rely on the power of thinking “which in the senses' glory would gladly lose itself”—and what we can do—call “forth prophetic feeling [to] take up with strength [its] rightful task.” The necessary transformation of mid-spring has been accomplished and verse 8 of Whitsun does no other than offer a confirmation.

Verse 8 (May 26—June 1)

The senses' might grows strong
United with the gods' creative work;
It presses down my power of thinking
Into a dreamlike dullness.
When godly being
Desires union with my soul,
Must human thinking
In quiet dream-life rest content.

Armed with the new faculty of prophetic feeling—which we can also call “intuition,” “boding,” or “heart sensing”—we are now well armed, not to egotistically lose ourselves in the light and warmth of the late spring, but to surrender in full self-awareness and trust in the help of the spiritual world. By overcoming the temptation of verse 7 the soul will come to the time of Saint John and “trustingly ... seek [itself] in cosmic light and cosmic warmth” (verse 12) able to “seek expectantly to find [its] spirit kinship ... in spirit sources” (verse 13).

The second time the Luciferic temptation presents itself is six weeks before Michaelmas in verse 20, as autumn approaches, a time which is marked by the retreat of the light and the tendency of the soul to gradually turn inward, away from the call of the senses. A danger, we are told, approaches the soul, such as "[it] would in itself obliterate itself, and building only on its own foundation, would in itself bring death upon itself." What comes to our rescue is the presence of cosmic word that I "Have led into my innermost soul" in verse 17. What is the soul asked to experience in the following verses?

Verse 18 (August 4-10)

Can I expand my soul
That it unites itself
With cosmic Word received as seed?
I sense that I must find the strength
To fashion worthily my soul
As fitting raiment for the spirit.

It is natural that, when cosmic Word tries to be heard the soul should stir itself to bring order, to refine and purify itself. It is a moral imperative.

Verse 19 (August 11-17)

In secret to encompass now
With memory what I've newly got
Shall be my striving's further aim:
Thus, ever strengthening, selfhood's forces
Shall be awakened from within
And growing, give me to myself.

By asking us to look back at all that we have received through the end of spring and early summer, memory gives us the strength to consolidate our connection with the emergent Self. This way we come prepared to the challenging threshold that comes with verse 20.

Verse 20 (August 18-24)

I feel at last my life's reality
Which, severed from the world's existence,
Would in itself obliterate itself,
And building only on its own foundation,
Would in itself bring death upon itself.

The antidote to turning away from the world's existence is the cultivation of a conscious connection with Self, which has been strengthened by what we have received from the cosmos between verses 7 and 20. The Self can only grow by turning its attention to the needs of Earth. Conversely, when that is done, the Self grows in presence and power, and this is shown in the next two verses.

Verse 21 (August 25-31)

I feel strange power, bearing fruit
And gaining strength to give myself to me.
I sense the seed maturing
And expectation, light-filled, weaving
Within me on my selfhood's power.

Everything in this verse indicates that we feel, sense and expect before we fathom that this "strange power" is a "selfhood's power." And in verse 22 we go a step further, allowing the light of soul "to bring to birth the fruits whereby out of the Self of worlds the human Self in course of time shall ripen." Through the above efforts the soul develops the determination and courage it needs for the coming Michaelmas season, when the will shall "steel my spirit striving, that sense of Self springs forth from it."

The warning verse 20 announces the encounter with the Lesser Guardian of the Threshold. The soul that lives in the continuous mood of intuition/sensing of the heart may rest content with what it receives from the cosmos without having to further transform the gifts received through the crucible of thinking. It can do so by resting content in spiritual perceptions that do not strengthen the Self, such as in channeling, mediumistic perceptions, or in finding a haven in the virtual world. By such pursuits it separates itself from further world evolution.

We find the challenge further articulated in the weeks that follow verse 20. In the first ones we have seen the importance of the strengthening of the Self. In verses 22 and 23 we witness the retreat of the light and of the stimulation of the senses; the soul may resist this change and cling to the false light of Lucifer, rather than producing light of its own. It may resist the call to self-cognition (selbsterkenntnis) and the facing of its own abyss of verse 24 (September 15-21):

Unceasingly itself creating
Soul life becomes aware of self;
The cosmic spirit, striving on,
Renews itself by self-cognition,
And from the darkness of the soul
Creates the fruit of self-engendered will.

Verse 24 is therefore a calling to face not only the coming darkness of the season, but the meeting of our own darkness at the abyss; in essence a call to set forth on the path of self-knowledge. The gate to objective spiritual reality lies in the encounter with the Guardian of the Threshold. The Luciferic temptation wants to avoid such a meeting.

In the encounter with the Guardian the human being realizes that she can no longer lean on her education, family upbringing, social milieu, nation and race or other inherited conditions, that all of this has been taken away from her.

“And again, it is more than a mere symbolical expression to say that when the Guardian has enunciated his first statement [the above stated], there arises from the spot where he stands a whirlwind which extinguishes all those spiritual lights that have hitherto illumined the pathway of his life. Utter darkness, relieved only by the rays issuing from the Guardian himself, unfolds before the student. And out of this darkness resounds the Guardian's further admonition: ‘Step not across my Threshold until thou dost clearly realize that thou wilt thyself illumine the darkness ahead of thee; take not a single step forward until thou art positive that thou hast sufficient oil in thine own lamp. The lamps of the guides whom thou hast hitherto followed will now no longer be available to thee.’”²

The above situation is what appears poetically spelled out in the language of verse 24.

Everything in the Calendar of the Soul, and in the realm of feeling, is a matter of rhythm and balance. We cannot overcome one adversary without getting closer to the other. We cannot exert some soul faculties without, after a time, turning to the complementary ones. This is what happens now during fall and winter.

Overcoming the Ahrimanic Temptation

As we know what mighty challenge comes forward to meet us in verse 33 in mid-November—the risk that the world reality “would in itself find only death”—we fathom that key qualities to develop at this time are Michaelic strength and resolve, clear thinking, and the ability to harmonize our soul forces.

Verse 31 (November 3-9)

The light from spirit depths
Strives to ray outwards, sun-imbued;
Transformed to forceful will of life
It shines into the senses' dullness
To bring to birth the powers
Whereby creative forces, soul-impelled,
Shall ripen into human deeds.

Two themes follow Michaelmas; they intertwine the strong Michaelic determination of the will and the light and power of thinking. In the following verses it is the former that prevails. In this verse thinking is not mentioned directly, but the light in which it lives in the Calendar is present nonetheless. We want to imbue our human deeds with the light of

² Rudolf Steiner, *How to Know Higher Worlds*, chapter 9, “The Guardian of the Threshold.”

consciousness. Something else is added to the next verse that goes in the same direction.

Verse 32 (November 10-16)

I feel my own force, bearing fruit
And gaining strength to give me to the world.
My inmost being I feel charged with power
To turn with clearer insight
Toward the weaving of life's destiny.

The soul has confidence it can engage with the world. This confidence now lives directly in the feeling, as it will as well in the following verses. The soul also knows that "insight toward the weaving of life's destiny" is what offers a context to its actions. If we are confident about where we belong, our deeds will flow with more ease and meaning. They will more naturally enter the context of our immediate environment. We arrive at the threshold verse having integrated the forces of thinking, will, and more and more our feeling life (verses 32 to 34).

Verse 33 (November 17-23)

I feel at last the world's reality
Which, lacking the communion of my soul,
Would in itself be frosty, empty life,
And showing itself powerless
To recreate itself in souls,
Would in itself find only death.

The verse indicatively calls first of all to our feeling life once more. In our hearts we sense the call of the cold world in winter, an image of what the world would turn into without human conscious participation. We can turn this message into its positive, which is what the soul takes up as a challenge. "I will commune with the world around me and I will strive to encompass it in my being." I will allow the world to recreate itself in my soul means abolishing the distance between my thinking and the formative forces that act in Nature—becoming a participant in the world process by acquiring imaginative consciousness. This is what allows the external world to "recreate itself in souls."

Verse 34 (November 24-30)

In secret inwardly to feel
How all that I've preserved of old
Is quickened by new-risen sense of self:
This shall, awakening, pour forth cosmic forces
Into the outer actions of my life
And growing, mould me into true existence.

If the soul takes up the challenge of verse 33 an immediate result of this sense of belonging is felt immediately. What has been intermittently qualified as selfhood power, or Self, acquires new strength. What it pours into the world are no longer just human deeds but actions into which we

can pour "cosmic forces." The verse underlines that sense of Self that was first announced as a goal in the Michaelmas verse. This sense of Self signifies a recognition of our higher Self, a recognition that this higher Self is the architect of our biography, to which we gladly submit.

The soul that has taken this new step of individual responsibility is now ready to take another momentous step, the one that the Calendar calls the "spirit birth," which prepares us to another threshold in overcoming the Ahrimanic temptation. We are entering more and more into conscious participation, to borrow Owen Barfield's terminology.

We start the second part of the trial from verses 44 and 45 of February, which form a whole. In the lead up to these verses the soul has strengthened both its thinking and its will. The will, imbued with forces of the heart, has been expressed in terms like "heart's own core" (41) and "warmth of heart" (42) or "true spirit life with glowing warmth" (43). It has manifested in "human loving and human working" (41) and has "anticipated ... the sense world's revelation (42) or "give[n] to world appearance ... the power to be" (43).

Verse 44 (February 2-8)

In reaching for new sense attractions,
Soul-clarity would fill,
Mindful of spirit-birth attained,
The world's bewildering, sprouting growth
With the creative will of my own thinking.

In this first step is expressed the response to the challenge of the world's reality's need to "recreate itself in souls" of threshold verse 33. The "creative will of my own thinking" is of the same nature as the forces present in "the world's bewildering, sprouting growth." The attainment of sense free thinking is given another shade of meaning in the following verse.

Verse 45 (February 9-15)

My power of thought grows firm
United with the spirit's birth.
It lifts the senses' dull attractions
To bright-lit clarity.
When soul-abundance
Desires union with the world's becoming,
Must senses' revelation
Receive the light of thinking.

The spirit birth renders us participant in the "world's becoming." We can abolish the separation of the senses from spiritual reality. We can penetrate behind the veil of the senses through "the light of thinking." But, when all seems to have been brought to an end we are reminded that the transition from letting the spiritual world coordinate our three soul forces to taking on

this task actively in our hands is still fraught with one danger, that of the splitting of the soul forces, spelled out by the next threshold verse.

Verse 46 (February 16-22)

The world is threatening to stun
The inborn forces of my soul;
Now, memory, come forth
From spirit depths, enkindling light;
Invigorate my inward sight
Which only by the strength of will
Is able to sustain itself.

As the certainty of Self is taken away from us at the threshold, we only have the power of memory to form a bridge that carries us beyond it. In so doing we can harmonize our soul forces and overcome the temptation to use them on this side of the threshold in accord with Ahriman's intention of rendering physical reality ever harder.

Verse 47 (February 23—March 1)

There will arise out of the world's great womb,
Quickening the senses' life, the joy of growth.
Now may it find my strength of thought
Well armed by powers divine
Which strongly live within my being.

What was announced in verse 44 is now restated with emphasis. The forces of growth announced in February are now getting stronger, and so is our strength of thought. The sphere of cosmic life, lying in "the world's great womb" can be met with thinking when it achieves the last step of its transformation in the next verse.

Verse 48 (March 2-8)

Within the light that out of world-wide heights
Would stream with power toward the soul,
May certainty of cosmic thinking
Arise to solve the soul's enigmas
And focusing its mighty rays,
Awaken love in human hearts.

In verse 48 thinking renders us citizens of the cosmos, not just willing to match the forces of the cosmos with our own soul forces, but able to bestow blessings upon the world. The human being can perceive what she thinks and, freed from illusion, bestow love devoid of egoism. She can also accomplish truly free deeds. It is in the spirit of selflessness that she can approach the great time of reversal that comes with Easter and the return of the Luciferic temptation.

In essence verse 46 is a call to serve the Greater Guardian of the Threshold, behind whom we can divine the Christ being. It's a call to sacrifice the fruits of our self-development in service to humanity and world evolution.

As Rudolf Steiner reminds us in this regard, these are the words of the Greater Guardian: "Until now, you have worked only to free yourself, but now that you are free, you can help free all your fellow beings in the sense world. Up to now, you have striven as an individual. Now you must join yourself to the whole, so that you may bring with you into the supersensible realm not only yourself, but also all else that exists in the sensible world."³

In Conclusion

In reviewing the year in relation to the thresholds of cross 7 we can recognize the archetypal pattern of the confrontation with the adversaries of the human being. Each of the verses warns us of the necessity of a change. If we start from the spring, the first call of verse 7 directs us to a counterweight against the danger of unrestrained expansion into the ethers. It offers us the power of intuition/sensing of the heart as an antidote, as an inner guide to wisely receive the gifts of the spring and summer season.

Verse 20 in essence reminds us that it is only through a proper crossing of the threshold that we can avoid illusionary spiritual paths and the death of the soul. We have to face our shadow and to that end dedicate ourselves to the needs of Earth. A proper crossing of the "dark of space and time" (verse 24) of our abyss is essential at this point.

In verse 33 the soul continues the path of initiation and to that end has undertaken the transformation of the power of thinking and the transformation of the will. When this path is undertaken we can but realize that the Earth's future is intimately connected to our soul development, to the attainment of sense-free thinking. In Imagination and further transformations of our thinking we are no longer mere spectators; we acquire conscious participation in the world process. We can become co-creators.

Finally, when mid-winter time comes (verse 46) we face another danger. The path of spiritual development that serves humanity and the Earth's future is one of renunciation and self-sacrifice. At the meeting with the Greater Guardian of the Threshold we have to offer the benefits we have derived from our own self-development to the service of humanity. Resisting this call would mean turning our faculties into the greatest possible egotism on Earth. Armed with the power of love and willing sacrifice the power of thinking gradually dies to resurrect in the human being as an experience of the realm of cosmic life.

In rendering ourselves cognizant of the nature of the two major yearly temptations we can navigate the course of the year and undergo the subtle soul transformations we need in order to transition from one cardinal

³ Rudolf Steiner, How to Know Higher Worlds, chapter 11: "Life and Death: The Great Guardian of the Threshold."

festival to the other. Our life of feeling will be enriched and so will be our connection to the yearly festivals.