The Autumnal Equinox: (September 21) *Copied from an unknown source.*

The Autumnal Equinox is also a harvest festival and a prepa­ration for the cooler, darker times ahead, when days are "drawing in," as the old saying goes.

As for the Vernal Equinox, prepare the Antiphonal Chant:

N: What is this night?

s: It is the night of the Autumnal Equinox.

E: What is the meaning of this night?

w: It is the night of balancing.

n: What are the elements that balance on this night?

s: Tonight, the light and the darkness are equals.

e: After this night of balancing, which will prevail?

w: From this night forward, darkness will prevail over light.

N: How do we recognize ourselves on this night?

s: We turn away from light. We embrace the darkness. We find the darkness within ourselves.

E: Who helps us?

w: Our Goddess helps us.

n: What is our Goddess?

s: She is the brightness and the shade, the ash and the fire, the evening and the morning.

E: Who is our Goddess?

w: She is the Virgin of Light, the Crone of Darkness, the Mother of Time.

N: Where is our Goddess?

s: She is in our hearts in all seasons of the turning year.

E: Who is our Goddess? w: Behold, she is ourselves.

Autumnal dances can pantomime the fall of the leaf, the shortening of the day, the closing in of creative energies toward a period of rest in the dark core of things. Like the beginning of ges­tation, when everything is going on in secret, this is a woman-cen­tered time. Not concerned with striving always and only toward the idea of the light, ancient matrifocal religions recognized the equality and equal necessity of shadows and caves, interiors as well as surfaces, winters as well as summers. Therefore, women's rituals celebrate the coming of the dark time as essential to the regeneration of another cycle.

Autumn leaves and wildflowers are obvious choices for altar decoration. So are mementoes of summer vacations; symbols of completed projects; feathers to represent the rising winds; acorns; insect cocoons; late-summer fruits such as berries, grapes, and apples. The Autumnal Equinox is a good time to cut apples penta- cle-wise (transversely) and share them around the circle. It is a time to tell stories. It is a time to begin a new learning. It is a time to light another wish candle and let it bum away, taking all wish­es together into the atmosphere.

Special costumes might be created for this festival in imita­tion of the colorful clown-livery that the trees wear, or will soon wear. Participants bring bags full of small bits and snippets of bright-colored cloth, ribbon, rags, and other oddments, with a big supply of safety pins. They adorn each other by pinning these 'leaves" all over their clothing, then dance like bright autumn trees in the wind. The "leaves" can be unpinned and discarded one by one, symbolizing the trees' shedding of their fall finery in anticipation of winter.