



## TRACKS

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at the verb “to **track**” - I.1.a. - 1565 – *transitive*. To follow up the track or footsteps of; to trace the course or movements of; to pursue by or as by the track left; with down, out, up, to follow up or trace until found or caught.

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I have never understood why the season of Autumn has had a particular power to access me. I don't mean that I merely **like** Autumn; I mean that in some way I **belong** to Autumn. If there is any poetry in my soul it is most accessible to me in Autumn.

Do you have a season that affects you in a similar way? Do you know why it does?

Each Autumn I would seek an insight into why Autumn and I are entwined as we are. It was only a few years ago that it suddenly occurred to me to inquire about the date that lies nine months before my birthday on June 17th, four days prior to the summer solstice? And there it was: I was conceived in what most of us would count as Autumn - on September 17th (occurring five days prior in 1953 to the autumnal equinox), which equinox happens this year on Sunday, September 22nd at 5:43 AM PDT). Had I found the insight that I had sought?

And let's say that I was conceived on that Thursday in 1953 (I was also born on a Thursday in 1954), conceived on the feast day of St. Robert Bellarmine, SJ (1542-1621), conceived four days before my dad's 26th birthday. Is that why I have felt so significant a connection to Autumn? Our human natures are far more connected with Nature than we guess, or so I guess.

And in the traditional way of affixing the dates of Jesus Christ, Mary had her visit with the Archangel Gabriel in Nazareth in the Spring of the year, on March 25th, a few days after the vernal equinox. This means that nine months from March 25th, on December 25th, Jesus would be born.

I wonder whether Jesus felt a particular connection to Spring. I don't know why I do, but I have always associated Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan River, and then His being tempted in the desert, as both having occurred in the Spring. That our Lord came out of hiding and revealed Himself to us in the Spring appeals to me. It may have appealed to Him also.

But did you also know that it has been the long tradition of the Church to suggest that Jesus was crucified and died on March 25th, a Friday, thirty-three years after His conception? This date, and for this reason, is of central importance in understanding the timeline of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. For in that great story, the One Ring was destroyed on Mount Doom on March 25th: "The realm of Sauron is ended!" said Gandalf, "The Ringbearer has fulfilled his Quest."

Anyway, welcome Autumn!