

The Books of the Relative by Richard Rose

The following essay is available in Richard Rose's book, *Carillon: Poems, Essays, and Philosophy of Richard Rose*. This delightful and enlightening book will carry you from the poetic to the profound. The idealism and romanticism of youth, the realism of maturity, and the wisdom of spiritual attainment are eloquently and poignantly expressed in Richard Rose's poetry and prose. If you like the dynamism and spontaneity of Richard Rose as writer and teacher, please order *Carillon* from www.tatfoundation.org or www.rosepublications.net.

I.

My name is legion, but I have but one Lord. I am an army standing against myself, and for the dust of my flourishes, I cannot see my Lord.

Our voice is like thunder, and madly we shout to be heard above our echoes. How then can we hear the voice of the Lord? Loud is the flesh, so that its ears are drowned to the voice of the Lord.

We have conquered other armies, we have built cities, we have founded cultures, this we have done on our blood and on our flesh. Now our legion is restless and would enter into dissatisfaction with its members. And the army that was mighty sets upon itself, like the hunter against his hounds, like the hounds against the master. So that as time passes the army is less, and they that were legion may be counted on the fingers of the hand.

And this handful of units, dissatisfied with the struggle and having grown dear to one another, swore to seek out the Lord together and to abandon vanity and glory to look into His face. And not having seen Him, they knew not what terrible or holy thing His face might be.

But now that they were less, and their tumult was less, they could hear the voice of the Lord, and it came like a whisper, and each thought that it spoke to him alone and to his ear.

And to one it said, "Eat not meat." And to another ear it said, "Eat only fish and the plants of the earth." And to another it said, "Eat only the plants of the earth."

And each thought he heard correctly, and each swore that his ear was the vessel of the word of the Lord. And each heard the voice say, "Thou and the Lord are one. He who is alive when the remainder are dead -- he is one with the Lord."

And this drove them to strange acts. Some ran with a ladder to climb to the height of sound. Others brought forth magical instruments with which to examine the voice of the Lord. Others built boxes, like churches, to house the echoes of His voice, so that they might encompass Him forever. And others tried to beget children, thinking that their children might find the Lord. But in the end, maddened and dismayed, they fought and slew each other, until but one remained.

And this One, lonely in His wisdom and saddened at His path of flesh and blood, and at the loss of his dearly loved brothers, cried out to the Lord. He cried, "O Lord, long have I battled and sacrificed. I have exchanged my sons for a ladder to my Lord. I have destroyed my temples, my vanities, and burned my books, and yet I have found no ladder to lead me to the source of thy voice. O Lord, give unto me a sign for a way, for a path, for a ladder, and for a discernment that I will know, when I see, that which is a True path, that which might be a True way, that which might be a ladder of direction, on whose rungs each step is carefully numbered. I have slain these liars, my brothers, and I have none to teach me save thee. I have slain my spouse when she spoke out against thee; now thee must I love only. Wilt thou love me in return and grant me favors from the bounty of thy love? Wilt thou convey to me the words of magic that change lead to gold, move mountains, and rouse the demons slumbering in the bowels of the earth? Wilt thou now whisper the ineffable word, that will be a door to all wisdom, now that there are but two of us?"

And the voice replied, "I am the beginning and the end. I am the bowman, the arrow and the victim. I am the Way. I am the Path. I am the Ladder. And the numbers are so written that they can only be seen from above, when the feet are upon them. And when thus seen, the feet are part of them. For that which climbs is always upon a ladder.

"I speak and thou hearest Me not. I am the Truth. I am the Love. And as I promised, I and thou are one. So that truly thou must be honest to thyself, and love thyself for My sake. Thou art now the fox and the hare and art still the hare even after the fox has taken thee into his jaws.

"And now thou speakest to Me of a word. And I reply to you that the word and I are one. And you and I are one. And if I spoke a word unto thee, then there would be two people, the hearer and the speaker. But this is now not so. For we are one. Long have I been divided against myself, but now thou hast found me. Let there be no question or answer. Let there be no positive word, for that is creation, and it begets the negative. Let us be one. And this One shall be I who am, unborn and undying. Seek not for a word, for then shall we be three, and these shall cast other reflections until there shall stand armies preparing to war against one another. And their name shall be legion, and my voice shall be like a gnat's looking vainly to be heard.

"I am the voice of silence. I am the joy and the sorrow. I am the beginning and the end. Be still and know that I am the discernment."

II.

Speak to me, O Guru, of that which is True and that which is certain.

And thus it came about that the Guru spake to his chela. Wherein will you find the Truth? Shall the guru who trades thee Truth for rice extend to thee a commodity worth more than the rice?

Shall the guru who asks you to rely on faith support thy quaking soul at death?

For is not faith an instrument and not an end in itself. The faith of the Mohammedan is fatal to the Christian, and separate creeds call upon us to extend faith to them while they stand apart and even opposite to one another. So that the sacred implementation of faith is used as a weapon rather than a celestial lever.

Though I possessed the Truth, particular and absolute, still I could not give it to thee, for how could I converse except by words, which are relative.

I say that the Truth is in thee, but that with the help of the guru thou mayest find thyself. And to know thyself, thou must first know that which thou art not, lest thou mistake thy alter-ego for the real.

And you wouldst ask me for that which is certain, and I say that all that thou wouldst know in honesty is that thou knowest nothing for certain. And if thou knowest this, thou hast made a worthy beginning. Let thy beginning be from zero. Fill not thy mind with false assumptions, and let the doubt live until it is drowned in evidence.

Look at thyself to see if thou thinkest from fear or desire. Among thy fellows, thou will see great numbers who have followed a vain religion out of fear. Others have changed their religion out of a desire for the seemingly better things the other religion offers. Others will change religion because of benefit to their economy. And thou will look with scorn upon all of these but forget to ask thyself, "What do I really know for certain? What has brought me to the door of this temple -- has it been true intuition or masked desire?"

This I would tell thee as a certainty. Man cannot learn by starting with presumption. Man cannot start with the Truth because he knows not where it is or what it is, and since he cannot have anything proven to him when he is not acquainted with it, he must become acquainted before the proving.

Man must make a start. He must seek. Not knowing what the True is, he must in every situation take that which is evidently more true than the other. Thus will he approach the altar. Seek thou for books and people. These are thy guru until thou findest the Guru who knows all. Look not with scorn on the great soul of Buddha, who gives advice to the ages to seek the path and the sangha. In the darkness, even the sage goes hand in hand with a sage to take surer steps and avoid the abysses. And this is brotherhood.

Seek not ye out men who profess to know all, for these men are liars. If they knew all, the world would join to build temples to them. But seek ye humble men who will with thee build, stone upon stone, a wall to keep out the forces of ignorance and adversity and to retain that which thou mightest forget if thou hast no wall to remind thee. Gather ye from the far corners of darkness, and joined in groups work ye and comfort one the other. And let all exult with the progress of one.

Turn thy back to the light lest it blind thee, but advance toward it in this manner. Always thy face shall be toward the darkness of ignorance, for thou need not be wary of the Light.

Make one step in seeking, and make another. And these things shall be made known to thee, and with each step it will be easier to follow the next.

Help another to thy level, and the seeds of brotherhood are planted, and then shalt thou rise.

Thus spake the Guru.

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