



*William Lilly*

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# ASTROLOGY

**William Lilly**

# **An Introduction to Astrology**

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# Preface.

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AFTER a lapse of 205 years since the first publication, in 1647, of *Lilly's Introduction to Astrology*, there would be no necessity for an apology for its re-appearance, were it not for the prevailing fashion of the day, which is to rail at and vituperate that science, and all who dare to say a word, not in its favour, but in favour of examining into its merits, with a view to ascertain what were the grounds on which our honest ancestors believed, and strictly followed, that which we conceive only fit for ridicule. As I have long outlived the days when I, like many others, thought myself at liberty to laugh at, and condemn, what I did not understand; the world will forgive me if I be bold enough to advise those who value truth, to spend a few days (and but a few days will be necessary) in examining the principles laid down in this work, and applying them to their own individual cases, before they join the herd of learned and unlearned in pledging their words to a false assertion, viz. that Astrology is an unfounded science. If any man will take the trouble to examine for himself, and should find that the prejudices of his education against the science of foreseeing the future, and many other matters which it teaches, are in reality well-founded, and that it has no claims to truth, then will he have the proud satisfaction of knowing, that his opinions on a matter of some consequence are based on experiment, and are the result of his own conviction, not of another person's assertion. On the other hand, if he find truth flash with

lightning force upon his mind, and convince him that Astrology, notwithstanding prejudice and abuse, is founded in nature, and is indeed a noble science, given by a benevolent Creator to enlighten man in his wanderings, and enable him to shun the vice and folly which his passions throw in his path; then will he, if a spark of piety exist within his breast, offer thanks to that Creator for the blessing he has discovered. In either case, he must admit that I do him a service in putting forth this plain and simple means of discovering the truth.

This is "the age of enquiry;" and yet prejudice continues to press down her leaden foot upon the neck of examination in this matter. I can only attribute the pitiable fact to the circumstance of there being no recent publications on those parts of Astrology which are the most easily acquired. The art of *Nativities* requires many years of patient experimenting before it can be well understood, and practised with certainty and satisfaction. The art of *Atmospherical Astrology*, and also that of *Mundane Astrology*, alike demand much time to penetrate their arcana, and a good education to follow their practice. Hence we may account for their comparatively confined study: few have either the abilities or the opportunity to wrestle with their difficulties.

But *Horary Astrology*, the chief subject in this work. may be speedily learned by any person of even moderate abilities; and may, as far as regards its elementary difficulties, be mastered in a few days' study. It may be well understood, and reduced to constant practice in less than a quarter of a year, and no one will find himself at a loss for

occasions to test its reality or its utility; for his own avocations, and the affairs of his friends, will offer these almost daily. If a proposition of *any nature* be made to any individual, about the result of which he is anxious, and therefore uncertain whether to accede to it or not, let him but note the hour and minute when it was *first* made, and erect a figure of the heavens, as herein taught, and his doubts will be instantly resolved.

He may thus, in five minutes, learn infallibly whether the affair will succeed or not; and, consequently, whether it is prudent to adopt the offer made or not. If he examine the sign on the 1st house of the figure, the planet therein, or the planet ruling the sign, *will exactly describe the party making the offer*, both in person and character; and this may at once convince the inquirer for truth of the reality of the principles of the science.

Moreover, the descending sign, &c. will *describe his own person and character*; a farther proof of the truth of the science, if he require it. Here, then, is a ready test of the *truth* of Astrology. Will its adversaries dare to make its application? It would, methinks, be better than relaxing the broad muscles, which ever denote ignorance and surprise, the feelings which, combined are the undoubted source of laughter; the only argument of the idiot, the ready resource of the ignorant.

In editing this work, my chief object has been to render it useful to the student in Astrology and so, by forwarding the science, to promote the general interests of humanity.

With this view I have re-written those parts of the work which modern discoveries in Astronomy and Astrology have

rendered obsolete. *Tables for calculating Nativities* and a *Grammar of Astrology* are adjoined, and every ingredient of the science given which the student is likely to require.

As regards the deviations I have made from the rules of the author, they are few, and founded on much experience. I have omitted his chapters on nativities, as in that part of the science he was less perfect than in any other; the reason being that he relied on essential dignities, which are, by my experience, of little, if any, avail. The rules for calculating arcs of direction will be found in the *Grammar*.

In conclusion, I have no desire to offend any class of men by putting forth this work: I do not know whether I should not respect even prejudice, for the sake of peace, were it not that I cannot conscientiously consent to abandon truth in the effort. I am callous to the puny efforts of critics who may desire to pour on me the waters of vituperation or ridicule, having already passed through a flood. After many years' experience, I have found the laws of Astrology unailing; and as I can discover no prohibition of its practice in the Word of God, I am prepared to defend it against all the foolish attacks of those who falsely declare that it upholds fatality, or is opposed to the providence or the revelation of the Deity. And I am contented, with God's blessing, to give up the ghost in the firm persuasion, that, in Maintaining what I believe is the truth in this respect, I shall meet, hereafter, through the goodness of God and the merits of my Saviour, with a merciful judgment.

I am, reader, your devoted friend and well-wisher in all science which may honour trod and benefit mankind.

ZADKIEL.

# Life of William Lilly.

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IN offering an abstract of the most valuable of this clever astrologer's works to the notice of the public, I consider myself called upon to make some mention of his personal history. And it fortunately happens that this is not made up of imaginary ideas, founded on a few known facts, and a multiplicity of suppositions; for what we know of this man of extraordinary talent rests on the best evidence. He undertook, in his sixty-sixth year, to write a history of his own life to his "worthy friend," Elias Ashmole, Esq., afterwards Sir Elias Ashmole, the founder of the celebrated museum which bears his name. Mr. Ashmole made marginal notes therein, which testify his high opinion of our Author; and, fortunately for the cause of Astrology, this gentleman verified the correctness of the Figures of Heaven, which are given in the subsequent pages; for we find the following note at the foot of page 131:--"*I devised the forms and fashions of the several schemes, E. A.*" This note was made after these observations of Lilly. "The desire I had to benefit posterity and my country, at last overcame all difficulties; so that what I could not do in one year, I perfected early the next year, 1647; and then in that year, viz. 1647, I finished the third book of nativities; during the composing whereof, for seven whole weeks, I was shut up of the plague, burying in that time two maid servants thereof; yet, towards November that year, the Introduction, called by the name of *Christian Astrology*, was made publick."



The fact of this work having been chiefly composed under such awful circumstances, with a dreadful death immediately before his eyes, with the pestilence ravaging his own house-hold, might, with unprejudiced men, have been taken as a proof that the writer was sincere in what he wrote; and really believed in the truth of that which he taught to others as truth under the solemn appeal to Almighty God, which is so beautifully worded in his introductory epistle. Modern critics, however, can see no force in this argument, but unhesitatingly condemn *William Lilly* "as an accomplished impostor, and a knavish fortune-teller." <sup>1a</sup> Such, reader, is the force of prejudice. It will not allow men to examine before they condemn; for if it did, then would the literary world speedily acknowledge the reality of those doctrines which our Author has so ably set forth in the following pages.

William Lilly was born of an honest yeoman family, in the town of "Diseworth, seven miles south of the town of Derby, on the first day of May, 1602." At eleven years old he was sent to Ashby de la Zouch, to be instructed by one Mr. John Brindley. Here he says he learned the following authors, viz., *Sententiæ Pueriles*, *Cato*, *Corderius*, *Æsop's Fables*, *Tully's Offices*, *Ovid de Tristibus*; lastly, *Virgil*, then *Horace*; as also *Camden's Greek Grammar*, *Theognis*, and *Homer's Iliads*; and entered *Udall's Hebrew Grammar*. In the eighteenth year of his age his master "was enforced from keeping school, being persecuted by the Bishop's officers;" and our Author was "enforced to leave school." He then kept school himself for "one quarter of a year." On Monday, April 3rd, 1620, he left Diseworth and came to London, where he was

compelled to accept the humble situation of a footboy, his father being then "in Leicester gaol for debt," and, of course, incapable of doing much for his son. He had only seven shillings and sixpence left when he arrived at London, having "footed it all along" with the carrier. In 1624 his mistress died, having given him "five pounds in old gold." After which he lived "most comfortably," his master having a great affection for him. In 1626 his master married again, having first settled on our Author twenty pounds a year, which he enjoyed all through life. In October, 1627, he was made free of the Salters' Company. And on the "eighth day of September, 1627," married his master's widow, this same lady; and they "lived very lovingly" until her death, October, 1633.

In the year 1632 he began to study Astrology, being instructed in the rudiments by one Evans, a Welshman, of indifferent abilities. Lilly tells us that he applied himself to these interesting studies "many times, twelve, or fifteen, or eighteen hours, day and night;" adding, "I was curious to discover whether there was any verity in the art or not." By this his first wife he acquired a fortune of "very near to one thousand pounds." In the year 1634 he purchased the moiety of thirteen houses in the Strand, for which he gave £530. The figure of the heavens, erected on this occasion, will be found in the following pages. November the 18th, 1634, he married again, and had £500 portion with that wife. "She was of the nature of Mars," and he lived not very lovingly with her, as seems by his observations at her death. He appears to have now practised horary astrology with success, and to have instructed numerous individuals in the

art; among others he taught John Humphreys, in the year 1640, for which service he received forty pounds. He also wrote, in the year 1639, a Treatise on the Eclipse of the Sun, May 22d, 1639; and appears, about that period, to have turned his attention much to Mundane Astrology. He says, <sup>1</sup> "I did carefully, in 1642 and 1643, take notice of every grand action which happened betwixt king and parliament; and did first then incline to believe, that, as all sublunary affairs did depend upon superior causes, so there was a possibility of discovering them by the configurations of the superior bodies; in which way making some essays in those two years, I found encouragement to proceed further, which I did: I perused the writings of the ancients, but therein they were silent, or gave no satisfaction; at last, I framed unto myself that method which then and since I follow, which I hope, in time, may be more perfected by a more penetrating person than myself."

He appears to have dabbled a little in magic also, but he soon "grew weary of such employment," and burned his books. Lilly's better sense led him to perceive which of these studies was worthy of an honest and intelligent man's pursuit, and which not.

About April, 1644, he first published *Merlinus Anglicus Junior*. This work contained some of his most remarkable predictions, and was continued for many years. It attracted much attention, and was the means of adding greatly to the fame of our Author as an Astrologer. In that year he printed the *White King's Prophecy*, "of which were sold, in three days, eighteen hundred:" and some other works of like nature, the *Prophetical Merlin*, &c.

In 1645 he was twice had before a Committee of the Parliament, for some observations in his *Starry Messenger*; but he escaped, partly by means of his numerous friends, and partly by his own ingenuity.

In 1647, when he published the present work, he was introduced to General Fairfax, who paid him and his art some

compliments. In this year he was consulted by King Charles I., as to a safe place to conceal his royal person; but the King, unfortunately for himself, neglected Lilly's advice, and was accordingly ruined. Again, in 1648, the King consulted Lilly; but though he promised to take the Astrologer's advice, and come up to London with the Commissioners, he did not, however, keep his word, and again lost a good opportunity of escaping from his evil destiny.

"In this year," says Lilly, "for very great considerations, the council of state gave me in money fifty pounds, and a pension of one hundred pounds *per annum*, which for two years I received, but no more." In January 1649 he was present at the trial of King Charles, "who spoke," says he, "excellently well."

In 1651 he published *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, which contained several hieroglyphics; among others those of the great plague and fire of London, which the reader will find a copy of in this work.

These celebrated predictions were made by means of the motions of the fixed stars, as is evident by the words of Lilly; who says, "the asterisms and signs and constellations give greatest light thereunto." *The Bull's North Horn*, a star

which, Ptolemy says, is "like Mars," was, in the year 1666, when the fire occurred, in  $\text{II } 17^\circ 54'$ , which is the exact ascendant of London. It was, no doubt, by this means Lilly judged the city would suffer by fire; for in his Almanac for 1666 he states, that the 19th degree of  $\text{II}$  is London's horoscope. Our Author was not very nice in his calculations; and it may be observed, that though it may be called the 19th degree, being within 6 minutes of it, yet, in reality,  $\text{II } 17^\circ 54'$  is the true ascendant of London. It was that which ascended at the moment of *driving the first pile of the new London Bridge*.

The longitude of the <i>Bull's North Horn</i> , 1st January, 1834	$\text{II}$ 20° 15'
--	---------------------------

Longitude of London's ascendant	$\text{II } \underline{17}$ <u>54</u>
---------------------------------	--

Difference	2 21
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This difference of  $2^\circ 21'$  is equal to 8460 seconds of longitude, which, divided by  $50\frac{1}{3}''$  (the rate at which the fixed stars proceed yearly), gives 168.

From the year	1834
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Take away	<u>168</u>
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it gives the year when that evil star was crossing the ascending sign of London. And as it is of the *fiery* nature of Mars, we need not be surprised that it produced such terrific results. The celebrated *Nostradamus* had predicted the same event in that year, about 111 years previously, as follows:

"Le sang du juste à Londres fera faute  
Bruslez par feu, de vingt et trois, les six."

The blood of the just, which has been spilt in London, requires it to be burned with fire in sixty-six. He states that he made this prediction by "Astronomical Affections."

In 1651 Lilly was again had before the Parliament, on account of his predictions, and was thirteen days in the custody of the Serjeant-at-Arms. But the prediction which gave offence, viz. that the "Parliament stood upon a tottering foundation, and that the commonalty and soldiery would join together against them," was amply fulfilled by the members being turned out of doors by Oliver Cromwell.

In February, 1654, his second wife died; and in October following he married a third, signified, in his nativity, "by *Jupiter in Libra*; and," says he, "she is so totally in her conditions. to my great comfort." In 1655 he was indicted at Hicks's Hall by a half-witted young woman. The cause of the indictment was, that he had given judgment upon stolen goods, and received two shillings and sixpence; contrary to an act made in King James's time.

"I owned," says he, "the taking of half-a-crown for my judgment of the theft, but said, that I gave no other judgment but that the goods would not be recovered, being that was all which was required of me. I spoke for myself, and introduced my own *Introduction* into court, saying, that I had some years before emitted that book for the benefit of this and other nations; that it was allowed by authority, and had found good acceptance in both Universities; that the study of Astrology was lawful, and not contradicted by any scripture.; that I neither had, or ever did, use any charms, sorceries, or enchantments, related in the bill of indictment,' &c. The jury, who went not from the bar, brought in, No true Bill."

"In 1666 happened," says our Author, "that miraculous conflagration in the city of London, whereby, in four days, the most part thereof was consumed by fire." He then gives an account of his being brought before the House of Commons by the following summons:

MONDAY, 22nd OCTOBER, 1666.

"At the Committee appointed to enquire after the causes of the late fires:--

"ORDERED,

"That Mr. Lilly do attend this Committee on Friday next, being the 25th of October, 1666, at two of the clock in the afternoon, in the Speaker's chamber, to answer such questions as shall be then and there asked him.

"ROBERT BROOKE." In remarking on the circumstance, he says, "I conceive there was never more civility used unto any than unto myself; and you know there was no small number of parliament men appeared, when they heard I was to be there."

"Sir Robert Brooke spoke to this purpose:--

"Mr. Lilly, this Committee thought fit to summon you to appear before them this day, to know, if you can say anything as to the cause of the late fire, or whether there might be any design therein. You are called the rather hither, because, in a book of your's long since printed, you hinted some such thing by one of your hieroglyphics.' Unto which I replied,

"May it please your honours,

"After the beheading of the late King, considering that in the three subsequent years the parliament acted nothing which concerned the settlement of the nation's peace, and seeing the generality of the people dissatisfied, the citizens of London discontented, the soldiery prone to mutiny, I was desirous, according to the best knowledge God had given me, to make enquiry by the art I studied, what might, from that time, happen unto the parliament and nation in general. At last, having satisfied myself as well as I could, and perfected my judgment therein, I thought it most convenient to signify my intentions and conceptions thereof in forms, shapes, types, hieroglyphicks, &c., without any commentary, that so my judgment might be concealed from the vulgar, and made manifest only unto the wise; I herein imitating the examples of many wise philosophers who had done the like. Having found, Sir, that the city of London



should be sadly afflicted with a great plague, and not long after with an exorbitant fire, I framed these two hieroglyphicks, as represented in the book, which, in effect, have proved very true."

"Did you foresee the year?" said one. I did not," said I, or was desirous; of that I made no scrutiny." "I proceeded:-- 'Now, Sir, whether there was any design of burning the city, or any employed to that purpose, I must deal ingenuously with you; that, since the fire, I have taken much pains in the search thereof, but cannot, or could not, give myself any the least satisfaction therein. I conclude that it was the finger of God only; but what instruments he used thereunto I am ignorant.'

"The Committee seemed well pleased with what I spoke, and dismissed me with great civility."

After this, nothing very remarkable happened to our Author. He left London, having acquired an independence, and settled at Hersham, in the year of the great plague, 1665. He then applied himself diligently to the study of physic, and on the 11th October, 1670, he received a licence to practise as a physician. He continued to practise with much success, no doubt by applying his astrological science thereto; and he gave his advice and, prescriptions freely, without money. His skill and his charity gained him extraordinary credit and estimation.

He continued generally in good health till August, 1674; but his health and his eyesight remained very weak afterwards. He still continued to write his monthly observations and astrological judgments, though latterly by

aid of an amanuensis (Mr. Henry Colley, who succeeded him as an astrologer), even until the year 1682.

In the beginning of 1681 he was seized with a flux, which he recovered from, but then became totally blind. The 30th of May of that year he was seized with a dead palsy; and, after some days of severe suffering, he died about three o'clock on the morning of the 9th of June, 1681, "without any shew of trouble or pangs."

He was buried in the chancel of Walton Church, his friend, Sir Elias Ashmole, assisting at the laying him in his grave, which was "on the left side of the communion table."

A black marble stone was afterwards placed thereon by his friend, with the following inscription:

Ne Oblivione Conteretur Urna  
GULIELMI LILLII  
ASTROLOGI PERITISSIMI  
QUI FATIS CESSIT  
Quinto Idus Junii Anno Christo Juliano  
MDCLXXXI  
Hoc Illi posuit amoris Monumentum  
ELIAS ASHMOLE  
ARMIGER.

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# An Epistle to the Student in Astrology

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"My Friend, whoever thou art, that with so much ease shalt receive the benefit of my hard studies, and doest intend to proceed in this heavenly knowledge of the starres; In the first place, consider and admire thy Creator, be thankful) unto him, and be humble, and let no naturall knowledge, how profound or transcendant soever it be, elate thy mind to neglect that Divine Providence, by whose al-seeing order and appointment all things heavenly and earthly have their constant motion: the more thy knowledge is enlarged, the more doe thou magnify the power and wisdom of Almighty God: strive to preserve thyself in his favour; for the more holy thou art, and more neer to God, the purer judgment thou shalt give.

"Beware of pride and self-conceit: remember how that long agoe no irrationall creature thirst offend man the Macrocosme, but did faithfully serve and obey him; so long as he was master of his own reason and passions, or until he subjected his will to the unreasonable part. But, alas! when iniquity abounded, and man gave the reins to his own affection, and deserted reason, then every beast, creature, and outward harmfull thing, became rebellious to his command. Stand fast (oh, man) to thy God: then consider thy own nobleness; how all created things, both present and to come, were for thy sake created; nay, for thy sake God became man: thou art that creature, who, being conversant with Christ, livest and reignest above the heavens, and sits above all power and authority. How many pre-eminences,

privileges, advantages, hath God bestowed on thee: thou rangest above the heavens by contemplation, conceivest the motion and magnitude of the stars: thou talkest with angels, yea, with God himself: thou hast all creatures within thy dominion, and keepest the devils in subjection. Doe not, then, for shame deface thy nature, or make thyself unworthy of such gifts, or deprive thyself of that great power, glory, and blessednesse, God hath allotted thee, by casting from thee his favour ' for possession of a few imperfect pleasures.

"Having considered thy God, and what thyself art, during thy being God's servant, now receive instruction how in thy practice I would have thee carry thyself. As thou daily conversest with the heavens, so instruct and form thy mind according to the image of Divinity: learn all the ornaments of virtue, be sufficiently instructed therein: be humane, curtius, familiar to all, easie of accesse: afflict not the miserable with terrour of a harsh judgment; direct such to call on God to divert his judgments impending over them: be civil, sober, covet not an estate; give freely to the poor, both money and judgment: let no worldly wealth procure an erronious judgment from thee, or such as may dishonour the art. Be sparing in delivering judgment against the commonwealth thou livest in; avoyd law and controversie: in thy study be *totus in illis*, that thou mayest be *singulus in arte*. Be not extravagant, or desirous to learn every science; be not *aliquid in omnibus*; be faithfull, tenacious, betray no ones secrets. Instruct all men to live well: be a good example thyselfe; love thy own native country; be not dismaid if ill spoken of, *conscientia mille testes*. God suffers

no sin unpunished, no lye unrevenged. Pray for the nobility, honour the gentry and yeomanry of England; stand firme to the commands of this parliament; have a reverent opinion of our worthy lawyers, for without their learned paines, and the mutual assistance of some true spirited gentlemen, we might yet be made slaves, but we will not; we now see light as well as many of the clergy. Pray, if it stand with God's will, that monarchy in this kingdom may continue, his Majesty and posterity reigne; forget not the Scottish nation, their mutual assistance in our necessity, their honourable departure. God preserve the illustrious *Fairfax*, and his whole armye, and let the famous city of London be ever blessed, and all her worthy citizens. <sup>1</sup>

"WILLIAM LILLY."

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## Footnotes

<sup>1a</sup> Retrospective Review, vol. ii. p. 51.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 101 of Lilly's History of his Life and Times.

<sup>2</sup> I have retained the exact orthography of this epistle, which is a curious and interesting remnant of our author's day. It was penned in 1547.--ED.

# INTRODUCTION TO ASTROLOGY.

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## CHAPTER I.

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THERE are in the heavens several bodies which appear to shed their light directly on this Earth; and also some others which, having no light of themselves, serve to reflect that of the Sun, and thereby become visible to our organs of sight. The former are termed *Fixed Stars*, because they appear to retain the same situation, or to be fixed in the same place; but the latter, being observed to wander, are termed Planets. The number and distance of the former are so extensive, that I shall take no further notice of them here, than to observe, that they are not much used in that portion of Astrology which is denominated *Horary*, and that those persons who desire to make use of them in nativities, will find their right ascensions and declinations given with great accuracy in the Nautical Almanack for each year. In the Appendix to this work, I shall give rules, to ascertain their latitude and longitude by, trigonometry, for the benefit of such persons as may be curious to make experiments as to their influence; though I do not, in general, pay much attention to them when judging a nativity.

### ***Of the Planets.***

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