

'Et In Arcadia Ego'

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As a child, or an adult, living in America, you seek salvation for the *personal* sins you have committed. The subject is the person who is the son of so and so, lives on such and such street and does such and such things that are wrong. And surely, you have done many wrong things which require redemption. But, living in America, as you grow older and realize though your sins may be forgiven, your guilt still lingers, and you first encounter a mystery. From whence this guilt? You are urged to take a personal inventory. Do you lust? Do you covet? And you fall into a pattern of requiring forgiveness over and over again for the same sins that were driven out before. But even when your personal inventory is 'clear', there is a gnawing and an ever present *guilt* that will not pass, no matter how much prayer is given up that the cross will be laid aside and all will be made well.

As an adult, you can have a crisis that comes out of nowhere that causes a suffering in you, that in your wildest dreams, you never could have imagined. This, then, you can realize is the suffering common to mankind. This worst suffering is what unites you to your fellow man. In this uniting, the soul begins to remember. It remembers, slowly, painfully, that it is ancient, connected to all life and for lack of a better word, is pagan. So now, through recognition of the soul's vastness and archaic-ness, you can realize there are many sins for which you have not asked forgiveness, by virtue of being *human* and most, one of an ancient society of men. The soul remembers. It has sacrificed innocent victims, human and animal for its own perpetuation. It has harmed many. It has been prideful, arrogant, self centered, crushing anything, including prophets and messiahs, that has stood in the way of its own expression.

Suddenly, historical personages can come to mind. Nero. Mussolini. The Borgias. Hitler. Hussein. And I can realize, that not only am I no better than them, but I, by virtue of being human and connected to these through suffering, *am* these people. The weight of guilt, sociological guilt, communal guilt, comes to bear and you realize those sins for which you have not asked forgiveness. The other point that comes to mind is the relation between war and sin.

Of course, many a war in the bible could be interpreted as an internal battle happening within the soul of man. How should we look on the recent events in Burma, where Buddhist monks are silently protesting the tripling of the price of grain and subsequent spread of misery among the populace. This is a brilliant example that recalls Gandhi where peaceful yet steadfast civil disobedience can arouse the city, the state, the country and the world into rallying to a just and noble cause. No threats need be yelled, no fists need to be thrown, just a quiet demonstration of Dignity that speaks words and moves worlds to compassion and goodwill.

In Taoist literature, specifically the Tao Te Ching, times are spoken of when rulers of men were aligned with the Heavens and consequently Peace reigned and men lived in utter contentment. No wars, no famines, no economic turmoil, just the quiet living out of

days where rulers revered the Divine and the people revered their leaders. Peace profound without ennui. The responsible distribution of goods and husbandry of Earth. The quiet wheel of Heaven was made manifest on Earth where natural cycles of work and rest rolled on uninterrupted for centuries. Nature mirrored Heaven and mankind mirrored Nature's immutable laws.

The resurgence of Feng Shui in the western world is but a faint reminder of this previous state of affairs, but falls so very short of the previous all encompassing Philosophy that reached from the stellar to the ant. Peace is sought in an abode where a house is to be oriented in the proper manner, furniture is to be placed in a certain way, and a crystal to be hung in a foyer. All is meant to develop the proper flow of chi, the natural telluric currents the Ancients studied, revered, and aligned themselves with.

But if leaders are not aligned to the pattern of the Heavens, this from the very beginning sets into motion a disharmony that will reach from stars to dust that will only be able to be temporarily and even accidentally assuaged. There may arise local incidents of right living, but the system itself is broken and misery becomes an anathema mankind as a whole must bear. Again, by virtue of being human, and being connected to these through suffering, I *am* these leaders too.

Presently, there are folks who are referencing ancient Mayan timetables and declaring the age of Hell is coming to a close and the age of Heaven is once again dawning. Manifest the Peaceful, the Quiet, they say. A critical mass will be reached where people will demand their leaders once again align themselves to Harmony and eschew war. Leaders once again will lie prostrate before the Heavens, seeking its Wisdom and guidance in all their affairs. In serving Heaven (rather than self interest), the people once again will fall into the natural pattern of work and rest, and Peace will come once again.

This is an awesome possibility, if not fact. People may be turning away from materialism, greed and the exploitation of their neighbors and returning to the Quiet, Still existence that once ruled man's days. Diplomacy may be coming once again to be preferred to violence.

I pray that this is the case and am willing to begin with myself, my family, my friends, in once again feeling hopeful about the future. I will make myself available to the Heavens and seek their reign in my life. I will focus on the possible and not the present reality and seek agreeableness over argument.

I challenge you to begin to wonder, with all the wealth of this world constantly at our hands, what will we demand of our political leaders? We give them billions of dollars every year and for what? The lack of intelligence to solve problems peacefully and diplomatically? The lack of spiritual competence to reign nobly and not by the spread of fear? I challenge you to demand nothing less than the manifestation of the Divine on Earth, the rebuilding of Jacob's ladder from the firmament to the Heavens and the

abrupt end to the old paradigm of war and violence. You, and your children, and your children's children deserve nothing less!

The spirit has thrown light on the soul, this vast, oceanic, connected soul that participates in the experience of all mankind, being blessed and cursed with good deeds and deep sins. This then, is the old testament notion of 'sins of the fathers'. We enjoy the benefits of being born to nuclear families and being a member of the families of humanity at large, but suffer the sins of said families by virtue of our birth.

When this last vestige of the soul has been come to light, that sociological self that participates in history and through memory is brought to bear in need of forgiveness, the light pours in and a weight is lifted for sins that were committed by virtue of proximity. This last darkness, brought to light and remembered, is redeemed along with the internal pagan, Christian landscape it inhabits.

This redeemed inner wilderness then becomes paradise. From darkness to light, the sun once again takes its place in the interior landscape and you can operate once again. Except now from a new, integrated, wholly redeemed self.

This is the garden of Eden. Paradise. Arcadia, though it be but a shadow world of that former and future kingdom we eventually will reach once again and then.