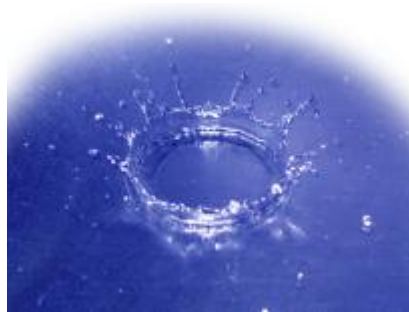




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"The Wrath to Come"



"Jesus, who delivers us from the coming wrath."
(1 Thessalonians 1.10)

How fond we are of saying — and with such *conviction* — vapid things of the following sort:

- *"The ripple caused by a pebble dropped in the ocean touches every shore"*
- *"One single drop added to the water, affects the entire lake"*
- *"Each time you start your automobile, use your electric razor, however fractionally measurable, you contribute to global warming"*
- *"What goes around comes around"*

To utter such profundities makes us feel ... philosophic, wise, deeply discerning, even "*earth-connected*" and "*mother-earth friendly*" ... and who would possibly wish to offend such "earth-people" as they articulate popular physics through New Age nuance.

However *conceptually* correct such statements are, they are deeply disturbing because they are not simply moral apostrophies — pretending to address deep ethical issues through brainless bromides masquerading as moral utterances — but moral impostures that deliberately prescind from far deeper issues still; issues involving sanctity and sin.

"Earth-friendliness", our overweening concern for oceans, lakes, dwindling polar ice caps and ozone layers are acceptable and polite venues for our concession to the fact that *what we do has not only measurable effects, but lasting effects ... some even irreversible. And some even eternal.*

"Mother Earth" vs. God the Father

How fiercely we defend "*mother earth*"... even divinize it, as we repudiate *God the Father*. Our "awareness" of the presumed laws of the one we hold as emblematic of our "enlightenment", while the Laws of the Other we contest, deny, or altogether abrogate ... also as emblematic of our enlightened distance from what we smugly deem a "primitive notion of God" — choosing, instead, a less primitive worship of mother earth ...

This is the by-product, the effluence really, of a generation nurtured on the moral nihilism that has leeches to our own children from the bygone "Age of Aquarius" through which their parents depredated and transvaluated every notion of the authentic *good* in exchange for *euphoria*, sexual license euphemized as "free love", and the disdain for all authority in Heaven and on Earth. It was an age of distributed relationships and, consequently, abolished responsibilities; "communal living" as the microcosmic welfare state.

The point of the matter is that New-Agers and Aging-Aquarians alike equally recognize the nature of the notion of *consequences*. Despite the best efforts of philosophers — and more recently, theologians — we cannot acquit ourselves of this conviction. There are consequences to our behavior in this world. And in the next. We prefer not to think of the latter, or we find a Church (or make one) that will absolve us from these consequences, and even claim to nullify them.

Every action has a consequence, we all agree. Everything, oddly enough, but sinful behavior (I say "behavior" because it lends itself to being understood in physical terms, in other words, in terms we recognize as entailing consequences, and which are more immediately evidential in nature). Uncertain of our own specious reasoning, we adduce support for our wishful thinking from philosophers and theologians in Catholic universities who assure us that no such consequences obtain in the moral realm any longer, and any vestiges are largely discredited artifacts from an earlier, "less enlightened" Church ... however historically and spiritually closer

it was to Christ. And this "church", they assure us, is shedding its skin as a snake ...

However they attempt to rehabilitate our perversity and sin and "christen" them as "persuasions" and "choices", we are still left in the dark watches of the night — especially as we grow older and begin to scan the obits — somehow uncomfortable with this tenaciously atavistic notion that everything, that all behavior, has a consequence ... except sin. We begin to dwell on the encroaching reality that this life is not a "rehearsal", that we cannot hit "replay" and do it right this time ... or simply place a mouse cursor over our enormities and simply delete them.

We even begin to entertain the notion that the ruined lives of others over whom we have walked in attaining our now strangely dwindling euphoria, our success, our wealth, our power, our pleasure ... will somehow call us to account, as an effect invokes a cause, and that we cannot extricate ourselves from it. If it doesn't give you the shivers, it should. 74 people in Boston alone crossed that bourne last night

The pebble, the teaspoon of water, becomes less charming ... and we begin to suspect that what holds true for blameless things, may hold true for things far greater, far more reaching, far more lasting, in which the notion of blamelessness plays no part ...

"The coming wrath." How quaint ... even as it oddly, irresistibly, somberly, resonates within us ...

Rather like that unshakeable notion of sin and accountability.

It rattled St. Paul. But he was a quaint fellow after all ... wasn't he? Much like his Master.

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