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Full Moon Special Edition

astrological-cultural-spiritual-political
views & commentary

THE HERBST NEWSLETTER



Thoughts, dates, & reminders about our lives as members of the craziest species on this lovely planet. Like a message in a bottle washing up on the sandy shores of consciousness...

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Dear friends,

I had originally intended to send this out as the April newsletter. Given that the tragedy of impending war is literally only days away, I've decided that it is more timely now, as a Full Moon Special Edition.

SPIRITUAL POLITICS

These newsletters have become very challenging to write. I try to come up with something spiritually positive for each edition to balance the passions of my political views, so as to appeal to (rather than alienate) my core constituency, which is you good folks who might help me to stay afloat financially by hiring me for astrological sessions.

This effort is all the more difficult precisely because the great divide between the subtle truths of spirituality and scurrilous lies of politics grows ever wider with each passing month. Given the state of America and the world these days, what could I possibly offer that would be spiritually meaningful? Silence would be eloquent, but that doesn't work for a newsletter. So I write.

“THOU SHALT NOT KILL”

Try telling that to George W. Bush, born-again though he claims to be.

Now, I'm not personally a card-carrying Christian, but I happen to think that the Ten Commandments are pretty cool—way cool in fact—and it puzzles me why so many people in this country who profess to be devout disciples of Christ, especially those in the Bush administration, seem to regard the Commandments as less than sacred. I say this because, if we are to believe the polls, a fair percentage of Christians in America apparently feel that it's perfectly all right for their representatives in government and the military to unleash the “Shock and Awe” of an unprecedented missile assault raining down on Baghdad, which will no doubt kill a sizable number of Iraqi soldiers but thousands of innocent Iraqi citizens as well, followed by a general invasion of Iraq using a quarter million of our troops, who collectively possess more sheer firepower than has ever been arrayed by any army in human history.

One can only conclude that these “good” Christians don’t give much weight to the Ten Commandments. It’s as if they preferred to see them as Ten Suggestions, or Ten Items to Think About But Only on Sundays, or Ten Things God Would Like You to Do If It’s Convenient For You.

No, these are spiritual COMMANDMENTS—rules for living that God has ordained, and that Christians must not violate.

God didn’t say, “Thou shalt not kill, except as collateral damage if you’re taking out a brutal dictator,” or “Try not to kill unless you need to dominate the world by controlling Mideast oil,” or “It’s OK to kill if you’re attempting to liberate and bring democracy to the very people you end up killing.”

No. God said, “Thou shalt not kill.” PERIOD. End of story.

If God is literally the kind of consciousness many Christians imagine Him to be (namely, like us, but bigger and more powerful), looking down at the earth from heaven, interested in and hopeful for His children, then won’t He be disappointed in our actions? Might He not become angry with us?

“TURN THE OTHER CHEEK”

But we were attacked, some Americans will protest, especially some of those devout Christians. We have a right to defend ourselves from terrorist threats. War and killing are legitimate under such conditions, they will say. Oh yeah? Well, besides the fact that the Iraqi people weren’t the ones who attacked us, and ignoring the persuasive argument that Saddam Hussein is no threat except to his own unfortunate people, what about turning the other cheek? What about stopping the escalating cycle of violence, with its endless retribution of more suffering, grief, hatred, and vendettas? How about acting as your Savior did? “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do...”

The argument for not striking back is not just idealistic pie-in-the-sky, nor is it merely about taking the moral high ground or any other such intangibles. Not striking back is the merging of working spirituality with real politics. Mohandas Gandhi demonstrated this in India.

FEAR VERSUS LOVE

In the aftermath of 9/11, America was regarded sympathetically by much of the world. We had suffered a terrible tragedy, and people around the globe opened their hearts to share our grief. The goodwill extended to us was never higher.

We could have chosen to respond by amplifying that love in true Christian fashion. We could have turned our attention to the very real problems and grievances that threaten the global community and all of humanity—not just terrorism, but poverty, lack of education, environmental destruction, inequity of wealth, religious and nationalistic conflicts, etc. We could have shared our great bounty in an effort to right some of these sad wrongs. We could have led the world as a shining beacon of hope.

Instead, we have acted like a neighborhood bully, inspiring fear and provoking mistrust.

Over the year and a half since 9/11, our government’s blustering, unilateral, with-us-or-against-us attitude has arrogantly squandered the invaluable resource of the world’s sympathy, as well as placing in jeopardy 50 years of painstaking international diplomacy. We have walked away from the Kyoto Accords, blocked international programs for women’s health care, and boycotted the International Court. At a time when American cities and states are crippled financially and tens of millions of our own citizens are suffering severe economic hardships, the Bush administration is spending a billion dollars a day on the military buildup to invade the paper tiger of Iraq, and yet has no foreign policy at all toward the real tiger of North Korea, which has both nuclear weapons and the missiles to deliver them, and is a true threat.

This is madness.

The world is now largely against America—with good reason, I believe—and within our own borders we are bitterly divided, living in a climate of paranoia and self-imposed terror.

WHY WAR?

The war with Iraq is not about fighting terrorism, nor about limiting weapons of mass destruction. Neither is it about overthrowing an unjust and brutal regime and bringing democracy to the Mideast. All those are tacit smokescreens, at best hoped-for results, and at worst pure Orwellian doublespeak. The war IS, however, about security—not security for you or me, since this war will make us less secure than ever—but the security of those in America who control its wealth and power.

Unpredictable political changes in the unfolding landscape of the 21st century, especially in control of Mideast oil and trade balances through petro-currencies—dollars or euros—put continuing American economic dominance at risk. Whoever holds the oil spigot calls the tune to the world economy in the decades ahead.

The corporate interests that have taken over our government are willing to send U.S. troops to war as often as necessary—and kill as many people as they have to—to expand their power. Once again, it's the economy, stupid, and it's got precious little to do with democracy or freedom (except the freedom to make money), and nothing at all to do with faith or spirituality.

But then, of course, the world has always been run by people who succumb to the insidious allure of wealth and control over others, and thus arrogantly lose their humility and reverence for human life. That's not news at all.

So where is the spiritual rainbow in this dark storm? Is there any hope?

THE GOOD NEWS

Yes, thankfully, there is good news in the amazing and worldwide movement for peace and against the use of violent force. This movement has arisen spontaneously over the past six months from the grassroots up (see my October and November newsletters for a discussion of the Sun-Venus-Neptune configuration that coincided with its appearance), and now the groundswell has reached astonishing proportions.

Never before in history has there been an upwelling of appeals to such basic human values on anything approaching this scale. Yes, these massive demonstrations are certainly motivated by fear and anxiety, but they stand FOR something—for peaceful, diplomatic resolution of disputes between nations. Ordinary people are finally willing to stand up and shout that they are sick of war and all its horrific repercussions.

Our leaders are unmoved by such appeals—those in power in America are extremely insulated from and unconcerned with the will of the public, except as a rubber-stamp for their own grandiose plans. They will have their war, regardless of the consequences.

Nonetheless, this mass movement of regular people in nations around the globe represents an infusion of authentic spirituality into politics-as-usual, and with a demographic that cuts across all races, all cultures, and all beliefs. Our voices may be cries in the wilderness falling on deaf ears, but they are a poignant outpouring of millions of hearts that fervently want something better than the same old story of man's continuing inhumanity.

This is, quite simply, unprecedented.

War and killing are not the only manmade expressions of our loss of reverence. The continuing struggle for our souls takes many forms. But saying NO to war and YES to peace is a good place to start if we are to survive long enough to mature as a species and return the material world to the spiritual garden it is our shared responsibility to create.



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