

# RUMINATIONS OF A FORMER HEATHEN

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**Guilt**

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Creative people often become creative as a result of a great crisis in their lives. A brush with death sometimes makes people change their course in life. There is a perception of our own mortality and suddenly the realization that our time here is finite, and it is short. At that point, people quit their jobs and pursue their art doing what they want to do the most, struggling to make a living but living in the environment they want, as dancers, writers, painters, actors, etc. But there are different sides to the awareness of death, when the creative juices dry out for a spell, when the play is finished, or the season is ended, or the novel finally done, there is an emptiness, a bitterness, a sense of the futility of life. Is this it? Is this what life is? Struggle for vanities and then die? It's a joke, if this is all there is.

Of course, many people turn to religion when faced with that kind of emptiness. The search for eternal life begins, there must be some kind of hope ahead. From one guru to another, listening to every word of charlatans, minions of Satan, and the beginning of all the lies in the world "Thou shall not surely die." The "Laws of the Universe" is one of the most attractive baits out there. How to attract money to yourself, or love, or success. There is always another New Age-enlightened person somewhere who has all the answers, we must go see him. Of course, New Agers don't think of their quest as a religion, but it is. It appears as no-religion by its apparent lack of structure. By the fact that so many different facets comprise the New Age, it simply appears as the best of many disciplines and religions, even some Bible verses will find their way in, in a melding of many sage and wise ideas. Who could possibly be against good knowledge? As far they are concerned, all gods are the same, and all the ways will lead to the same place. Are you a Buddhist? Great. Are you a Christian? Great. Going back to the awareness of death, it could be said that the pursuit of one's art, or one's pleasure, is a selfish response to that awareness.

Another reaction is to engage in selfless work, such as volunteer work, charity, care for the poor, works sacrificial in nature. But these works also are often very selfish, regardless of their appearance. At the extreme are the suicide bombers who are trying to pay their way into heaven and avoid hell. This great deed will surely suffice. They are works designed to alleviate guilt. And what is guilt? Guilt is the awareness of deserving punishment. Where does it come from? Why do we have it at all? Why can't we get rid of it? It is a vague feeling, difficult to recognize, distant, mostly surrounded by a wall of denial. But it doesn't go

away. No matter how many times some therapist or guru, or preacher, tells you you're good, you are a good person and you are worthy of good things, you know there is a pit of darkness, a cesspool of corruption deep inside you, in a place you never share, that condemns you to hell. This is the dark side Jung talked about. His solution was to embrace the dark side, reconcile yourself to it, integrate it into your total self and make you whole. Sounds good, all you have to do is become aware of your miasma of putridness and accept it, accept that's who you are. Well, I have no problem with that notion. I know I'm a thief and a murderer at heart.

The problem is that I also know that there is an eternal being on the other side of death, in the realm of eternal life, and this being is Holy, Pure and Undefined. He is the most lovely thing that there can be in the whole realm of eternal life and I want to be with him. But it is impossible without my corruption being done away with, traded for something. Well, it's done, I've been traded for the blood of God, no less. He has made a contract with us with all the benefits going our way. He is the author of the contract and he is the fulfiller of the contract. He provides the part of the contract that we cannot provide: The full payment for all our sins, past, present and future. Jung's been dead for a while, now. I wonder how he's doing without a payment for his dark side. Of course, he rejected all this notion of sin and it being the cause of guilt. He knew what the Bible said but he brushed that aside, scorned it, his solution was to ignore it, sear over that voice of conscience that said something dreadful would happen after death because of that dark side. Is he rejoicing or lamenting his embrace of his dark side? I'm going to make a guess, I bet he's not having a good time, God is not mocked. There will be special punishment for false shepherds. But humans continue to try dealing with guilt, the awareness of deserving punishment, in one way or another this has to be resolved.

Some people suggest that guilt is a product of fear, or of a misunderstanding of your true, divine nature. You are made in the image of God, you are wonderful. You should start by forgiving yourself and raising your self-esteem. Somehow, those efforts don't work, either. You can try to forgive yourself, but deep down you know you don't have the authority to forgive. Guilt is the basis for the vast majority of, if not all, psychological ailments and maladjustments. Denial and repression of this guilt cause health problems (mental and physical). The effects of this denial/repression show up in dreams, create much psychological distress and ailments, the most common being panic attacks, phobias, low "self-esteem." The whole aim of psychotherapy is to get rid of, or alleviate, guilt. The failure of all the techniques that address this problem is that they don't go in deeply enough, they don't address the problem from the point of view of eternity. The awareness of deserving punishment is an unresolved issue that doesn't go away. Guilt and death, and punishment after death, occupy a large portion of the minds of the

unsaved. And it should, because the peril is extreme. The wall of denial is nearly impenetrable. And how could it be otherwise? When one considers the horrible possibilities awaiting on the other side, the denial is justified. How can one seriously consider going to hell? It would be a crazy maker. But that reality remains there, staring in silence, in the back rows of the mind. Only the total assurance of escape from that punishment can free us, and we have it.