

6.

BETRAY THE AGE

“*We* have reached a point at which we must either consciously desire and choose and determine the future of the Earth or submit to such an involvement in our destructiveness that the Earth, and ourselves with it, must certainly be destroyed,” writer-poet Wendell Berry warns.

We are the matter of the universe — a Cosmos that made us and will take us. We are genetically encoded to seek and create life, genetically encoded to disintegrate and die. Although we appear to be different, we’re all kin beneath the skin, sharing the same ancient ancestry.

From a molecule of DNA — origin unknown — life emerged on Earth. Over the next four and a half billion years we crawled out of the oceans, formed hands and lungs, and walked upright for the first time a mere three hundred thousand years ago. Only one hundred thousand years ago the planet’s population was 60,000.

Anthropologists tell us that about 10,000 or so people from the original tribe migrated north from central Africa and from there, spread throughout the world.

And not surprisingly, wherever modern *Homo sapiens* migrated he and she drove the indigenous peoples into extinction, either by out-producing them or exterminating them through murderous acts of conquest.

“No cause is left but the most ancient of all, the one, in fact, that from the beginning of our history, has determined the very existence of politics, the cause of freedom versus tyranny.”

~ Hannah Arendt

Move forward 2,000 years past countless wars, and the rising and passing of civilizations, into a 20th century fraught with obscene brutality: Stalin; Mao; The Holocaust; Hiroshima; genocide in Armenia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Sudan; Pinochet’s terror in Chile; Pol Pot’s Cambodia; Apartheid; The crushing of human rights in Syria, Burma, the Congo, and Tibet.

All in the name of what?

Freedom? Democracy? Christ? Capitalism? Allah? Oil? God?

“It is no measure of mental health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society.”

~ Krishnamurti

Bono, the singer for the rock group U2, gives us his take on the story and moreover, how to turn it around: “There’s a truly great Irish poet, Brendan Kennelly,” he tells us. “And he has this epic poem called *The Book of Judas*, and there’s a line in it that says: ‘If you want to serve the age, betray it.’

What does that mean, to betray the age?

“Well to me betraying the Age means exposing its conceits, its foibles, its phony moral certitudes. It means telling the secrets of the age and facing harsher truths.”

“In this possibly terminal phase of human existence, democracy and freedom are more than just ideals to be valued — they may be essential to survival.”

~ **Noam Chomsky**

What are the ideas worth betraying?
What are the secrets you wish to tell?
And when will you tell them?

“One of the greatest gifts we can give to another generation is our experience, our wisdom.”

~ **Desmond Tutu**