

IN SEARCH OF THE IDEAL

"As the nobleman of cultivated taste surrounds himself with whatever conduces to his culture, - learning - wit - books - paintings - statuary - music - philosophical instruments, and the like; so let the village do. That is the "uncommon" school we want. Instead of noblemen, let us have noble villages of men. If it is necessary, omit one bridge over the river, go round a little there, and throw one arch at least over the darker gulf of ignorance which surrounds us."

Henry David Thoreau
WALDEN, 1845

Except for an uncommon few, I wonder whether it would have ever crossed the human mind that we may be no further from happiness and peace of mind than the next breath of air we take. Yet if we allow some cunning entrepreneur to convince us that the next breath of air we take might poison us unless it is first filtered through his particular brand of electronic air purifier, many of us would probably stand gasping in panic, assured that unless we have this remarkable, and no doubt expensive device, we shall never live to be happy or be able to go on pursuing this elusive happiness in any other of a multitude of equally foolish ways. Such it would seem, is the present mindset of modern western man.

The pursuit of happiness has become a necessary self-indulgence. We appear to have become addicted to each new wave of stimulation that promises to bring us a brief, warping flash of happiness - from collectable milk bottle caps to BMW's; inflatable dinosaurs to bungee jumping.

The United States Declaration of Independence assures us of the right to Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness... The Pursuit of Happiness??? Nowhere in this document is there any assurance that we will be happy. It is one thing to be in constant pursuit of happiness, and quite another to simply *be* happy. Our Declaration of Independence offers us no assurance in any way that we will be any happier than the lowliest peasant, barely existing in an oppressive totalitarian state. It does infer however, that happiness is something to be pursued rather than embodied.

It would seem that there might be a choice here. The inference is that the preferred choice is to pursue happiness rather than simply to *be* happy. Human discontent is a presumed condition, and can only be escaped by chasing an illusory dream of happiness out there in the future somewhere, rather than simply accepting that happiness is a natural by-product of appropriate human attitudes and behavior (*practiced virtue*) in our daily lives, personally and socially, in the here and now.

Perhaps we have deceived ourselves, or been deceived into believing we are not worthy of the simplest and most accessible of human emotions. Thus, we are convinced we must engage in a perpetually disappointing and disillusioning quest for an unrealizable dream. Like the proverbial donkey plodding along in pursuit of a carrot, dangling before his nose from a stick which is fastened to his own back, Western man goes on pursuing a quality he already has at his disposal - he simply does not seem to know how to experience it.

Perhaps it would benefit us to study certain periods of our history, when particular isolated groups of people gathered together in loosely organized village-communities for their mutual benefit and security. Somehow, they seem to have avoided the complexities and corruption that plagued the city-states and nation-states, thus assuring themselves a peaceful and contented existence; at least until such time as they were thwarted by a conquering invader from without.

In each case, I believe we will find that the groups who formed these village-communities had highly developed social disciplines, practiced virtuous living habits, and enjoyed the noble fruits thereof.

The remainder of this chapter will be an examination of several village-community systems that prevailed in various parts of the world at different times in history. These village-communities seem to have embodied a certain richness in their quality of life, even if not of the same high standard of living as we now enjoy. This was manifested in the well-adjusted, stable and contented natures of the people who populated them. They were, essentially, the most civilized examples of social harmony and effective living to emerge during their respective eras. We must wonder at what their secret might have been.

THE ARCADIAN OF SOUTHERN GREECE

About twelve hundred years before Christ, the civilization of Greece went through a vast transformation. Large numbers of Dorian tribes began migrating from the northern regions down through the Grecian peninsula and settled mainly in the Central Peloponnesus region. The people who already inhabited these areas were either assimilated or driven into more isolated areas. Very little is known about the history of Greece after the arrival of the Dorians, nor of the four hundred years that followed, leading to the Archaic period. Much of what is known, however, comes from Homer's ILIAD AND ODYSSEY.

There must have been major social upheavals, but Homer describes the development of a society of small agricultural communities grouped around citadels that were ruled by kings and aristocrats. The harsh mountainous areas with their limited fertile plains, especially in the Peloponnesus, became a significant reason for the rise of small village-communities dotting the valleys in these rugged geographical regions. No doubt this played a major part in making the inhabitants of each valley regard themselves as separate entities, and the region of Greece known as 'Arcadia' became a patchwork of small village-communities (*many of them with fewer than five thousand inhabitants*) that guarded their independence jealously.

Aristotle mentions the existence of at least one hundred and fifty such communities. The size of the unit was important in the development of Greek political beliefs, and it was held that an ideal political unit must be small and totally independent. Because of the geography, travel was

difficult, and so economic and political life tended to be confined to these isolated districts.

A citizen of Arcadia had four loyalties:

1. To Hellas - to being a Greek citizen, and which no doubt embodied the Arcadian concept of the Godhead as well,
2. To family,
3. To ones village, and
4. To ones tribe within the unit.

Loyalty to family and to the community seemed to be the strongest, and the idea of a larger political unit was never developed.

During this period, a belief evolved that government must be based on a known constitutional and legal framework. The Greek Arcadians were convinced that these small, independent units were the most natural configurations for a satisfying and a secure political and social life. Greater unity beyond this was not aspired to because of this attitude, along with the continual diplomatic and military maneuvering between these communities.

In all these village-communities, politics was a very intimate affair, and this deeply influenced the Greek concept of democracy (*demo = people, kratia = rule*). It was founded upon direct participation rather than representation, with every citizen having the opportunity to embrace high office. Although we cannot be absolutely certain as to the idyllicness of the lifestyles enjoyed by these inhabitants of Arcadia, we are reasonably certain that they enjoyed a few centuries of peaceful and contented lives in pastoral harmony and relatively self-determined independence.

As usually happens though, many of the village-communities underwent a transition from democracy to oligarchy (*a small select group in power*), subsequently to tyranny (*a single all powerful ruler*), along with all the attendant struggles between the rich and the poor. Reforms eventually established a more truly democratic framework and order was restored.

The essence of this democracy was the citizen body or “demos”, which would meet regularly in public assembly. At these assemblies, any citizen could propose laws on actions that would be discussed and voted on. Civil and religious officials would also be chosen at these times. There was no hierarchy amongst these officials, and they answered directly to the assembly. Juries were chosen from volunteers, and a council of citizens elected by the tribes into which the citizens had been divided, prepared the business of the assembly. Every citizen had the right and duty to serve the community, and there never appeared to be a shortage of willing and able men to serve with little or no recompense. At a certain point however, a small payment was introduced to allow the poorest citizens to participate fully.

Greece is considered the seat of earliest European civilization, and its classical period was the archetype for the cultural, intellectual and spiritual development of later civilizations. The flowering of art, sculpture, literature, poetry and theatre emerging from this culture remains unsurpassed to this day.

The influence of Arcadian thought, from the time it was first historically noted, up to the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, along with the burgeoning cult of classicism, gradually evolved into a nationalist movement based on "the romantic idea of Hellenism - a commitment to the Platonic ideal of a secular and purely human excellence achieved through the self-conscious construction of a civil and social order based on nationalism." (*From 'GREECE: A Country Study', Chap.1, Edited by Rinn S. Shinn*).

As recent as the 1980's, "pervasiveness of familial interest, politics and patron-client relationships was being moderated somewhat in the social-political life of the people. There was growing public awareness that the traditional way of social and political interactions should be placed on a more national and systematized footing. Nevertheless, this perception was not reflected in reality. For Greek villagers and urbanites alike, loyalty to the family remained unsurpassed. The family has been the focus and repository of virtue and responsibility. Leaving the village did not deprive the migrant of this loyalty, or for that matter, attachment to the village in which he and his parents were born. As a result socio-

economic and political behavior continued to center on family - related and personal - as opposed to impersonal, organizational - connections." (*From 'GREECE: A Country Study', Introduction, Edited by Rinn S. Shinn*)

THE INDO-CHINESE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Indo-China is an exceptionally ancient land. Vietnam was old in the days of the early Egyptians, Babylonians and Persians. It is one of the oldest known settlements of mankind. To those settled, village-oriented people, obligations to parents and to the emperor were the cement of the Confucian order. Cochin China (*the French colony*), had changed somewhat as a result of the French occupation that took place between 1861 and 1867, but Annam and Tonkin had not. To the Tonkinese, the village and the clans were strong, and the basis of the clan was the veneration of the ancestors, which ensured strong attachment to the village and to the land.

Each village had a shrine - the "dinh" - that contained the protective deity of that village. The cohesive force of the village was the sense of being protected by these spirits of the soil. A council of elderly notables handled village affairs, but there was a considerable degree of autonomy. It was said, "The power of the emperor stops at the bamboo fence." However, the village did pay a tax to the higher authority and did provide young men for military service.

In Vietnam however, law was not based on authority and will, but on the recognition of universal harmony. As in all parts of the world, the basic object of rural government was to provide security. As a result, the traditional demand was not for good laws so much as for good men. Law was deemed less important than virtue.

Cochin China, the land of the south, was an ancient, rural land. It was the rice bowl of Asia. Long before the modern cold war era, more than thirteen and one-half million acres of land had been planted with rice. As far back as 1931, Cochin China had been growing more than two million tons of rice a year. By the 1950's, this figure had been increased to more than six million tons.

The people of Cochin China were relatively wealthy. They lived comfortable, peaceful lives and their village-type local government had been perfected over thousands of years. They needed little from the outside world and the outside world scarcely knew they existed.

As Col. Prouty informed us earlier: "Traditional village life is effective, timeless, and impregnable. It is above all, self-sufficient; something that modern urbanization is not. Villagers have solved the problems of the necessities - food, clothing and shelter - on a modest scale and they do not need the omnipotent paternalism of the international banker, the chemical revolution, or the politics of the modern jungle. They would not recognize a lawyer if they saw one. They are not dependent upon the next eighteen wheel semi-trailer truck for food either."

An old, dog-eared copy of a 1931 National Geographic magazine likens Vietnam (*of which Cochin China is a part*) to a Garden of Eden. What was there about this historically serene Asian land that caused it to be chosen, that is, to be devastated by the perpetrators of modern warfare?

Col. Prouty also informs us: "One cannot understand too completely the strength of the village way of life for these ancient people. It began with family loyalty, which was regarded as the most respected value in Vietnamese life. The most significant religious ceremonies of these people were the rites regarding family ancestors. After a man's family came his farm. A farm consisted of village property cultivated by that family for centuries."

"After the family and farm came the village, and for millions of Indo-Chinese the village was the only political structure they knew. For centuries, they had been allowed to govern themselves. The senior council of the village was called the 'Tien Chi' (*in the north*) or the 'Huongca' (*in the south*). Theirs was the last word required for the settlement of significant financial and juridical problems."

"In recent times, a loosely knit, French monitored constabulary system provided an adequate framework for most legal matters. It easily provided for law and order. On the other hand, the Chinese had, for centuries, been the local entrepreneurs. They kept commerce alive and

well in the remote, autonomous regions. The only outside influence that might have affected these peaceful, contented people was from a small land and head tax introduced by the French in 1890. Even under French control there was not much difference in the communal organization and administration of these thousands of villages, whether in Tonkin, Amman or Cochin China."

"When the Vietnamese farmer harvested his plentiful crop of rice, he filled baskets woven of rice straw by the women of the families. He loaded those rice-filled baskets into his sampan (*flat-bottomed boat*) and poled it along one of the ever-present canals to the central village where his crop was converted by a most efficient economic process into a certain amount of the basic necessities of his and his family's life - essentially salt, tools and blades, fabrics and silver."

"It had long been the custom for each farm family to go to the village and pile their baskets of rice beside the others. Each farmer, by long custom, had a supply of small black sticks (*about the size of "magic markers"*) with his name or symbol on each stick, and he would place one in each of his baskets of rice. (*None of these comparatively wealthy farmers had a broker or other system of marketing.*)"

"On market day, the Chinese merchant would arrive in his large Sampan. All of the rice baskets removed from the village square would be loaded onto his boat, at which time the village elder would collect all of the marker sticks. The Chinese merchant then bought the rice, based upon the going price per basket multiplied by the number of sticks."

"In turn, the village elder bought from the merchant the salt, tools, fabrics, and other assorted needs from that account. If there was a balance to the credit of the village, the Chinese merchant paid it in silver coinage of intrinsic value. Each farmer benefited according to the tally of his sticks."

"This age old system created the market for the farmer's produce and provided him with the basic necessities of life in exchange for his labor. This basic and nearly idyllic social organization persisted for thousands of years until the middle of this century, when the secret organizations of

the western world chose this defenseless part of the world to suffer the genocidal ax of the *Power Elite*."

From thence forward, we witness the powerful and merciless effects of this Malthusian movement, concealed at all times from the public; to uproot and destroy the existing and traditional system of communal society in this and many other parts of the world. The activists of this movement fear the strength and independence of the peasant and the ways of peasant life. They much prefer a society of dependent consumers.

It seems that the Chinese under Mao Tse Tung were attempting to decentralize the authority of centralized government and return to a communal and locally independent type of economy and sociology, and this of course, flew in the face of Soviet Communism (*Internationalism*).

The Vietnamese, Laotians and Cambodians were already peace loving, agriculturally based peoples. Mao was a threat to both the totalitarian state authority of the Soviets and the dependence-oriented, consumerist Americans.

Thus, we see the insidious infiltration of the Soviet KGB and the American OSS (*now CIA*) into this part of the world, virtually creating a controlled war with no objective but to nurture the Military/Industrial Complex and to fulfill the Malthusian commitment to population control (*genocide*).

THE INCREDIBLE VALLEY OF THE HUNZA

In the towering vastness of the Himalayas of West Pakistan, cradled between the spires of the Hindu Kush and Karakoram mountains, nests a peaceful and beautiful valley known as Hunza, the home of a legendary and most remarkable people known as the Hunzakuts.

This verdant valley is approximately a hundred miles long, and as little as a mile wide at its narrowest places. It is home, at the last available count, to about thirty-five thousand people who thrive, to this very day, in their idyllic society. It is believed that it was this valley and its people that

inspired the classic fable of Shangri-La, described in the novel LOST HORIZONS by James Hilton.

Through this valley courses the Hunza River that is fed by the melting glacial snows high in the surrounding mountains. The minerals and silt carried with it have created soil conditions which are, while limited, almost unheard of in quality anywhere else in the world.

Here, for over two thousand years it is told, the descendants of five refugee soldiers from Alexander the Great's disbanded armies and their Persian wives, have successfully survived and prospered in almost complete isolation from the surrounding world.

Why is this place so remarkable? By modern standards, it would be due to the fact it is a land of eternal peace and beauty - enchanted almost. Its residents have embodied the secrets of harmony and serenity to such a degree that they have no crime, no prisons or police, no money, greed or jealousy, and no real poverty. They have no sickness or disease, so therefore they have no need of doctors or hospitals. There is no divorce or abandonment, so there is no need for welfare or orphanages.

On the rare occasions when Western travellers visit, it is a land that simultaneously evokes awe, bewilderment, and complete respect. Not many westerners have had this privilege however, as it has been a difficult and dangerous place to visit, being remotely hidden until recently.

The question that comes to mind when considering that this place does exist, and that the conditions described are true, is; "How have they achieved this in view of what the rest of the world has become?" The reasons are many, and we will explore them later in a composite discussion of the several societies we are examining herein.

Nonetheless, whatever aspects of Hunza society we choose to examine, we are certain to find them remarkable. For instance, it is not unusual for members of the population to reach the age of one hundred-twenty in extremely good health, and not unheard of for some to reach one hundred-forty without malady.

They play sports such as archery, volleyball and polo (*on horseback*), do avalanche repairs on the surrounding rugged mountain trails, and walk seventy miles or more with no outward sign of fatigue. It is claimed the men are able to sire children when they are well into their eighties and nineties.

The only medical assistance provided in Hunza is by bonesetters (*who are specially trained for this task*), when one of the energetic elders is unceremoniously unseated from his horse while playing their almost rule-less and rugged games of polo. Or when a child falls out of a tree and has the misfortune of breaking a limb. Healing takes place within an incredibly short period, and soon the previously injured are back at their tasks.

Though at present Hunza is administered as a state of West Pakistan, it is completely sovereign and self-determining, with its own rulers - the Mir and Rani (*King and Queen*), whose actual governing duties are that of providing spiritual inspiration to their followers by being messengers of good will throughout their kingdom. They also act as mediators in the rare disputes that arise in land boundary disagreements or goods exchanges, and being the decision makers in matters of mutual concern to the welfare of the communities. They travel throughout their kingdom periodically in their effort to facilitate these needs. In recent years, a tele-communications system has been installed, so that each village has at least one phone by which the Mir can be contacted on a daily basis, if required.

The religion of Hunza is not so much a study of concepts and principles, but rather a practicing of virtue in daily life. It is not something that is spoken about, but rather the embodiment of the way it is communicated. It is not a matter for speculation, but a way of life. It cannot be defined, only observed and experienced in daily activities and behavior. It has been spoken and written of as the closest thing we Westerners might imagine Christianity would be if it were being lived. As a result, those who have been privileged enough to visit and experience Hunza, describe it as being a completely healthy, happy and contented society.

It is an historical fact however, that it was not always like this. They also have a past of violence and marauding, and only in recent centuries have they come to know that happiness and contentment can only come because of a conscious decision to be peaceful among themselves and kindly toward their neighbors. The uniqueness of the valley itself, its remoteness and its fertility, has taught them that they can transcend their own base natures and reap a natural abundance and good health simply through right attitude and appropriate behavior. Thus, we see a religious framework based on cooperation, brotherhood, mutual responsibility and self-discipline.

How the people of the Hunza Valley have cultivated their hidden paradise, is in itself an engineering marvel, when one realizes that it was accomplished without any modern tools or implements whatsoever.

Because of the limited amount of arable land, and their own growing population, the Hunzakuts have had to create terraces that can rise in steps - up to two or three thousand feet and more above the valley floor. This has been accomplished by placing millions of stones to create seemingly endless barrier walls, which then contain thousands of tons of the rich valley soil that has been carried in baskets by hand, and placed in the highest levels of this unique containment system.

They then devised aqueducts and water channels to route the mineral-rich, melting glacial waters to irrigate the newly created farmlands. More than just a casual observation of this water system is required in order to appreciate the masterpiece of engineering that it truly is. The networks of channels were constructed in such a way that they all converged on the village itself, so that the water from the perpetually melting glaciers would not simply drain off into the river, but would remain in the valley for the people's domestic use. Since there is very little rainfall in Hunza, it is essential to trap as much of the precious liquid as possible, since they could not survive without it. For emergency use, they trap excess water in a deep, rock-bound gorge high up on the mountainside, for use during extremely dry conditions.

Their fields are tended with great skill and reverence, and their crops are rich and healthy. Leftovers and waste are regarded as reverently as the

produce itself. Since it is all organic, it is composted in specially dug pits and later used as fertilizer and food for the gardens. The people of Hunza have been forced to adopt an agricultural system that is more closely akin to gardening than to farming, but it has produced a quality of vegetables and fruits that could not be surpassed by other means. This is the reward they receive for repaying the soil in full for what the soil has given them. The Hunza people treat the soil as a gift from God that is to be cherished, worked at and cared for. It is of course a perpetual, but joyful task, as the dividends are excellent food, unbelievable longevity, perfect health and a contented lifestyle.

Since plant diseases are non-existent and there are no insects to destroy their crops, there is no need for the use of chemicals, which ultimately would deplete the quality of their soils. Their food remains pure, fresh and healthful.

It is a long-known fact that humans require a diet balanced in minerals, vitamins, trace elements, proteins, fats, water and oxygen in order to remain healthy. Ideally, these substances should be derived from the food we consume. Since plants are nourished essentially from the soil, they can only get (*and give*) what the soil gives to them. Life is dependent upon health, health is dependent upon good food, and good food is dependent upon the soil. We truly are what we eat.

Investigators have proven that food is no richer than the soil from which it was harvested. Depleted and chemically infused soils cannot produce healthy, nutritious vegetation. Vegetation suffering from nutritional deficiencies will not nourish healthy animals. Mineral-deficient vegetation and malnourished animals cannot provide good health for people. It would follow then that poor soils would produce poor people - physically, mentally and economically.

The Valley of the Hunza has become a legendary symbol of social excellence, with its living examples of unparalleled health and longevity, economic independence, political autonomy and social harmony.

In recent years however, the Hunza have submitted to administration under the government of West Pakistan. The visitor restrictions have

been greatly relaxed and vast improvements to the Karakoram Highway, or KKH, have made the valley more accessible to the invasion of curious Westerners. Thus, it is doubtful that the world will benefit from their examples before they succumb to the polluting influences they will inevitably be subjected to, as they are absorbed by our world.

THE CATHARS IN SOUTHERN FRANCE

Among the most enigmatic of the more successful and idealistic groups we have chosen for study in this chapter are the Cathars, or as they were better known in their own era, the Albigensians, who flourished in the South Central regions of the Langued'oc in France. They enjoyed almost incomparable agrarian prosperity and peaceful contentment from the early Twelfth Century, until the middle of the Thirteenth Century A.D. when the (*Albigensian*) Crusades dispatched from Rome nearly annihilated them.

The Albigensians (*or Cathars*), were considered heretics by the Roman Catholic Church due to their independent nature, and refusal to subscribe to the Catholic religious doctrines and dogma. Thus, they were sentenced by papal decree from the Vatican to be "cleansed" by means of genocide sanctified by the Holy Roman Church.

It is of a peculiar interest that the Cathars were mysteriously connected, by means of certain secret societies, to the noble but notorious Knights Templar, and shared beliefs, values and lifestyles similar to those of the Arcadians of South Central Greece and the earlier ascetic communities of the Essenes in the Holy Land. It is also of interest that aside from their steadfast devotion to a simple, austere, pastoral and peaceful way of life, as did the other groups in our study, the most unique characteristic of the Cathar life was their religious beliefs. In order to gain any understanding of these unusual people, we must first examine this particular aspect of their culture.

It is known that the Cathars were fundamentally Gnostics and their beliefs were essentially founded upon the precepts of a dualistic universe. It has been said that Gnostic dualism is expressed in one or the other of equal and opposite ways. The "purist" dualist and committed ascetic -

i.e., a Cathar, exemplifies his contempt for all worldly things (*the material world*) by spurning them and viewing matter as the product of evil. Conversely, the “extreme” dualist who is also contemptuous of the material universe which he views to be the work of an evil - or ignorant - demiurge, and of little or no consequence as compared to the spiritual world, may indulge himself in a life of excesses and even perversion if he so wishes. To such a person, matter itself is considered an illusion, or at least of no importance, and thus his interplay with it will bring no moral consequences.

Do we not see overtones of these beliefs apparent in the world around us even to this day? All around, the Cathar faith had its roots in other faiths of previous eras, i.e., the Manichean, Paulician and Bogomilian background that had been established (*perhaps much earlier*) in the Balkan Peninsula in Bosnia and Serbia. These religious ideas eventually found their way west across Europe to Italy (*possibly to Greece*), until settling in the Langued'oc district between the Eastern Pyrenees and the Lower Rhone in Southern France, eventually becoming a major Cathar stronghold.

The God of the Cathars was not the almighty, monotheistic God of Judaism, Islam or Christianity. As previously pointed out, the material universe - and all it contains, including their own bodies - was a creation of evil. It was the work of the devil, but, since Satan was unable to give life, he was forced to seek the good God's assistance to animate the human entities that he had created. According to Cathar doctrine, then, it was the good God who breathed the divine essence of life, or spirit, into the earthly (*clay*) forms which the evil God, Satan had manifested. The doctrine reports that Satan then enticed “angels” down from heaven that he might utilize their souls in the bodies of those who are descended from his first two human creations.

Historical records also indicate that many Cathars shared a belief in reincarnation and were supposedly successful in practicing it consciously. It would stand to reason that since the original number of souls “lured” from the angelic realms into physical bodies was believed to be finite in number, they would most probably ascertain that these

“shanghaied” souls would choose to migrate from one human body to another as the birth and death cycle recurred and the centuries rolled by.

There was yet another curious contingency to the Cathar faith whereby the good God had sent forth his second son, Jesus, in the image of a divine projection to liberate and retrieve these lost angelic souls from their prisons of the flesh. Their conviction was that Satan, who was now in opposition to the good God, had in fact been His first son. To the way of Cathar belief, Jesus was not a physical being, and as such, they maintained that he thus could not have been born, suffered, died or experienced the resurrection.

Further, the “cross” was viewed as an instrument of evil rather than being the sacred herald of the Christian faith. The Cathars also held all relics of the saints in absolute contempt - because they were purely physical (*and thereby distractive from truth – *Author’s note*). Cathar doctrine maintained “those who bowed before scraps of rags, bone or hair in reliquaries, were foolishly bowing to matter,” which was, of course, the creation of the evil Satan. Cathars also held that “sex” was deplorable and that family life was simply part of the trappings of a worldly, materialistic life. They disdained procreation because they believed that it served only to befoul increasing numbers of damned souls into enduring the miseries of worldly incarnation.

Their spiritual “laws” forbade killing of all human beings, for any reason whatsoever, and this prohibition was inclusive of animal life as well. It was not permitted to eat any food that was of animal origin and included such animal by-products as eggs and milk.

It was considered sacrilegious and in opposition to Cathar principles to tell an untruth, to practice thievery, to curse anyone or anything, or to own any property, yet even with all these moral, sexual and regimental restrictions, salvation was not assured. The only way in which salvation was guaranteed was by fulfilling the requirements of complete and proper submission to the Cathar Church, and this could only be confirmed by the laying on of hands by an ordained Cathar Minister.

The eschatologies of the Cathar faith - their teachings about the end-times - were vividly intense and poetically paradoxical. The majority of Cathars were of the belief that the process of reincarnation would continue to unfold until all of the displaced angelic souls - with the exception of the few which were Satan's own creations and thus could not be saved - were in safe and secure communion with the good God. It would be at this time that the material world would be completely and finally in a propitious cataclysm of fire and water, wherein fire would consume all water and water would quench all fire. When this holocaust had exhausted itself and the elements of fire and water had accomplished their mutual annihilation and disposed of all physical creation in the process, the few remaining Cathar souls would then savor a blissful eternity in the presence of the good God.

The most poignant issue that was central to the Cathar ritual was the "consolamentum". During this ceremony, it was believed that the Holy Spirit was conveyed by the laying on of the Minister's hands and received by the convert who was subject to the service. These Ministers of the Cathar faith were known among the people as "perfecti" and, as a rule, they travelled and ministered in twosomes. A male travelling companion was known as a "socius" and a female partner was known as a "socia".

These roving pairs of Ministers to the Faith shared all the hardships and dangers of the life as they travelled throughout the Langued'oc. The colloquial reference to the perfecti was *bonshommes* (*the good men*), which gives us a fair indication of the admiration, affection and respect that was given them by the people who inhabited this region, many of whom had received their selfless assistance. The common members of the Cathar movement were called "credentes" and they, of course, were not bound to follow the rigid strictures and codes of behavior that were required of the perfecti.

A bishop and two assistants were assigned to administer each Cathar province. These two assistants were given the titles of the "Filius Major" and the "Filius Minor" - the "greater son" and the "lesser son" - respectively. When an aging bishop sensed that his death was imminent, he would then assign the Filius Minor to the newly vacant position of

Filius Major. The perfecti in the region being administered would then elect a new Filius Minor from the qualified aspirants.

Even though, as individuals, the Cathars had no possessions as such, the perfecti, as a fellowship, held dominion over a very substantial amount of wealth. Much of this wealth was distributed, as needed, directly to the poorer citizens in the districts they administered. Some of it was utilized to maintain the charitable institutions they had fostered - many of which were hybrid types of hospitals, seminaries and monasteries.

It is insistently rumored that some of this wealth was stockpiled and stored carefully, either in or near some outstanding local landmark, or perhaps in several of their superlatively defensible Cathar strongholds - so much for the independent Counts of Raz'es, and their Cathar protégé's! Montse'gur, a rocky promontory, in the Langued'oc region was conquered by the Catholic Crusaders, bent on enforcing the Pope's religious agenda upon these prosperous and peaceful, basically agrarian and rural people. In 1244 A.D., the Catholics in the name of God burnt over two hundred Cathars alive. *(It is interesting to contemplate which of these devout religious persuasions may have been enacting and accomplishing the greater "evil".)*

There is historical evidence however, that four daring Cathar mountaineers managed to climb down the precipitous rock upon which this stronghold stands and carried with them the secret of the fabulous Cathar treasure. Could it have been a purely "spiritual treasure" - some secret wisdom perhaps, or some irreplaceable and priceless documents such as THE KEY TO TRUTH? It is known that at least one community of Paulicians reverently adhered to THE KEY TO TRUTH as recently as 1824.

The most intriguing question of all is aroused by a reference to "pecuniam infinitum", or unlimited wealth, which was made by a surviving Cathar prisoner who was being interrogated by the inquisitors. What mysterious secret might the Cathars have cherished, which may have given those who understood it dominion over limitless prosperity?

A legend persists even to this day, which claims the Cathars, even though they outwardly decried such things, were actually in possession of the Holy Grail. And despite the fact they outwardly seem to have disappeared, they are, through their descendants and the perpetuity which anonymity can afford from within some unknown secret society, possibly still the stewards of this cherished relic, and no doubt considerably more.

Putting aside these intriguing possibilities, it will be helpful to note for the purpose of our study, that even in view of the historical evidence of the peace, prosperity and contentment these people enjoyed among themselves, we must presume there must have been divergent moral interpretations and subsequently differing modes of life expression. Even so, it would seem that each interpretation, at whatever level of their moral spectrum, tolerated or at least adapted to each of the others extremes, thus affording them a fairly high degree of social harmony, in spite of their obvious differences. History points out that the doctrine of conformity was imposed and enforced only after the Catholic invasion and conquest dispatched from Rome.

It is perhaps significant to note that this vanquished "evil"; formerly peaceful and provincial region was thereafter besieged by dissension, oppression and hardship. Interesting, is it not? This may be an important point to ponder in view of our currently teetering social predicament, though it is possible that only the future will provide the answers we need to correct our presently wavering course.

THE MYSTERIOUS ESSENES OF QUMRAN

In the entire history of mankind, there have never been a group of people more subject to conjecture and controversy than what was once believed to be but a small community of Essenes, who seem to emerge and then disappear in the vicinity of the Holy Land during crucially portentous periods in the dramatically unfolding epoch of man.

Certain points of fact regarding the Essenes and their relationship to the Dead Sea Scrolls are shrouded in thought provoking mystery. Were they maji and healers, or simply agrarian eccentrics? Might they have been

warriors and assassins, or pacifists and priests? Are they the true authors of these controversial scrolls? How did they become known as Essenes in the first place?

There is considerable historically recorded evidence that they surfaced at the time Jesus Christ walked the earth, but the questions that haunt students and scholars alike on this subject is whether Jesus was their teacher, or whether they were his teachers. It would seem that whichever the case may have been, they did spend a considerable amount of time in each other's company. It is also true that much of what Christ taught had already been known and practiced for aeons by this obscure clan. This has been revealed in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were discovered in 1947 in a number of caves surrounding Qumran, near the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea.

Though very little has been publicly released regarding the actual contents of these scrolls, we can note that our knowledge of history is quiescently and measuredly being modified by a rather obscure means of introducing speculative conjecture. This is gradually having the effect of disintegrating our once rigid and immutable "sacred cows" as a means of preparing humanity for a much greater and penetrating truth. Such may be the hidden potency of the message under the aegis of these enigmatic scrolls, that the investigating scholars have deemed that sudden disclosure might wreak havoc among orthodox religious and academic historians and their students. It may be felt that small, measured amounts of "truth", gradually introduced to mainstream thinking is the more palatable and sage approach.

It has been suggested that the Dead Sea Scrolls (*in which the Essenes most certainly played a significant role*), may even be the lost books of the Holy Bible, and contain truths so staggering that the very continuity of western civilization as we know it hangs in the balance, should the public suddenly be made aware of them. If, for instance, the scrolls revealed that the scriptures had been distorted (*with deliberation*) by means of augmentation or omission, for the purpose of deception by a powerful priesthood of another era, the repercussions today could be devastating.

To continue with our brief study of the Essenes, the traditional view has been passed on to us in the writings of Pliny, Philo and Josephus, who portrayed them as a sect or subset of First Century Judaism. Pliny described them as a group of celibate hermits "who kept company only with palm trees", and were believed to have resided in the desolate Northwest region of Jordan known as Qumran.

Josephus, who shared the viewpoints of Philo, clarifies the picture somewhat. He agreed that the Essenes were celibates, but also points out that "there was a second order of Essenes" who actually partook of matrimony and procreated. Overall, however, they viewed wealth, ownership and pleasures of the flesh with extreme contempt. All their possessions were shared in the common fold, and any person who sought to join their community had to relinquish all *private* property.

Their leaders were selected from their own midst, and were dispersed and settled throughout all the cities of Palestine, as well as in their own separate communities. Yet, even when dwelling in the urban setting of that era, they distinctly insulated themselves from the mainstream of society. The picture Josephus has created of these enigmatic people is similar to that of a monastic order, or one of the ancient "mystery schools". Aspirants wishing to gain entry to their order were required to submit to a probationary period lasting three years, much the same as a novitiate. Full acceptance could not be anticipated until the novice had completed his "apprenticeship".

The fully initiated Essenes would engage in pre-dawn prayer, then toil at an assigned task for a period of five hours, and afterwards they would bathe and attire themselves in fresh loincloths. This was a purification ritual that they performed everyday, and when thus purified, they would all gather in a community hall and share a communal meal.

It was once believed the Essenes were strict vegetarians, but according to Josephus, they are said to have eaten meat. He also informs us they were scholars of the Old Testament verses as well as the teachings of the prophets. They were also, he tells us, highly trained in the mystical arts of divination, healing, and were able to foretell future events through the study of sacred scriptures in concurrence with specific purification rites.

According to the Essene doctrine, the soul is immortal, but resides temporarily in the mortal prison of the physical body. It is liberated at death to rise in rapturous union with the Almighty Presence.

Josephus draws a comparison between the Essene teachings and those of the Greeks (*Gnostics*), and at one point, likens their principles to the schools of Pythagoras. He also points out their tenacious coherence to the Mosaic Law, saying: "What they revere most after God is the Lawgiver, and blasphemy against Him is a capital offense."

For the most part the Essenes were given to pacifism and were basically in good favor with established authority. As a point of interest, according to Josephus' commentary, they were apparently held in very high esteem by King Herod, whom it is said showed them special favour, and even honored them. There is, however, considerable conjecture regarding the true nature of the Essenes, as becomes apparent in the various writings of the times by Josephus, Pliny and Philo. Some of the writings are completely irreconcilable with the archeological evidence at the Qumran site. The question of their being celibates for instance: There are gravesites of women and children amidst the excavations of these ruins, and according to the "Community Rule", there are regulations governing marriage and the raising of children.

Regarding the claim that they were in King Herod's favor, there are indications in Qumran literature that they harbored a militant hostility toward any non-Judaic authority, and that their community was even abandoned at one point due to persecution by Herod. This militant hostility also contradicts claims that they were pacifists. The Qumran site contains a defensive tower that was obviously designed for military purposes, and even though Philo insistently maintains that there were no makers of weapons or armor in their numbers, there is clear evidence of a rather efficient looking forge that could easily have produced such accoutrements of war.

Returning to the literature of Qumran, it is sometimes extremely "martial", as is evidenced in the "War Scroll".

Classical writers have long used the term "Essene" to identify this important, if mysterious, sub sect of Judaism, just as they have the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Yet nowhere in the Dead Sea Scrolls is the actual term "Essene" to be found. How is it then, that the greatest spiritual teacher the world has ever known, found His way into the company of such as these? How is it that His teachings, which are believed to have emerged from their doctrines, have so completely permeated and influenced the world we live in today, yet they themselves remained so obscure?

Above all, why have the truths contained in the Dead Sea Scrolls been withheld from public scrutiny for so long? Moreover, is there any intention to ever release any of this sacred information by the so-called "learned elders of the church", so that these and other questions relating to our spiritual and physical purpose here on earth might be clarified to us all?

It is possible such a revelation might pose such a threat to the power and influence that secular religion still holds over the lives of humanity, that only a "spiritual renaissance" would finally wrest the truth from the hands of these politically motivated saviors of the church, and place it in the rightful hands of the flock.

Regarding the questions about the Essenes themselves, there is another option, not simply a possibility, but a very likely probability. It appears the Qumran community did not refer to themselves as Essenes but did refer to themselves by a number of other Hebrew and Aramaic terms. Therefore, from these multiple references, we can safely presume that this community of people did not have a single definitive name for themselves.

They did have a very distinctive and unusual concept of themselves however, and this concept manifested in a variety of characterizations and sobriquets. This concept comes to rest, ultimately, upon their total dedication to the mutually binding "Covenant", which required a formal oath of obedience, completely and forever, to the Mosaic Law.

The composers of the Dead Sea Scrolls reference themselves as, "the keepers of the Covenant". Often, in place of the words for "Covenant" or "Law", they would use other terms, such as "the way" or "the work" or "works", much as they are used in Taoism and in Zen teachings. References with regard to themselves can be found, for example, as "the Perfect of the Way", or "the Way of Perfect Righteousness" - "Way" meaning "the work of the Law", or "the way in which the Law functions", "the way the Law works".

Many variations of these themes are found in the Dead Sea Scrolls to indicate the Qumran community and its members. One such reference, which translates quite closely, labels them as the "Doers of the Law", so we may safely conclude that their peculiar mission and purpose in life rather than for any other reason identified them.

A COMPOSITE SUMMARY

We have now had a brief look at several unusual communities of people in widely divergent geographical locations, periods and cultural backgrounds, which achieved noteworthy success historically, from a perspective of social integration and harmony. We presume, of course, these would be desirable criteria from which to measure their success.

Political and economic factors aside for the moment, what else might these communities have shared as a priori commonalities that served to confer upon them the unique blessings that have made them worthy of note to historians - ancient and modern alike? If we entertain the suspicion that perhaps these remarkably diverse people had discovered something worth knowing, does it not seem strange that eventually some large scale movement would be spearheaded to emulate their successes, rather than simply standing by impotently, as the ever-jealous, current Machiavellian "powers that be" invariably invade and destroy these harmless, non-aggressive and peace-loving mini-societies?

It is no different at present than it was then. How long will we, as members of mainstream society, continue to be governed by our own stupidity and faintheartedness? It is, perhaps, less the fault of those wily ones whom we trust and hire to govern us, for they simply seek to take

advantage of our weakness and ignorance, which we offer them on a silver platter, allowing them to abuse us.

It is interesting to note that whatever label our learned historians have chosen to bestow upon these remarkable people, whether it be 'Essenes', 'Arcadians', 'Cathars', 'Hunzakuts', etc., they continue to appear on the historic scene at different places and in different times, yet always demonstrating similar qualities which reflect a form of social excellence, albeit peculiar to their own culture and era. It is worthy of note that these are, invariably, universally appropriate, and virtuous qualities such as integrity, chivalry and valor and are always built upon a mutually agreeable foundation of simplicity and relative solitude. They practice a very distinct segregation, even isolation, from the prevailing values and mores of the surrounding conventional society. It is also interesting to note that what distinguished these communities the most was the level of excellence they seemed to have achieved, as compared to the apparent mediocrity and degeneracy surrounding them in general society.

For the sake of creating a fresh hypothesis, let us, for a moment, forget about the different sectarian labels our historians have bestowed upon these rather unconventional and exceptional people. Let us forget about their diverse locations, periods and the probable rationale behind their mutually common revulsion for the attitudes and behavior that are the custom of mainstream society. When we examine our history as a whole, - as a gestalt unit or complete cycle - we find there are certain periodic convocations of exceptional people who seem to emerge briefly to the notice of society, bringing with them a living example of social excellence that is attainable by us all. They then disappear, usually in an act of violence perpetrated by a vanquishing foe, which claims these non-conformists are a threat to the status quo of the current social establishment.

It is a tragic drama that is oft repeated in accordance with the qualities and conditions of the particular times. It is possible that these unique communities of individuals, though attracted to each other, may not be such well defined, yet transient, cults or sects as our historians have imagined them to be. In reality, they may not be bound to a doctrine or dogma which is peculiar only unto themselves, and to which all strictly

conform and adhere, emerging in public practice from time to time and then submerging themselves in anonymity at other times.

Rather, they may simply be a certain type of human being who happens to be deeply imbued with intrinsic virtue, who reacts spontaneously and naturally to injustice and immorality. They may intuitively embody a heightened capability or sense of essential values and morality required by our Creator to maintain an ethical balance in our world. Whenever the pendulum swings too far into the dark side, so that imbalance occurs and there is evidence of a predominance of conflict, anguish and suffering in human society. Then, like a natural anti-body, these “moral-retentives” are stimulated to awakened action for the purpose of correcting and compensating for the imbalance. It is possible that their moral conscience resides deep in the un-conscious, or perhaps more correctly, in the higher-conscious mind. When it is pressured sufficiently by the negative conditions of injustice and malice in the world, the conscious mind begins to sense the presence of positive moral and ethical principles and urges, which can be translated into counter actions when it is appropriately required.

What I am suggesting here, is that the ‘Essenes’, the ‘Cathars’, the ‘Arcadians’, etc., etc., may not simply be isolated sects of eccentric and clandestine moral extremists who lie buried in our past, but rather that they (*we*) possibly exist anywhere and everywhere, at all times, in the midst of our society as “moral-retentives” who are stimulated into awakening and subsequent action by the very quality and conditions of the times. There is no way to guess at the present numbers in our midst, but it would be a fair assumption that the amount is sufficient to meet the task at hand, and fulfill what has been prophetically ordained for our present epoch. I sincerely doubt that our Creator and Sustainer would underestimate the needs of the times.

In our continuing study of humankind, it becomes clearer that, like all else in nature, we are predisposed or inclined toward three basic “climates” of temperament - morally, intellectually and emotionally. These climates can be subsequently identified by their respective attitudes as moral, amoral or immoral; assertive, impartial or contradictory and; stable, indifferent or unstable. All of which can be

found to fit also into the general qualities of Positive, Neutral and Negative.

All human beings, regardless of their race, creed, nationality, geographical location, educational or cultural background can, for the sake of analogy, generally be recognized as to type within these fundamental characteristics. Distinctions as to the particular idiosyncrasies within these qualities will vary kaleidoscopically, however, as their attendant particulars will, for example, compare to the complex diversity of events which transpire within the ternary period of daytime, twilight time and night time - three distinct intervals within a specified time period governed by nature.

One could say: "predictable parameters in which related but unpredictable events transpire." The study of humanity, the history of our growth and development through religion, government and socio-economics, is like exploring a vast cavern, equipped with a tiny but penetrating flashlight, while motivated by intense curiosity.

Allegorically, our experience of life can be described as follows: A visitors representative will hand you a guide map at the entrance to the cavern, and this would seem to suffice if the explorer is only interested in a superficial excursion. However, if one is moved to scrutinize the confines of this complex lair more closely, one will discover accesses to a vast labyrinth of tunnels and pathways that are not shown on the guide map. Hidden grottos, containing mysteries previously unimagined, are revealed to one's perception. Once engaged in such an exploration one soon realizes that the guidebook, so kindly proffered upon entering this curious maze of life, is no longer of any use. It seems that its plotters and designers themselves had either not ventured far from the main path, or they simply neglected to record these subterranean portals leading to deeper understanding and greater awareness of truth.