

"Everything is plundered, betrayed, sold" by Anna Akhmatova (1899-1966)

*Everything is plundered, betrayed, sold,
Death's great black wing scrapes the air,
Misery gnaws to the bone.
Why then do we not despair?*

*By day, from the surrounding woods,
cherries blow summer into town;
at night the deep transparent skies
glitter with new galaxies.*

*And the miraculous comes so close
to the ruined, dirty houses --
something not known to anyone at all,
but wild in our breast for centuries.*



THE WISDOM OF DISRUPTION

Moses was shepherding the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. He led the flock to the west end of the wilderness and came to the mountain of God, Horeb. The angel of God appeared to him in flames of fire blazing out of the middle of a bush. He looked. The bush was blazing away but it didn't burn up.³ Moses said, "What's going on here? I can't believe this! Amazing! Why doesn't the bush burn up?" God saw that he had stopped to look. God called to him from out of the bush, "Moses! Moses!" He said, "Yes? I'm right here!" God said, "Don't come any closer. Remove your sandals from your feet. You're standing on holy ground." Then he said, "I am the God of your father: The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face, afraid to look at God.

God said, "I've taken a good, long look at the affliction of my people in Egypt. I've heard their cries for deliverance from their slave masters; I know all about their pain. And now I have come down to help them, pry them loose from the grip of Egypt, get them out of that country and bring them to a good land with wide-open spaces, a land lush with milk and honey, the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite. The Israelite cry for help has come to me, and I've seen for myself how cruelly they're being treated by the Egyptians. It's time for you to go back: I'm sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the People of Israel, out of Egypt."

Moses answered God, "But why me? What makes you think that I could ever go to Pharaoh and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

"I'll be with you," God said. "And this will be the proof that I am the one who sent you: When you have brought my people out of Egypt, you will worship God right here at this very mountain."

Then Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the People of Israel and I tell them, 'The God of your fathers sent me to you'; and they ask me, 'What is his name?' What do I tell them?"

God said to Moses, "I-AM-WHO-I-AM. Tell the People of Israel, 'I-AM sent me to you.'"

—Exodus 3, The Message

Mabel Ping-Hua Lee (1896-1966)

"Frankly speaking, it is strange that you should spend your life on a thing that is merely a Baptist church in China Town." *Hu Shih to Mabel Lee 1936*

Sophie Scholl (1921-1943)

From Sophie's letters and diaries

The real damage is done by those millions who want to 'survive.' The honest people who just want to be left in peace. Those who don't want



their little lives disturbed by anything bigger than themselves. Those with no sides and no causes...Those who don't like to make waves—or enemies. Those for whom freedom, honor, truth, and principles are only in literature. Those who live small, mate small, die small. It's the reductionist approach to life: if you keep it small, you'll keep it under control. If you don't make any noise, the bogeyman won't find you. But it's all an illusion, because they die, too, those people who role up their spirits into little tiny balls so as to be safe. Safe?! From what? Life is always on the edge of death; narrow streets lead to the same place as wide avenues, and a little candle burns itself out just like a flaming torch does. I choose my own way to burn.

Just because so many things are in conflict does not mean that we ourselves should be divided. Yet time and time again one hears it said that since we have been put into a conflicting world, we have to adapt to it. Oddly, this completely unchristian idea is most often espoused by so-called Christians, of all people. How can we expect a righteousness to prevail when there is hardly anyone who will give himself up undividedly to a righteous cause?

I'm still so remote from God that I don't even sense his presence when I pray. Sometimes when I utter God's name, in fact, I feel like sinking into a void. It isn't a frightening or dizzying sensation, it's nothing at all — and that's far more terrible. But prayer is the only remedy for it, and however many devils scurry around inside me, I shall cling to the rope God has thrown me in Jesus Christ, even if my numb hands can no longer feel it.

I've been thinking of a story from the Old Testament: Moses stood all day and all night with outstretched arms, praying to God for victory. And whenever he let down his arms, the enemy prevailed over the children of Israel. Are there still people today who never weary of directing all their thinking and all their energy, single-heartedly, to one cause?

The only remedy for a barren heart is prayer, however poor and inadequate. As I did that night at Blumberg, I'll keep on repeating it for us both: We must pray, and pray for each other, and if you were here, I'd fold hands with you, because we're poor, weak, sinful children. Oh, Fritz, if I can't write anything else just now, it's only because there's a terrible absurdity about a drowning man who, instead of calling for help, launches into a scientific, philosophical, or theological dissertation while the sinister tentacles of the creatures on the seabed are encircling his arms and legs, and the waves are breaking over him. It's only because I'm filled with fear, that and nothing else, and feel an undivided yearning for him who can relieve me of it.

I know that life is a doorway to eternity, and yet my heart so often gets lost in petty anxieties. It forgets the great way home that lies before it. Unprepared, given over to childish trivialities, it could be taken by surprise when the great hour comes and find that, for the sake of piffling pleasures, the one great joy has been missed. I am aware of this, but my heart is not. It seems unteachable; it continues its dreaming ... always wavering between joy and depression.

To the Nazi judge of the People's Court, 21 February 1943)

I am, now as before, of the opinion that I did the best that I could do for my nation. I therefore do not regret my conduct and will bear the consequences that result from my conduct. Somebody, after all, had to make a start. What we wrote and said is also believed by many others. They just don't dare express themselves as we did.

To her cell mate Else Gebel on the day of her execution, 22 February 1943

Such a splendid sunny day, and I have to go. But how many have to die on the battlefield in these days, how many young, promising lives... What does my death matter if, because our actions, thousands of people will be awakened and stirred to action!

