

Extrarchal Cogitation

December 13, 2008

“Archa, archae” is the Latin for “box.” Thinking outside the box is not a popular activity – who wants to be shaken out of their comfortable mental routine? – but circumstances may soon force it upon all of us. It may not be a bad idea to get a little used to it sooner rather than later. Here are some considerations of an American, James Kunstler, who is not afraid to cogitate extrarchally!

The recent succession of massive bailouts by the USA government of mega-banks and mega-corporations TBTF (too big to fail), he says, is no better than injections of embalming fluid into the walking dead. Worse, the corresponding fabrication of trillions of dollars out of nothing virtually guarantees hyper-inflation in anything from six to eighteen months. But if the dollar is destroyed, how will the USA pay for imported oil? And without oil, what happens to our whole oil-based way of life?

Moreover, with the collapse of the debt pyramid, what happens to the whole fantasyland, built like most everybody’s houses and cars, on credit and debt? People will have to get back to real as opposed to virtual activity. Back to the distribution of property and growing of food as before the arrival of petro-agriculture. Back to the land, or social chaos! We must start thinking – outside the box – of alternate energies in place of oil, of production instead of consumerism, of localism in place of globalism.

Mr. Kunstler recognizes that a “zombie disease” has “eaten away our brains,” but he still puts his hope in a young generation of Americans realizing what an opportunity to rebuild is offered to us all by this meltdown, and he hopes that a revived American people will set its shoulder to the wheel. I wish I shared his hope, but the whole question is

religious, and the closest that he gets to mentioning the Lord God is when he comments that “the meltdown is building straight into the Christmas holidays”!

Yet as the Psalmist says, to build the city without God is to build in vain (Ps. CXXVI). And, as Our Lord says, “He that gathereth not with me, scattereth” (Mt. XII, 30). All the suffering that lies in wait for us next year will be allowed by God for one supreme purpose, to help us to save our souls for eternity. If the collapse of our gimcrack paradise on earth merely makes us want to build a solid paradise on earth, he may have to increase the dose of suffering until we get the point.

Kyrie eleison.