



SIEBENQUELL

Adam and the Final Word



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Although Adam often has a bad reputation (Ruth Lapidé once called him the weakling) I have always had a soft spot in my heart for him. Being the first human is pioneering work. Just ask the firstborns you know. They have to explore everything for themselves without role models and landmarks. They don't have the advantage of younger sibling, of someone who has already gone ahead and can tell them how things work and what is still to come. Adam must painstakingly learn what it means to be a human being on earth.

When I think of Adam, I always come back to a very humorous story about him by Mark Twain, »The Diaries of Adam and Eve«. Here Mark Twain tells a story about how Adam and Eve, after initial great difficulties, find each other, learn to love each other and finally can no longer be without each other. Although it is satirically exaggerated, Twain is never hurtful. There is always a tender and understanding tone. Because this story is our story as well.

Listen to how the book ends. Here are the last lines after the Fall in the Garden:

Adam: (ten years later)

After all these years, I see that I was mistaken about Eve in the beginning; it is better to live outside the Garden with her than inside it without her. At first I thought she talked too much; but now I should be sorry to have that voice fall silent and pass out of my life. Blessed be the apple that brought us near together and taught me to know the goodness of her heart and the sweetness of her spirit!

Eve: (40 years later)

It is my prayer that we may pass from this life together. But if one of us must go first, it is my prayer that it shall be I; for he is strong, I am weak, I am not so necessary to him as he is to me. Life without him would not be life; how could I endure it?

Adam: (At Eve's grave)

Now that she is gone, I know one thing; wheresoever she was, there was Eden.

I love this story because it shows us that Adam was able to learn more than he started out with. The story that began with Adam hiding from Eve in the garden, because she was so annoying, ends with the sentence: »Wheresoever she was, there was Eden.« What began in anger and misunderstanding, ends in love.

Mark Twain is not telling the biblical story from Genesis here, but he does illuminate a deep truth of the biblical story. Like Adam, we too can grow beyond the weak and broken beginnings of our lives. The moments in life when we are too small or petty do not determine the greatness we can still achieve. Now, as we stand on the threshold of a new year, what could be more precious to us than this comforting life lesson that our stories can end very differently from how they began?

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