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THE REVIVAL OF HUMAN SACRIFICE: THE FRUIT OF MODERN PAGANISM

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The first human sacrifice, of course, (not counting Adam's First Sin) was that of Abel, by Cain (Gen. 4:8). The story of the murder by the firstborn son of Adam of Adam's second son is familiar, though its connection with human sacrifice is not. But the fundamental principles of human sacrifice are all present in the actions of Cain.

Human sacrifice is nothing less than murder, and hence is forbidden by the law of God (Ex. 20:13). Cain's murder of Abel grew out of God's refusal to respect the offering of Cain. God refused to respect Cain's offering because it was not made according to the manner prescribed by God's word. In desiring to make his own prescription of an acceptable offering to God, Cain was in essence manifesting the fundamental nature of man's fallenness: his desire to be as God, determining for himself good and evil (Gen. 3:5). For in substituting his own system of sacrifice, his own mode and content of sacrifice, Cain was doing nothing less than substituting his word about what is acceptable to God—and hence his word about the nature of God and the nature of things—for that of his Creator's, the Ruler and Sustainer of the universe. He was substituting his own word about good and evil for God's word about good and evil. God, of course, saw through Cain's attempt to autonomously redefine His nature and to simultaneously re-create His creation. He labeled it for what it was: sin (Gen. 4:7).

Now, it made Cain unhappy—no, angry—that God was displeased with his attempted autonomy, his attempted self-law. Rather than acknowledging his guilt before God's word and law, however, Cain did not repent of his sin. Instead, he **transferred the guilt of his sin to another: to another man, to his brother, to the image of God.** Rather than seeking to pay the penalty for his own sin, Cain sought to **transfer the penalty for sin to another man, to the image of God.** Moreover, he sought to make another man pay a **penalty not prescribed by God** for the offense, a penalty more severe than that prescribed by God's law, which limits the death penalty to certain prescribed offenses (see R. J. Rushdoony's *The Institutes of Biblical Law*; Phillipsburg, N. J.: The Craig Press, 1973, pp. 225-237, & passim).

In his attempt to autonomously determine the nature of God, the nature of God's creation, and the nature of God's laws, Cain was **idolatrous**, for he worshipped a false god, a god of his own imagining, of his own imagination's making. In presenting God with an unacceptable sacrifice, and in refusing to make restitution to God for his unacceptable sacrifice, he committed the sin of theft. His wrath was kindled against his brother because of his sins of envy and covetousness. It was these sins which led him to murder his brother.

Integral Human Sacrifice

Literally, to sacrifice is to make holy (Lat. *sacer*, 'holy' & *facere*, 'to

make'). Generally, however, a sacrifice is a rite in the course of which **something is forfeited or destroyed, in order to establish or maintain relations with a source of spiritual strength**, for the benefit of one(s) in need of such strength. In human sacrifice that which is forfeited or destroyed is human life: human sacrifice is fundamentally **ritual murder**. Legally speaking, it is simply a **ceremonial murder**, and, like the majority of all sacrificial acts, is generally a collective undertaking. When an individual executes this ceremonial murder, he is as a rule a representative of the community, or at least of a class within the community. From the earliest to the latest examples of this horrid rite, there has been a close connection between human sacrifice and the retributive functions of the community. The only difference between Cain and later practitioners of the art is that he acted alone.

The fundamental relationship of human sacrifice may be communal, piacular, or honorific. In the perverse communion of human sacrifice, the idea is to have strength imparted to man through his participation in the cannibalistic "sacred" meal. Men seek union with the sacred species or being. The cannibalism of this human sacrifice is essentially a form of **self-deification**, of obtaining spiritual strength or achieving union with the divine nature through contact with the sacred being. Salvation by works! Pelagianism of this type is evident in the self-sacrifice of suicide, which is done to bring a benefit to the community or to gain a better status of life beyond the grave.

The piacular type of human sacrifice aims at conciliation with the divine or the superhuman. It seeks to **withdraw or neutralize** a human weakness or weaknesses or to avert, neutralize, or expel evil. Scapegoating is the classic form of piacular human sacrifice. In such heathen rites, the **mana** concentrated in the victim is believed to leave him and give strength to the communicant, by drawing his (their) infirmities into itself. Or, in scapegoating "proper," the ills of the community or the individual are thought to be removed by treating the victim as unclean and casting him or her away to beasts of prey.

Piacular human sacrifice originates partly from fallen man's perverse sense of covenantal responsibility, for as A. E. Crawley said (*Encyclopedia of Religion & Ethics*, N. Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913, Vol. 6, pp. 840-1), "the history of society up to quite recent times is characterized by a special **sense of collective responsibility**. The belief that national or tribal distress or failure is due to national or tribal sin is very real. . . . The whole history of human sacrifice is linked together by ideas of *vicarious suffering, substitution, and representation*, no less than by its form of collective murder." (italics added) The perversions of God's ordained covenantal plan of responsibility, salvation and forgiveness here are too obvious to describe in detail. But when Crawley remarks that "there is such a phenomenon

as a collective lust for blood and, sociologically speaking, we have a right to class together the behavior of the Commune in the Revolution of 1789, and of the Aztecs in their systematized orgies of human sacrifice," (Crawley lived before the greater, less stylized bloodbaths of the twentieth century) we are reminded of the Adamic, Cainitic root of such practices.

When we know of the origins of the piacular form of human sacrifice in Original Sin and a collective sense of sin or danger to the community, it is easy to see that such men will want **propitiation, expiation for their sins**, or at least a preventive guard against future sins or ill-success. It is also easy, bearing in mind these origins, to understand that the victims of such barbarous practices were often very carefully chosen. In many cases criminals, who, unlike today's "liberal" practice, were seen as culpable for their crimes and therefore fit to pay the penalty for their sins, were included among the victims. The catch, from the biblical perspective, was that the punishments were usually far more severe than those warranted by their crimes. Until quite recently the death penalty was prescribed for the majority of offences in all civilized communities. It is, however, easier to understand pagans sacrificing criminals—or even an occasional chief—to their gods in times of difficulty than it is to comprehend the revolting custom of choosing the most beautiful girl (or any girl!), or children, or infants to be sacrificed to the vultures or the fish to "ensure" good crops or to relieve a drought or plague, or to "save" the life or relieve the misfortune of an important individual. Unless, that is, one comprehends the depth of sin and deceit and corruption of the heart of man!

The essence of piacular sacrifice is **expiatory and magical**. The victim is substituted for other individuals or the community; his death is to make expiation or atonement for others. As with Cain, the fundamental motivation is the magical manipulation of reality, the placation of the false gods of the human imagination, via the transference of guilt and punishment. Because it is in essence magical, it is fundamentally a **desire for power**, a desire to manipulate reality in order to make it conform to the desires of the ruler(s) or of the community.

Now, it is not necessary that the ruler(s) believe in magic for "magic" to work, but at least that the citizens of the community believe. For, as Machiavelli has abundantly shown in *The Prince* and the *Discourses*, the Romans and other pagans were most adept at utilizing their sacrifices for political purposes, pragmatically interpreting the portents to secure their practical advantage.

It is at this point that **envy** as a factor in human sacrifice rears its potent, ugly head. In the ancient pagan world, law and war, the two major exercises of political power, involved the death of persons in rites required by the deity, since power in the ancient world was legitimized by the gods. Power in the modern world, too, is legitimized by the gods—only the names of the gods are different: Mankind (one-world socialism), the Proletariat (communism), Democracy (Liberalism), the Nation (Fascism, nationalism), National Self-Determination (Liberalism), "Social Justice" (Socialism, Liberalism), the Race (National Socialism), Revolution, Freedom (Leftists in general, moderns, in general), and others. But the evidence from the ancient world is interesting. Aside from early "foundation sacrifice" (in which living persons, usually children, were buried alive in the foundations of important buildings [the parallel today would be the countless lives expended by the Communists in various Russian construction projects described by Solzhenitsyn in *The Gulag Archipelago*]) and the ritual murder of the attendants of important persons, "all evidence," says Crawley, "points to 'human sacrifice' during times of political or domestic crisis" (p. 841). The conjunction of political power and the desire for human sacrifice can be a volatile combination, but one more useful than dangerous to the ruler(s). In India and Mesopotamia, for example, adult **substitutes** were sacrificed for kings, upon whose persons the continuity of natural processes was believed to depend. The substitution of scapegoats to bear the

burden of rulers' sins, of course, is an ancient device of tyrants.

In light of these considerations, it is not difficult to see that the honorific sacrifice of human life, as a gift to the gods of the city or state, is both a lesser motivation and a less frequent occurrence. When utilized, however, it may be subordinated to a lesser motivation, such as the prevention of the anger of bloodthirsty gods being kindled against the society.

Modern Human Sacrifice

It was the social, legal and governmental influence of Christian doctrine that brought an end to human sacrifice, as a principle of public policy and an expression of civil religion in law. This was achieved at the gory cost of the sacrifice of untold thousands of Christian martyrs at the hands of the Romans and other pagans. To the extent that the Church did, in various countries, compromise with pagan ideas harsher punishments were retained than those sanctioned by God's law. But in the main the Church did not surrender the ministry of government to the pagans and their perverse doctrines of law. The incalculable sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb without spot, sacrificed before the foundation of the world for His elect, who endured the inestimable sacrifice of becoming flesh to dwell among fallen men and the infinite sacrifice of his human life on the cross, laid the foundation for the end of human sacrifice, precisely by being the One who alone can atone for the sins of men. His example in fulfilling perfectly the law of God and His authority in affirming the binding validity of the law of God (Matt. 5:17-19; Rom. 14:15; 15:14) explicitly made human sacrifice manifest as idolatry and murder. Because the Church, with all its failings, did not surrender the ministry of government to the pagans or the authority of law to man's autonomy, the triumph of the preaching of the word of God bore fruit in the practice of rulers.

But the retreat of the Church before the onslaughts of modern paganism has ushered in a new pagan revival, and with it a resurgence of human sacrifice unmatched in its collective destruction of human life.

Modern human sacrifice, as has been said above, has been undertaken in the names of many gods: the Nation, the Race, the Proletariat, Mankind, Democracy, National Self-Determination, "Social Justice," Revolution, Power, Freedom. Whatever the specific idolatry involved, however, it retains the classical characteristics of human sacrifice: idolatry, lawlessness, self-atonement, guilt-transference, self-righteousness, envy, the destruction or forfeiture of human life, perverted sense of collective responsibility, vicarious suffering, substitution, magic, pseudo-expiation, and ritual murder. Human sacrifice under the aegis of modern paganism has taken three fundamental forms: **mass murder, human experimentation, and the torture or destruction of human life and its attendant providential blessings.**

Mass murder is the most characteristic form of modern human sacrifice. Mass murder may be **collective**, as in wars of aggression or wars undertaken to promote domestic unity, deliberate starvation of civilians (Russia under Lenin, Cambodia, Nazi Germany), massacres of captured soldiers (the Russians of Polish soldiers in the Katyn Forest) or civilians (the Soviet Union, Red China, Cambodia, Nazi Germany), terrorism, "euthanasia" (Nazi Germany), or even work under brutal and harsh conditions (Soviet Union, Red China, Cambodia). Or it may be **individual**, as in abortion, infanticide, "euthanasia" (which, following upon the principle of abortion and infanticide, is coming to the U. S. A.), and induced or justified crime—although these individual types of human sacrifice are justified or sanctioned by the community, or by the state and its antinomian laws.

The ancient Romans were perhaps unsurpassed in the barbaric efficiency of their extermination of their enemies, both military and civilian. In the name of conquest, order, example and the state they murdered hundreds of thousands. The National Socialists sacrificed

millions in the name of eugenics, mental health, racial purity and will-to-power. The Communists, who, because of alleged contrasts with the Nazis and fundamental philosophical kinship with Western intellectuals, have received a much better press than the Nazis, have by conservative estimate murdered tens of millions (probably more than 100,000,000 men, women and children), in the countries they have "liberated" from varying degrees of freedom, since 1917. This, of course, has been done in the name of freedom of the proletariat and mankind.

Where nationalist or communist sentiments have waxed in non-communist countries (and they are almost always combined), terrorism has been a favorite vehicle for the acquisition of power and the imposition of will. (Terrorism, of course, is a tried-and-true policy of private thugs, whether they operate individually or collectively, but our concern here is with governmentally-sanctioned goons, not private ones.) Terrorists are selective in two senses. One, they carefully select their targets for maximum psychological and political impact; and two, they select seemingly random mass murders which will terrorize the whole populace of the target country.

All of these things are done, of course, in the name of the most effectual gods—for private ideology and public consumption. Guilt for the sins or circumstances of society is transferred to the targeted victims, or (according to circumstances—whether the desire is revolution or planning and control) to the government or to society. Mass murder is alleged to be the means of expiation or of magical self-atonement and fulfillment of collective responsibility. (For an important account of this, see Gary North's *Marx's Religion of Revolution; The Doctrine of Creative Destruction*, Craig Press, 1964) The victims are carefully chosen, and become substitutes for those whose real sins are worse.

Individual mass murder may lack the "ceremony," such as it is, of collective mass murder, but it is nevertheless sanctioned by law and public policy. Thus, abortion and, in practice, infanticide are not (yet) mandated by the state, but are rather left to "individual choice." The choice, of course, is given to those who possess the physical or financial power to arrange for the murder of the baby, not to the baby who is about to be murdered. It is the same with "euthanasia:" the elderly or infirm person may have no real say in his or her murder, depending on conditions.

Induced or justified crime is an interesting and increasing form of modern individual human sacrifice. The recent murderous riots in Miami are but a case in point. We are taught, in story, textbook, song and script, from lectern, pulpit (in liberal churches), newspaper and tube, by Humanists that man is a product of his environment and is, in effect, helplessly moulded by that environment. Thus, poverty and poor parental child-rearing are said to be the causes of crime. Did some pervert murder six nurses or several little children? Did a man commit seventeen armed robberies? Well, he must have been poor. If not, then he must have had a father who beat him too much or parents who traumatized him into various Freudian hangups. So, the rhetoric runs, it is not this "poor" man who is to blame for his crimes, but rather "the rich, capitalistic exploiters," or "the social and economic system," or "society" which is to blame. Certainly not his sin! Therefore if we convict this "poor" man, and if we put him in jail, his term should be short and as sweet as possible, he should be under the care of as many featherbrained humanistic psychiatrists as possible, and he should be paroled A.S.A.P. And massive programs for social and economic egalitarian reconstruction must be established by our saviors in Washington. So help me, Ramsey Clark!

The effect of the enactment of such nonsense into law, combined with the effect of years (decades!) of public teaching of such humanistic nonsense is to justify the criminal in his crime, and to encourage others to do likewise. The non-criminal population of society pays—in death, destruction, loss of property, injury, fear and taxes for welfarism, crime detection and "prevention," and the humanistic

psycho-bureaucracy. Combine this with the added guilt and resentment pumped up by years of reverse racist indoctrination by "liberal" Humanists in the public schools and the media, and you have the volatile formula for mass murder and destruction of a Miami, waiting only for some real or imagined incident to touch it off. And when that happens, more of the same rhetoric by mediemen and other demagogues prepares the way for more individual and collective crime in the future.

All of the classic symptoms are visible in this syndrome: The gods of "freedom," "social justice," democracy, equality. The transference of guilt and punishment to others. The perverted sense of collective responsibility. The magical expiation and self- or human-atonement. The murder of relatively innocent persons sanctioned by public policy (welfarism, "liberal" criminology and penology).

Human experimentation is most advanced and extensive in the Soviet Union and other communist countries. There it is genetic, physical, medical and psychological. It is always frankly manipulative as, proceeding from environmental determinist premises, it seeks to control and remake man. It is thus also frankly (if not publicly) repressive, as, for example, it utilizes psychiatric terror to persecute Christians and other dissenters from the communist totalitarian pattern and ideology. As recent works by Dr. Thomas Szasz on the psychiatric/psychological profession and recent revelations about some of the operations of the CIA indicate, **human experimentation** is not absent from the American scene. While it may not often result in deaths, its practice is a manifest threat not only to life, but also to the providential blessings of life, such as liberty, property and dominion, which God is often pleased to bestow on men.

Forfeiture or destruction of human life and its attendant providential blessings is the broadest category of human sacrifice. Although it may or may not involve the actual destruction of human life as a consequence of governmental policy, it may seem to be a form of human sacrifice, since without the enactment of unbiblical laws the injurious consequences not attributable to the workings of God's providence—what the Humanists and other pagans call "chance," or "accident"—would not occur. In other words, with no humanistic welfarism, government control of educational content and form, and idiotic environmental determinist "criminal justice" (an appropriate term, when you stop to think of it) policies, Americans would be less likely to be taxed into the poorhouse, scared into the blockhouse, and lectured into the nuthouse.

The law of God is the law of Christ, and the yoke of Christ is a light, not a heavy yoke. We must work within it and in terms of it. Without the law of God we have burdensome taxes, oppressive regulations, counterproductive government bureaucracies and policies, the sacrifice of our fortunes, our honor and even our lives. Without the law of God we have lives of fear, as we are encompassed by the rising tide of human sacrifice. This is reason enough to love the incomparable justice and goodness of God's law: for his law is the bulwark against human sacrifice in all its forms.

The End of Human Sacrifice

Man is inescapably a religious being. He is either of the Kingdom of Satan or of the Kingdom of Christ, since he either worships the creature or the Creator. He cannot serve two masters: he must choose between God and mammon, Christ and Satan. As a recent and humanistically-lamented Bob Dylan song proclaims, "you've got to serve somebody; it may be the devil or it may be the Lord; but you've got to serve somebody." Those who do not serve Christ the Lord will sacrifice, in one sense or another, man, the created image of God. Since man was created and commanded to have dominion over the earth under God's word and law, the sacrifice of man by satanic cultures and socio-economic-political orders, against the commands of God, is at the same time both the attempt to have dominion over the created world apart from God's word and law and the destruction of dominion in the destruction of man, the created

image of God. The destruction of man in human sacrifice's various forms is destruction of dominion because it is against the law of God, whose law requires and facilitates dominion. It is the destruction of dominion because its violation of the law of God blocks the ability and retards the will of man to achieve dominion. And it is inescapably the destruction of dominion because its perversion of dominion is an ungodly apostasy which God has promised to curse with the destruction of His wrath.

But while the religion of man, the worship of the creature and of his attempt to manipulate the whole of created reality in his denial of God is a perversion of dominion, it is also the broad way which leadeth to destruction and death, individually and culturally. And this is precisely what should be encouraging to the Christian community in this age of revitalized human sacrifice. For the way of human sacrifice, terrible as it is, horrible as it is to contemplate, is the way of destruction of humanistic cultures. The ways of Humanism are the ways of death. The present ascendancy of Humanism is but a temporary ill, but a passing terror and disgust. For Humanism, the religion of man, is, with all its sacrifices of humans/men, but the enemy of Christ, which Christ will make his footstool, before He returns (I Cor. 15:24-28). All the forms of Humanism—Fascism, Communism, Socialism, Liberalism and all the other isms—are but doctrines of devils, religions of the enemies of God, enemies of Christ, who "must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (I Cor. 15:25).

The Kingdom of God, not the Kingdom of Satan, will triumph. The Kingdom of Satan is on the defensive, and its gates shall not prevail against Christ's church (Matt. 16:18). Christians, Christ's Church, will have dominion over the Kingdom of Satan, over Humanism and all other forms of false religion and their social and political and economic orders.

Happily, with this end will come the end of human sacrifice, in all its various forms. For the Kingdom of God advances through the fundamental work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians, in the life of the Lord's Church. And since the triune God who is the bridegroom of the Church is also the Creator (Gen. 1:1) and sustainer of all things (Heb. 1:3), the Author and Providential Determiner of history, who works within, and through, the vast multitude of details of interpersonal relations, thoughts, events in the physical creation, and the destinies of nations to achieve His plan and will, it is Christ's word and plan which will triumph, not man's, and hence His church, not the synagogues of Satan, which will be victorious. The means that our Lord has appointed to this end for the Church is the preaching and teaching of His word, as it affects all areas of life (Matt. 28:18-20).

The means appointed by our Lord is particularly the application of His infallible word as it applies to the lives of believers, working for Him in and through His divinely ordered institutions, the church, the family and the civil government, striving, by His grace, to fulfill every jot and tittle of His law (Matt. 5:17-19).

As Bible-believing Christians yield their thoughts and actions to obedience to the whole counsel of their Lord given in scripture (II Tim. 3:16), human sacrifice will be driven backward to defeat and destruction, as a social, political and cultural force, as the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:9). Having the infallible, unchanging law of God, the Church must eschew human sacrifice. Having the Holy Spirit's guidance, the Church must be triumphant over the religions and practices of human sacrifice. Having the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, on the cross and His ascension into Heaven to sit on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, what need has the Church of human sacrifice? The incarnate Word become flesh, born for sacrifice in the manger in Bethlehem, has ended that.

Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. He shall come like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust." (Ps. 72:1-9)

The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.

For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their souls from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight. . . .

Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen. (Ps. 72:10-14, 18-19)

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