



FEED MY SHEEP

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Nose rings and other bodily mutilations *Part 6—The Covenants of the Bible*

Last month, we concluded with these facts: that according to heathen myths, Cybele or Rhea or Gaia is the Great Mother Earth. Therefore she is the great mother of all the gods. In Greek mythology Zeus is known as the father of the gods. In the Roman pantheon, his equivalent was Jupiter. Well, Rhea was the mother of Zeus; Cybele the mother of Jupiter. With that background, we can now turn to Sir James Frazer's remarks in *The Golden Bough*. (Note: the original work was 12 volumes. My copy is the one-volume edition abridged by Sir James himself, copyright 1956, published by MacMillan Company, New York.)

"The worship of the Great Mother of the Gods and her lover or son was very popular under the Roman Empire. Inscriptions prove that the two received divine honors, separately or conjointly, not only in Italy, and especially at Rome, but also in the provinces, particularly in Africa, Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, and Bulgaria. Their worship survived the establishment of Christianity by Constantine; for Symmachus records the recurrence of the festival of the Great Mother, and in the days of Augustine her effeminate priests still paraded the streets and squares of Carthage with whitened faces, scented hair, and mincing gait...while they begged alms from the passers-by.

"In Greece, on the other hand, the bloody orgies of the Asiatic goddess and her consort appear to have found little favor. The barbarous and cruel character of the worship, with its frantic excesses, was doubtless repugnant to the good taste and humanity of the Greeks, who seem to have preferred the kindred but gentler rites of Adonis. Yet the same features which shocked and repelled the Greeks may have positively attracted the less refined Romans and barbarians of the West. *The ecstatic frenzies, which were mistaken for divine inspi-*

ration, the mangling of the body, the theory of a new birth and the remission of sins through the shedding of blood, have all their origin in savagery, and they naturally appealed to peoples in whom the savage instincts were still strong." [Italic emphasis mine—JWB]

With that last comment, Sir James Frazer clearly shows either a lack of understanding or an anti-Christian bias because the remission of sins through the shedding of blood is a fundamental premise of the Christian faith. Its supposed origin in savagery is only true if you consider that Adam, Noah, Abraham, King David and Solomon and the rest were all savages.

Perhaps Frazer, though, is meaning to restrict his comments about bloody covenants and savagery only to the heathen tribes, but that restriction is not at all clear. Both he and Trumbull (whom I quoted in last month's FMS) describe even more gruesome scenes of human sacrifice, which I will forego sharing with you. Most of us have heard stories of such things from our history courses. I wonder though if the accounts of such savagery will long remain in the history books because it might be offensive to those peoples' descendants today.

In other words, will future generations still be taught in the history books just how savage and brutal the Aztecs and Incas were in their rites of human sacrifice, or will those things be excised from the history books so as not to offend their descendants today? Among many primitive cultures, in addition to sacrificing other human beings, it was sometimes the duty of the priests to appease their gods by offering their own blood. We have an example of that in the famous showdown between Elijah and the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel.

Some day I will do an expository lecture on the whole story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal, but for now, just this tiny excerpt. It was a contest to see who was the real god, Baal or Yahweh. Like the perverted worship of Cybele/Gaia/Mother Earth in the Roman Taurobolium a thousand years after Elijah, here too, both Elijah and the bad guys slaughter a bull for the sacrifice.

1 Kings 18:23 Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under:

24 And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD [Yahweh]: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

25 And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under.

26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.

Picture the scene: these priests of Baal were working themselves up into a real frenzy. But no matter what they did, their dumb god would not answer them. So after being mocked by Elijah, they were somewhat forced into going the extra mile for their idol by slashing and gashing themselves.

27 And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

Notice: “after their manner:” i. e., this was their regular practice! Concerning this type of religious ritual, even to his day over a century ago, Trumbull states that this was done not as a means of self-torture, but as proof of their devotedness to their god, signifying that they would pour out their blood, their life, to their god. Sure sounds like self-torture to me! Trumbull then goes on:

“Among the primitive peoples of North and of

South America, it was the custom of priests and people to draw blood from their own bodies, from their tongues, their ears, their noses, their limbs and members, when they went to their temples to worship, and to anoint with that blood, the images of their gods.”

Again, this can be seen again as a degeneration from the authentic ritual of the Hebrew high priest when he took the blood—not of himself, but the blood of animals—and went into the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle and he sprinkled that blood, not on an idol, but on the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant. What did that act accomplish? It provided an atonement or a covering of the sins of the people.

As I read that last passage from Trumbull concerning the heathen drawing blood from their tongues, ears, noses, etc., I couldn’t help but think of the sad fact that so many young people today are piercing various parts of their bodies and putting rings in them, including their lips, eyebrows and other places.

I feel confident that not one in a thousand of these wandering souls who get themselves pierced are actually intending it as a worship of some kind of god—they’re just doing it because of peer pressure and/or because they are searching for their own identity; they’re searching for something in their young lives to give them meaning. They are presently lost souls. God forgive us as a nation for the sin of ours and previous generations for not being diligent to teach them the ways of Yahweh!

And like the explosion of that other form of body mutilation among our people today—I am referring to tattooing—let us hope that this tragic and permanent defilement of the body will fade in popularity. I saw a news report last week about a young woman who went to a laser treatment specialist to have her tattoos removed and not only was it torturously painful during the laser treatments, but she is horribly scarred for life. They showed pictures of her back; it was dreadful to see. The young people today are doing these things out of great ignorance and I can only encourage us to be very kind and gentle with them if we should ever have the opportunity to discuss it with them. The worst mistake we could make would be to have an angry, judgmental, condemnatory attitude. I guarantee you, that will only backfire and drive them deeper into that subculture.

At the time Trumbull was writing (the 19th century), there were two very famous explorers who had been very much in the news in Great Britain and America over the past couple of decades. They were the Scotsman Dr. David Livingstone and the Ameri-

can, Mr. Henry Stanley. Livingstone was a Christian medical missionary and explorer of central Africa. His letters, reports and the book of his adventures in Africa created quite a stir in Britain and America. Later he was not heard from for a long period of time, and as a publicity stunt, the New York *Herald* newspaper sent Stanley over to Africa to find him. When he did finally succeed in locating him, Stanley uttered what has become almost comical because of its understatement, as he said, “Dr. Livingstone, I presume?”

The stories and adventures of Livingstone and Stanley were much more well known in the past century and Trumbull has devoted more than two dozen pages to recounting several of the numerous occasions when either Livingstone or Stanley submitted to the ritual of blood covenanting. Says Trumbull:

“Travelers in the heart of Africa, also, report the covenant of ‘blood-brotherhood,’ or of ‘strong friendship,’ as in vogue among various tribes, although naturally retaining less of primitive sacredness there than among the Semites.”

Which is another way of saying that the further that tribes and nations are separated from the Source, the true God, and His ordained sacrificial system, the more variation will be found. We are now some 2,000 years since the Old Testament-ordained system of sacrificing animals was replaced by the One sacrifice for all time. But since the gospel has *not* been preached in all the world to the extent that all men, tribes and nations have forsaken the old blood rituals, they were thus still found around the globe in the 1800’s and even to this day. Continuing quoting Trumbull...

“The rite is, in some cases, observed after the manner of the Syrians, by the contracting parties tasting each other’s blood; while, in other cases, it is performed by the inter-transfusion of blood between the two.” [Emphasis mine—JWB]

He then goes on to cite cases of both Stanley and Livingstone where either they themselves, or one of their local porters or servants standing in proxy for them, submitted to being cut and having some blood drained from them, which was then either sucked by the other party, or in the case of one tribe, the blood was dripped into a cup of beer, which was then drunk by the two covenanting parties.

Let us now turn to passages in Scripture which make mention of the drinking of blood. This occurs just after Israel had conquered the Amorites and taken their land. Moab was next on the list. Balak, the king of the Moabites, realized that he and his people had no

chance of defeating Israel on the strictly human level. They would be wiped out just as had happened to the Amorites. The shrewd king Balak realized that only through the spiritual realm, could he hope to defeat Israel. So he hired a prophet by the name of Balaam to go out and curse Israel. Unfortunately for the Moabites, the hired gun, the prophet for profit, the televangelist Balaam—oops, I’m sorry, did I say something about televangelists in general there? ☺ —Well, anyhow, Balaam couldn’t deliver for King Balak. He was prevented by Yahweh from being able to curse Israel. Not only could he not *curse* Israel, but when he opened his mouth, Yahweh caused him to utter only *blessings* upon Israel. That’s the setting as we now read beginning in...

Numbers 23:20 Behold, I have received *commandment* to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.

21 He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.

22 God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.

23 Surely *there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!*

24 Behold, the people [meaning Israel] shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat *of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain.*

So God caused Balaam to predict that Israel would be a great conquering nation and that they would “drink the blood of the slain.” We alluded to it earlier, and we reiterate here, that in numerous primitive cultures, they believed that when they drank the blood of their victims, not only did they appease their gods, but that they also gained *all the strengths and attributes of their victims whose blood they drank.*

That belief could have devolved from the original truth which we quoted at the outset, Leviticus 17:11, that the life/soul of the flesh is in the blood. But there is more there. Trumbull’s comments on this:

“The root idea of this rite of blood friendship seems to include the belief that the blood is the life of a living being; not merely that the blood is *essential* to life, but that, in a peculiar sense, it *is* life: that it actually vivifies by its presence; and that by its passing from one organism to another it carries and imparts life. The inter-commingling of the lives, of the personalities, of the natures, thus brought together; so that

there is, thereby and thenceforward, one life in the two bodies, a common life between the two friends; a thought which Aristotle recognizes in his citation of the ancient proverb: 'One soul [in two bodies],' a proverb which has not lost its currency in any of the centuries."

This begs the question about modern blood transfusions. Is a medical blood transfusion the same in God's eyes as drinking blood? The prophecy by Balaam—and it *was* an accurate one—was that Israel would drink the blood of their enemies. Nowhere in Scripture have I found that Israel actually did that. Maybe somewhere in history, some one or more of them did so, but there is no record in Scripture that I could find of any such action by Israel. If anyone did, they were in direct violation of God's law. Because God's law states:

Leviticus 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

12 Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood.

13 And whatsoever man *there be* of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust.

14 For *it is* the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off.

Fifteen hundred years later, the Pharisees at the time of Christ—despite their traditions—were undoubtedly still teaching this law that we are not to eat or drink the blood of animals, let alone the blood of man himself. Therefore, it seems that this fact may have had something to do with the dread of many of the disciples—their scandalized shock—when they heard Jesus tell them that unless they ate His flesh and drank His blood, that they had no life in them. (John, chapter 6)

They had been taught all their lives that it was a sin to eat human flesh and drink blood, and now here was this great spiritual Teacher apparently telling them just the opposite. But, as I pointed out earlier, they failed to grasp that Jesus was speaking figuratively, not literally. Had their religious leaders themselves not been so ignorant of the Scriptures, they all might

have known that Jesus was not abolishing the law, nor advocating that they break it. Because the Old Testament Scriptures themselves reveal these truths.

Deuteronomy 32:14 Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.

Wine is *figuratively* the blood of grapes, and wine is almost universally and in every age symbolic of blood in ritual ceremonies. In other words, wine can be used as a substitute for blood. Thus Jesus—in asking His apostles, and all His followers in the coming centuries, to remember the shedding of His blood on our behalf—Jesus made that request over a cup of wine. He said that whenever we come together for that purpose of commemoration, that when we drink the wine, it can be said that we are drinking His blood and we thereby have his life within us.

So the pagan perversions aside, we do have comunion, that is, we come into union with our God in a mystical and *symbolic* way, when we partake of the bread and wine. God is spirit, and so in my way of thinking, bread and wine are material things, and eating bread and drinking wine can in no way provide us with a means of actual and literal union with God. That occurs in the spiritual realm. But partaking of the material emblems does symbolize what we seek to obtain in the spiritual realm.

In the next FMS, we will begin to find the acceptable sacrifice that God is looking seeking from His followers.

(To be continued.)

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