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The Dream of Babel

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BABEL'S DREAM: THE FALSE "WISDOM" OF EVIL

By Dr. Steven Alan Samson

All they that hate me love death (Prov. 8:36).

The wisdom of this world — humanism — is repeatedly contrasted in Scripture with the wisdom of God. Each has a different foundation; each has a different goal. True wisdom places its confidence in God rather than man. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy is understanding" *(Prov. 9:10)*. Its goal is eternal life.

Worldly ways are described in contrary terms. "There is a way which seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" *(Prov. 14:12)*. Paul states that "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" *(I Cor. 3:19)*. Indeed, the foolishness of the humanistic enterprise is clearly seen in the serpent's temptation of Eve with the forbidden fruit: "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die, for God doth know that on the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" *(Gen. 3:4-5)*. Our ancestors succumbed to sin and, like all sinners, "changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator . . . " *(Rom. 1:25)*.

Sin is a direct denial of God's authority. It was by sin that death entered the world. Yet for the humanist, "knowing good and evil" — that is, experiencing and understanding them intimately — is the beginning of wisdom. Thus the humanist typically plays the devil's advocate, seeing in the story of the Fall man's first human act: rebellion against the supremacy of God. (See, for example, Erich Fromm, *You Shall Be As Gods*, 1966. p. 21).

Similarly, humanists identify themselves with the program to build what Augustine called "the city of man" — a collective world order — described in Gen. 11:4. " . . . Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth." Having lost fellowship with God, having fallen into sin and death, mankind sought immortality in the glory of the empire, in collective human achievement. While this second enterprise has met with as little success as the first, the humanitarian dream of unity is revived in every generation: salvation through a world state. It is the religion of theological liberals and syncretists: what some proponents have called "the religion of humanity." (For a critique, see R.J. Rushdoony, *The Nature of the American System*, 1965, pp. 78-134).

The byways of history are strewn with the ruins of such dreams. But what hope have these dreamers apart from God? What greater desolation do we find in Scripture than the description of Jerusalem that opens *Lamentations*? "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! How is she become as a widow! She that was great among the nations, and princes among the provinces, how is she become a tributary!" *(Lam. 1:1)*. Judgment falls on the rebellious cities of man: "The city of confusion is broken down: every house is shut up, that no man

may come in" *(Is. 24:10)*. Whether its enemies are outside its gates or abroad in its streets, this passage could describe any city that has turned from God and established chaos in His place. In fact, the word for "confusion" here is the same one translated "without form" in Genesis 1:2. While the original formlessness of creation was followed by what Francis Schaeffer called a "continuing, unfolding differentation" between the parts, pagan religions seek a reversion to chaos, celebrating it through licentious rites that confound good and evil, such as the ancient Roman Saturnalia.

Today, we are witnessing a revival of the pagan rivals and heresies that beset the early church. Like volcanic mud pots, subterranean religious currents

boil to the surface in times of cultural disorder such as our own. Only in this context can we grasp the nature of modern humanism and understand its lawlessness.

Secular humanism — whether agnostic or atheistic — is marked by a hatred of God, His creation, His commandments, and His redeeming grace. Its adherents, including nominal Christians, fashion gods after their own conceits, disdain creaturely limitations, impose legalistic rules with endless loopholes, and despise any salvation not of man's own making. By adding and subtracting from the revealed word of God, humanism subverts the Gospel and attaches its own stipulations. Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for the same attitude: "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition" *(Matt. 15:6)*.

What then are some of the distinguishing features of humanism? Despite the lack of a single, comprehensive, definitive statement of humanistic doctrine and practice, numerous manifestos and declarations have been issued by various factions of humanists. The literature of humanism encompasses such superficially distinct ideologies as socialism, anarchism, evolutionism, vitalism, eugenics, behaviorism, progressive education, deconstructionism, legal positivism, historicism, the human potential movement, globalism, religious syncretism, and occultism. Humanists identify themselves politically as conservatives, liberals, socialists, libertarians, and independents. But for all their complexity, humanistic literature and politics may be likened to a set of themes and variations which are linked by a few *leitmotifs*, or "leading ideas." In one way or another these leading ideas parody Scripture and God's promises.

In an essay entitled "Socialism in Our Past and Future," part of the collection *From Under the Rubble* (1981, ed. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn), Igor Shafarevich says about socialism — the mainstream of the humanistic Styx: "The socialist ideal, that basic complex of ideas which for many thousands of years has lain at the foundation of socialist ideology, can now be formulated: (1) the foundation of socialist hierarchy; (2) the destruction of private property; (3) the destruction of religion; (4) the destruction of the family" *(pp. 55-56)*.

For man to be remade in the image of the "new man" of humanism, every institution that permits the maintenance of Christian liberty — property, religion, and the family — must be made subservient to the all-compassing state, which then becomes the source of all authority, law, and salvation. Although Shafarevich's analysis is weakened in places by his acceptance of some common myths and misconceptions, such as "overpopulation" and Sigmund Freud's "death instinct," his historical and theological analysis of the socialist faith, its ends, and its ideals is convincing. Shafarevich points out that in its most virulent forms, the socialist ideal aims at nothing less than the suicidal destructions of humanity in a pagan "twilight of the gods."

If this last point seems far-fetched, then consider the evidence. Even before the horrors unleashed by Pol Pot in Cambodia and Idi Amin in Uganda had gained world attention, Shafarevich wrote: "In the near future the leaders of the socialist movements will look forward with surprising *sangfroid*, and occasionally even with open satisfaction, to the destruction, if not of all mankind, then of the greater part of it." *(63-64)*. Westerners have generally refused to recognize the enormity of the evil, keeping silence instead. We find it difficult to scrutinize evil in human form. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn recently elaborated on Bertrand Russell's observation that Lenin was uncommonly evil: characterized by "the absence of any mercy, the absence of any humanity in his approach

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

By Garry J. Moes

Of faith's many problems, one of the most commonly voiced is the problem of evil. The question is always some form of the fundamental expression: how can a good and loving God, if He exists, permit evil and suffering to exist?

The question has been raised by millions of critics and doubters. Most who ask it do so with fist raised to heaven in plain and simple defiance of God and displeasure with the realities of their own lives or the world in general. It is not so much a question as a quixotic attack against Jehovah. Answers are not really sought; rebellion is the aim.

Others, of course, raise it out of genuine anguish or out of sincere quest for truth. People in this category who call themselves Christians — who have been exposed to Biblical truth or in some way have come to know God and to view His Word as truth — justly deserve admonition. Doubt, if entertained, is fatal to the man of faith (Heb. 6:4-8, 10:23-39). *It is interesting that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, after warning against the mortal dangers of doubt, commends the faithful — and even more to the point is the fact that these readers were victims of tremendous* **suffering** (Heb. 10:32-34). *They wonderfully demonstrated that it is possible to acknowledge the reality of suffering — even experience it to its depths — and still rely fully upon the existence and providence (goodness) of God.*

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to people, the masses, to anyone who did not follow him precisely."

Let us never forget what this century has already witnessed: two world wars; hundreds of brushfire wars; the pogroms against Jews in eastern Europe; the slaughter of Armenians by Turks; the gulags and concentration camps of scores of countries; murderous medical experiments on living POWs; the devastation of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Dresden, and other major cities; innumerable Communist purges and the starvation of peasants. We may also add to this list the continuing horrors of massive abortion campaigns throughout the world; forced relocation of ethnic and religious groups; *coups d'etat*, assassinations, and revolutions; live murders and dismemberments in pornographic movies; and ritual murders by cultists, not to mention the "ordinary" murders, suicides, "mercy killings," rapes, and injustices that today are paid scant attention in the press. Far from being kept concealed, death — like sex — has come out of the closet in a lurid pornography that reduces all moral distinctions to a common denominator: the pit.

What is to be done? We have neglected to put first things first. God designed us to love and enjoy him forever. He commanded us to love our neighbors as ourselves. This is not empty piety. It has everyday implications, as Jesus pointed out when he told his disciples to keep his commandments. There was nothing new about them. Paul listed some of them in Romans 13:9, then added: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." We have been called to the task of planting the seeds of the Kingdom. We must therefore apply God's Law-Word to all areas of our life. As God's people, our failure to do so has been bringing judgment on us just as in Biblical times.

We should reflect on the fact that some of the greatest horrors of this century sprang out of the heart of the so-called Christian West. We who have been given so much have fallen so far, being torn by self-destructive envy and guilt. Has there ever been a time more obsessed with death than ours, dreaming its dream of Babel? "For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee: and thou hast said in thy heart, I am and none else beside me" *(Is. 47:10)*.■

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Many who have raised the question of evil have been told that there really is no answer. That's a tragedy and a symptom of the doubt and skepticism of many pastors, theologians and so-called Christian counselors. Nevertheless, if you profess to be a Christian and have raised the question out of personal doubt, let me ask you this: if that is the only reply you ever receive, what will be your response? Will you place your confidence in God and the clear self-revelations of His justice, love and mercy anyway? Or will you say that despite what God says is so and despite what he says about His own nature, you are not satisfied with the way He has been running things. This is the height of arrogance and assumes that you have the right to stand in judgment of Him who is your Creator, the Soveriegn Ruler of the universe and the ultimate judge of all men. It assumes that you have a better understanding of right and wrong and of justice and righteousness than does He who invented all of these concepts and from Whom we get our own understanding of them. This kind of thinking is proud madness. It is the thinking of the totalitarian humanist.

I recently heard from a man who said he had been blessed for some time by Chalcedon's ministry but had recently plunged into doubt and nearly into atheism after listening to a Radio Moscow broadcast which defiantly asserted that no good God could have allowed the Holocaust or other similar evils. The man told me he could find no answer himself and had been told by a number of pastors he consulted that no answer exists. That is exactly what Radio Moscow hoped would happen. As advocates of the totalitarian state which they control, the creators of Radio Moscow consider themselves to be god. It is *they* who arrogantly wish to determine what is right and wrong (moral) and what is just and righteous (ethical), and any God who claims to have that right is a deadly obstacle to their designs and a rival who must be defeated. They foolishly believe that if they can convince their listeners that the True God who owns sovereign rights to the universe is a cruel hoax, this God will somehow cease to exist and they will own the field themselves. This is nonsense. God does not evaporate because all men cease to acknowledge Him for what He is. The opposite is true. Read all about it in Romans 1:18-32. It isn't a pretty picture.

It may be said at this point that I am presupposing the truth of the Bible (God's Revelation about Himself and reality) and to cite the Bible as proof of its own truth is circular reasoning. If you are saying that, I will tell you that you are absolutely right. But where else can one expect to go for truth? One's own wisdom? The wisdom of godless men? These two sources have never once in history proven successful in providing either personal peace or an evil-free program for human society. In fact, they have led to nothing but disaster, and as our own times are governed by these sources of wisdom, we see the abjectly evil results. Again, any defiant attempt to rely upon these sources of wisdom does not change the reality that God is there and in control.

One of the earliest men to raise the question of God's role in evil was the righteous ancient believer, Job, whom God Himself described as a blameless