

Sin Avenged

May 16, 2015

Immersed as we all are in the world around us, it is difficult, especially for young people, to realize into what an abnormal condition it has brought itself. Never in all human history has God been so discredited, disbelieved, and in effect discarded from men's lives. And since all sin is primarily an offence against God, then as men lose all sense of God, so they lose all sense of sin. Therefore men are always right, and "God," whoever he may be, is always wrong, so that whenever things go wrong "he" can always be brought back long enough to take the blame.

This widely spread attitude makes it virtually impossible to understand the apparent severity of God in the Old Testament, where for instance he commands the Israelites to exterminate whole peoples, as in the book of Joshua. But Catholic Scripture scholars who have not lost their sense of the true and unchanging God, put things back in perspective. Here for instance is a summary of the commentary by a modern Benedictine, Dom Jean de Monléon (1890–1981), on the slaughter of the Canaanites by the Israelites under their leader, Joshua:—

As far as Joshua himself is concerned, he was acting not out of hatred, racism, greed, ambition or whatever, but under strict, precise and repeated orders from God himself. St John Chrysostom says that Joshua might personally have preferred some less murderous solution, but certainly God had his own reasons. These we cannot know for sure, but we can make reasonable guesses. To begin with, all of us human beings, by our original sin (What is that?" cries modern man), have to pay the debt of death, the time, manner and place of which are decided by the Master of Life and Death, who is God. For sinners like the Canaanites, to die sooner rather than later can be a mercy, especially if the manner of death gives them

time to repent and so save their souls for eternity.

Next, the Canaanites were indeed sinners, immersed in the committing of terrible crimes, and like mankind before the Flood, like the Sodomites and Gomorrhans, they had made the cup of God's wrath overflow: prostitution of all kinds, bestiality, incest, witchcraft and in particular, the ritual murder of children, as proved by multiple archaeological excavations in Palestine, whereby tiny skeletons have been uncovered in surroundings clearly identifying them as sacrificial victims, etc.

Moreover if the Canaanites were allowed to survive, they would present a grave danger of corrupting the Israelites, as subsequent history only too clearly showed.

In more recent times, some 400 years ago (but still before the advent of liberalism!), the first missionaries in Canada found themselves bound to conclude that the only way to deal with a certain tribe was to exterminate them. A canonized Saint said, "After repeated experience of their treachery, whether for peace or for the Faith, there is nothing further to be hoped for from them." (end of Dom Monléon summary)

This still shocks modern susceptibilities, but is it not simply tribal as opposed to individual capital punishment? The principle of capital punishment is that by such anti-social crimes as, for instance, murder, treason, counterfeiting, homosexuality, etc., men are capable of behaving in such a way as to render themselves unfit to live any more in society, and so society's legitimate authority has the right to take their lives (one may object that not all the individuals in a tribe will be equally guilty, but it should go without saying that Almighty God can and will make all the distinctions necessary).

The problem all comes down to disbelief in the greatness and goodness of God, but let us just say that the Old Testament is

neither as cruel nor as out of date as it is often made to appear.

Kyrie eleison.