

Perfect Sacrifice

by [Albert Norton, Jr.](#) (July 2023)



The Lamb, Grace Carol Bomer

Something's wrong with us. We can think of it as "alienation," a sense of incompleteness, of loneliness, of shame, of never

quite being satisfied; of never quite being good enough. Christians would refer to this as a "sense of sin," the reason we need Christ. But "alienation" serves, too, and perhaps aids us in understanding what's going on in opposite-world around us.

The sense of sin is often criticized by atheists, who reject religion in part because they mistakenly think the felt sense of alienation comes from religion itself, rather than being an endemic feature of human existence which religion explains. The alienating sense of sin is then ascribed to something else, usually some tendentious reading of culture which is thought to create victims and victimizers; oppressors and oppressed. Marxism is paradigmatic of this way of thinking.

We ascribe the sense of alienation to our expulsion from the garden. Whether you take the Adam and Eve story literally or not, it is certainly a good descriptor of our estate. It arises because of our knowledge of good and of evil, which carries with it the understanding that evil is ineradicable, incurable, and endemic to the human race.

Solzhenitsyn famously wrote that the line between good and evil runs through every human heart. It wasn't a new idea when he said it; it's a tenet of orthodox Christianity. He memorably reminded us of this in explaining the evils of the Soviet Union, having experienced its gulag system first-hand. The implications of this idea—that good and evil exist in all of us—are large.

The knowledge of our own tendency to evil means we have to look outside ourselves for a cure. Understanding reality draws us out, and this drawing out prevents crashing in on ourselves like we see so many do with depression, monomania, suicide, murderous destruction of others, and self-harm. The rot is mitigated in this life and cured in the next if we look to Christ.

Remember the Israelites in the desert, bitten by snakes, looking up at the serpent on the pole, to live. The serpent is a symbol of alienation; of the original serpent in the garden which is its source. And the pole is a symbol repeated in the cross, Christ's crucifixion in which sin (the serpent's venom, injected by twisting of words) is expiated. In Christ, alone among men, good and evil do not both run through the heart. He is all good, and so His sacrifice is effective.

All religions attempt to address our innate alienation in one way or another. Some by working out ways to try to make us all good. That is the way of the Pharisees, and all of us when we are the older brother in the story of the prodigal sons, worshipping moral decrees rather than the Author of them. The Eastern pantheisms also try to deal with alienation, by emptying out the self that would be infected with evil.

I suggest that postmodern philosophies are among the "religions" attempting to deal with alienation by rejecting the principle that good and evil run through every heart. Don't be distracted by my calling these philosophies "religion." Atheistic ideologies are just as metaphysically substantive as what we traditionally call "religion."

The way it works is this. Valorization of victimhood corresponds to the conviction that good and evil do not actually cut through each human heart. Evil is expiated from the heart by all-in allyship with victims, or even better, being a victim oneself. This leaves one wholly good. By convincing ourselves we are wholly good we re-paganize and elevate ourselves to gods.

Girardian mimesis is the mechanism by which we ally ourselves with victims and victim causes. By doing so we purge ourselves of the original sin of victimization. Victim valorization means not just deference, but worship, of groups that plausibly wear the mantle of victimhood.

There are no other sins than victimization, on this way of thinking. There is no sexual sin; indeed calling sexual sin "sin" is a form of victimization. Likewise with property sins and even violence, when the violence can be interpreted as self-defense of the victim, rather than the unjustified resentment of Cain.

Having purged ourselves of the one impurity of victimization, we stand blameless; self-baptized, in a manner of speaking—all sins forgiven. Sin no longer runs through the heart, instead it runs between people groups, the clean and the unclean. No wonder woke people can't stand non-wokes. I keep seeing memes and anecdotes lambasting all Republicans or all conservatives or anyone who isn't woke. A few days ago I read about a celebrity who said, with a full sense of self-satisfied self-justification, that she "hate[s] those f-ing Republicans." The self-righteousness is suffocating. One must be utterly irony-proof to live this way. There's only one right way to be. There is no room for those who won't renounce the sense of sin; who won't accept that we are perfected upon eradicating the sin of victimization from the heart.

I had a music teacher once who said practice does not make perfect. Only perfect practice makes perfect. It's a bit like that with sacrifice. Sacrifice does not eradicate sin. Only perfect sacrifice eradicates sin. Only an unspotted lamb will do. For Christians only Christ could make an effective sacrifice because only He was wholly good. Then we make Him our identity, trusting that He covers over the sin we cannot ourselves eradicate.

The postmods believe themselves to be wholly good because they sacrifice themselves not to death in order to overcome death, but to society to overcome selfish individualism. And their sacrifice is thought effective for the same reason Christ's was: they are made wholly good by sacrifice of self. This explains the insufferable moralism of the woke.

What I think is happening is that people sacrifice themselves to the collective in an attempt to expiate the felt sense of alienation. It's as if they can out-Christ Christ. Christ is the victim who was perfect. But Christ came to redeem us from alienating sin. In the new dispensation the sacrifice is dissolution of self in the oceanic collective, in which the one overriding virtue displacing all others is the purity of our identification with victimhood itself.

This has alarming consequences. One is that for our sacrifice to be effective, we can't be a mix of good and evil. We regard ourselves as all good, having nailed to the tree our tendency to victimize. Other sins, like sexual sins and property sins and violence, are dross refined away by the purifying fire of victim worship. As they must be, because otherwise the "sense of sin" would still cling to us, causing us to second-guess our rejection of God. The socialism resulting from sacrifice of self is not just dictatorial theft. It is a "we" perspective in all things. It has to apply to all, hence intolerance of dissenters in the name of tolerance. It means fascism, the real kind, not the opposite-world label applied to those who don't comply with woke hegemony.

The self-sacrificed are all good; the rest are all evil. The line between good and evil doesn't run through every heart. It runs between me and you. You don't just have a different opinion or outlook from me. You're evil. And what do we do with pure evil? You know the answer to that.

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Albert Norton, Jr is a writer and attorney working in the American South. His books include [*Dangerous God: A Defense of Transcendent Truth*](#) (2021) concerning formation of truth and

values in a postmodern age; and *Intuition of Significance*, a 2020 work weighing the merits of theism against materialism. He is also the author of several award-winning short stories, and two novels: *Another Like Me* (2015) and *Rough Water Baptism* (2017), on themes of navigating reality in a post-Christian world. His newest book is [*The Mountain and the River: Genesis, Postmodernism, and the Machine*](#), and explores the chasm between two worldviews: that of Genesis and that of postmodernism.

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