

Multiculturalism and the Demotion of Man

by Lawrence Auster

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,

The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

*What is man, that thou art mindful of him,
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?*

For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,

And hast crowned him with glory and honor.

—Psalm 8

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

—Romans 1:22-23

The perverse tendency among white Western elites to welcome and embrace non-Western peoples and cultures while refusing to defend their own people and culture is no mere fashion, as superficial conservatives would have it, but a natural and inevitable expression of a new culture — a culture of nihilism — that has become the dominant culture of the West. The organizing idea of this nihilist culture is that abnormal and transgressive conduct is normalized and celebrated, while traditional moral norms and constraints are either ignored or subjected to crippling social and civil penalties. Hardly a day goes by when this dominant nihilism does not announce its presence in unmistakable terms (readers are invited to come up with their own examples):

- High school pupils who physically attack their teachers go unpunished, while a police officer

Lawrence Auster, a writer living in New York City, is the author of *Huddled Clichés: Exposing the Fraudulent Arguments That Have Opened America's Borders to the World*, published by the American Immigration Control Foundation, Monterey, Virginia.

- who slapped a boy he discovered having sex with his daughter is suspended from his job.
- Male and female students at elite colleges are housed in the same dorms, using the same bathrooms, while religious students who don't want to be forced to live in this libertine environment are told by school administrators they should have gone to school elsewhere.
- People who want the mail bomber Theodore Kaczynski executed are described by the *New York Times* as "angry," while people who consider him a hero are described by the *Times* in neutral, nonjudgmental terms.
- Hospitals are informed by federal courts that carrying on hospital business in the English language is "discrimination," while illegal aliens using those hospitals are told they have a "right" under the U.S. Constitution to be addressed in their native languages.
- Laws against disability discrimination punish employers for failing to hire or make "reasonable accommodations" for hostile or violent or chronically late employees.

This systematic inversion of normal and abnormal, of law and lawlessness, of good and evil that characterizes our society, goes beyond mere democratic leveling. It is a rebellion against what philosophers call the order of existence. Ultimately, it is a rebellion against God and the belief that man is made in the image of God. When man gets rid of the belief (which comes both through revelation and rational intuition) that he is made in the image and

likeness of God, man is not — as secularists imagine — enhanced. He is degraded. If man is not made in God's image, then he is made in his own image. If God is not the measure of all things, then man is the measure. But without a higher truth to raise him above himself and his disordered impulses, man inexorably sinks, becoming so contemptible that he can no longer believe in God or in man. So he begins to worship non-human, sub-human, anti-human behaviors and forms.

The manifestations of this depravity can be seen not only in our popular "entertainments" (e.g.,

***"It is no longer God above man,
and God's spirit working within man,
that is divine, but mere biological life,
by which man is equal with
crustacea, worms and viruses."***

the Jerry Springer Show and much of prime-time television) and "lifestyles" (e.g., face-piercing and vampirism), but in the so-called high culture of post-1960s America. Sculptures and monuments once embodied an heroic-divine ideal going back to the ancient Greeks. But today our typical public sculptures portray grotesque shapes of victimhood, human figures bedraggled and twisted in pain, as though the universe were one vast Auschwitz. It is an aesthetic in which any sense of human dignity in suffering is destroyed. Alongside the depiction of human beings as hopeless victims, we have now statues of monsters. In recent years New York City has displayed in parks and squares such "art works" as a 25-foot-long statue of an insect, and a statue of a gigantic, hideous dog as high as a man, with huge dugs projecting downward like knives. These sculptures, conveying a malign, anti-human sense of life, are our postmodern equivalents of the terror-gods of the pre-Columbian cultures. When man loses belief in God, he also loses respect for man, and turns to non-human or anti-human figures as symbols of the malign spiritual universe he now inhabits.

The postmodern degradation of man and culture begins with the modern idea of placing all

human beings, and even all of nature, on an equal plane, free of the burden of transcendence. The essence of this agenda has been put forth in a remarkable essay by religion professor Steven C. Rockefeller. Blending deep ecology with multiculturalism, Rockefeller enunciates what is in effect a new religion. "All life is sacred," he writes, "[and] all life forms should be respected as a 'thou' and not just as an 'it.' ... If, as has been suggested, all cultures as well as all life forms are of intrinsic value and also sacred, then from a religious perspective all are in this sense equal in value."¹

All of this, of course, is a total inversion of both Christianity and Judaism, which tell us that *God* is holy, not the world — and that human beings can become holy by orienting themselves toward God: "Be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy." But according to Rockefeller's new gospel, everything that exists — plants, animals, humans, and (most of all) Third-world cultures — is not only holy, but equally so:

If one employs this kind of religious argument in defense of the idea of equal value, one should recognize its full implications. It is opposed to anthropocentrism [the idea that man is higher or more important than animals or plants] as well as to all egoisms of class, race, or culture. It calls for an attitude of humility. It encourages a respect for, and pride in, one's own particular identity only insofar as such respect and pride grow out of recognition of the value of the uniqueness in the identity of all other peoples and life forms. Furthermore, if what is sacred in humanity is life, which is not something exclusively human, then humanity's primary identity is not just with the human species but with the entire biosphere that envelops planet Earth.

It is no longer God above man, and God's spirit working within man, that is divine, but mere biological life, by which man is equal with crustacea, worms, and viruses. Instead of being humble before God and the nobler manifestations of mankind, we are supposed to be humble before plants and animals and primitive cultures. Most importantly, our own culture has no right to self-respect unless we first have total respect for all other cultures and life-forms. Rockefeller continues:

The call for recognition of the equal value of

different cultures is the expression of a basic and profound universal human need for unconditional acceptance. A feeling of such acceptance, including affirmation of one's ethnic particularity as well as one's universally shared potential, is an essential part of a strong sense of identity.... The politics of recognition may, therefore also be an expression of a complex human need for acceptance and belonging, which on the deepest level is a religious need.

Unconditional(!) acceptance as a sacred(!) right of every(!) person and culture. Try to imagine what this would mean in practical terms. Of course, there's a catch, which Rockefeller makes explicit elsewhere in his essay. Only *some* cultures and life-forms (namely white Western males) are actually obligated to extend this unconditional acceptance to other cultures and life forms, while those other cultures and life-forms are only expected to *receive* such recognition as is their divine right.

In Steven Rockefeller's mad epiphany, we seem to hear the final, degenerate gasp of the once-great Protestant spirit that made America. In the earlier stages of this devolution, the Protestant loses his Christian faith, which eventually leaves him with nothing but "niceness." Then this "niceness" — cut off from the religious faith that was its source and discipline, but still in need of some sort of "divine" sanction — spreads out indiscriminately until it embraces the whole universe, taking the form of nature-worship, the belief in the equality of all cultures and life-forms, and the totalitarian religion of unconditional acceptance.

But the religion of cosmic equality, as mad as it is, is still not the end of the process. As already suggested by Rockefeller's anti-Western double standard, the attempt to eliminate all hierarchy and transcendence leads inevitably to an *inverted* hierarchy, in which man, particularly Western man, is at the bottom. The Bible placed mankind near the top of a divinely ordered universe, only a little lower than the angels. But now the radical egalitarians tell us that man is no better than animals, who (it is argued) also communicate and reason, and are less destructive than humans. "And as with animals," remarks the late literary critic Peter Shaw, "so with primitive man and with societies less

developed than our own: both are closer to the sources of natural wisdom, and both wreak less damage upon the ecosystem and biosphere than does Western man."² As an extreme example of this inversion, Shaw quotes the popular left-wing paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould:

Evolution is a copiously branching network, not a ladder, and I do not see how we, the titular spokesmen for a few thousand mammalian species, can claim superiority over three quarters of a million species of insects who will surely outlive us, not to mention the bacteria, who have shown remarkable staying power for more than three billion years.

"Here we have very nearly the ultimate demotion of man," comments Shaw, "the inferior not only of

"...the attempt to eliminate all hierarchy and transcendence leads inevitably to an inverted hierarchy in which man, particularly Western man, is at the bottom."

primitive peoples, other mammals, and the cockroach, but even of bacteria."

But, as Shaw points out, there is just one little problem with this belief in the superiority of primitive cultures: it is not true. Therefore it can only be sustained by ceaseless mental gymnastics. Embarrassing evidence, if it can't be suppressed, must be re-interpreted so as to make it fit within the egalitarian paradigm. It came to light some years ago that the ancient Mayans — long thought of as an exemplary, peaceful civilization — engaged in horrifying practices. Before going to war, reported the *New York Times*, "the king would puncture his penis with a stingray spine, while his wife drew a thorn-barbed rope through her tongue." The Mayans waged war in order to capture aristocrats for torture and sacrifice. The captives would sometimes be forced to play ball games using the decapitated heads of the losers as balls. The *Times* admitted that the evidence of these practices had

been available for decades in stone reliefs and paintings, but that scholars had explained it all away in order to keep the Maya on a "mist-shrouded pedestal," where they could be idealized as an austere and enlightened people. But while the new evidence has shattered that peaceful image, it has not ended the need to portray nonwhite and non-Western cultures in a positive light. Anthropologists now argue that the Mayan practice of royal self-laceration indicates "a cooperative, sacred relationship between the elites and the commoners." In other words, remarks Peter Shaw, "if the evidence shows a society's aristocrats obsessed with self-mutilation and torture, a bit of interpretation will help us see beneath the surface to the class solidarity so characteristic of pre-Columbian America and so lamentably missing from the modern world."

More recently, the human sacrifice cult of the pre-Inca Moche culture of Peru, memorialized in the ubiquitous image of the Decapitator (a demonic grimacing figure holding a severed head in one hand and a curved blade in the other), has been interpreted by Stanford anthropologist John Rick, not as the sacred core of the Moche culture (which it obviously was), but as a temporary expedient through which the Moche ruling class solidified its political power over a recalcitrant populace. Once the Moche elites were safely established through the use of violence, Professor Rick told *The News Hour*, they were "no more violent than ourselves." Thus, in the practiced manner of a contemporary liberal academic, Rick effortlessly made it seem that there is no essential difference between this ancient cult of death and the "oppressions" of modern America.

What anthropologists write in their academic journals, public school teachers, judges, reporters, and social workers are disseminating through the whole society. When the *New York Times* referred to car thieves and police in Newark, New Jersey as two "cultures" that were "clashing," and spoke of a deranged woman sitting on a sidewalk as having a "culture" that was different from the "culture" of the shoppers walking past her; when a New York City case worker refused to investigate a Nigerian immigrant who had been torturing his son for months, on the grounds that such beatings were part of the father's culture; when American teachers excuse the Japanese for their inhuman brutalities

during World War II, while damning the U.S. for the wartime relocation of Japanese-Americans in California; when the national media covers up an endless series of horrifying racial murders of whites by blacks, while generating national hysteria over a non-existent white racist plot to burn black churches, the underlying idea is always the same: never to allow a non-Western or nonwhite people to be portrayed in a critical light, while portraying whites and Western culture in the harshest light possible.

As David K. Shipler, an apostle of racial correctness, inadvertently reveals in his recent book, *A Country of Strangers: Blacks and Whites in America*, this systematic denial of plain evidence by "right-thinking" whites is achieved through a deliberate act of self-hypnosis:

This is the ideal: to search your attitudes, identify your stereotypes, and correct for them as you go about your daily duties.

This, at its Orwellian core, is the mindset that enables contemporary whites never to entertain a negative conclusion about non-whites, regardless of those individuals' moral and intellectual failings. This (in Joseph Sobran's useful coinage) is *alienism*: "a prejudice in favor of the alien, the marginal, the dispossessed, the eccentric, reaching an extreme in the attempt to 'build a new society' by destroying the basic institutions of the native."³ This is the intellectual and spiritual environment which, combined with open borders and racial diversification, is turning America into the opposite of itself — into the anti-white, anti-Christian, anti-rational, anti-American anti-nation that is Multicultural America. **TSC**

NOTES

¹ Steven C. Rockefeller, "Comment," in Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*, Princeton University Press, 1992.

² Peter Shaw, "The Demotion of Man," in *The War Against the Intellect*, University of Iowa Press, 1989.

³ Joseph Sobran, "Pensées: Notes for the Reactionaries of Tomorrow," *National Review*, Dec. 31, 1985, p.33.