

THE PRAYER ROBBERS

By Michael Ventura

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EXCERPT FROM THE REPORT TO THE ALPHA CENTURI PROTECTORATE, RE: THE HARVEST OF SENTIENT ENERGY ON LABORATORY 'EARTH'

As required by law, definitions of primary terms must be stated at the outset of each Report to insure that the Project retains its original intentions and that the Project Director abides by his mandate. The usage to be defined is: Sentient Energy (and its functions).

Sentient Energy [S.E.]: Sentient Energy is the essential inner force of a sentient being. Protectorate scientists discovered that thoughts and emotions are radiant energies that may be technologically harnessed as propellants. Properly refined, S.E. has proved superior to any atomic, electrical, etc., energy in the Universe. S.E. propels all Protectorate transportation (planetary and inter-stellar), machinery, weaponry, etc. But the Protectorate soon discovered a critical difficulty: As S.E. is drained from sentient beings they become increasingly erratic and dangerous. Thus to harvest S.E. from our own species would result in eventual self-destruction. Therefore, it was necessary that S.E. be harvested from the sentient species of underdeveloped worlds. Though this entails the eventual extinction of such species and their worlds, their sacrifice contributes to the greater good of our far more advanced species, and, therefore, the greater good of the Universe.

How S.E. Functions: Sentient beings evolve organically from the planet of which they are, literally, made. Their S.E. [consisting, as noted, of thoughts and emotions that radiate from each member of the species] feeds the planet which in turns feeds the sentient species -- a classic symbiosis. S.E. is also how a sentient species sustains itself: As the planet is fed by the S.E. of the species as a whole, individual members of the species are sustained by the S.E. of each other. Crude Energy [C.E.] such as food is, of course, necessary; but the primary purpose of C.E. is to sustain the organism as it generates and intakes S.E. The most focused S.E. comes in three forms: "love," by which individual members of a species fructify each other's S.E.; "hate" (subcategory "greed") by which factions of a species organize boundaries and generate collective activity; and the mode termed by primitive species "religious," by which the species as a whole focuses S.E. on their planet. This point cannot be understated: "religious" S.E. is the primary energy-food by which a planet reconstitutes and renews itself. The most useful form of "religious" S.E. (useful to the planet) is "nature" religion that "worships" the planet itself, its flora, fauna, soil, seas, atmospheres. All sentient species, at their earliest evolutionary stage, are DNA-coded to practice such forms of "worship" as will transmit energy [S.E.] directly to their planet.

Harvesting S.E. From Client Worlds: Left to itself, a species will -- as we still do, though in advanced form -- direct their S.E. through the rituals of "nature religions" into their planet. A species thus can sustain itself and its planet almost indefinitely. Protectorate science discovered that S.E. could be used as a propellant, when properly refined technologically; and that, so used, S.E. could run a complex intergalactic civilization with non-polluting, virtually inexhaustible energy. As noted above, when we

tried to harvest our own S.E. we found the result destructive. Our species simply could not safely generate enough S.E. to sustain each other, sustain our planets, and run our new and ever-more-S.E.-dependent technologies. When deprived of S.E. our planets began slowly to destabilize, and our species therefore destabilized with it. Fortunately, Protectorate science discovered the source of these climate and personality changes and devised the solution: We had to redirect our own S.E. into our planets and into each other, and we had to find a means by which to harvest S.E. from primitive sentient species on client worlds. It was necessary to coerce primitive sentient species into directing their "religious" energies [S.E.] *upward*, away from their planet, so that their S.E. would radiate to our collecting stations in Deep Space. These Deep Space stations would then refine the energy and make it technologically suitable. We chose Earth as our primary laboratory for developing these techniques.

When we discovered Earth, every "tribe" practiced a highly efficient form of "nature religion" that directed S.E. into the planet and sustained it admirably. At the point of discovery, several of these tribes had developed the rudimentary forms essential to civilization: cities, the commerce that sustains cities, and written language. Our mission: to send agents with special powers, powers that would appear to be "divine" or "supernatural" to primitive beings, and usurp their "nature religions" ["nature religions," as noted above, direct considerable S.E. into the planet]. We needed to direct "religious" S.E. *upward* to our refineries in Deep Space. Through trial and error we developed what among the sentient Earth species was called "monotheism": worship of a single "deity" [a receptacle of religious S.E.] that was off-planet. This "deity" had to be perceived as existing elsewhere than the planet itself, in some vague place that no "human" [the species' self-designation] could comprehend. Since our Deep Space Refinery was named with our root-word for refinery, "heaven," through artfully placed propaganda and coercion we developed "monotheism" that placed the "deity" in "heaven." In fact, "heaven" is the only word-concept-function in our native tongue that is now in wide use on Earth. This was a tremendous innovation. As you know, S.E. works best when it is specifically directed at an object: another member of one's species, as in "love"; another faction of a species, as in "hate"; or directly into the planet, as in "nature religion." As you also know, the most concentrated form of "religious" S.E. is direct address, which on Earth is called "prayer." When "praying" to a "deity" in "heaven," the Earth-species radiates intense S.E. directly to our refinery, Deep Space Heaven No. 1.

As one does in any laboratory, our scientists on Laboratory 'Earth' proceeded by experimental trial and error. At the time most of this species' civilized tribes were concentrated in their Mediterranean area. We slowly inculcated "monotheism" with one especially resilient and imaginative tribe. Our agents provided various spectacles: plagues of locusts and frogs, the parting of a substantial sea, burning bushes -- the sort of theatrics that win over undeveloped peoples. But with this original tribe we made a mistake, though we had logical reasons for doing so: In order to contain our experiment, the better to determine the efficacy of our means, we allowed them to think that the "deity" favored them alone, and that its "heaven" would be accessible to them alone. They generated a tremendous amount of S.E. to Deep Space Refinery/Heaven No. 1, siphoning off S.E. from the planet at heretofore unheard of rates. However, the very success of our experiment, the depth to which this tribe absorbed our subversions (accomplished through various "prophets" whenever they "strayed" and further subversion became necessary) ultimately worked against our grand design. Tribe Prime, as we designated it, saw itself as set apart from all others, and therefore "monotheism" was confined to Tribe

Prime for several thousands of their "years," thus limiting our intake of S.E. But once we had thus scientifically determined the efficiency of "monotheism" for the harvesting of S.E., we broadened our scope.

Briefly: 2,000 years ago, through much the same means of "miracles," "resurrections," etc. [again, technologies we take for granted] we instituted another "monotheism" that was anti- or cross-tribal, and this infectiously spread quickly from tribe to tribe. After waiting several hundred "years" to examine and calibrate results, we instituted a third "monotheism" that has been particularly effective among tribes that the first two found economically unsuitable or culturally incompatible. [These tribes are Earth-designated "Judaism," "Christianity," and "Islam," respectively.] However, as noted above, when a sufficient amount of S.E. is siphoned or harvested from a planet, at some point its sentient species becomes intensely self-destructive and the planet begins to destabilize. There are virtually no "nature religions" left on Laboratory 'Earth'; certainly not enough to sustain the planet. In Earth's last hundred "years" there's been more volcanic activity than in the past 2,000. Climate and tectonic changes, etc., will soon devastate this species, cutting their numbers drastically and making them a poor source of S.E.

The remainder of my Report surveys a number of planets and species where the Earth Method, as it's come to be known, will provide the Protectorate with the necessary S.E. to sustain our technologies indefinitely. In sum, "monotheism" is an unqualified success.

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