

Porphyry, *About Abstinence* 2.27 and 53-6

27. And from then up to the present day they perform human sacrifices with the participation of all, not only in Arcadia during the Lykaia and in Carthage to Kronos, but also periodically in remembrance of the customary usage, they spill the blood of their own kin on the altars, even though the divine law among them bars from the rites, by means of the *perirrhanteria* and the herald's proclamation, anyone responsible for the shedding of blood in peace-time.

53. Indeed history has handed down the memory of more cases—in addition to those recorded by Theophrastos—of the ancients' sacrificing even human beings, and in no way because of this are human beings also to be eaten.

54. And to show that we do not state these things lightly but that history is full of such example, it is sufficient to cite the following cases: for also on Rhodes on the sixth day of the month Metageitnion a human being used to be sacrificed to Kronos. Now this custom, having lasted a long time, was altered, for they would keep one of those condemned to death by the people until the time of the Kronia, and during the festival they would lead the man outside the gates opposite the seat of Aristoboule, where, having given him wine to drink, they would slay him. And in the city now called Salamis, but formerly known as Koronis, in the month known among the Cypriotes as Aphrodisios, a human being used to be sacrificed to Agraulos, the daughter of Kekrops and the nymph Agraulis. The custom persisted until the time of Diomedes: then it underwent a change, so that the person was now sacrificed to Diomedes. And the temple of Athena and that of Agraulos and Diomedes are within one precinct. The one who was slain, led by the ephebes, would run three times around the altar, whereupon the priest would strike him on the throat with a spear, and so would he burn him entirely on the pyre which had been heaped up.

55. But Diphilos the king of Cyprus, who was born around the time of Seleukos the *theologos*, abolished this rite, changing the custom into an ox-sacrifice. And the *daimon* accepted the ox instead of the human being: thus is the sacrifice of equal value. And in Hieropolis in Egypt, Amosis, as Manethos testifies in his book *Concerning Ancient Customs and Piety*, also abolished the custom of killing a human victim. The victims were sacrificed to Hera and would be tested just as unblemished calves are sought out and marked. Three victims were sacrificed each day, but Amosis ordered that an equal number of wax figures be placed in their stead. And also in Chios they would sacrifice a human being to Dionysos Omadlos, tearing him apart, and in Tenedos, as Euelpis or Karystos says. Moreover, Apollodoros says that the Lacedaemonians would sacrifice a human being to Ares.

56. The Phoenicians, in the great misfortune of war or plague or drought, would sacrifice someone of their most beloved, whom they selected by vote, to Kronos: the Phoenician history is full of such sacrifices, which Sanchouniathon composed in the Phoenician tongue, but which was translated into Greek in eight books by Philon of Byblos. And Istros in his *Collection of Cretan Sacrifices* says that in ancient times the Kouretes sacrificed children to Kronos. But that human sacrifices were abolished nearly among all peoples is reported by Pallas, who made the best collection of the facts concerning the mysteries of Mithras in the time of the emperor Hadrian. For also in Laodikeia in Syria a virgin was sacrificed each year to Athena, but now a deer is sacrificed. Indeed the Carthaginians in Libya used to perform the same sacrifice, which was stopped by Iphikrates. And the Doumetanoi of Arabia every year would sacrifice a child, whom they buried under the altar which they used as a cult image. And Phylarchos relates that all of the Greeks in general would kill a human being before setting out against the enemy. And I needn't mention the Thracians and Scythians, and that the Athenians killed the daughter of Erechtheus and Praxithea. But even in our own day who is not aware that in the Great City a human being is slaughtered in the festival of Zeus Latarios? And certainly human flesh is not for this reason to be eaten, simply because through some necessity a human being is employed for sacrifice.

Translated Dennis Hughes.