

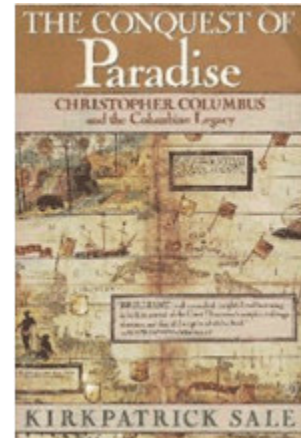
## THE CONQUEST OF PARADISE

*Next Columbus Day let's all just spit on his statues*

*by Kirkpatrick Sale*

As may be discerned from recent Coffee Coaster reading and viewing activity, coming to grips with the truth of 'whatever you want to call' the migration of European Old World societies to the New World is high on my personal agenda. One of my most visited Coffee Coaster pages is the book review I wrote on Jared Diamond's Pulitzer-Prize-winning *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. In that review I criticize Dr. Diamond somewhat:

... Diamond does not properly attend to the above political achievements [reason and the concept of individual rights], nor to the concept of individual rights within the framework of large communities with common understanding. The effectiveness of the Founding Fathers' creation of liberty within community, especially with the federal concept, is relevant to guns, germs, and steel... not to mention production, trade, peace, and benevolence.



There, I sure told him! :) Today I look at *Guns, Germs, and Steel* as a masterwork of archeological sociology, though still with some caveats on Diamond's lack of reference to certain principles that at least were supposed to be fundamental to the American experiment. What I'm saying is that regardless of the Old World European framework of oppression and exploitation, the framers of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution had set up a system remarkably free of such aggression. Now, especially looking at the dispossession and—there's no other word for it—genocide of indigenous peoples by the distinctly American New World 'guns, germs, and steel' crowd, I'm not so sure.

That is, I'm not so sure the ideals of liberty—freedom is for everyone—truly ever gained ascendancy over American Manifest Destiny and the insidious Money Power. The most you can say is there were a few bright, shining moments where relative handfuls of heroic Americans fought the power to a standstill: the abolitionists, (most of) the American Indian Resistance (to tyranny), the anarchists and early libertarians, the women's movement, the peace and civil liberties movements. But the full flowering of liberty remains in the future when we have reached the next stage of consciousness... of the sacred nonaggression principle.

What does all this have to do with Columbus? You will be amazed.

The author, Kirkpatrick Sale, is an independent scholar with a history of polymorphous activism, most recently as a leader of the/an American secessionist movement. His detractors seem to characterize him as leftist and anti-technology, but I see a positive libertarian advocacy toward decentralization of power in quotes such as:

**"The virtue of small government is that the mistakes are small as well...If you want to leave a nation you think is corrupt, inefficient, militaristic, oppressive, repressive, but you don't want to move to Canada or France,**

what do you do? Well, the way is through secession, where you could stay home and be where you want to be."

The only reason I mention Sale's background is that the research, the reasoning, and the conclusions he draws in *Conquest* are bound to be controversial. Presumably, his book has been condemned from several quarters, particularly from the crowd who looks at Columbus as an American icon. Well, let me tell you that from where I sit and having read the result of Sale's seven years of "research, reasoning, and conclusions," *The Conquest of Paradise* leaves very few stones unturned, and he applies the highest standards of scholarship to what he will accept as historically valid or historically questionable. He also writes superbly.

What strikes you quickly is the shoddiness of so many other authors who have essentially created a Columbus myth: namely, that the man was a visionary and heroic leader who brought civilization to an untamed world full of primitive savages. The fact is Cristóbal Colón was an ambitious mediocrity who managed to get the attention, thru accidental political means, of the Spanish Head-Monsters, Ferdinand and Isabella. He was suspicious, venal, ignorant of science and nature, inhumane, and as a sailor incredibly lucky to have survived so many unbelievably poor decisions—several of which are documented here—bred of obsessive emotionalism. His general incompetence as a sailor and a man is balanced only by his psychotic Catholicism. Columbus is thus the perfect emissary of late 15th century continental Europe.

Sale provides long and sad description of the waves of unconsciousness and death gripping the Old World in those days. It is truly a fascinating story, to me the more important part of the book. Why? Because that politically oppressive, mystical engine of mass slaughter we call late-Medieval Spain and Europe represents the sick worldview that was inflicted on the New World... indeed becoming the essence of the Anglo-American mega-state through the ages until today:

"Columbus is above all the figure with whom the Modern Age—the age by which we may delineate these past 500 years—properly begins, and in his character as in his exploits we are given an extraordinary insight into the patterns that shaped the age at its start and still for the most part shape it today. He is the figure as well who was primarily responsible for the ways in which the culture of Europe was implanted in the Americas, under not only Spanish flags but subsequent banners too, and his extraordinary career, very like his sailing routes, was the model for all those that came after. And he is the figure who, more than any other, provided the legacy by which European civilization came to dominate the American world for five centuries with consequences, we now realize, involving nothing less than issues of life and death."

Mr. C., as you will read, was the singular fountainhead and harbinger of 1) slavery in the Americas, 2) genocide of the Indians, 3) religious intolerance, 4) rape and slaughter of women, 5) rape of the environment, and 6) unspeakable cruelty toward all living things. Aside from that, we should certainly celebrate him. And we do: "...and thus it is in the United States he is honored with more place names of all kinds—cities, counties, towns, rivers, colleges, parks, streets, and all the rest—than any other figure in American history save Washington."

More than any other achievement by author Sale, this association of the moral-intellectual depravity that was Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries with the Columbus phenom and with the American nation-state phenom is so powerful it practically numbs the soul. When I talk about the patharchy or the Money Power or the Kleptocons—the Men of the Power Sickness (MOPS)—I now see its embodiment in one banal, evil human being. The fact that this banal, evil human being is still celebrated is living proof of the continued existence of the MOPS... only the center of power has shifted away from the Spanish to an Anglo hierarchy of psychopaths.

As normal human beings, we still have our work cut out for us.

Just another couple of words: how can one read books of this nature and remain serene? I haven't figured that out yet. The genocidal numbers are mindblowing: the gentle, pacific, life-loving Taino Indians who inhabited Española are estimated to have equaled eight million in 1492. By the mid-1500s: zero. Finally, a publishing note: if you intend to read *Conquest*, buy the hard cover. I'm not sure the hard cover uses larger font, but the paperback demands a microscope. The index is excellent.

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