

America's Child Sacrifice

Child sacrifice is horrifying to even contemplate. Yet it remains with us, practiced millions of times every year.

by Melvin Rhodes

Although almost 14 years have passed, the picture remains a vivid memory in my mind. A policeman stands outside a courtroom holding in his left hand the head of a 6-year-old boy, decapitated in a ritualistic child sacrifice.

The gruesome murder took place in West Africa. The perpetrators of this heinous act, including at least one close relative of the boy, were caught, tried and executed within a few weeks. But the reality of child sacrifice continues to this day.

Child sacrifice—to most people in Western nations—conjures up vague memories of school classes on ancient history. Of course we all know it took place once upon a time, but surely not now, not in our civilized, contemporary world.

In biblical times, yes, children were murdered in this way—and the God of the Bible strongly condemned the practice. In 2 Kings 3:26-27 we read that, “when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him, . . . he took his eldest son who would have reigned in his place, and offered him as a burnt offering upon the wall . . .”

In Jeremiah 7:30-31 we read of God's condemnation of child sacrifice: “‘For the children of Judah have done evil in My sight,’ says the LORD. ‘. . . They have built the high places . . . to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart.’”

It's not a pleasant subject to think about. But the reality is that child sacrifice is still around—and far more common than you think.

Child sacrifice continues

Children can, of course, be sacrificed in many ways. Another West African nation, Sierra Leone, was recently wracked by a vicious civil war in which tens of thousands of the soldiers were children, teens and preteens. One of the methods soldiers used to intimidate the opposing side was to cut off their limbs. The result is thousands of children with missing hands, arms and legs.

West Africa is not the only part of the world that presses children into warfare.

Palestinian terrorists train young men and women, some of them teenagers, to be suicide bombers, then send them into Israel to blow up Jewish children. Islamic-fundamentalist terrorists have no qualms about murdering children.



To them, their goal justifies the means.

Two months after the decapitation mentioned above, Libyan terrorists blew up a Pan Am airliner over the Scottish town of Lockerbie, killing 270 people, including several children. A picture in one of the newsmagazines showed a young girl who had died on the plane. Someone who had met her at the airport before the fatal flight left flowers for her, accompanied by the simple inscription: “Little girl, you didn't deserve this.”

At the time of that bombing, my wife and I were living in West Africa in a country that was friendly with Libya. My wife had returned home to Detroit on Pan Am via London the same day as the Lockerbie atrocity, the downed plane also en route to Detroit via New York from England's capital city. Hers was an earlier direct flight from the United Kingdom. Friends had been calling to see if she had been a passenger on the fatal flight. I'm grateful to say she wasn't, but she could just as easily have chosen that flight as the other one.

I remember expressing my horror at this appalling terrorist act, voicing my contempt for the inhumanity of anyone who could so easily blow up hundreds of blameless people, including innocent children.

But one person's response shocked me—and reverberates to this day: “You Americans make such a fuss about the loss of a few children killed by terrorists. Yet you murder millions of your own children every year.”

He was talking about America's child sacrifice: *abortion*.

Children not valued

Of course, abortion is not just America's

plague. Every Western nation allows abortion. The former communist countries of Eastern Europe encouraged it to such an extent that women in the Soviet Union were reported to have had around seven abortions for every child that survived to birth.

Russia paid a heavy price for that devastating policy. Eventually the Russian population dropped so low that the Russians themselves could not maintain control over other areas of the Soviet Union that began to outnumber them.

Something similar is happening in the West, where the birthrate is so low that millions of people from other nations have to be imported each year to keep Western economies from going under, and a growing elderly population must be financially supported by proportionately fewer and fewer younger workers.

In spite of the occasional barbaric child sacrifice and gruesome wars involving child soldiers, peoples in most poorer countries generally value their children far more than many in the West. One reason for this is economic. In countries with no effective social-security programs, children are security for old age—they will provide for their parents when the parents are too old to take care of themselves. That's the way it was in Western countries until fairly recently.

Additionally, in poorer countries infant-mortality rates are higher than in the West. This means couples must have many children to ensure that at least some make it to adulthood. Also, religious values and tradition often prohibit the use of birth control, while family pressures ensure most women give birth frequently. The extended family helps in bringing

up children, who are treasured as members of the wider family unit. All these factors mean that poorer countries' birthrates are often five or more times higher than those of wealthier nations.

The discrepancy between these birthrates has led to one of the greatest migrations in history—a massive movement of peoples from the poor nations of the world to the rich Western nations, a movement that some warn could result in the death of the West. If so, abortion will be a major contributor to the decline and fall of Western civilization. Since the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion in 1973, authorities estimate that 42 million children have been aborted in America alone.

Consider this: After the events of Sept. 11, many have warned of a growing conflict between Islamic fundamentalism—appealing increasingly to young people in poor countries with high birthrates—and the irreligious West, with its falling numbers. If an all-out military conflict were to happen, America alone would be short more than 15 million men—all those of military age aborted in the last three decades.

A matter of convenience

Part of the problem in the West is that children generally are no longer valued as they once were. One reason is that governments have taken over the role families used to play. Now that social-security systems have usurped the traditional family role in taking care of the elderly, there seems no need for parents to have children to take care of them in later years.

Compounding the problem, the high taxes that are required to pay for the old-age pensions and medical care of elderly people living longer mean that most mothers find themselves working full time, driving the birthrate down even further and encouraging more people to opt for the convenience of abortion.

And let's be honest. *Convenience* is what we're talking about, isn't it? Admit it. Children are an inconvenience, aren't they? They require so much time, and time is short, especially with all the recreational diversions and electronic gadgets available to entertain us, all of which cost money, which means we have to work more hours, which means that children are even more inconvenient. No wonder so many reach for the phone number of the closest abortion clinic. They don't want needy kids disrupting their lifestyles.

Ironically, falling birthrates in the wealthier countries mean that there won't be enough young workers to pay the social-security bill a few decades from now. The proposed solution in many countries is simply to import more foreign workers. But will people of different cultures be content to pay taxes to pamper rich white people

in their old age? And could the resultant cultural mix in high-density European countries lead to further racial and religious conflict, already a problem for many?

Perhaps the West has got it wrong. Maybe there needs to be a cultural rethinking here.

Children are a blessing

There was a time when our ancestors considered children a blessing. In Victorian times, on both sides of the Atlantic, families had many children. As a result, Britain and America expanded and prospered. Today the descendants of 19th-century Britons and Americans are in numerical decline.

Forty years ago, at a time when more citizens were more biblically aware than they are today, most people in Western nations opposed abortion, at that time a crime. There was no national clamor in the Western democracies for a change in the law, but a steady shift in laws on abortion helped alter public attitudes until abortion became acceptable to most people. Now abortion is a nonissue in most European countries.

Why the change? Sixties liberals thought abortion would reduce the numbers of unwanted pregnancies. Ironically, more children are born out of wedlock today than before abortion laws were gutted—and 30 percent of all pregnancies already end in a visit to the abortion clinic.

Abortion is now the most common surgical procedure in Western nations. Along with the birth-control pill, first used in 1960, the legalization of abortion radically transformed the morals of Western youths, who could now indulge in sex with little thought to the consequences.

Interestingly, the Bible says that children are a blessing from God—who, as the Creator of men and women, set the reproductive process in motion at creation. Yet some professing Christians describe themselves as “pro-choice” and limit the numbers of their children through abortion.

When establishing the Israelites as a nation, God also gave His chosen people a choice. They could obey Him and reap unparalleled rewards or blessings, or they could reject Him and His laws and reap the whirlwind (Hosea 8:7) in the form of inevitable negative consequences the Bible calls curses. These blessings and curses can be found in Deuteronomy 28.

One of the promised blessings for obedience was many children. “Blessed shall be the fruit of your body . . .” (verse 4). One of the prophesied consequences of disobedience was the reverse: “Cursed shall be the fruit of your body . . .” (verse 18).

A further warning follows in verse 62: “You shall be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars in heaven in multitude, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your

God.” (Of course, this does *not* mean that married couples who have no children or few children are under a special curse from God. Many Christian couples, though having God's favor, are unable to have children.)

It's not just that children are a blessing from God. Every child in the womb has the potential of eternal life in God's Kingdom. The Scriptures demonstrate clearly that fetuses are human beings—and that ripping one apart in the womb in an abortion is, therefore, murder. Note the following scriptures:

God said to Jeremiah: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5, New International Version).

In reflecting on how he should treat his servants, Job concluded: “Did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one form us both within our mothers?” (Job 31:15, NIV).

Precious lives in the womb

In the New Testament we see that Mary's cousin, Elizabeth, was pregnant with John the Baptist at the time Mary was carrying Jesus. “When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit” (Luke 1:41, NIV). In verse 44 she tells Mary: “As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.” The baby Elizabeth was carrying was clearly a separate human being at this point, even though still in her womb.

In considering Mary, we need to remember that she “was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 1:18). It is doubtful anybody at the time believed this to be the true source of her conception. To family, friends and neighbors—even to Joseph himself for a while—she was simply an unmarried expectant mother. Today many would no doubt encourage her to have an abortion.

We should remember that God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:26). Every human being has the potential for eternal life. God is “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” that they may receive eternal life (2 Peter 3:9). Even children yet unborn deserve this opportunity.

Is God pro-choice? As we have already seen, God does give us a choice. But He tells us *what* to choose. The choice He wants us to make is best summed up in Deuteronomy 30:19: “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.”

Choose life. That is God's command! Abortion—today's child sacrifice—should never be an option we'd consider.