

CHILD SACRIFICE

From Abraham To Abortion

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One of the great stories of the Old Testament was God's call upon Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac.

“ . . . God put Abraham to the test. ‘Abraham, Abraham,’ he called. ‘Here I am,’ he (Abraham) replied. ‘Take your son,’ God said, ‘your only child Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him as a burnt offering, on a mountain I will point out to you.’ ” (Genesis 22:1-2)

Abraham was seventy-five years old at the time. He and Sarah had experienced much shame for the many long years they were without children, yet Abraham responded promptly, “Here I am.” A response equivalent to, “Yes Sir,” in the modern military.

God subsequently spared Isaac's life and provided Abraham with a ram to offer as a sacrifice in place of his son. It was a great act of faith and courage on the part of Abraham, but to limit the meaning of the event to Abraham's faith was to miss God's intended message. For if the only purpose of, “the test,” was to validate Abraham's faith, what was impact on Isaac? Did Isaac suffer severe psychological trauma? Did he rejoice in his Father's faith when he was older and heard the story for the 100th time of how his Father was about to kill him at the request of God?

In truth, and without limiting Abraham's greatness, his action was not without precedent. Certainly we know from the Bible itself, that child sacrifice was practiced elsewhere:

“When the king of Moab saw that the battle had turned against him, he mustered seven hundred swordsmen in the hope of breaking a way out and going to the king of Aram, but he failed. Then he took his eldest son who was to succeed him and offered him as a sacrifice on the city wall.” 2 Kings 3:27

"Each national group made idols representing its own gods and put them in the temples of the high places made by the Samaritans; each national group did this in the towns allocated to it. The men of Babylon had made a Succothbenoth, the men of Cuthah a Nergal, the men of Hamath an Ashima, the Avvites a Nibhaz and a Tartak; while the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire in honor of Adrammelech and of Anammelech, gods of Sepharvaim." 2 Kings 17:30-31

Isaiah condemns Judah for:

"Lusting among the terebinths, and under every spreading tree, sacrificing children in the wadis (rivers) and in rocky clefts." Isaiah 57:5

And then Jeremiah and Ezekiel vented God's wrath on Judah:

"Yes, the sons of Judah have done what displeases me - it is God who speaks. They have put their abominations in the Temple that bears my name, to defile it; they have built the high place of Topheth in the Valley of Ben-hinnom, to burn their sons and daughters; a thing I never commanded; a thing that never entered my thoughts. So now the days are coming - it is God who speaks - when people will no longer talk of Topheth or of the Valley of Ben-hinnom, but of the Valley of Slaughter, Topheth will become a burial ground, for the lack of other space, the corpses of this people will feed the birds of heaven . . ." Jeremiah 7:30-33

"You have even - it is the Lord God who speaks - taken the sons and daughters you bore me and sacrificed them as food to the images. Was it not enough for you just to be a whore? You have slaughtered my children and handed them over as a burnt offering to them, and in all your filthy practices and your whorings you have never remembered your youth or the time when you were quite naked and struggling in your own blood." Ezekiel 16:20-22

All of the incidents of actual child sacrifice mentioned in the Bible occurred long after the time of Abraham, but it was possible to build a strong case that Abraham was familiar with the custom. First, independent historical and archeological research established that ritual sacrifice of sons was practiced in Mesopotamia during a period that could have included Abraham. Second, that custom paralleled a 300 year drought. The best confirmation of Abraham's familiarity with child sacrifice, however, came from Abraham himself. When God instructed Abraham to initiate the sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham responded with, "Here I am." That response was long associated with a modern day, "Yes, Sir," in the military, but such prompt responses even in the military were associated with expected commands . . . "Stand at ease soldier" . . . "Yes, Sir," would have been a common exchange. Though Abraham consented promptly to the sacrifice of Isaac, he did not react in a similar manner when God informed him of his intention to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah:

"How great an outcry there is against Sodom and Gomorrah! How grievous is their sin! . . . Abraham remained standing before God. Approaching him he said, "Are you really going to destroy the just man with the sinner? Perhaps there are fifty just men in the town, will you really overwhelm them, will you not spare the place for the fifty just men in it?" Genesis 18:20-25.

Abraham indeed, won some concessions from God. The characterization of Abraham and the characterization of his relationship with God showed Abraham to have been a man

confident that he would be heard, and his objection respected by God. The fact that he made no similar protest to the expected sacrifice of Isaac meant the command had precedence in Abraham's milieu.

In addition to the incidents of child sacrifice associated with Biblical history, we know there was an elaborate custom of child sacrifice in the Mayan culture in Central America, and in the Inca culture in South America.

The common thread in all of the above examples of child sacrifice was cultural stress.

- ! A three hundred year drought.
- ! The migration to a new and unknown land.
- ! A king and his people who were about to be slaughtered by the army of Israel.
- ! A region dominated by chaos.
- ! A Judah about to come under siege by the Assyrians.
- ! A Judah about to be destroyed by Babylon.
- ! A culture in Central America which was one of only two regions in the world regularly struck by three different "Acts of God," namely earthquakes, hurricanes, and volcanoes.
- ! A culture built on the extremely arduous and inefficient custom of managing an empire from high mountain cities.

Child sacrifice was always a desperate supplication to a false god during a time of extreme stress. Blood was necessary . . . death was necessary . . . to confirm the absolute sincerity of the supplicants. The life offered was valued relative to the stress. During ordinary times an animal might suffice. But extreme stress required more . . . a son . . . or a young virgin.

God's real purpose with Abraham was to show him by the provision of the ram and through a vivid and unforgettable experience that would be passed through the Ages, that God the Father was the provider and the source of blessing for Abraham. Therefore Abraham and Isaac were joint participants in an experience with God that established a new paradigm, and everlasting meaning for God's people.

God established Israel with similar intent, and even provided for them during the forty years in the desert. Again God planned for that experience to be sufficiently intense and dramatic so the story of God's grace and provision would be passed down through the centuries. Clearly, Israel's later apostasy and renewed practice of child sacrifice was especially galling to the Father. Nevertheless, after venting his anger on Israel, he offered his own Son as a sacrifice, confirmed by a bloody death on the cross, for all humanity, present and to come, thereby declaring in the most graphic possible manner:

See, I offer my own Son as a sacrifice for you so you may know that I love you and will provide for you, and that I will always take the initiative in making

that love and provision known to you. Do not sacrifice your children for me but love your children as I have loved you, and participate with me in the greatest of all experiences . . . the creation of life.

ABORTION

The correlation between ancient child sacrifice and modern day abortion was straight forward, but where was the cultural stress that drove modern humans into the same repugnant custom? How was it possible, after such transcendent manifestations of love and provision, humans could resort to a custom found only in extinct cultures forgotten by history?

The truth was, the values that formed cultures were simple, and easily understood by all reasonable citizens. The strength of those values derived from their embrace as absolute truth that was at once, the datum upon which the culture was founded, and the utopian goal for which the culture strived. "All men are created equal," was the declaration of the Founding Fathers of the United States, and the utopian goal of equality remained the obsession of modern America. Alexis de Tocqueville said in his Introduction to, Democracy in America, published in 1835:

"The various occurrences of national existence have everywhere turned to the advantage of democracy; all men have aided it by their exertions: those who have intentionally labored in its cause, and those who have served it unwittingly; those who have fought for it and those who have declared themselves its opponents, - have all been driven along in the same track, have all labored to one end, some ignorantly and some unwillingly; all have been blind instruments in the hands of God."

Tocqueville had, of course, observed the United States during its early formative period. A period characterized by firm conviction and positive expectation. All of those early settlers came from aristocratic cultures where prosperity and sustenance derived from a dependent relationship on a king, a queen, or an aristocracy. Such dependent relationships were not between equals, provided no certain rights, and required submission to undesirable political and religious demands. The Reformation generated an ideal capable of challenging that "divine right of kings," namely; the "divine right of the individual." The invention of the printing press, and consequently, the availability to the Bible to all, allowed the individual to establish and nurture a personal relationship with Christ, and their own understanding of Christianity. Religious freedom thus became the main concern of early Americans. But religious freedom so construed could not endure unless augmented by independence and self-sufficiency. Therefore, the early American settlers had to break with the established kingdoms of Europe and find a place to live out their beliefs. America offered religious freedom, and fertile farming land for individual ownership and sustenance.

The vast quantity of land available for settlement did not become apparent until the early years of the 19th Century. Pioneers set in motion a steady push westward into new lands and that westward push was paralleled by a gradual change in motivation. Greed for land led to brutal treatment of Native Americans in a manner clearly inconsistent with Christian belief. Still the family was together. Husband and wife, and then children, worked side by side with courage and faith in a new territory beset by dangers and hardship. The religious freedom and family unity was very close to a Christian ideal.

The steady influx of new settlers, however, exerted unrelenting pressure on those family units. The push west stalled for a time at the Mississippi River. Topsoil was thin or non-existent, grass and water sparse on the high plains west of the river. North and South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, eastern Oregon, Nevada, and Utah were never capable of generating more than a subsistence life style. The pioneers who had the money, elected to cross the high plains in wagons trains to the more fertile land on the west coast.

The steady pressure from new settlers, the declining quality of agricultural land, and the Industrial Revolution forced the man of the family to seek employment in the city. A seemingly innocent adjustment to inevitable developments, but an earthquake in terms of Christian values.

First, the husband ceased to be at home for much of the day, and that meant a substantial additional burden for the wife. The wife sought support from other wives at and though the local church. In the short term that arrangement worked very well, but over the longer term it had two negative and enduring consequences.

The church became imbued with the values and needs of the wives, and gradually took on a decidedly feminine flavor that alienated the men.

Secondly, the move to the city required a dramatic shift in values for the man. The very religious freedom, and right to interpret Scripture for themselves, that was the yearning of the early settlers and the principal consequence of the Reformation, encouraged a variegated and shifting interpretation of Scripture, which in turn led to the fragmentation of Christian belief. That fragmentation insured such Christian values would not generate the kind of consensus necessary for successful cultural and industrial development. Consensus meant common values which generated prescriptive behavior that was dependable and predictable. The necessary values were indeed derived from and anchored to the "divine right of the individual," established by the Reformation. Those secondary ideals were:

- ! Self-sufficiency of the individual
- ! Equality.
- ! Democracy, or more accurately, majority rule.
- ! A legal system built on the presumption of equality.
- ! Capitalism
- ! Competition

But like the "divine right of kings," of a preceding milieu the new American values gradually shed all Christian trappings and stood alone as a right superior to the claims of any god, or God. Those values defined America as it began to grow. Those values defined the utopian promise of the American future. Those values were the datum to which America returned in times of stress. And over time those values imprinted and warped the soul of the American male.

The first negative consequence caused by the shift in male values was strain within the family. Work in the city was most often boring or competitive. Both engendered insensitivity as a survival mechanism. Competition and the expectation of self-sufficiency

ensured that the emotional needs of men would be ignored and/or belittled and that resulted in the suppression of feeling. A few men excelled in a competitive environment, but most men returned from work feeling insignificant and needy. To be needy, however, was unacceptable for it clashed with the admonition of self-sufficiency. Unfulfilled need did not dissipate, but did erupt in anger . . . expressed by walking away from the marriage and the children . . . or through marital abuse. The warp in the soul of the American man caused by those secular values generated the single most destructive dynamic in the American family.

The second negative consequence caused by the shift in male values was social strain. The only need satisfaction offered by the American idealism was a comparative relationship established through competition . . . “I won so I am better” . . . “you lost so you are inferior.” That might have appeared fine in an athletic contest . . . high grades in school . . . or the acquisition of money in business, but such a view was superficial at best. Competition was, in fact, far more pervasive, far more subtle, and very devastating. Men who won felt pride, but men who lost looked for a secondary venue for establishing worth. When all competitive venues were out of reach they attached to inherent traits . . . superiority over women . . . ethnic origin . . . color of skin. Young men resorted to fantasy (See *Discerning the Need for God in Young Men*, on this website) . . . dreamed of heroic accomplishment . . . a hero in war . . . a billionaire in business . . . a great athlete . . . the action hero who saved the world from aliens. When all the games were lost, all the fantasies dissipated, anger emerged . . . drug addiction . . . alcoholism . . . marital abuse . . . crime . . . death.

Women, for many years, did a good job of holding the family unit together but a combination of developments in the modern period further stressed women, the family, and the social structure.

The invention of the atomic bomb and the protracted “Cold War” between Communism and the West was a very scary period for America. Newspapers, television and cinema obsessively compared the quantity and size of atomic and hydrogen bombs, aircraft, and intercontinental ballistic missiles on each side, day after day, year after year. Citizens were shown replay after replay of atom bomb explosions and advised to build bomb shelters. Spy and war movies infatuated the entertainment industry. It was in that context of fear that John F. Kennedy was elected President of the United States in 1962. His Presidency was immediately portrayed as, “Camelot.” in an idyllic association with the mythological King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. But that characterization was much more than a metaphor. Kennedy hailed from a wealthy and well connected family and during his campaign he promised to bring “the best and brightest” to Washington. He was received as royalty and treated as royalty. On the part of the American people there was relief, capitulation, a handing over of authority, and an empowering of the “best and brightest,” he supposedly brought into the American government.

The “best and brightest,” became America’s new aristocracy. Their first accomplishment was the humiliating loss of the Vietnam War. So significant was the damage to the American ethos it generated a number of culturally destructive trends. The most important were:

- ! A polarized and increasingly strident political culture.
- ! An empowering of, and transfer of allegiance to, corporate America.

The polarized and strident political culture was the consequence of the broadly felt need to reestablish the presumed primacy and authority of the American idealism. Political and/or cultural initiatives directed at restoration referred back to the original ideological datum upon which the American culture was constructed whether such initiatives were labeled liberal or conservative. The only difference between the two political extremes was the conservative initiative was directed at restoring and maintaining the authority and value of that which had already been achieved, while the liberal initiative was directed at achieving a more pure and complete expression of that original ideological datum. Consistent with other cultures that degenerated over time, that cultural dynamic in America was driven by the grim determination to "make the American ideals work," regardless of the cost. In effect, those values had been appropriated by a predominate number of American citizens over an extended period of time, as "absolute truth." Therefore, conservative and liberal initiatives alike determined that others had no choice but to appropriate the prescriptive behavior required by their understanding of those original values. Conservatives and liberals alike judged that the primacy and power of the American culture would be restored when the populous complied with their demands. The actual consequence of the entire dynamic was accelerated cultural degeneration. In other words, the greater the pressure to appropriate the prescriptive behavior of a false absolute, the more likely that pressure would actually destroy the subconscious bond to those values. Once that bond was broken the moral imperative of those values vanished. That explained why there was a much higher rate of degenerative and criminal behavior in the population of veterans from the Vietnam War. The subconscious appropriation of American values as absolute truth had been destroyed, therefore the moral requirements of that culture had no meaning,

The transfer of authority to the "best and brightest," at the inception of the Kennedy Presidency in 1962 began to weaken with the failure in Vietnam. The deep human need that had propelled that transfer in the early 1960's, however, did not weaken. Rather it was transferred to "corporate america," To better understand the cultural dynamic, it would have to be understood as equivalent to the rise in power of "War Lords" in more "backward cultures." War Lords were secondary power centers dependent on the central values of the culture for their existence, which appeared to offer security and protection to individuals when the authority of the central values and central authority of the culture proved incapable of integrating its population. Since the transfer of authority was driven by needs that were not recognized by the individuals, there was no required recognition of those needs on the part of the new war lords. That allowed the new war lords to receive the offered allegiance and dependency without a comparable commitment to the individual. In truth, the individual ignorance of need enabled the new war lords to use those people solely for their own purposes, and discard them when they became a burden.

The second accomplishment of the intelligentsia was the protracted and forceful public relations campaign of the late 1970's against population growth. They warned of certain disaster if population growth was not restrained, and systematically belittled the institutions of family and motherhood. That period of public mockery of the traditional role of women led to a broad rejection of that traditional role, and greatly energized women's quest for equality and independence.

That quest was directed primarily at equal academic opportunity and achievement, equal opportunity in athletic competition, and equal opportunity and compensation in work. In other words, women willed to appropriate and successfully compete with the same values that men were forced to appropriate when they left the farm and entered the work force in the city. Those values were not inherent qualities of masculinity, but rather forced upon men as a cultural necessity. When women likewise willed to appropriate those same values

they were neither establishing a claim of equality with that which was inherently male, nor expressing qualities that were female. It was only a response to a cultural demand for the appropriation of secular values and had nothing to do with either maleness or femaleness. Women's souls were thereby warped in same manner as men's.

Prior to the transfer of authority to corporate america that began with the failure in Vietnam, corporate executives were expected to have satisfactory and stable families. As the transfer of authority developed momentum, corporations realized divorced and/or single men worked harder, longer hours and were more willing to travel then executives with families. Men with families were thereby forced to work and travel at an equivalent pace to keep their jobs. Likewise, women who willed to succeed in the corporate world had to accept the same work load.

The transfer of authority and allegiance to corporate america generated the largest transfer of wealth from one class to another in the history of the world. The middle class in America thereby impoverished itself.

Unfortunately, the damage extended beyond the economic consequences. When women accepted the obligation to work the same arduous schedule as men, neither was available to raise the children. Like men of a previous era, at the end of the work day women came home tired and needy, and had little to offer their children. Children became burdensome and therefore expendable. The social force behind abortion was a manifestation of extreme cultural stress in America. Abortion was the final plea of a desperate people . . . to a false god . . . *"See corporate america . . . I am willing to offer marriage and children as a sacrifice to prove that I accept your wishes as my sole responsibility, and I will give everything in exchange for your provision."* There was, of course, no positive response to that desperate plea.

In pondering the future of the human race, one should ask:

What is in humans that compels them to give up their inheritance for a life of poverty?

What is in humans that compels them to surrender freedom for servitude?

What is in humans that compels them to nurture a dry intellectual hostility built upon a foundation of spiritual poverty . . . and ignore the gift of the Spirit that wells up within until it over flows in abundance . . . as the gift of life to others . . . even on to life everlasting?