



FAITH FOR ALL OF LIFE

Christianity and The Culture of Death



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Matthew 12:43-45

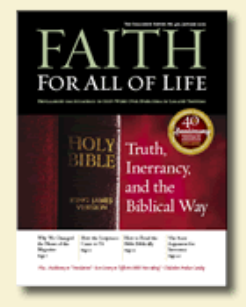
The rise of modern terrorism in recent decades has brought the depravity of man into full view. As Christians, we have an obligation to follow our Lord's command to be salt and light by showing that only Christians can understand and explain what I call the "culture of death." As Christians we must confront this culture of death both at home and abroad.

The culture of death is often what people simply call evil. Consider some of these shocking examples from the Middle East:

- On June 18, 2002, the BBC reported on a mother who appeared in a videotape with her son who was about to go on a suicide mission: "God willing you will succeed" she said. "May every bullet hit its target, and may God give you martyrdom. This is the best day of my life." The son responded by saying, "Thank you for raising me." Asked if it mattered whether her son killed women and children she said, "The women and children are also Jews, they're all the same for me." She has nine more children.
- On July 18, 2002, Gary Bauer did a report on the conflict in Jenin contrasting the truth with much of what was reported by the mainstream media: "During the heavy fighting, the Israeli Defense Force worked hard to keep the hospital open in Jenin and offered the Palestinians blood for their wounded. Incredibly, the blood was rejected because it came from Jews! The IDF brought in blood from Jordan but a Jewish reporter asked the right question: "How do you negotiate with a hatred so great that it will refuse to accept your blood even to save its own people's lives?"
- Finally, on August 10, 2002, Michael Oren recounted a series of Palestinian celebrations for the *Wall Street Journal*: After the cold-blooded murder of seven people and maiming of 80 more by a terrorist bomb at the Hebrew University, Palestinian children were seen cheering and singing in the streets as adults showered them with candies. He talked about the dancing from the rooftops in 1991 as the Iraqi scud missiles landed in Israeli neighborhoods and the estimated 70,000 Palestinians who filled a Gaza stadium to cheer a re-enactment of a bus bomb that had killed dozens in Israel including the writer's sister. Mr. Oren reminded Americans that the death of 3,000 of our citizens on September 11 was also cause for dancing in Palestinian streets even though coverage was greatly restricted for the Western press.

Mr. Oren went on to contrast properly this culture of death with reactions by Western civilizations to the death of women and children, even accidental death. His piece is a thoughtful consideration of how difficult this Middle East situation will be to solve, but in the course of his discussion he makes an interesting comment: "[T]here is no rational explanation for the outburst of joy bordering on ecstasy at the dismemberment of innocent children, women and men."

Christians, and only Christians, can and must provide a rational answer to this type of madness. More importantly, not only can we rationally explain why these things



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happen, we can provide the hope that there is a solution.

Beginning at the Beginning

Christians must begin at the beginning; or as Ken Ham would say, you must find the answers in Genesis! In the early chapters of Genesis, we learn that the fall of man ushered in the culture of death. It is important to understand that God was serious when He said: "You shall surely die." Man experienced death *both* physically and spiritually. Man experienced death *both* now and for eternity. From the point of the fall of man forward, on one side man struggles, trying to earn his salvation, and on the other God reaches out in His abundant grace.

The salvation found in Christ is a real answer because we are clearly told the end:

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (1 Cor. 15:20-26).

In 2 Timothy 1:8-11, we find more encouraging words from the Apostle Paul referring to "*our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death.*" We should also remember those sobering words about the end of time in Revelation 20:11-15, including the fact that "Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire."

Only with the truth of Christianity can we begin to understand and rationally explain the culture of death. Only a solid Biblical worldview can honestly explain this profound evil and then offer the hope that people, and nations, so desperately need.

Recent events provide us with an incredible opportunity because people see more clearly that this culture of death is a *big* problem. As Christians, we must consider how to engage this culture of death with a properly balanced Christian response. We must have a solid Biblical worldview that centers on Christ as the answer! We would, and must, confront the terrorist. The confrontation can be anything from rhetoric to war. We would, and must, protect, and comfort the victims. We can do these through anything from preaching to practical compassion.

And of course, we will want God to be on our side in this battle!

However, God might have a few questions, like Jesus did when He walked with the disciples:

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me remove the speck from your eye"; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. (Mt. 5:1-5)

The Sacrament of the West

Let's go back to that shocking Palestinian mother who appeared in the video with her son. She was willing to sacrifice her own son to help her people. Allow me to contrast her with a modern western mom who was the focus of an article by Ken Connor of the Family Research Council in a recent *Washington Update*. The parents made a television appearance to discuss plans to work with a controversial doctor and a secret medical team to produce a cloned baby. According to Connor's report, "Despite the mounting evidence that cloned animals develop defects, Dr. Zavos says the mistakes made with animals may not apply to cloned human beings." Even so, the mad scientist has a contingency plan. The following is an excerpt from the show.

BILL (husband): We're not going to give birth to a monster or an abnormal child. If there is a serious abnormality, absolutely we will and Dr. Zavos concurs that we will abort.

GUILLEN (host): And when you said the word "abort," lots of people are going to think... you're piling one abomination on top of another.

KATHY (wife): Well, at least they'll have stem cells to possibly help improve someone's life who is having a problem.

GUILLEN: You would harvest stem cells from the aborted fetus for... research?

KATHY: Well, I'm a controversial person.

We are also learning about some odd results from the war on terrorism. In a recent report from ProLife Network we learn that "A British abortion business said that it will officially open one of the first dedicated 'reproductive health clinics' in Afghanistan." Steve Mosher, president of the Population Research Institute, said it best: "Afghan refugee women face a new reign of terror designed to violate their right to bear children."

I would humbly suggest that we as Americans have a very *big* log in our eye. Since the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, we have had abortion on demand. Consequently, over 40 million of our children have been lost. Instead of repenting of this holocaust, today many see abortion as the new "sacrament," not unlike how that Palestinian mom saw terror.

Father Frank Pavone recently discussed the 1992 book, *The Sacrament of Abortion*. The author, Ms. Ginette Paris, argues in the book that abortion is a sacred act, a sacrifice to Artemis, a goddess known to the Romans as Diana. Father Pavone observes, "Diana is both a protector of wild animals and a hunter who kills them with deadly aim. How can these contradictory roles be found in the same female deity? The view proposed in this book is that a mother properly cares for life only if she possesses full power over life and death. Death is sometimes preferable. The one who can provide death in order that one may escape an unfriendly life, is really loving the one who is being killed. Abortion, then, is seen as 'an expression of maternal responsibility and not a failure of maternal love'" (p. 8). "Diana stands for the refusal to give life if the gift is not pure and untainted... As Diana might kill a wounded animal rather than allow it to limp along miserably, so a mother wishes to spare the child a painful destiny" (p. 55).

In the garden, Satan tempted the woman by saying in part, "you shall be as gods." Ms. Paris has taken the original rebellion against the Creator to new heights with her "maternal responsibility" that has woman exercising the complete power of life and death over her offspring.

Defeating the Culture of Death

If we want God's blessings in these battles against the culture of death, then we must be honest. After the completion of the great temple in Jerusalem, King Solomon heard this warning from God:

Then the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now mine eyes shall be open and mine ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place." (2 Chr. 7:12-15)

Dr Gene Veith stated our challenge well in the July 20, 2002 edition of *WORLD* magazine: "Civilization requires vigilance against barbarians, both from without and from within."

Yes, as Christians and Americans, we must confront terrorism abroad and clearly present Christ as the answer. But, we must also confront terrorism here at home! If we desire God's mighty blessings, we must be willing to stand up to this new Diana as the early Christians did in Ephesus. Read Acts 19:24-34 to review the impact that those early Christians had on that pagan city. Both here at home, as well as abroad, we must see and boldly proclaim Christ as the answer.

We Americans above all others have a special responsibility based on the light that we have been given. Consider these sobering words of our Lord as He spoke to the enlightened cities of Israel in His day:

The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here. When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, "I will return to my house from which I came." And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation. (Mt. 12:41-45)

After September 11, many thought that the proverbial demons were being cast out and the house was starting to be swept clean: flags were flying, many public prayers were offered, people were singing "God Bless America" and, boy, was there a national uproar when Dr. Newdow tried to take "under God" out of the Pledge!

Yes, a demon can be sent packing at times and we can even sweep things up and make the house look pretty tidy. But, if it was not Christ who drove away that demon, and if we don't keep Christ at the center of all we do, that same demon can easily return with a whole lot of his fellow demons!

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