



"It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society."
—Krishnamurti

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Behind the Scandal

Since May 4, the leading story in just about every newscast has been the release and fallout from the pictures of the humiliation of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib by American soldiers. The images of GIs posing near naked or nearly naked prisoners themselves posed in often erotic postures has sickened both Americans and foreigners. Well-deserved condemnation has rained down on the perpetrators from every quarter.

Juxtaposed to these humiliations is the beheading of private citizen Nicholas Berg by Abu Mussab Al Zarqawi, a Jordanian with links to al Qaeda, and four henchmen, supposedly in retaliation for the Abu Ghraib atrocities. Both are terrible acts of cruelty and inhumanity, and both are worthy of the most severe censure and punishment. In addition, both are clearly rotten fruit of debased and ungodly cultures.

From our Western vantage point, we can easily see this in the fundamentalist Islamic culture. Children are indoctrinated at an early age in Islamic schools to devote themselves to the "religion of [peace](#)," Islam, and its prophet, Mohammed, and to disdain non-Muslims. Early on, they are taught that Israel should be wiped off the planet and that America is the Great [Satan](#) to be fought at every turn. Beyond this, many of them—certainly Palestinian children and likely children of many other nationalities—are brainwashed to view martyrdom as the highest of aspirations, for by this they will immediately enter Paradise and receive great reward.

With this disdain for their own lives, the lives of others, especially those they have been taught to hate so vehemently, mean nothing. To take the life of an American or a Jew (incidentally, both Richard Perle and Nicholas Berg were American Jews) means less to them than stepping on a bug. It would probably not take much interrogation to make the jihadists admit that these men deserved to die as worthless infidels. This is not a minority opinion among radical Muslims: Just remember the glee of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as of the Taliban in Afghanistan and of their Pakistani supporters, when news of the 9-11 attacks reached them.

Because it is much closer to us, the Abu Ghraib atrocities are harder to work back to a cause in American culture. The news media have presented this story with an undertone of "How can

Americans have done this?" A better question would be, "Why has this not happened sooner?" Rush Limbaugh has caught a lot of flak over his comment that these humiliations are similar to college fraternity pranks, but many of his critics seem to have missed his point: This kind of activity is considered normal in other situations! In other words, our culture accepts and promotes such perversions.

Shocking? It should not be. Americans spend an estimated \$10 billion each year on pornography. *The Journal News* of Westchester, New York, reports that the porn industry is "a cash cow that pumps out an estimated 8,000 new titles a year, up from 1,250 just 10 years ago, according to *Los Angeles Magazine*. The U.S. trade is valued at some \$19 billion annually, and upward of \$10 billion to Los Angeles alone" (May 9, 2004). Add to this the sexual content of television and movies, as well as the rate of premarital and extramarital sexual encounters, and the Abu Ghraib images do not seem so out of the ordinary.

We should also not forget the high violence content of video games, television dramas, and movies. For instance, the *Kill Bill* movies, dubbed as "black comedy" by its director, Quentin Tarrantino, show scores of murders committed with little emotion in pursuit of revenge. Kids inured to the violence of *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* then placed in a war theater at a high security prison might not think twice about committing the acts shown in the sickening photographs. Whether they were ordered to do these things to "soften up" the prisoners for interrogation, or they did them on their own initiative, they seemed to have been more than willing participants.

[God](#) prophesies of Israel in [Hosea 4:1-2](#):

Hear the word of the LORD, you children of Israel, for the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: "There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing [adultery](#), they break all restraint, with bloodshed upon bloodshed."

It certainly seems many Americans have reached this nadir of morality and inhumanity. How much lower can we go and still function as a civil society?

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Whose Morality Are We Following?](#)

by Martin G. Collins

Moral legislation over the years has steadily eroded because antinomian liberal leaders, claiming that morality cannot be legislated, have rejected biblical standards of morality in favor of personal choice or private morality. Ironically, they, like many mainstream Christian denominations, have endorsed Satanic abominable practices, such as sodomy, homosexuality, abortion, and euthanasia — all condemned and censured in the Bible. Disregarding personal responsibility, these same liberal leaders blame poverty, parents, or environment instead of personal accountability. Martin Collins points out that a culture which turns its back on God's standards is a culture which embraces death.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[A Basket of Summer Fruit](#)

by Charles Whitaker

Summertime reminds us of "those lazy, hazy, crazy days" of our youth. Charles Whitaker shows that biblically summertime sounds a warning to us to prepare for the fall harvest.

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