

The Century Of The Child

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Complaints abound regarding the health and welfare of our children. Dr. Luther Holt, known as one of America's first and finest pediatricians, says: "The conditions which kept child life simple and natural 50 years ago have greatly changed since that time. On every side there is more to stimulate the nervous system and less opportunity for muscular development." Continuing the thought, Dr. G. Stanley Hall, who had earned the first psychology doctorate in the country, opines, "One of the most important reasons for this is the far greater proportion of children now than formerly who are reared in cities and large towns and who spend lots of time in the 'modern school.'"

These statements were made in speeches given at the National Congress of Mothers in Washington, D. C., in 1899. Yes, the same 1999 concerns raged 100 years ago, helping to spark a deliberate and organized, but not so consistent, attempt to push God aside and replace His wisdom with the reasonings of men. Their ideas and projects are culminating as we near the beginning of the next century.

Enlightened Parenting

Holt and Hall went on to say that children who are shut away from nature and free movement and play in unwholesome air are more worried and nervous. Innocent children are becoming miniature men and women before their time because of the way parents are bringing them up. They believed that such changes in society made parents no longer able to raise their children properly.

One hundred years ago this winter, 200 delegates to the same National Congress of Mothers proclaimed the impending "Century of the Child," a conscious effort to reject the biblical principles governing families. As Ann Hulbert writes in the *Wilson Quarterly*, Americans could achieve this by making motherhood "a modern, systematic discipline," much as the new field of home economics was reorganizing housekeeping upon systematic principles. (The Home Economics Association was founded in 1899.)

There was one crucial difference, however: While both home economics and the infant science of motherhood promised "an unprecedented relationship in American family life, between parent—mother—and professional expert," the home management experts were almost invariably women, while those who preached "enlightened" mothering were men with degrees after their names.

American businessmen were being remade by a managerial revolution; new management techniques improved efficiency and productivity. Similarly, many believed that "motherhood should become a vocation of professional management." This, of course, placed the care and training of children on the mother, and "effectively consigned fathers to the sidelines."

This faulty thinking directly contradicts God's instruction through Solomon in Proverbs 4:1, "Hear, my children, the instruction of a father." The experts desired the power to manipulate families as they saw fit, and their ideas frequently ran afoul of God's teachings. For instance, God says that child training is balanced between both parents: "My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother" (Proverbs 1:8). Nonetheless, influential doctors and psychologists

embraced contrary opinions, even though God says His way ensures a long and fruitful life for the child.

On these "advances," the *New York Times* editorialized, "Given one generation of children poorly born and wisely trained . . . what a vast proportion of human ills would disappear from the face of the earth!" The *Times* guessed wrong, as the next two generations of humanity fought the two bloodiest wars in man's history. But society's faith in science was well established, despite evidence of its failures.

The experts, intoxicated by Darwin and his theory of evolution, were overjoyed that nature offered them the perfect subject—the child—to follow in his own evolutionary twists and turns. These experts' audacity and desire to manipulate the family by such newly influential professions as psychology showed in their condescending, presumptuous attitudes. They acknowledged that mothers, spending long hours with the small specimens, would be useful accomplices in psychological experimentation, provided intellectual professionals gave the mothers some training.

Contradictions from these experts have been common. Working mothers have gravitated to the advice of the importance of bonding, while stay-at-home mothers have fallen victim to warnings about the importance of youthful independence. In their myopia, the experts cannot see the incongruity of bonding with independent children!

Thinking of similar arrogant intellectuals, the apostle Paul writes, "Professing to be wise, they became as fools" (Romans 1:22). Even the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom (I Corinthians 1:25), yet humanity rejects the tried-and-true childrearing guidelines of the written Word of God. We have only to take an objective look at today's children to see what fruit that course has borne.

Transfer of Influence

The similarities to our situation today, as we prepare to bid the "Century of the Child" goodbye, are eye-opening. Then, as now, self-appointed experts insist that rapid technological change necessitates a transfer of influence over children from "ill-prepared" parents to "Those Who Know Better."

No longer does it seem possible for parents to rely on biblical principles and mere apprenticeship to their own parents as guides to the new childrearing challenge. At the beginning of this century, parents were told their upbringings had not equipped them for the difficult task of preparing their children for a future that would be unimaginably different. The same claims are made today.

Solomon indicates differently in Proverbs 4:1-4: "When I was my father's son, tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, he also taught me, and said to me: 'Let your heart retain my words; keep my commands and live.'" Though our technological knowledge has increased, human nature remains the same, so the biblical principles of human interaction are just as valid in our "advanced" age as in Solomon's day. In verse 19 he indicts those "experts" who reject God's truth, "The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble."

Alice Birney, president of the national Congress of Mothers, told the 1899 convention, "I claim, without hesitancy, the greatest evil today is the incompetence, the ignorance of parents, and it is

because of this evil that others exist." Despite Birney's and others' high hopes, childrearing practices have never been standardized in the United States—or the rest of the world, for that matter—in part because the experts never could agree on anything other than that parents should listen to experts!

About AD 61-62 Paul warned Timothy of this false type of knowledge:

O Timothy [and all true Christians]! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoid the profane and vain babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—by professing it, some have strayed concerning the faith. (I Timothy 6:20, 21)

The Greek word for "trust" is *paratheke*, which literally means "deposit." It is the word for money deposited with a banker or with a friend. When this money became due, it was a sacred duty to hand it back in its entirety. Sometimes children were called a *paratheke*, that is, a sacred trust. It was believed in Greek society then that, if God gave a person a child, it was his sacred duty to present that child trained and equipped to God. Likewise, we are not only the possessors, but also the trustees, of God's truth and of God's children. The truth that we have received we must also pass on to our children.

God says in Deuteronomy 6:6-9:

These words which I command you today shall be in your heart; you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Do we have God's law hanging in our house as an obvious sign that we believe and obey God? God has commanded that we do so. If we do not, we are sending the same message to our families, especially our children, that Satan has convinced the "experts" to promote in our society: If God exists, He does not know what He is talking about, and there is no value in raising a family by His commands.

Undermining Parents

The effect of this passing "Century of the Child" has been that children are now the focus of everyone's attention. Our society cowers and caters to them. Politicians become popular for their support of laws that "protect" children from their parents. Although most parents deeply love their children, laws are continually passed that deteriorate the authority and relationship that parents have with their children.

From God's Word we know that foolishness is bound in the heart of a child (Proverbs 22:15). Children are ill-equipped to make major decisions about important aspects of their life. They need and must have guidance from their parents, who have experienced life and can lead their children over the rough spots.

In I Corinthians 13:11 Paul says, "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." But the leaders of this world want to give children say-so over their own lives—at least until governments can gain complete control of them.

Take, for example, the promotion of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is a treaty that nations sign with the UN, agreeing to pass laws supporting the treaty's articles. Its object is a worldwide human-rights standard for children, protecting them against economic and sexual abuse, and guaranteeing them education, health care and recreation. On the surface, this sounds great, but it is designed to undermine parents.

Among its benign articles reside more insidious ones. It declares children's rights to privacy, to freedom of expression, to freedom of conscience and to associates of their choosing. This could mean parents would have no control over their child's involvement in other religions. The right to privacy means the right to abortion and condoms without parental consent—or even that parents could not turn off the TV unless the child approves!

Citizen magazine reports, "No specific right of parents in regard to discipline or decision-making is mentioned anywhere in the treaty." The magazine quotes Senator Dan Coats as saying, "The treaty, under the guise of protecting children, would rob parents of authority over their children."

The treaty gives equality, if not superiority, to children over parents. And of course, the government is increasing its control over parents and children at the same time they are trying to reduce parental authority. What are their ulterior motives?

What could this equality with parents mean for children in the future? The first step has already been taken in the public acceptance of pedophilia. The American Psychological Association claims that their research does not support the idea that great harm is done by "adult-child sex." As a result, a move is on in some academic circles to remove pedophilia from the list of psychological diseases, just as homosexuality was removed several years ago. Psychologists have begun to suggest they stop using "judgmental" terms like "child abuse," "molestation" and "victims," but instead use neutral terms such as "adult-child sex."

What a perverted world we live in! There is no limit to the decadence of a society when its citizens reject God's truth.

Oppressive Children

A century of dizzying advice from psychologists and childcare experts—where every wave of expert counsel conflicts with another—has left fathers and mothers with a great deal of anxiety over the raising of their children. It has produced a society of confused, self-centered, disrespectful children, many of whom grow up to be childish leaders.

This same thing happened from the time of Isaiah until the time of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. Isaiah describes God's punishment of Judah for rejecting Him. "I will give children to be their princes, and babies shall rule over them" (Isaiah 3:4). Most commentaries agree this is not speaking of children with respect to age so much as skill in governing. This passage refers primarily to babes in experience, knowledge and maturity, although in many cases today, children do seem to rule their parents.

Isaiah continues, "The people will be oppressed, every one by another and every one by his neighbor; the child will be insolent toward the elder, and the base toward the honorable" (verse 5). In our society it is common to see flagrant disrespect of authority by children who, not too long ago, were "to be seen and not heard."

Verse 12 prophesies, "As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths." The character of the princes and rulers are that of inexperienced children, unqualified for government. *Oppressors* is literally "exactors" or "taxers of money." Believing the well will never run dry, they tax oppressively to pay for their extravagant spending and their childish endeavors.

We see history repeating itself because humanity is intent on rejecting all of God's commandments and instructions. Though we all have choices to make in life, the majority of mankind seems to make all the wrong ones. In declaring this the "Century of the Child," the elite in the social sciences and education made a far-from-honorable choice to eradicate this nation's thread-bare attachment to God. Most Americans have weakly followed their lead.

Proverbs 1:7 states some good advice for parents: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise [God's] wisdom and instruction." We have the extraordinary blessing of having and believing God's Instruction Book so that we can live righteously and raise our children to do the same. Such wholesome and godly practices will ground and guide our children, not just for a century, but for all eternity!

Inset: *America's Lost Children*

A prime example of America's skewed child-training practices appeared nationally on Public Broadcasting's "Frontline" program during the third week of October. The documentary, called "The Lost Children of Rockdale County," revealed the sordid underbelly of some middle- and upper-middle-class American families. Significantly, the show's producers pointed the finger of blame squarely at the parents and their childrearing practices.

Back in 1996, Frontline executives became intrigued by a little-reported story out of Conyers, Georgia, a small town on the outer ring of Atlanta's suburbs. Just before the Olympics began, Rockdale County health officials discovered in Conyers an outbreak of syphilis, considered rare in rural, affluent, predominantly white areas. Of greater concern was that among the ten infected people were six teenage girls, four of whom were younger than 16 years old. After interviewing almost half of the more than 200 people exposed to the syphilis bacterium, the Georgia Division of Public Health concluded that these six girls were "at the center of this outbreak."

What emerged from the investigation stunned the local residents. For at least a year before the first case of syphilis was diagnosed, young teens had been engaging in complex sexual relations. The six teenage girls,

. . . in various combinations, met periodically to use drugs and have a variety of sexual interactions with several groups of slightly older boys. The venue was usually the home of one of the girls whose parents were out for the evening. . . . The drugs of choice were blunts (short, mild cigars), to which marijuana or cocaine had been added, and alcohol. Multiple accounts corroborated the fact that injectable drugs were not used. Sex was usually public and communal; the girls would have sequential and simultaneous sex partners. . . . The girls also had sex with each other, and numerous sexual encounters outside the party environment were also documented. (Richard B. Rothenburg, MD, MPH, et al., "Using Social Network and Ethnographic Tools to Evaluate Syphilis Transmission," *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 1998, pp. 154-160.)

Once these perversions became known, the teens involved had little or no remorse or shame about their conduct; many of them laughed and joked about their predicament when they met at the county health office. Their parents' reactions, which ranged from stunned disbelief to denial, were not helpful. In public meetings and private counseling, parents consistently voiced their frustration and powerlessness in controlling their children.

Even now, nearly four years afterward, little change is noticeable. The participants are different, but the high-level sexual and drug activity continues. In an interview this year, a trio of teenage girls agreed that most of their peers lost their virginity at 13 or 14, and that having multiple sexual partners was commonplace. To them, it was all part of maintaining their social standing and getting and keeping the attention of their friends.

All the interviewees mentioned some sort of "disconnect" with their parents or guardians. Many of the parents, often both parents, held high-income, time-consuming jobs. Some of them were required to travel for days at a time, leaving their children to fend for themselves. They provided all their children's material needs, including easy access to significant amounts of cash, but had too little time or concern to oversee the teens' activities.

The producers conducted extensive interviews with some of the parents. One couple admitted that they had lost control:

I think what it is is we've lost control over our children. You can't spank them now, or they'll turn you into the police. . . . I don't believe you should beat your children, but I think you need to discipline them. I've raised my children, tried to raise them to be good. I've tried to tell them that drugs are bad and that they don't need to drink and all. And I know they're going to go out and sow their oats, that's expected. But I don't know where kids get this behavior from other than knowing that their parents have lost control over the years.

A father of one of the teenage girls remarked:

Any parent this day and time that has daughters and sons have got to realize that's [sexual activity] taking place. Not that you agree with it. Not that you approve of it. But what can you do about it? You can't lock a kid in a closet. Thirteen, fourteen, fifteen years old. No, they don't want their parents to go with 'em and their friends. And you got to understand that. You just got to hope that you instilled the kind of values in them, or that you taught them the kind of values, what is important. And when they get that old they will respect that.

In essence, he and others of these parents let their children make their own decisions as soon as they became teenagers. They gave up trying to influence them positively. They, indeed, have lost control.

How common is this across the country? It is hard to find solid facts on such matters, but Professor Robert Blum, M.D., of the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, says, "What is so disturbing about the program is not that we are witnessing a rare event in the United States, but rather an event that is quite common." He goes on to place the blame on parents:

[W]e need to have adults who are authoritative in their parenting, not authoritarian or laissez-faire. . . . Authoritative parents set clear boundaries, ... [and] follow through with

pre-established consequences. Authoritative parents are both firm and fair. . . . [A]dolescents need guidance as well as encouragement, and they need to know that their parents, their relatives and the adult network in the neighborhood are all watching them, are all concerned, and see their upbringing as a priority. While the program is entitled "The Lost Children of Rockdale County," the reality is that these are the lost parents of Rockdale County, and even after the syphilis epidemic and even after the town hall meeting, it is clear that the adults in the community are as clueless as they ever were. (Robert W. Blum, "Lost Children or Lost Parents of Rockdale County?" October 1999, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/georgia/isolated/blum.html>.)

From a historical perspective, this tragic episode was predetermined, considering the permissive parenting methods promoted by the academic elite. As Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no revelation [of God's way], the people cast off restraint." These children, quick to "cast off restraint," expose the lie of mankind's social "advancements."